

**Au Train Township Regular Board Meeting Minutes
February 12, 2024 6:00 pm - 7:26 pm**

Roll Call:

Board Members Present: Supervisor Michelle Doucette, Clerk Mary Johnson, Treasurer Kristy Cota, Trustee Jake Miller and Trustee Tom Balmes. Board Members Absent: None. Also Present: Zoning Administrator Kathleen Lindquist, Assistant Fire Chief Justen Knuttila, Donna Shields, Matt Lang, Brian VanWieren, Dale Meese, Tommy McHale, Char Dugas, Lisa Cromell, Scott and Peg Smith and Kerby Albro.

Supervisor Doucette opened our February 12, 2024 meeting at 6:00 p.m. leading us with the pledge.

Approval of the Agenda:

Moved Johnson/seconded Doucette to **approve the agenda**. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes:

Moved Doucette/seconded Balmes to **approve the minutes of the January 8, 2024 Regular Board Meeting**. Motion carried.

Moved Johnson/seconded Cota to **approve the minutes of the January 29, 2024 Special Board Meeting**. Motion carried.

Pay Bills:

Moved Cota/seconded Johnson to **pay bills**. Cota, yes; Johnson, yes; Miller, yes; Balmes, Doucette, yes. Motion carried. (General Fund #17063-17073; Fire Fund #9125-9140; Garbage Fund #2128).

Financial Reports:

Clerk Johnson presented the January Financial Reports, which were reviewed, and indicated the need for a Budget Amendment for the Promotions and Elections Departments. Reports are provided to Board Members prior to the meeting.

Au Train Township Budget Resolution
Re: FY Budget 2023-2024 - Amendment No. 2
February 12, 2024

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of the Au Train Township Board to establish a General Appropriations Act for the purpose of budgeting the Township finances in a manner which does not allow expenditure, to exceed revenues, including any available unappropriated surpluses, and,

WHEREAS, the Au Train Township Board recognizes that some activities may require amendments to this Act, and such amendment shall be made by resolution of the Au Train Township Board; and

WHEREAS, the Au Train Township Appropriations Act for FY 2023-2024 does not permit deviations which cause expenditures for any activity to exceed budgeted amounts without amendment to the Act by the Au Train Township Board; and

WHEREAS, the Au Train Township Board has duly reviewed the budgets for the General Appropriations Act, which includes all funds of Au Train Township, at public meetings of the Au Train Township Board,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Au Train Township Board hereby amends the Appropriations Act for FY 2023-2024 in accordance with budgetary information presented to the Board and the limitations defined within this Resolution.

The foregoing Resolution offered by Board Member: Johnson

Second offered by Board Member: Cota

Upon roll call vote the following voted:

"Aye": Johnson, Cota, Doucette, Balmes, Miller

"Nay": None

The Clerk declared the resolution adopted.

Mary Walther Johnson

Mary Walther Johnson, Au Train Township Clerk

General Fund - Fund No. 101

Expenditures	Current Budget	Amended Budget	Change
Community Promotions	750.00	2250.00	(+) 1,500.00
Elections	4550.00	7050.00	(+) 2,500.00
Fund Balance	\$320,125.92		
Ending Fund Equity	\$178,131.92	\$174,131.92	(-) \$4,000.00

To correct shortfalls in Community Promotions and Elections by reducing Ending Fund Equity.

Board Member Reports:

Treasurer - Balance as of January 31, 2024: General Fund \$294,663.64; Fire Fund \$170,423.30 + CD \$52,534.46; Garbage Fund \$307,982.57; Road Fund \$104,057.97.

Treasurer Cota noted that the Swamp Tax payment of \$51.27 was received and that there were 2 Tax Dispersal for the month of January. Office Hours are scheduled for February 29th from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, which is the last day for payment of Winter Taxes without penalty and interest. There are no upcoming Community Building rentals.

Clerk - Clerk Johnson noted that since the December Meeting several emails were answered, returned phone messages or forwarded to appropriate Board Members. The emails and FOIA requests continue from Duane Newton. In addition, an Mr. Newton sent an email requesting information on how to submit a proposal for text amendments to the Zoning Ordinance which will be responded to. I also received FOIA requests related to the upcoming Presidential Primary Election.

The W2's and 1099's were prepared and sent and the Wage Detail Report was filed with the IRS and uploaded to the SSA.

An application was filed with get.gov for our autraintownship.gov domain request. Once reviewed and approved, a request to Kelley Marketing will be made to get it transferred. This is something we have discussed and the registration was open.

The new Au Train Township Website went live on February 8, 2024. Uploading additional documents and updating the calendar is ongoing and that process will continue until complete.

The Public Accuracy Test was held on February 3rd, with the Onota Township's Clerk, for the February 27th Presidential Primary Election. The remainder of the month was spent doing Election Administration tasks.

Budget document prep will be completed for the upcoming Budget Workshop Meeting scheduled for February 17th.

Information was provided regarding Quickbooks Monthly payroll fees increase. The cost of processing 9 direct deposit payroll checks monthly isn't worth the \$100.00 per month cost and yearly fee.

Trustee's - Trustee Balmes noted that business owners have indicated business is down this winter because of the lack of snow. The recent Ice Climbers Festival did provide a boost. He also attended the recent Fire Department meeting and all is running well.

Trustee Miller noted he has received some emails from Duane Newton and responds when appropriate. The Planning Commission 2024 Meetings and CUP Hearings will be scheduled.

Supervisor - Supervisor Doucette provided her report. The Regional Government Meetings will be reinstated, with the first meeting being February 15, 2024, at the Alger County Courthouse.

Supervisor Doucette also provided information on a Noise Complaint received by Zoning Administrator Lindquist. Supervisor Doucette spoke with Alger County Under Sheriff Blank regarding snowmobiles driving on private roads. He indicated there wasn't anything the Department could do about private road use, especially when the property where the snowmobiles are coming from borders the private road. If there is constant snowmobile activity after 11:00 pm, then a Noise Complaint form needs to be filled out and returned to the Supervisor, where it will be reviewed and followed up according to the Township Noise Ordinance. The Ordinance and Complaint Form are available on the Township website.

Special Presentation: Denise Gerth and Michelle Hach from Friends of Valley Spur presented information to the Board of their application with the Sault Ste Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians and the need for government sponsorship of their request. The funds, if awarded, would be for their Grooming Equipment Capital Campaign. Clerk Johnson suggested a Resolution could be prepared for consideration and placed on the agenda for the February 17, 2024 Special Budget Workshop Meeting if the Board would like to proceed. Action tabled for preparation of a Resolution authorizing support and government sponsorship of the grant application.

Public Comment: Char Dugas, Chair of the Alger County Library Board and Lisa Cromell, Director of the Munising Public Library, presented information regarding their millage renewal request that will be on the February 27th ballot. The Library needs 3/10 of a mill to continue to be eligible for State Funding. There is no cost for Library Services to Alger County Residents. Comments were also received from Matt Lang and an emailed comment was received and on file from Duane Newton, which was forwarded to the Board members prior to the meeting.

Boards/Departments:

Zoning Administrator - ZA Lindquist present. Report received and on file. The Planning Commission schedule is forthcoming for Regular Meetings and CUP Hearings.

Zoning Board of Appeals - The Zoning Board of Appeals has an Organizational Meeting scheduled for April.

Assessor/Board of Review - Assessor Fuess provided his report for January and it is on file.

Maintenance Department: Ryan Walther provided a text report for the meeting.

Fire Department: Assistant Knuttila was present and provided the Department Report, which is on file. Brandon Lewis was voted in as Fire Captain, replacing Codey Grahovac. There were 3 calls for the month. A garage fire on Au Train Trail and two mutual aid calls for Munising Township. The annual Truck DOT's are complete and Pomasl completed the flow testing on the air packs. They received a \$15,000 USDA Grant, through Alger County, and will be purchasing Ice Rescue Gear.

Unfinished Business: Litigation update - Ridge Road/VanWieren et el vs Au Train Township. Supervisor Doucette indicated there has been no update.

New Business:

1. Correspondence - Supervisor Doucette presented correspondence from State Rep Jenn Hill.
2. Fire Department - Approval of 2024 Officers. Assistant Fire Chief Knuttia noted that the Department made no recommendation for changes to Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief as their January meeting. Trustee Balmes affirmed that no other members came forward. MOTION Supervisor Doucette/seconded Balmes, to **Appoint Perry King as Fire Chief and Justen Knuttia as Assistant Fire Chief for 2024.** Doucette, yes; Balmes, yes; Cota, yes; Miller, yes; Johnson, yes. Motion carried.
3. Appointment Consideration Planning Commission Member - Review of persons interested in serving on the Planning Commission was made. Letters of interest were received from Donna Shields and Bob Leibinger. After discussion, MOTION Miller/seconded Doucette, to **Appoint Donna Shields to the Planning Commission.** Motion carried.
4. Appointment Consideration Board of Review Member - Review of persons interested in serving on the Board of Review was made. Letters of interest were received from Tommy McHale and Susannah LaCombe. After discussion, MOTION Balmes/seconded Cota, to **Appoint Tommy McHale to the Board of Review.** Motion carried.
5. Poverty Exemption Guidelines - Clerk Johnson presented the Guidelines Resolution for Poverty Exemptions for consideration. The updated Federal Poverty Guidelines from 2023, effective January 1, 2024, were implemented.

AU TRAIN TOWNSHIP - GUIDELINES RESOLUTION FOR POVERTY EXEMPTION
Resolution No. 2024- 001

WHEREAS, the adoption of guidelines for poverty exemptions is required of the Au Train Township Board; and

WHEREAS, the principal residence of persons, who the Supervisor/Assessor and Board of Review determines by reason of poverty to be unable to contribute to the public charge, is eligible for exemption in whole or in part from taxation under Public Act 390 of 1994 (MCL 211.7u); and

WHEREAS, pursuant to PA 390 of 1994, the Township of Au Train, Alger County adopts the following guidelines for the Board of Review to implement. The guidelines shall include but not be limited to the specific income and asset levels of the claimant and all persons residing in the household filed in the current or immediately preceding year;

To be eligible, a person shall do all the following on an annual basis:

- 1) Be an owner of and occupy as a principal residence the property for which an exemption is requested.
- 2) File a claim with the supervisor/assessor or Board of Review, accompanied by federal and state income tax returns for all persons residing in the principal residence, including any property tax credit returns filed in the immediately preceding year or in the current year or a signed State Tax Commission Form 4988, Poverty Exemption Affidavit.
- 3) File a claim reporting that the combined assets of all persons in the household do not exceed the current guidelines. Assets include but are not limited to, real estate other than the principal residence, personal property, motor vehicles, recreational vehicles and equipment, certificates of deposit, savings accounts, checking accounts, stocks, bonds, life insurance, retirement funds, etc. – See Asset Test Requirements, Below.
- 4) Produce a valid driver's license or other form of identification if requested.
- 5) Produce, if requested, a deed, land contract, or other evidence of ownership of the property for which an exemption is requested.

6) Meet the federal poverty income guidelines as defined and determined annually by the United States Department of Health and Human Services or alternative guidelines adopted by the governing body providing the alternative guidelines do not provide eligibility requirements less than the federal guidelines.

7) The application for an exemption shall be filed after January 1, but one day prior to the last day of the December Board of Review. The filing of this claim constitutes an appearance before the Board of Review for the purpose of preserving the right of appeal to the Michigan Tax Tribunal.

ASSET TEST REQUIREMENTS: Total Assets should not exceed \$50,000 in True Cash Value for eligibility for poverty exemption. This excludes the homestead being claimed, essential household goods (clothing and furniture), and the first \$5,000 of the market value of the claimant's motor vehicle. Au Train Township may consider and require an applicant to list any of the following types of household assets to determine the person's eligibility for a poverty exemption:

- Second home with different Parcel ID#
- Land with different Parcel ID#
- Vehicles (\$5,000 allowed for vehicle of claimant)
- Recreational Vehicles, such as campers, motor homes, boats, ATV's, snowmobiles
- Buildings other than residence with different Parcel ID#
- Jewelry
- Antiques
- Artwork
- Equipment
- Other personal property of value
- Bank accounts over \$1,000
- Stocks
- Money received from the sale of property
- Withdrawals of bank deposits and borrowed money
- Gifts, loans, lump-sum inheritances and one-time insurance payments

The following are the 2023 Federal Poverty Income Guidelines which are updated annually by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, effective January 17, 2024. The annual allowable income includes income for all persons residing in the principal residence.

Federal Poverty Guidelines Used in the Determination of Poverty Exemptions
Size of "Family Unit" 2023 Federal Poverty Guidelines

Household of:1	.....	\$15,060
2	.....	\$20,440
3	.....	\$25,820
4	.....	\$31,200
5	.....	\$36,580
6	.....	\$41,960
7	.....	\$47,340
8	.....	\$52,720

For each additional person, add \$ 5,380

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the supervisor/assessor and Board of Review shall follow the above stated policy and federal guidelines in granting or denying an exemption, unless the Board of Review determines there are substantial and compelling reasons why there should be a deviation from the policy and federal guidelines and these reasons are communicated in writing to the claimant.

The foregoing resolution offered by the Au Train Township Board Member Johnson

and supported by the Au Train Township Board Member Doucette

Upon roll call vote, the following voted:

"Aye": Johnson, Doucette, Cota, Miller, Balmes

"Nay": None

The Au Train Township Supervisor declared the Resolution adopted.
Dated this 12th day of February, 2024.

6. Munising Memorial Hospital - Clerk Johnson presented information to the Board regarding the possibility of MMH approaching the Township for use of the Community Building as a satellite office to see patients. It is just in the preliminary stages and should their Board decide to pursue, a formal request will be made to the Township for consideration.

Public Comment: Public Comments were received from Matt Lang.

Board Member Comments: Additional Comments were shared by Board Members.

Next Meeting: The next Regular Board meeting is scheduled for March 11, 2024 at 6:00 pm.

Adjournment: Motion Johnson/seconded Miller to **adjourn at 7:26 pm.**

Submitted by Mary Walther Johnson, Clerk

Mary Walther Johnson

APPROVED DATE: March 11, 2024