



MINUTES

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SWATARA TOWNSHIP

REGULAR MEETING I

NOVEMBER 1, 2023

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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information on the agenda this evening. The revenues have not been presented yet. She feels we are in the same situation as 2020 when the Board was presented with numbers the same evening they voted on the budget. The police department is hosting the final 5K Hero Run on Sunday, November 5.

- B. **Commissioner Boudier**: He was happy to see Mary Klaus in the audience, she just returned from another mission trip.
- C. **Commissioner Tuckey**: He is proud of how the past two years have gone with budget preparation. He is grateful that all information has been gathered and accurately presented for the last two years.
- D. **Commissioner Varner**: He was pleased to hear that there were no incidents during Halloween Trick or Treat last evening.
- E. **President Zubeck**: Just a couple of things I would like to point out. Regarding the budget, 2020 was an interesting year. It was the year that we got the budget that evening and it was also the night we learned that there was going to be a million-dollar hole in the general fund. That was part of my concern, that while it was \$8 per household and a significant amount of a tax break for larger big box stores, it was not a significant enough tax break for residents to leave a million-dollar hole in the budget. Commissioner Ellis was on the Board in 2020, the revenue projections were given that night and no, I didn't vote for it. I didn't think it was right to, I voted for the tax cut, I didn't vote for the prior year's budget which was also not very timely. During that time nobody made any mention of it, except for myself and Commissioner Varner. A year later we learned about the architect during a meeting, during budget. We were never even told there was an architect that was being considered. There were a lot of things that were kept from the Board of Commissioners at that time. I also want to mention the fact that in addition to that nearly million dollar hole that was left in the budget, we also had some increased costs at the same time. Revenues were dropping and expenditures were increasing and that was not a good recipe when you are lowering taxes. A few months later, the Board decided to borrow twenty million dollars. I couldn't understand why anybody would cut taxes and then borrow twenty million dollars, which also left us another nearly million dollars to pay per year. I also want to touch on the fact that if you look at the legal fees during that time, a lot of political decisions were made. Dave Wion was our solicitor up until 2015 when he was removed, and I believe it was political. He never charged the township over \$100,000 for legal fees for the entire year. In 2016, Mr. Wion was no longer the solicitor and the legal fees increased by 128%, up to \$231,551.75. In the final year of the new solicitor the annual fee was \$367,010.06. The fees never went down, they continued to increase. We were able to save a significant amount of money by making a smart budgetary decision, a fiscally responsible decision, and bring on new legal representation at \$222-231,000 respectively, approximately. Then we go to engineering fees. Another political

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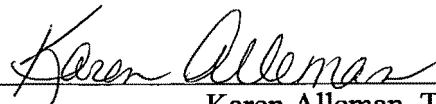
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decision. From 2007 to 2016, HRG was the engineer, we never paid over \$300,000 for engineering fees and we did some pretty good, significant projects during those years. 2017, a change was made. The two transition years were reasonable, \$143,000, \$152,000. It was reasonable for a little bit, and then you get to a full year of the new engineer in 2019 and it jumped 130%, to \$152,357. And you get to 2020, we were sitting at home, during COVID, it was a COVID year, projects weren't taking place, \$754,429.87. That's a significant jump. I don't know who was meeting with our engineer and doing all of these things in a COVID year in 2020, running the bill up to \$754,000. In 2021, \$677,000. In 2022, \$583,000, its coming down because we started questioning the billing. And 2023, \$427,000, so we are getting there. When people want to spread lies and want to say that we are doing something wrong and not watching the budget and that we're taking money out of the capital reserve, I want everybody to know that we passed a balanced budget in 2023 with no tax increases and we didn't touch capital reserve despite all of the increases. Despite the million-dollar gaping hole that was left in our general fund. I want to thank everybody for coming out this evening. I want to thank everybody for putting their faith in us. As we move forward, we will do the right thing by the taxpayers no matter what that ends up being. We're going to do the right thing and we're going to keep watching your tax dollars. Thank you and have a good evening.

13. **Adjournment**: Commissioner Tuckey made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:16 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Varner. Motion carried unanimously.



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Karen Alleman, Township Secretary