

Minutes of
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SPECIAL MEETING
January 30, 2024

SPRINGFIELD
CHARTER TOWNSHIP

Sean R. Miller, Clerk



Call to Order: Supervisor Moreau called the January 30, 2024 Special Meeting of the Springfield Township Board to order at 6:00 pm at the Springfield Township Civic Center.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call:

Board Members Present

Laura Moreau	Township Supervisor
Sean Miller	Township Clerk
Jamie Dubre	Township Treasurer
David Hopper	Township Trustee
Jason Pliska	Township Trustee
Denny Vallad	Township Trustee
Bill Whitley	Township Trustee

Others Present

Judy Hensler	Technical Review Committee member
David Kwapis	Technical Review Committee Member/ Brandon Township Fire Chief

AGENDA- Follow up and discussion of Fire Department Chief search first round interviews

Supervisor Moreau stated that a few things still up for discussion are the process, timing, next steps for the interviews, and what questions are going to be asked to the candidates. Before starting this discussion Supervisor Moreau wanted to address the Fire Department and the Board regarding an email that was received regarding allegations of bias. She stated that an email was sent to her from Diana Walls stating that she had a personal connection to Mr. Covey through his wife, who is her hair stylist. She stated that she met the Covey family through church years ago and understands how rumors start but felt the need to clarify this situation. She stated that she does not have a conflict of interest based on where she gets her hair done. She continued by saying that she owes the residents of Springfield Township, The Township Board, and the Fire Department the best fit for Fire Chief, and that is where her interest lies. She is committed to the process of interviewing each candidate, asking the right questions, and making a decision with the other members of the Township Board. She also reiterated the fact that she has always been open to discussions with the Fire Department prior to the candidate interviews and had previously asked them to give their opinions or call her with any questions. She stated she was disappointed in the nature of the email and invited anyone who still has questions to give her a call.

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Supervisor Moreau continued by distributing the original job posting to Board members to review. She thought it would be important to remind everyone of the preferences, requirements, and other experience or training desired that was listed in the posting. She also provided a draft of a possible timeline for the process. She continued by saying that after speaking with the Township's HR about the candidate's background check and assessment test, she was told there could be a summary of the assessment that could be made public. She is proposing to direct Ecto HR to initiate that process right away and be able to get the proposed questions out to the candidates so that everything can be completed and returned by Monday February 5th.

The Board agreed that this is a good timeline.

She continued by saying that it was discussed in yesterday's meeting to include Fire Department Officers or a small committee to review the responses and provide feedback. She is turning this topic back to the Board for discussion.

Treasurer Dubre stated she doesn't think that's necessary.

Trustee Vallad stated that if it alleviates concerns, then it might be worthwhile.

Supervisor Moreau stated that this would be public record, so regardless, anyone could see it. She doesn't want it to seem like any information is being hidden. She does not object to constructive feedback and insight into the responses.

Trustee Pliska agreed and stated that the feedback would be contingent upon the question.

Mrs. Hensler stated that the more people involved, the more convoluted this process is going to become. She feels like the more time the Board gives these candidates to review and write down their answers to the questions provided, the more the answers are going to become like term papers and the less weight their answers are going to hold.

Trustee Pliska agreed and stated maybe the Board should reconsider and come up with a different process, like giving them a scenario and getting their response.

Supervisor Moreau agreed and stated from yesterday's meeting she heard a lot of feedback about how well a candidate does or doesn't interview. She said this doesn't want to take away from the fact that there is a good reading on first impressions and initial responses.

Chief Kwapis agreed that coming up with the questions can be difficult and getting the right questions. He suggested giving them a topic or a question to present to the Fire Department and to the Board.

Treasurer Dubre liked the idea of giving them a small amount of time to come up with a presentation and giving them a question that is going to gage different responses.

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Supervisor Moreau asked if it should be the same question for all candidates.

Chief Kwapis suggested that it should be the same question for all candidates.

Supervisor Moreau stated that she thinks two important things to consider are what did the Board state they were looking for in a candidate and what is left to be understood and who is the best fit. She feels leadership is the most important. She was trying to come up with questions that answered those and got to that point.

Trustee Whitley agreed and stated that he thinks a set of questions or a project that is directly comparable to the way each candidate solves the problem, that way there is a way to differentiate. He liked Chief Kwapis's suggestion where it would be a question or presentation that would interact with the Fire Department and with the Board.

Clerk Miller stated that he liked the idea of giving a situation-based analysis or assessment by giving them a hypothetical situation and hearing how they would handle that situation.

Trustee Whitley stated that this could be a great way to engage with the Fire Department. What is their biggest concern and find out a way to fit that into the content of the question.

Chief Kwapis stated that he thinks that is a great idea and likes that it's a way for the Department to buy into the process. He thinks it should be a fairly difficult question and a difficult presentation.

Trustee Pliska thinks that the candidates should be given a story rubric and the Board and Fire Department be able to rate their answers on a scoring mechanism.

Chief Kwapis suggested giving the candidates enough time to prepare and answer the questions properly.

Trustee Whitley stated that he doesn't want to give them too much time to be able to prepare their responses.

Treasurer Dubre stated that they will have to have their presentations submitted by a certain date to eliminate that.

Supervisor Moreau stated this would be a good time to request topic areas from the Fire Department to discuss on the agenda at the next Township Board meeting.

The Board decided that the 2nd interview and presentation would take place on the 22nd at 5pm with a backup date on the 29th at 5:30pm.

Supervisor Moreau stated that this would give the Fire Department enough time to come up with top 3 topics or discussions that they would like to see presentations on.

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A member of the Fire department suggested that Dave Feichtner talk about important topics.

Dave Feichtner addressed the Board and suggested that a presentation on the budget would show depth of perception of what is going on in the budget, for instance what if the Township lost the Millage. Also solving issues with state allocations or resource allocations or the mutual aid association group. He suggested issues with non-uniform agreement and continued by suggesting what is something that is in the fire service of Michigan that there isn't uniform agreement on and how would they build consensus.

Supervisor Moreau likes the idea of offering two challenges. One being related to the budget and the other being what is a challenge that they believe the department is facing.

A member of the Fire Department stated that he would like to see all three of the candidates write a statement regarding what they would write a grant for first in order to address the needs of the department.

Another member stated another idea would be about water sources in Springfield Township and have the candidates come up with water sources and where would they put them.

Treasurer Dubre stated that she believes the candidates should be given a single point of contact at the Fire Department to reach out to if they need additional information about something that relates to the Fire Department.

A member of the Fire Department stated that managing and leading the personnel is another huge part of the Chief's job and feels the Fire Department should be more involved in this decision beyond just their budget and their interview style.

Supervisor Moreau agreed and stated that's why the Board is giving the Fire Department the opportunity to give input on the questions that are to be asked.

Clerk Miller suggested a personnel-related scenario.

A member of the Fire department stated they would like to see a presentation on retention. Also, what would they do in a crisis scenario.

Mrs. Hensler agreed that she likes the idea of management by crisis.

Dave Feichtner stated that the problem with incident examples is that every candidate has taken a 5-day incident command course where they manage crises for 5 days. He expects that each candidate would give almost the same answer based on their experience in those classes. He suggested a question that involves more soft skills.

A member of the fire department suggested asking where the candidate sees the Fire Department going and whether they think another millage is needed and why.

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Trustee Hopper suggested asking what the candidate wants to see accomplished in the 30, 60, 90-day administration. And what are the candidates' 3 goals for the Fire Department.

Supervisor Moreau suggested challenges with paid-on-call.

A member of the Fire Department suggested asking how they would groom and grow the department into a higher status. He is also concerned about how long the candidates will have to write a presentation. He feels it should be more on the spot.

Treasurer Dubre stated that she likes the idea of a timed presentation with a set amount of time to prepare, followed by questions from the Board.

Clerk Miller stated that he likes the idea of having them think critically on the spot. He also liked the idea of a question about Grants.

Trustee Pliska asked whether these questions will be ready for the next Board meeting.

Supervisor Moreau stated yes, it will be included in Monday additions.

A member of the Fire Department suggested incorporating a medical response question.

Supervisor Moreau asked for all questions to be emailed to her by Monday, February 5th and all questions will be decided on at the next Board meeting on February 8th. She asked the Board if they still want to move ahead with the background check and assessment test.

The Board agreed that they wanted to move forward.

The Board decided on the order of presentations as follows: Mr. Covey, Mr. Proctor, and Mr. Seal.

Public Comment: none

Adjournment:

Hearing no other business, Supervisor Moreau adjourned the meeting at 7:27 pm.

Laura Moreau, Supervisor

Sean R. Miller, Clerk