

Centre Documenters

Meeting: Board of Supervisors

Township: Halfmoon

Documenter names: Kayla Dembrak, Sadie Harvey

Date: March 14, 2024

Start Time: 7:00 p.m.

End Time: 8:32 p.m.

Attendance

Board members:

Treasurer Brett Laird

Member Charles Beck

Member Patricia Hartle

Member Tammy Perkins

Chair David Piper

Secretary Amy Smith

Vice-chair Ronald Servello

Other speakers:

-Donnan Stoicovy from ClearWater Conservancy

-Cliff Neil with Port Matilda EMS

Pledge of Allegiance

Public Comment

- Donnan Stoicovy from the ClearWater Conservancy invited everyone to the 28th annual Watershed Cleanup Day from 8 a.m. to noon on April 20. She also asked on behalf of the climate action committee if the board wants Halfmoon Township to be

Note to readers of these notes: Centre Documenters is part of a nationwide network dedicated to building a corps of “curious citizens” equipped with the skills necessary to support local government transparency. Our documenters attend public meetings in Centre County, and they make their notes available to the public. Documenters often include notes to their readers, and unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate or you would like to support our work in any way, please email us at documenters@psu.edu.

If you use this work to power your own reporting, please credit Centre Documenters.

rated for sustainability.

-Brett Laird said the township got a gold star for sustainability last year and that the rating is based on a variety of factors.

Approval of Minutes

The board approved the February 8, 2024, meeting minutes.

Consent Agenda

With one motion, the board approved all of the following items:

- Ratification of the Bills List for the period between Feb. 3, 2023, to Feb. 16, 2023, from the General Fund in the amount of \$41,600.85 and the Open Space Preservation Fund in the amount of \$178
- Ratification of the Bills List for the period of Feb. 17, 2023, to March 8, 2023, from the General Fund in the amount of \$24,878.24
- Reappointment of Brian Walker, PE to the Building and Housing Board of Appeals for a three-year term starting April 1, 2024
- Appointment of Heather Fink, R.A. to the Building and Housing Board of Appeals for a three-year term starting April 1, 2024
- Recognition of Riff Raff Days, which are scheduled for 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on May 17 and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on May 18
- Designation of April 20, 2024, as Watershed Cleanup Day

Ellenberger/Walters Lot Addition – Final Plan

-The final plan for adding land owned by the Walters to the Ellenbergers' property was approved.

Port Matilda EMS

- A representative from Port Matilda's EMS Board of Directors said that as of last year, their group has been doing well, but they're struggling to recruit and maintain staff because they don't have enough of a budget to pay them adequately.

Note to readers of these notes: Centre Documenters is part of a nationwide network dedicated to building a corps of "curious citizens" equipped with the skills necessary to support local government transparency. Our documenters attend public meetings in Centre County, and they make their notes available to the public. Documenters often include notes to their readers, and unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate or you would like to support our work in any way, please email us at documenters@psu.edu.

If you use this work to power your own reporting, please credit Centre Documenters.

- The representatives asked the board members to write letters to state officials and legislators, as well as officials at the federal level, on a timely basis, consistently asking for reimbursement. The board of directors aimed to encourage the board of supervisors to organize with other municipalities and influence the state to remedy the lack of EMS staffing and pay. The end goal is to eventually change insurance companies and one day be independent so that the directors don't have to ask the township for more money.

-Ron Servello said he agrees it's a bipartisan issue that needs addressed at the state level and in some cases, like Medicare reimbursement, at the federal level.

-The EMS directors reported that the nonemergency ambulance is back up and running.

-The EMS Directors reported they had \$20,000 at the end of last year and went into this year with \$50,000. They are anticipating \$80,000 in spending, and therefore, will still end up with a \$30,000 deficit.

-The EMS Board of Directors hired a full-time captain to help build their transportation business. The captain is a salaried employee and is the only one who receives benefits.

-Cliff Neal talked about how to retain employees if raising their salary is impossible.

-Neal explained they could offer benefits to employees, but that would cost anywhere from \$8,000 to \$12,000 for basic health, dental and eye care.

- He also suggested giving them gifts for certain amounts of calls, like a helmet or a jacket.

- Neal also said employees need a certain call volume to come in for reimbursements. For EMS workers to be reimbursed, the call needs to result in the workers providing a service to the patient who calls, which often does not occur if the person who calls leaves the scene before EMS arrives.

- David Piper and Neal agreed that younger people value money more than benefits, but Neal said, "All it takes is one trip to the doctor or the hospital, and they realize very, very quickly what not having health insurance costs."

Note to readers of these notes: Centre Documenters is part of a nationwide network dedicated to building a corps of "curious citizens" equipped with the skills necessary to support local government transparency. Our documenters attend public meetings in Centre County, and they make their notes available to the public. Documenters often include notes to their readers, and unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate or you would like to support our work in any way, please email us at documenters@psu.edu.

If you use this work to power your own reporting, please credit Centre Documenters.

- Neal compared the pay of EMS workers in Port Matilda to that of a fast-food job. He said the pay is the same, if not less. EMS workers make \$14 per hour and don't receive benefits.

-Neal said the other directors are working on and receiving several grants. (Below is a summary of what the grants are providing to EMS.)

- A new ambulance.

- Centre Gives funded building equipment like washers and dryers.

- The Freas Foundation grant paid for the HVAC system, which is needed to properly store medications that need to be kept at a specific temperature.

- The directors received a \$13,929 grant approved to install a new security system at the station, and they're pursuing a grant to pay for a \$81,585 transport van.

-The biggest expense for EMS workers in Port Matilda is payroll, according to the EMS directors.

-Tammy Perkins said grants can't cover pay raises because they're a one-time thing, and the directors can't guarantee they'll be able to maintain the raise next year.

-The EMS directors said even with the staffing shortages, they respond to somewhere between 90% and 100% of calls, but they didn't have the exact number available.

A note from your Documenter — Did you know? The National Emergency Number Association has a standard that 95% of emergency 911 calls should be responded to in 20 seconds, according to the NENA Call Answering Standard/Model Recommendation.

-The EMS directors said they want to expand their transport systems to nonemergency calls, like providing transportation between the hospital and rehabilitation facilities. The hope is to increase reimbursement through wheelchair service.

- The EMS directors said they need volunteer drivers for wheelchair vans. Volunteers need CPR training and can pick which days they are available to drive. They said those interested can call 814-692-1035.

Note to readers of these notes: Centre Documenters is part of a nationwide network dedicated to building a corps of "curious citizens" equipped with the skills necessary to support local government transparency. Our documenters attend public meetings in Centre County, and they make their notes available to the public. Documenters often include notes to their readers, and unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate or you would like to support our work in any way, please email us at documenters@psu.edu.

If you use this work to power your own reporting, please credit Centre Documenters.

-The directors have been working on improvements to the station, including a new bunk room, new flooring, new furnishing and desks for students.

-Port Matilda EMS will collaborate with PAWS for a vaccine clinic fundraiser on April 13. Microchipping services will also be provided. The entrance fee will be \$10-12.

Port Matilda 2025 EMS Contract

-The contract proposes returning to a standard agreement between the township and EMS for consistent funding, and the plan is to make a similar deal with the fire department at the June meeting.

-The township's draft of the contract will allocate 0.56 mills of its estimated assessed value for the next year. (That would be around \$44,867 this year.)

A note from your Documenter: The mill rate is used to calculate property tax and is "the amount of tax payable per dollar of the assessed value of the property," according to [FasterCapital.com](https://www.fastercapital.com).

-The draft was constructed by the treasurer and was presented to the board of supervisors for approval. The draft was approved among board members and will later be presented to the EMS's Board of Directors.

Permission to advertise 2024 Paving Projects

-The board of supervisors said the current numbers indicate advertisements will cost approximately \$310,000.

-A community member spoke out to say the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that would be used for this was originally meant to help communities recover from COVID, not to fund roads.

-Ron Servello refuted by saying they have expanded the uses of the money.

-Permission to advertise the paving projects was approved.

Note to readers of these notes: Centre Documenters is part of a nationwide network dedicated to building a corps of "curious citizens" equipped with the skills necessary to support local government transparency. Our documenters attend public meetings in Centre County, and they make their notes available to the public. Documenters often include notes to their readers, and unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate or you would like to support our work in any way, please email us at documenters@psu.edu.

If you use this work to power your own reporting, please credit Centre Documenters.

Open Space Preservation Board solicitor review recommendation request

-Servello motioned, Hartle seconded, and it was approved unanimously.

Hiring part-time seasonal public works laborer

-The board of supervisors voted unanimously to hire Westley Layton to help with flagging duties and grass trimming.

Township Reports

-Perkins updated the board about the finance committee for Upper Bald Eagle COG.

-They are working on a better budget and timeline for COG.

-Community members expressed unrest over the fact that COG oversees the fire department but not EMS.

- The argument between the board and the community ensued for about 20 minutes, causing the meeting to carry on past approved business. Community members expressed concern that COG was an unnecessary extra step for approval of the fire department's budget and spending money. Board members explained that COG was implemented due to an incident over 20 years ago, when a fire engine was almost repossessed due to the fire department not paying required fees. The COG was then implemented to manage the budget of the department. To get rid of COG, each municipality would have to agree, but the municipalities have not directly expressed concern about COG.

-Piper and Servello moved to adjourn the meeting, but Perkins argued that they should let the community speak. Servello argued that community members had the opportunity to bring up issues, as stated, during the public comments section of the agenda. He clarified the public is allowed to ask questions during discussed topics of the agenda for better understanding, but excess commentary and concerns are not permitted to ensure business is completed and that the meeting ends on time.

Note to readers of these notes: Centre Documenters is part of a nationwide network dedicated to building a corps of "curious citizens" equipped with the skills necessary to support local government transparency. Our documenters attend public meetings in Centre County, and they make their notes available to the public. Documenters often include notes to their readers, and unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate or you would like to support our work in any way, please email us at documenters@psu.edu.

If you use this work to power your own reporting, please credit Centre Documenters.

A note from your Documenter: The argument between Ron and Tammy was rather animated.

Adjournment

Summary/Takeaways from your Documenter

- The Board of Directors for Port Matilda’s EMS is struggling to pay its employees enough money to not only recruit and maintain workers but also to lead a life of quality. They encouraged council members write letters on a regular basis to officials and legislators on a state and federal level to help supply reimbursements and benefits for EMS workers.
- The Board of Supervisors’ EMS contract draft was improved and will soon be sent to the Board of Directors of EMS. This contract will allocate 0.56 mills to EMS’s budget.
- A rabies clinic will be provided for local cats and dogs. The clinic will offer more than just rabies vaccines, like microchipping, and will have an entrance fee from \$10-12. Walk-ins will be accepted.

Follow-Up Questions

- Other than reimbursements, how do state and federal legislatures affect payroll of EMS workers?
- What exactly will 0.56 mills benefit for EMS workers?

Top Quote

“We’ve asked ourselves as a board, why does anyone become an EMT, a first responder or a paramedic? Because, especially for the EMT level, any EMT in the county could go to Sheetz, they could go to Lykens Market, or something like that and make more money.”

Note to readers of these notes: Centre Documenters is part of a nationwide network dedicated to building a corps of “curious citizens” equipped with the skills necessary to support local government transparency. Our documenters attend public meetings in Centre County, and they make their notes available to the public. Documenters often include notes to their readers, and unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate or you would like to support our work in any way, please email us at documenters@psu.edu.

If you use this work to power your own reporting, please credit Centre Documenters.