

CALL TO ORDER

The Public Hearing of August 17, 2017 meeting of the Buchanan Township Board of Trustees was called to order by Supervisor Malinda Cole-Crocker at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present: Malinda Cole-Crocker, Supervisor; Sheila Reitz, Clerk; Janet Dehring, Treasurer; Lynn Ferris, Trustee; Thomas VanAntwerp, Trustee

Members Absent:

Others Present: 13 Residents

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

ADDITIONS / CORRECTIONS TO AGENDA-

BRIEF PUBLIC COMMENT- AGENDA ITEMS-

CORRESPONDENCE-

TREASURER'S REPORT

REPORTS

Ferris gave a brief SMCAS report

NEW BUSINESS

Cole-Crocker opened the SMCAS Public Hearing at 6:34 pm. A time limit of 3 minutes was given per speaker.

Brian Scribner, SMCAS- Stated SMCAS was established in 1976. Special Assessment was put into place 8 years ago and has now expired. The community owners have come together with a new funding structure of \$20 per parcel. All real property parcels will be included as opposed to just residential. This not in additional assessment it is a renewal. It accounts for about 17%-18% of the budget and is a critical amount. All the money goes back to the community in form of quality of emergency care.

John Tenglitsch, N Redbud Tr – You say this is not going to be an increase. It's \$20 per parcel. If you've got to use SMCAS and you've been paying taxes on this all your life, you charged \$1000 to go from house to Powati what are we paying? Then you have another program where you join SMCAS and we pay for that and then we still have to pay this. Is it going down to Florida to buy somebody's house? Where is money going?

B. Scribner, SMCAS- SMCAS does fund about 83% of fee for service. If you have a membership, you shouldn't be getting billed for any additional service

Dave Lolmough, Little Glendora Rd- I called SMCAS one time as I fell and was bleeding like a stuck hog. I received two bills one for \$350 for paramedics and one for \$1000 charge for the same call. Now where in the hell is all our money going. I'd like to know. They charged me \$1000 to go from my place out to Lakeland over there. Then they charged me \$350, so \$1300 damn dollars. Medicare doesn't cover it. Medicare doesn't pay a damn cent to you guys.

B. Scribner, SMCAS- You should only be receiving one bill for one time of service. Medicare reimburses about 45% roughly speaking. I will sit down and look at it with you. It sounds like you received two bills for one service and that doesn't sound right.

D. Lolmough, Little Glendora Rd- It doesn't show up on my bill. I will lay there and bleed to death or die before I call SMCAS again. I'll call Medic One or have my wife take me. You guys just keep raising, raising, raising, raising, raising. We are paying too damn much.

B. Scribner- I'd be happy to take a look at your bill with you. I can assure you that you shouldn't have been billed twice for one call and if you have Medicare that should have been reimbursed for services.

Malinda Cole-Crocker- Thank you. Just for clarity this is not an opportunity to discuss any individual bill, not that you shouldn't be able to do that. The point of business is to establish the Special Assessment to fund SMCAS through the tax for clarity.

David Bailey, W. Clear Lake Rd- Where is all the money that goes into SMCAS? Where does all that money go and now you are charging \$20 per resident, it's crazy. Where does all that money go? I don't understand it. My mother was charged \$1600 to go from a facility in Niles to Powati; I call it Powati but its Lakeland. It's crazy. Why? Where does all this money go? We can't continue this stuff. I would just as soon do away with it.

Lynn Ferris- I do have to tell you that I see the financial reports and I agree the costs are astronomical. Costs are there in the medical field. If you look at it you would see why.

David Bailey, W. Clear Lake Rd- They're there because they are made to be there and this is typical of government today and bureaucracy. You can't convince me that it costs that much money to transport somebody.

Carl Keefer, Rynearson- I came a little late so I need a little clarification. You say you will charge per taxing unit or per parcel not resident is that correct?

Malinda Cole-Crocker- Yes

Carl Keefer, Rynearson- In other words if you have a vacant lot we will be paying \$20 on a vacant lot because it is a separate description.

M. Cole-Crocker- Correct.

Carl Keefer, Rynearson- Ok

Wallace Casto, Herman Rd- How long is this assessment going to run? What's the duration?

M. Cole-Crocker- 5 years

Robert Krauss, Wagner Rd- Sorry I was late. What is the reason for the assessment?

M. Cole-Crocker- For operating SMCAS; to continue to serve us.

Robert Krauss, Wagner Rd- Why are we having this? I mean I'm hearing everyone saying that they are paying high bills. We pay to SMCAS now. There was an embezzling problem a year ago. Are we actually bailing out SMCAS in a sense because of the embezzlement?

M. Cole-Crocker- I don't believe so. I will let Brian Speak to that.

Robert Kraus, Wagner Rd- As a retiree and I don't know how many other people are retirees we are getting hit in every direction, whether it be our fuel or taxes. I'm so far out. I've had an emergency at my house. I actually drive myself. I won't call an ambulance.

B. Scribner, SMCAS- Last year there were charges brought against the previous director for embezzlement. The charges were for between \$50,000- \$100,000. That individual was convicted for that. SMCAS recovered \$70,000 under an insurance policy as a result of that. The actual incident had a relatively low financial impact on us.

Robert Krauss, Wagner Rd- You recovered \$70,000 but you didn't recover the full amount.

B. Scribner, SMCAS- It is still in court being evaluated for restitution.

Tom Flanagan, Bear Cave Rd- Isn't this the second time for embezzlement? How come there isn't accountability for the money?

B. Scribner, SMCAS- I can assure that SMCAS has built in accountability because of the last few years. Under my directorship the Board has worked with me in developing procedures and we've developed separation of duty policies.

Tom Flanagan, Bear Cave Rd- So do you have Medicare and Medicaid insurance pretty much paying the bill? How often and how much are you not receiving funds for payment?

B. Scribner, SMCAS- We write off about 46% of what we bill out. We only collect about 46% of what we bill. That's the reality of our business. Medicare is roughly 35%, Medicaid is 30%, and private pay is lower than that. We write off roughly 54%.

Tom VanAntwerp- There are two things to be considered: Cost and Service. Per parcel what should we expect?

B. Scribner, SMCAS- I can provide a fee schedule. For a level 1 priority \$1000 is not unusual.

VanAntwerp- What is the expectation of service?

B. Scribner, SMCAS- 12 minutes or less 90% of the time for priority one for all coverage areas.

Robert Krauss, Wagner Rd- Why not put it to a committee vote? Let us all see the numbers? How do individuals know what is going on with the ambulance service. What's to prevent financial difficulties like in the past?

M. Cole-Crocker- L. Ferris gives the Board reports from SMCAS. Financial information is available.

T. VanAntwerp- Insurance costs defray cost. You're not alone.

L. Ferris- Stop in to SMCAS, the public record is available.

M. Cole-Crocker- Buchanan Township is an owner municipality. We have a stake in it. There is nothing in place for getting out of it. We are on the hook for it.

Tom Flanagan, Bear Cave Rd- Can SMCAS be sold out? We could privatize it.

L. Ferris- Quality and care would need to be looked at along with the cost.

Tom Flanagan, Bear Cave Rd- During privatization things change when belts are tightened.

Dave Lolmough, Little Glendora – I called them and it took them one hour to get there. I'll lay there and die or wife can take me.

B. Scribner, SMCAS-If you give me the date and time I would be happy to look at those response times for that call.

Jerry DiPietro, Main Street- It costs \$45 a year for a membership, \$20 per parcel. For \$65 a year I'm covered, that's good.

David Bailey, W. Clear Lake Rd- Does SMCAS allow their units to go out and get coffee and donuts? That is what I've witnessed.

B. Scribner, SMCAS- Our people work 24 hour shifts. It is necessary for them to go out and get food.

David Bailey, W. Clear Lake Rd- Why? Maybe they should have taken care of that themselves. As an employee I go to a job, I work and I take my lunch. That's an expensive that has always been in the back of my mind.

B. Scribner, SMCAS- That is during the time period they are on call or in the station.

Stephanie Abrahamson, Mead Rd- Farmland will be charged also?

M. Cole-Crocker- That will be charged also because if you call an ambulance, they will come.

Mike Homier, Attorney- Statue refers to all land and premises benefited. Ambulance calls occur anywhere and everywhere. There is a benefit as to the Special Assessment to all of the lands in the township and that is what is proposed as the district for the Special Assessment. There are 2 public hearings.

Robert Krauss, Wagner Rd- Is this going to be an open vote? Will we see how you vote?

M. Cole-Crocker- We will do it right here in front of everyone.

Mrs. Robert Krauss, Wagner Rd- Why doesn't the community vote instead of just the Board?

Mike Homier, Attorney- Under the statute of Special Assessments a vote is not required. The last assessment was 8 years in duration expired last December and this is just a continuation not in addition to. This has to be done in November to get it on the roll for the December 1st winter taxes which is how it will be billed.

Robert Krauss, Wagner Rd- I will take Mr. Ferris up on his offer. I will go to SMCAS and look at the books for future accountability because of past history of misappropriation of funds twice. But if we are stake holders in this operation, and apparently this could go through I think that there needs to be some accountability in the future. Quite frankly I don't want to keep paying into something that I may not use where funds can be misappropriated.

Jeff Burkhard, W. Clear Lake Rd- Has Buchanan Township looked at providing any first responders service through the Buchanan Fire Department? First responders can get to the scene before the ambulance does.

M. Cole-Crocker- We have not since I've been here. Our fire department is volunteer.

L. Ferris- You are asking a lot of the firemen to have an awful lot of knowledge with study time. This causes chaos on a fire call as to whether or not they act like firefighters or first responders. We only have 14 firefighters.

Stephanie Abrahamson, Mead Rd- So it is still going to be \$20 per parcel/lot we are not going to be charged an extra \$20? Does the membership fee cover everyone under your roof, like college age children?

B. Scribner, SMCAS- The general rule is if they qualify as a dependent. We can talk about it.

T. VanAntwerp- There are two pieces: the Service piece and then cost piece. Cost will be anywhere from \$750-\$1000 wherever you go. It's not just Buchanan Township, it's wherever you go. We have to consider if this cost is inline. The service piece I would ask you if we don't renew SMCAS what do you recommend we do. That's what we have to consider.

Kim Critzer, Burgoyne Rd- Why can't the Township look into getting someone else instead of double taxing the farm people? Why can't the Township look into getting another SMCAS?

M. Cole-Crocker- The State Statute says we are to assess all parcels. We are still an owner. We are still on the hook.

Kim Critzer, Burgoyne Rd- Get off the hook. Medic One will get there faster. When my dad died I called SMCAS and they didn't know where to go. Medic One got there and pronounced him dead already.

Jeff Burkhard, W. Clear Lake Rd.- I was at a Medic One board meeting. Medic One is in bad shape; they are ready to implode.

Other Municipalities are going through the same thing.

L. Ferris- It costs to purchase a new ambulance, etc. I want to provide service to you. It's your choice to use it or not. Get the membership. It's the best way to go. We need to promote that better.

Brian Scribner, SMCAS- Members can contact SMCAS if they get a bill and we will take care of it.

Robert Krauss, Wagner Rd- \$20 sounds cheap if you have more than one parcel it isn't cheap. I'm representing 2 families that are unhappy. I get the feeling there are a lot of loose ends on the accountability of finances. Do you bid out ambulances?

Brian Scribner, SMCAS- Yes, then we bring before the board.

M. Cole-Crocker closed the public hearing at 7:15 pm.

Motion made by VanAntwerp, second by Ferris to approve Special Assessment District for Emergency Medical Services through Southwestern Michigan Community Ambulance Service, District No. 1- Determination to make public improvements; approval of plans and estimate of costs; final determination of special assessment district; preparation of special assessment roll. Roll call vote showed unanimous approval, motion carried (5-0).

VanAntwerp stated for the record "From what we've seen private companies, and Medic One SMCAS will do a better job. I am comfortable with the audit of records and there is appropriate accountability now."

Ferris stated for the record "Many citizens that have used SMCAS have praised SMCAS for the work they have done and continue to do. SMCAS is a good organization."

Motion made by VanAntwerp, second by Dehring approve Special Assessment District for Emergency Medical Services through Southwestern Michigan Community Ambulance Service, District No. 1-Resolution 3 Filing of Special Assessment Roll for Special Assessment District; Notice of Public Hearing. Roll call vote showed unanimous approval, motion carried (5-0).

Reitz stated that the township board had to act within the parameters of the law or we wouldn't be doing our jobs.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resident suggested the Board invest in a public address system so the public can hear what is being said.

CITIZEN COMMENTS- NON AGENDA ITEMS

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

Sheila Reitz
Buchanan Township Clerk

Malinda Cole-Crocker
Buchanan Township Supervisor