

Keene Township Board Meeting

Minutes April 15, 2025

Wojcik called the meeting to order with the pledge of allegiance at 7:00 PM

Roll Call:

Present: Nate Wolff, Christine Hendrick, Corey Wojcik, Sandy Smiley, Holli Melton.

Recognition of Visitors :

There were approximately 25 members of the community present, along with Zoning Administrator Jeanne Vandersloot.

Approval or changes to the Agenda: Changes - Christine added Brian Thelen onto the assessing service contract agreement discussion.

A **motion** was made to approve the Agenda as amended, 1st by Hendrick 2nd by Smiley. motion carried 5-0

Approval of March 12 board meeting minutes:

A **motion** to approve the minutes was made by Melton, 2nd by Wolff All in favor, Motion carried 5-0.

Public Comment on items related to the Agenda No Comments from attendants

Treasurer Report (Christine Hendrick)

1. Christine shared the investment report and stated that copies are on the table.
2. Our former company, Parplan insurance, should be issuing us a refund of \$3,226.50.
3. Holli and Christine are working with BS&A to get W4s, and all documentation for the setup.
4. Corey Wojcik is working with Rehman on finishing up the ARPA financial report before the April 30th deadline.
5. Yearly employer contributions will be mailed out this week to John Hancock.
6. Plan to retype Hall Rental agreement with a hold harmless clause, and post on website.
7. Zoning administrator job descriptions and wages in other comparable townships was shared with the rest of the board for a later discussion.
8. Third meals non-profit was mentioned, they put together lunch bags and send them home with kids from all the different school districts that are low-income who might not get their third meal of the day. Donation information was shared.
9. Her and Jeanne have been working with LocalIQ. We sent them a check back in January. They cashed it, and they never posted it to our account. She will continue to work on getting this resolved.
10. She discussed the Odessa township meeting Her and Sandy attended pointing out issues with county permits being issued without township permits being issued first.
11. April 22nd, is a Michigan House Energy Committee meeting in Lansing. Gina Johnson recommended that all the local townships send a couple representatives, and they have an opportunity to speak to the Energy Committee regarding PA 233.

Clerk's Report (Holli Melton)

1. We have a new absentee ballot drop box. Installation will be this summer.
2. She is working with the MTA to acquire another ballot collection box for the second tabulator to mount on. This will help streamline elections.

3. She's currently working with one resident on several PA116 applications.
4. A letter was written to the Chief connectivity officer for the state of Michigan in support of Comcast's grant application to bring high speed internet to our township.
5. The Spring 2025 Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) is complete, which focuses on Michigan local governments' finances and budgeting.
6. Election inspector applications are on the table and poll worker applications are online michigan.gov. She asked anyone interested to leave their contact information.
7. She went over the bills for the month. Smiley mentioned that the Foster Swift invoice for the PA233 lawsuit might be able to be paid from donations received for that.

A **motion** was made to pay the bills in the amount of \$26,876 1st by Wolff 2nd by Smiley. All in favor, Motion carried 5-0.

Planning Commission Report (Nate Wolff)

The wind energy ordinance was divided about the location and moved to the AG district with a capacity of 20 megawatts, to send to the Board. There's ongoing discussion about the overlay district and separate ordinances.

1. There was confusion regarding the overlay district ordinance and the need for separate ordinances for solar, wind, and battery energy. The board made it clear that all renewable energy shall go in overlay district 3 as stated in the overlay district ordinance. The resolution includes all three ordinances in the overlay district.
2. A public hearing for the battery storage ordinance is scheduled for May 5th.

Zoning Administrator Report (Jeanne Vandersloot)

Zoning updates include new building permits, a land division and one parcel combination and the completion of the battery energy storage ordinance, with a public hearing set for May 5th.

Life EMS Contract (Kraig Dodge)

Life EMS provides ambulance services with a membership program and a per capita fee structure.

1. Life EMS has a membership program that offers financial benefits for frequent users.
 - o Membership fee is approximately \$69 annually.
2. The EMS subsidy is 7.1% of the overall budget, with a total budget of \$4.3 million in 2024.
 - o Subsidy from all entities is \$305,673.
3. The current per capita fee is \$6.69, annual adjustment based on the consumer price index.
 - o Adjustment for 2025 is 2.9%.
4. There is a disparity in per capita fees between Life EMS and Portland Ambulance.
 - o Portland Ambulance charges \$31 per capita.

No changes were made to the EMS contract.

1. The contract is automatically renewed and offers a reasonable rate.

New Assessor for Keene Township (Christine Hendrick)

Brian Thelen presented his qualifications and expressed interest in becoming the assessor for Keene Township. The recommendation to hire Brian as the new assessor was made.

1. Brian is recommended as the new assessor due to cost savings and experience.
 - o Brian's rate is \$13.48 per parcel, saving the township \$6,400 annually.
 - o Brian has 30 years of experience and was recommended by other assessors.

Residents can email or call the assessor for tax-related inquiries. A Q&A section will be added to the website for convenience.

1. Residents should be able to easily find out the taxable value of new constructions.
2. Frequently asked questions as well as forms like an AG affidavit and PRE exemption form will be added to the assessor part of our new website.
3. There is a mutual right of termination clause in his contract.

A **motion** to accept the proposal of A two-year contract with Brian Thelen effective date of 2025-04-15 1st by Hendrick 2nd by Melton. All in favor, Motion carried 5-0.

Website Launch Update (Sandy Smiley)

The website launch is progressing, with completion expected in early May and a review period to follow. A fraud alert program will be available on the site. The program notifies participants of any changes in the deed or title of their homes.

Wind Energy System Ordinance

The board had many questions, concerns and recommendations. With regards to location, size, environmental studies, safety reports, decommissioning etc.

1. The Planning Commission recommends adopting amendments to the wind energy system ordinance to comply with state law PA-233.
 - o A public hearing was held on 3-25-25.
 - o The amendments include adding the CREO section and other necessary changes.
2. The PC is divided regarding the AG district being suitable for commercial wind energy systems with a limit of up to 20 megawatts.
3. The current electric infrastructure is not suitable for renewable energy projects.
 - o Proposed new lines and substations are not yet in place.

The discussion highlighted the need for clear zoning and planning for renewable energy projects, considering acreage and megawatt limitations.

1. The proposed project will require 15 miles of transmission lines from Peddler substation to Hawley substation, with construction anticipated in 2026-2027.
2. Wind energy requires 200 to 800 acres for 20 megawatts, and District 3 has 465 acres.

Some suggested edits to the wind ordinance were.

1. (15.46.04 first paragraph) "may be allowed in overlay district 3" not AG
2. (15.46.04 A 13) Should be: The Township Board or PC will require various types of impact studies including Environmental assessments, carried out by a 3rd party of the Township Boards choosing and paid for by the applicant.
3. (15.46.04 C, last line) the word "reasonable" needs clarification
4. (15.46.04 E) Hazards, including lighting, are regulated by the FAA.
5. (15.46.04 G) The decommissioning plan should be approved by the board and reviewed regularly due to inflation.
6. (15.46.04 K) A bond is recommended over a cash deposit for performance guarantees.
7. (15.46.04 L) The applicant shall pay for a preinstallation and post installation road assessment by a third party of the Township Planning Commissions choosing and reimburse ICRD for any associated road repairs.
8. (15.46.04 M) Liability depends on the lease, and the township shall have copies of all leases in their entirety.
9. (15.46.05 J) Stray voltage must be tested for every April by a third party of the Planning Commissions choice, paid for by the applicant. A yearly report must be submitted to the

township showing no more than 1.25 volts of stray voltage at the perimeter setback line every 300ft.

10. (15.46.02 M, line 5&6) The standards state that blades have not turned, and equipment has not generated power for over one year. The redundant lines should be combined for clarity.

A **motion** to table this discussion until the next meeting because of time restraints. 1st by Wolff 2nd by Smiley . All in favor, Motion carried 5-0.

Reduction of Planning Commission Members (Sandy Smiley)

There is confusion about the existence and content of the ordinance establishing the Planning Commission.

1. The township has options to reaffirm or create a new Planning Commission.
2. The existence of a standalone ordinance could change the approach, however, the only way it would make a difference is if a vote of the people specifically established the planning commission of 7 members. Then It would need to be a vote of the people to reduce it to 5.

A **motion** made to table this discussion until the next meeting pending the provision of the ordinance documentation from Jeanne 1st by Wolff 2nd by Smiley. All in favor, Motion carried 5-0.

Publication of Public Notices (Christine Hendrick)

The motion to switch public notices to the Daily News was passed.

1. Switching to the Daily News for public notices offers more flexibility and cost savings.
 - o The Daily News publishes six days a week Vs. Sentinel Standard's once a week.
 - o A sample ad costs \$190 with the Sentinel Standard and \$150 with the Daily News.
 - o Include a notice to residents of the change in the next newsletter.

A **motion** made to change the public notice from Sentinel Standard to The Daily News 1st by Smiley 2nd by Melton. All in favor, Motion carried 5-0.

Postage Meter Acquisition

1. A postage meter will save time and at \$32.99/month plus postage, reduce postage costs.
 - o Saves five cents per regular mail.
 - o Packets for the Board from Zoning will now be dropped off at the township hall, and everyone will pick them up.
 - o Nate will reach out to the PC about Packets being emailed, and if needed, Cori Wilbur offered to print them for whoever on the PC needs it.

A **motion** to acquire a postage meter for township use was made 1st by Melton 2nd by Smiley. All in favor, Motion carried 5-0.

PA116 Farmland preservation Program (Robert Simpson)

The application involves gathering titles, maps, and signatures to be reviewed and sent to the state.

1. Property tax credits are based on income, not a reduction in property tax.

SUPERVISOR REPORT (Corey Wojcik)

New Micro Transit Service

The new iGo micro transit service is a grant-funded project beneficial for the area, with no cost to the township.

1. iGo is a pilot grant project by the city of Ionia, similar to Uber.

Township Issues and Complaints

Residents have concerns about road graveling, fiber line extensions, taxes, and cargo containers. Residents can contact the zoning administrator for ordinance violations.

Township Cleanup Day

Township Cleanup Day is scheduled for Saturday, April 26 from 7am to Noon.

Volunteers are needed for Township Cleanup Day, with liability waivers and sign-up sheets available the day of. – 2025-04-26

Roadside Mowing Contract

Switching to Quick Mowing Incorporated will result in cost savings for roadside mowing.

1. The new contract with Quick Mowing Incorporated will save approximately \$2,831.46.
2. Our previous contract with Jablowski and Sons was \$3440.00 per mowing
3. The township has roadsides mowed twice per year, Each mowing will cost \$2024.27 for a yearly cost of \$4,048.54

Hawley Hwy Roadwork

The Hawley Highway Road work is a federally funded project involving significant changes.

1. The project involves redoing the road from Centerline to Rickert.

Rickert Rd Mobile Home Removal (Sandy Smiley)

The community plans to coordinate efforts and possibly set up a donation system to assist the resident.

1. Removal of the trailer is quoted by 616Junk at \$2,000.
2. The community is allowed to contribute financially to assist the resident.

Sandy Smiley will Coordinate with 616Junk and community donations will be accepted by Christine Hendrick to assist the resident.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kim Newell Made the suggestion to automatically review contracts upon expiration.

Kim Newell: Stated There is disorganization in township records, which is problematic.

Upon hearing the zoning administrator say that there is in fact a planning commission ordinance, but it is not online, The issue of record disorganization was addressed.

Cori Wilbur: Stated Standalone ordinances should be accessible and incorporated into the master book. Centralizing ordinances for accessibility is important.

Upon hearing the zoning administrator say that there is in fact a planning commission ordinance, but it is not online, ordinance accessibility was addressed.

Mike Welch donated a Flag for the Pinckney Cemetery as well as \$40 for the township to purchase a backup flag. At that same time He donated \$40 for the cleanup efforts on Rickert Rd.

Adjournment of Meeting

A **motion** to adjourn the meeting was made at 9:51pm 1st by Smiley 2nd by Hendrick. All in favor, Motion carried 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:52pm