

Norwood Township Board of Trustees Special Meeting
Approved Meeting Minutes
March 3, 2021 @ 1:00pm
Zoom Meeting due to COVID-19

Call to Order – Meeting called to order at 1:00 P.M.

Pledge of Allegiance – by all present

Roll Call – Warner-present, Spilis-present, Smolenyak-present, Freds-present, Ridenour-present

Approval of Agenda – Ridenour asked to add presentations by Robert Cook, Torch Lake Township Supervisor and Michael Bertram, Torch Lake Township Ambulance Authority to Old Business. Warner asked to add closed session at end of meeting.

MM by Smolenyak to approve Agenda as amended, 2nd by Warner. Roll call vote: Ridenour-aye, Freds-aye, Smolenyak-aye, Spilis-aye, Warner-aye. Motion carried to approve 5-0.

Old Business –

EMS Situation with Torch Lake-

Robert Cook, Torch Lake Township Supervisor read a letter written by him regarding the relationship between Torch Lake Township Ambulance Service and Norwood Township. Cook's letter stated that due to the ongoing turmoil, unsigned agreement and negative impact on Torch Lake Township Ambulance Service, Torch Lake Township has decided to withdraw from the EMS Agreement with Norwood Township. The decision was made with the option of revisiting at a later date.

Michael Bertram, Torch Lake Township Ambulance Authority, addressed the quality of care and response time that they would offer. He also discussed the Mutual Aid Agreement with Charlevoix EMS and gave a list of his Professional Experience.

Smolenyak thanked the two gentlemen for their presentations and efforts. She stated Torch Lake Township has been great to work with and very reasonable.

EMS Situation with Lake Charlevoix Ambulance Authority-

Smolenyak stated that Norwood, under the LCAA will be assessed 1 mil which equals about \$50,000 so for the forty EMS runs Norwood had this works out to about \$1,250 per run. This amount of \$50,000 may not cover all EMS expenses and if it does not then each entity of the Authority will be billed for the difference. Torch Lake would have been charging \$18,000 per year so there would be a difference of \$32,000 per year which would go towards LCAA overhead. Smolenyak went on to say that Norwood has to renew the Fire Department millage this year which will be .75 mil since the Fire Department costs went up and 1 mil for the LCAA so Norwood will endure a .75 mil increase on their taxes. Smolenyak suggested for the short term, joining the LCAA as a Contracted Entity Member not an Incorporated Member. She stated that the difference between the two is if you are a Contracted Member

you are responsible to collect your own funds but if you are an Incorporated Member the funds are collected from the millage. She went on to say she is not convinced this is the best way to go for Norwood Township, but time will tell.

Spilis stated that his background is reading and reviewing contracts. He said what Norwood is being asked to do is to sign and contract that is not completed yet and that is a concern. Mike stated Norwood had an option for another service and other Townships did not and Norwood is very limited on funds. Spilis is concerned about how the funds are going to be paid for the Authority and agrees that Norwood should be a Contracted Municipality not a Member.

Ridenour stated the Township will not be able to get out of the contract unless all debts and bonds are paid off which will make it difficult to exit. He stated, not knowing any of the details he is unwilling to sign any such contract.

Warner stated he agrees with Smolenyak and Spilis but would also like to allow the Norwood Township voters to be able to decide which EMS service to contract after they review all the facts and figures. He understands we have to go with Charlevoix and the LCAA for a short time but would like to see what the people of Norwood Township want. Warner said he agrees with being a Contracted Entity and not a member.

Ridenour said what Warner said was good, but a decision has to be made within two weeks because the LCAA needs to put the legal documents together. Feels the Authority will take at least 18 months to establish and is frustrated by the media and the non-support from Norwood Township residents and again stated he will not sign the contract because of not knowing any of the details until after the Authority is established and it will be very difficult to get out of the contract until all debt is paid off.

Freds stated when the LCAA millage goes on the ballot it will be on the ballots for each participating Township and even if Norwood does not accept it the majority rules if passed by the other Townships so Norwood residents would still have to pay. Freds is also concerned that due to misinformation the voters will not understand that the two millages (Fire & EMS) will be different and if either are turned down there may not be Fire or EMS service for Norwood Township.

Warner again said he feels the people need to be involved and be able to vote on it because if this does not go through then it will not be the Township Board's responsibility. Work out something with Charlevoix to keep EMS service until residents are able to vote. Does not want to sign Norwood away to something or someone that we are not sure about.

Smolenyak stated the Township must act quickly and the only option is to continue with Charlevoix EMS until the Authority is established and then be a contracted entity. Warner stated he agreed this is the way to go. Lynn stated the new contract can possibly be vacated with two months notice. Lynn went on to say the Township Board gets very little pay for the amount of time spend on Township business and all trustees are basically volunteers and said what has happened to the Board of Trustee's over the past couple of weeks has been disconcerting and extremely disappointing and has put a blight on Norwood Township and the harassment that has been put on the Board is unimaginable.

Lynn went on to thank Robert Cook, Torch Lake Supervisor and Mike Bertram of TLTA and said they are first class organizations and have been helpful and apologized for everything that has transpired as of late. Warner said he agreed with Lynn. Spilis said we need to make decisions going forward and feels communications have not been fair and feels he has not had an opportunity to defend himself.

MM by Smolenyak to approve joining the Lake Charlevoix Ambulance Authority on a contractual basis as an Approved Contracting Municipality, 2nd by Spilis. Roll call vote: Warner-aye, Spilis-aye, Smolenyak-aye, Freds-aye, Ridenour-nay. Motion carried to approve 4-1.

MM by Smolenyak to give Clerk, Brenda Freds, authority to sign contract for Norwood Township as an Approved Contracting Municipality, 2nd by Spilis. Roll call vote: Ridenour-aye, Freds-aye, Smolenyak-aye, Spilis-aye, Warner-aye. Motion carried to approve 5-0.

Warner asked about making a motion to put the vote out to the residents of Norwood at the earliest possible time. Discussion by Board to discuss this at the March 16th Township Board Meeting.

New Business-

David Ridenour Resignation-

Supervisor David Ridenour asked the Township Board of Trustees to accept his letter of resignation effective March 31, 2021. Letter was submitted March 1, 2021 and it was a 30 day notice.

MM by Doug Warner to accept Ridenour's resignation, 2nd by Spilis. Motion carried to approve 4-0-1. Ridenour recused himself for obvious reasons.

All Trustees stated they are accepting the resignation with a heavy heart and appreciate all of the hard work Ridenour has done over the years and for his service as a Trustee, Treasurer and Supervisor.

Public Comment-

Supervisor asked that each comment be under three minutes and asked people to state their names and their affiliation with Norwood Township.

Annie Doyle, Charlevoix Courier Reporter, stated she would like to politely remind the Board they have to give a reason for going into closed session at the end of the meeting.

Sharon Shultz, Torch Lake Township Treasurer was at the TLT Hall. Sharon stated she was grateful to Ridenour for all the work he put forth on the EMS project. She wished good luck to the Board on the EMS project and she said her door is always open. Sharon also thanked Smolenyak and wished good luck to Ridenour and commended him on his years of service.

Tom Mielke, Norwood Township resident from his home. Tom said he was happy the Board is staying with Charlevoix EMS and said he wrote a letter to Torch Lake Township and never questioned their quality of care, service or professionalism. Mielke said he was concerned about the TLT Ambulance response time and gave examples of milage from each Ambulance garage to Norwood Township. Mielke said he will be on board to help the Township get the millage passed. He stated he did not do this alone and noted that there was overwhelming

opposition to the change to Torch Lake but again it was based on response times. Mielke stated he is glad Norwood is staying with Charlevoix but is disappointed they are not going to the Authority as an incorporated member.

Bill Gnodtke, Norwood Village resident, expressed appreciation to Ridenour and wished him good health and told him to enjoy life. Gnodtke stated the best place to go for EMS service has been debated and is disappointed the Township has been put into a situation that they are signing a contract for a service that the cost is unknown. He stated the promised quarterly EMS meetings have not happened as was stated in 2019 and does not feel that 1 mil would handle the costs of the Authority. Gnodtke asked what happens after Charlevoix cannot house the EMS and felt the Board was put into an impossible situation. He thanked the Board for all of their efforts and wished good luck and thanks to David Ridenour.

Jesse Silva, Marion Township resident and Charlevoix EMS Assistant Director, understands it is an emotional day for Norwood Township but said he would like to offer any help he can with the EMS process.

Ridenour verified with Warner that his request for a closed session was for Personnel Issues.

MM by Warner to adjourn, 2nd by Spilis. Motion carried to adjourn 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 2:19pm.