
MINUTES OF SYMMES TOWNSHIP FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
May 12, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m. Members of the Committee present were: Rik Vonderhaar, Larry Harte, Pete Sayles, Michael Tranter, and Joe Grossi.

Also, present: Administrator - Mrs. Kim Lapensee, and Township Trustees – Phil Beck, Jodie Leis and Kenneth Bryant.

OLD BUSINESS

Mrs. Lapensee stated that she revised all the 2020/2021 budget sheets to show the expenses for last year and the new balances going into 2021. She stated that she also revised some of the line items for 2021 to reflect the changes in the budget through May. She stated that we did hire an accountant to come in and help us reconcile 2019 and 2020.

NEW BUSINESS

New Garage Facility for the Service Department – Mr. Bill Pitman, Public Works Director, stated that his department needs a new building to store their vehicles in. He stated that they need a 60 X 100 pole style building to fit their 4 large dump trucks. He stated that we only have room for 3 of the trucks and the 4th one is stored outside. He stated that it would be inconvenient to park the 4th truck in the park building. He stated that the vehicles are 32 feet long (with all the snow equipment) and in the current building they are housed in, there is not enough room to walk around the vehicle with a snowplow on it in the winter. He stated that in one area of the garage to exit the vehicle you need to step on the tire of the backhoe. He stated that he would like to get all the vehicles inside so that it prolongs that life of the vehicles. He stated that also need a wash bay and have been told many times by the storm water district that we need to wash all our vehicles inside where there is a drain and filter to catch any residual salt from the trucks. Mr. Pitman also stated that having our vehicles inside would deter theft because last year we had an incident where someone broke into the trailers that are also stored outside and stole a generator.

Mr. Pitman stated that he looked at other neighboring communities and Loveland is building a new maintenance garage with offices (1.3 million), Crosby Township just built a pole barn 60 X 100 (500K), and Sycamore Township built a new maintenance facility (4.5 million). He stated that he would be happy to take anyone on a tour of our facilities to show them our workload and how much equipment is needed to perform the work and that we need to protect our investment. He stated that we generally do our own vehicle maintenance, and it saves us a lot of money.

Mr. Grossi stated that he was amazed at how much work the employees do and was surprised at the small size of the group. He stated that we also spend a lot of money on new equipment. Mr. Pitman stated that it used to cost around \$60K to purchase dump truck and now that price is around \$200K. He stated that all vehicles are generally on a 12 – 16-year replacement schedule. He stated that we generally get more out of our trade-ins than the average township and there are a lot of smaller townships that want to buy our used equipment.

Mr. Larry Harte stated that we talked about this in past meetings and wondered if we are just talking about the garage or does it include the administration building too. Mrs. Lapensee stated that we talked about building one new building with a garage portion in the back with offices in the front so that we could share one building. Mr. Grossi stated that the committee received copies of the feasibility study that addressed that. Mrs. Lapensee stated that we had our engineer show two concepts on a site plan to just build a pole barn (which is shown in the rear of the lot) or build a garage now with the hopes of an addition in the future (which is shown closer to the road). She stated that another idea would be to just build a garage for the service department and then renovate the SSC and move the administrative staff to the SSC. Mrs. Lapensee stated that the building has

plenty of room and they could make some minor renovations to fit us there. Mr. Grossi stated that he feels that the SSC is an underutilized building.

Mr. Rik Vonderhaar asked how much will a new building cost? Mr. Pitman said he is estimating anywhere from \$500K to \$1,000,000.00 for a 5-bay building which would include utilities that are needed. Mr. Vonderhaar mentioned that that feasibility study talks about an 8-bay option and a 10-bay option. Mr. Pitman stated that we could build a bigger building.

Ms. Leis stated that she is not in favor of building any new office buildings and feels it would be too much of a cost. She stated that she would rather renovate the SSC. She asked the Sheriff's office if they are okay with having the administration employees in their building. Mrs. Lapensee stated that there is still a need for the pole barn itself. Mr. Sayles asked if they built a new garage on the SSC lot, would they still have a need for the buildings on Union Cemetery? Mrs. Lapensee stated yes, but the existing administration building could be torn down or reused for a community center or rentable space. Mr. Harte asked if the building could be sold. Mrs. Lapensee stated that she would not recommend selling it because the building is located right in the middle of the lot.

Ms. Leis stated that she feels that the Sheriff's Office is not happy about the administration moving over here and she asked why. Mrs. Lapensee stated that it would only be 5 people. Major Chris Kettelman stated that if they moved downstairs, it would be fine. He stated that the upstairs was designed for the current occupants upstairs (the Sheriff). He stated that they used to run District 3 from the administration building, then they moved to the building the Service Department is now in and then they moved here to the SSC. He stated that there are a lot of unassigned persons who use this building as their home.

Mr. Vonderhaar asked if they are only looking for a 5-bay facility. Mr. Pitman stated yes (bare bones). Ms. Leis stated that we should get something bigger for the future. Mrs. Lapensee stated that is why we had them price a larger building for growth. Mr. Vonderhaar stated that the costs are now 2-years old and are no longer valid. Ms. Leis stated that we are not talking about building it now, maybe in 1 or 2 years from now.

Mr. Sayles asked how we could pay for the building. Mrs. Lapensee stated that we have 7 different road funds and the general fund that we could use to pay for the building (or pay debt service). She stated that she would ask our attorney if we could use TIF funds to pay for it as well. She said that the TIF funds allow us to pay for public safety, but she is not sure that includes the service department. Mr. Sayles stated that salting roads is public safety. Ms. Leis asked if the new stimulus money can be used. Mrs. Lapensee stated that she is not sure.

Mr. Bryant asked how much equipment we have now versus when the park maintenance building was built back in 2006. Mr. Pitman stated that we have more equipment now than back in 2006 and we store a lot of our materials in that building as well. He stated that the old building had no water or electric and it was only used to store equipment. Mr. Bryant stated that we will need to look further into the future, and we should build a building that will also fit our needs into the future instead of just building for today's needs. Ms. Leis agreed but feels that we can discuss all of this in the future and look at options.

Mr. Tranter asked if the administration building can be used for their offices now. Mr. Pitman stated that it really is not set up for their needs. He stated that it is an old house that has been added onto twice.

Mr. Vonderhaar asked about Deerfield Township and what kind of building they have. Mr. Pitman stated that they built 3 new buildings about 3/4 years ago. He stated that they built a maintenance garage with offices, then built a mechanics garage and wash bay for repairs and then built another cold storage building because they did not have enough space in the first garage. He stated that they are a bit smaller than what Sycamore just built.

Mr. Harte asked how we would finance a new building. Ms. Leis stated that we would need to look at all the option, but right now we just need to establish the need.

Mr. Mike Tranter asked if we could use park money to pay for it. Mrs. Lapensee stated that it would depend on what type of equipment is stored in the building.

Mr. Pete Sayles stated that he would like to see everyone stay together and that there is a lot of value in having everyone in the same building. He suggested that we not rule out selling the old lot if all this moving occurs or rent to another business.

Mr. Grossi stated that we will still need to use all the other buildings on the lot even if the administration leaves and the SSC gets renovated.

Mr. Bryant stated that we have the TIF fund, but it will be ending in 2022 unless we can extend it. He stated that we must have 15,000 persons or more with the new census to be able to do that. He stated that that is why we increased the Safety Services Levy to offset the loss of the funds that we typically have used in the past to purchase public safety equipment.

Mr. Sayles agreed that we need to look at building a larger building to fit the needs now and into the future.

Chief Huber stated that they just went through this remodeling at their other safety center in Loveland and he suggested that we consult with an architect to see about a new building or additions because this whole area was originally thought of as a campus where all the buildings could be located. He stated that you do not want to put people in closets to work out of. Ms. Leis stated that she feels that everyone is on top of each other in the admin building. Mrs. Lapensee stated that our biggest need is meeting space because there is no room for a meeting with a table in it.

Safety Services Building allocation – Mr. Grossi stated that the next item on the agenda is discussing the cost allocation for the SSC. Captain Tory Smith stated that when the building is at full capacity, it is home to 41 Sheriff's deputies. He stated that this includes all the corporals, (1) lieutenants, (4) sergeants, deputies and (1) desk clerk that patrol Symmes and Sycamore Townships. He stated that this shared agreement is bigger than what they have anywhere else in the county except for their headquarters in Colerain Township. He stated that they are structured in 12 hour shifts and it takes 5.2 people to fill each car that is assigned to that district. He stated that Symmes Township has two (2) 24-hour cars and one (1) 12-hour car and Sycamore runs four (4) 24-hour cars and one (1) 8-hour power shift car. He stated that this equates to 22 people who are assigned to Sycamore Township that run out of this building. Lieutenant Smith stated that Sycamore Township parks 14 cruisers here. He stated that one of the immediate benefits to having Sycamore Township here is the added presence. He stated that when the Sycamore Officers are starting work, coming back for lunch, or leaving the building, there is an added presence for the number of officers that are in the community at one time daily. He stated that they are also spending their money in the township for lunch and dinner. He stated that we have had this shared arrangement for at least 40 years in this location. He stated that we patrol 9 townships and 4 villages, and it would not make sense for them to operate out of 13 different locations. He stated that they are our police department and we do share resources (space) all over the county. He stated that our rank structure is for both communities and the townships do not pay for the additional supervision. He stated that if the two entities were to split, they are simply not in the position to duplicate the same structure (they do not have enough supervisors). He stated that his fear is if we started charging Sycamore Township for space in this building, it would compel them to leave and move their deputies and equipment to an existing building on Kenwood Road. He stated that it would be a nightmare scenario for them. Lieutenant Smith stated that speaking about equipment, it would put them in a bind because they have a lot of equipment here that is owned by the county, owned by the townships, and issued to the county but stored here from ICRC. He stated that all the deputies start her for roll call; and they get all their directives here. He stated that everything they do occurs in this building and to move it between 2 different buildings would hurt them. He stated that there are a lot of people who come to this building daily for different things: car maintenance, training, property storage, etc. He stated that they have enjoyed the relationships that they have had with each township and they continue to be mutually beneficial. He stated that they serve both communities with pride and enthusiasm and they appreciate this facility. He stated that it works for them this way and they would hate to see the division and he feels it will put a strain on everyone.

Major Chris Kettelman stated that the board agreed to build this facility a whole ago because they wanted to have everyone here. He stated that the Symmes contract is smaller than Sycamore's. He stated that Anderson does not have a partner and they pay for everything. He stated that he appreciates all the space that the township provides, and it is beneficial to everyone that all the deputies are here. He stated that he understands that there are costs associated to run this facility, but the costs are the same no matter how many people are in the building. He stated that it is a shared arrangement and is most beneficial to the residents.

Lieutenant Smith stated that he does not know how much the utility costs are but thinks it would be the same no matter how many people are here. Mrs. Lapensee stated that it costs about \$100,000 a year to operate this building between police, fire, and administration.

Major Kettelman stated that his payroll for the supervisors that we do not pay for is around \$450,000.00 a year. Ms. Leis stated that we do not pay for them. Major Kettelman stated that this arrangement has worked well for many years. Chief Huber stated that we will give calls to any deputy sheriff if a Symmes car is not available. Major Kettelman stated that Symmes cars will jump over the border to help Sycamore too.

Captain Smith stated that we have a good working relationship with both communities, and he fears that if we start charging them, it will create division between the townships.

Mr. Vonderhaar asked if Silverton charges Columbia Township or if Cleves charges Miami Township. Captain Smith stated no. Major Kettelman stated that each of those host entities understands the importance of everyone coming to their area. Captain Smith stated that those communities do not pay for the additional supervisors either.

Mr. Harte asked if there were any examples of other shared arrangements where they pay like with public works. Major Kettelman does not know, but he stated that the shared arrangements help with response times as well.

Mr. Grossi asked what would happen if Sycamore Township decided that they wanted to split off and everyone in their building, what would that do to our costs? Major Kettelman stated that they are not able to duplicate the supervisory structure. He stated that Sycamore Township has a larger contract, and they have more officers there. He stated that they would not be able to staff the front desk here and there so everyone would have to get reports from Sycamore Township.

Mr. Sayles asked if Sycamore says one day that they are going to build a building and they want to move their people, what would the Sheriff do if they said we have the bigger contract, etc. and we want everyone in their building. Captain Smith stated that they could, but he would try and have the same conversation with them that he is having with us tonight. Mr. Sayles asked if they would discourage it. Captain Smith stated yes. Mr. Sayles stated that it would be interesting to see what would happen and what drives those decision on where the buildings are located. Captain Smith stated that Cleves already had a building, so they did one shared building in Cleves with Miami Township. He stated that the run volume is higher in Miami Township, but Cleves had the building.

Ms. Leis stated that they have done a great job explaining why we have what we have and why we should leave it.

Mr. Harte asked if the Captain is located here. Captain Smith stated that his office is on Hamilton Avenue and Lieutenant Tarr and all his employees report to him and he reports to the Major. Captain Smith understands that everyone needs to be fiscally responsible, but there are intangible items that you just cannot put a price tag on. He reiterated that it would be incredibly inefficient for us to operate somewhere else.

Mr. Pitman stated that every year the state puts out a crash report for the county and Symmes Township has had the 4 of the 10 largest crash intersections the last 5 years in a row.

Mr. Beck asked if there is another location for a substation in Sycamore. Captain Smith stated that they have a small office in the fire station that is for them to use the bathroom and have a desk to use for reports if needed. Captain Smith stated that they have no control over that space. He stated that at any time the Fire Chief could repurpose that space if he wanted to.

2022 Tax Budget – Mrs. Lapensee stated that tried to balance each fund but there a few she could not balance with major cuts. She stated that she budgeted for 3% raises and mentioned the equipment budgeted – swap loader for the service dept, vehicles for the police dept (2), vehicle for the fire department (1), preemption devices, new mower and security cameras for the parks, replacement windows for the service department building, and Phase 2 of the Union Cemetery Road sidewalks project. She asked if anyone had any questions. She stated that we need to have this approved by the board by July 15 and turned into the county by July 20 and that we will have a public hearing with the board of trustees at the June meeting.

The committee agreed to meet again on August 11, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Meeting Adjourned 7:30 p.m.