

**Cheboygan County Board of Commissioners
Committee of the Whole Meeting
April 28, 2020**

The Committee of the Whole meeting of the Cheboygan County Board of Commissioners was called to order via telephonic conference by Chairperson John Wallace at 9:38 a.m.

Roll called and a quorum present.

PRESENT: Commissioners Mary Ellen Tryban, Richard Sangster, Michael Newman, Cal Gouine, Roberta Matelski, John Wallace and Steve Warfield.

ABSENT: None

Also in attendance: John Moore, Louis Vallance, Scott Swanson, Kortny Hahn, Sharon Lange, Sheriff Dale Clarmont, Treasurer Buffy J. Weldon, Administrator Jeff Lawson, IT Director Dave Berg, Administration Secretary Kathy Morrow, CCE 911 Director Pamela Woodbury, Veterans Director Rick Wiles, Judge Vizina, Megan Fenlon, Equalization Director Elizabeth Zabik and County Clerk Karen L. Brewster

Commissioner Wallace gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion by Commissioner Sangster, seconded by Commissioner Matelski, to approve the agenda adding OEM Report under item 6. "Scheduled Visitors/Department Reports". A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried with 7 yes, 0 no and 0 absent.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

President of the Cheboygan Economic Development Group (CEDG) Sharon Lange commented on the Orion Renewable Energy Solar Field project in Grant Township. The CEDG has been aware for approximately two (2) years that the project was intending to come to the Cheboygan County area. Since January, the CEDG has become more active with them and have been supportive in their involvement in bringing the project through to the finish line. The CEDG sees the solar field as a great opportunity for economic gain. This is a sustainable energy solution, which carries with it a lot of really great opportunity and positive press for development as the county supports other types of energy. Just to point out that not all projects have to create a lot of jobs. The CEDG did see a positive outcome coming from this and they knew that a lot of work has been done in the township and at the county level. There is a concern with the disruption that the COVID-19 has caused as to whether or not the CEDG has been proactive enough or not in the process of getting everything needed to get this plan in place. As they facilitate this opportunity, questions have come up and they were concerned of being reactive and are weary with the denial on the Planning Commission's side of things. These projects take a lot of time, there are a lot of steps involved, but development is not meant to be passive. It is meant to be an active activity. As this work goes forward, issues have been brought up about access to the site. The CEDG would like to see some positive action taken on this. There was a scheduled meeting in March that had to be cancelled with another meeting rescheduled for May 6th, but there is some indication through the CEDG contact with Planning that they have some concerns, which leads to questions why Planning did not know about these concerns and have ironed out the problems. Orion Renewable Energy would acquiesce to the best needs of Cheboygan County. They understand that we are facing tough times and also that this may be pushed into June, but it is very difficult on their timeline to be able to sell this project and move forward. The CEDG wants to make sure that the communication is happening.

Louis Vallance citizen of Grant Township commented that he still hadn't heard about getting citizens USDA food boxes. This should be a part of the Office of Emergency Management. He was also concerned about not having the emergency alert system activated. Commissioner Wallace stated that there have been a couple places in the county where food has been distributed. Staff will look into this and get back to him. Mr. Vallance stated that the two times food distribution was scheduled at the DPW, it

was cancelled. The only food distribution that took place was at Tube Fab in Afton, Michigan. He also commented that he really likes the new Straits Regional Ride buses except that you cannot see out of the front window and he thanked the Board for getting quieter handicap lifts on the buses because it makes for a much more enjoyable ride.

SCHEDULED VISITORS/DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Sheriff Dale Clarmont gave an update on the Office of Emergency Management (OEM). The Cheboygan County OEM continues to partner with Alcona Health Center; McLaren Northern Michigan; District Health Department No. 4 and the local Firefighters Association members with their COVID-19 drive-through test site at the Cheboygan County Fairgrounds. The drive-through test site started yesterday and will run from Monday, Wednesday and Friday of this week. This is by appointment only with a referral from a doctor. Next week's schedule will be Monday through Friday. He thanked the District Health Department No. 4, the Cheboygan County Firefighters Association members, the Cheboygan Department of Public Safety, Cheboygan County Life Support System and the Fairground Director, Dan O'Henley for their assistance at the test site. A major part of the program is acquiring and distributing personal protection equipment (PPE). To date OEM has distributed 82,259 items of PPE, which included everything from hand sanitizer, surgical gowns, surgical masks, goggles and face shields. Cheboygan County OEM is working closely with Michigan Region 7 District Emergency Manager to set up a distribution center in Cheboygan County for the Tip of the Mitt, which would include Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Crawford, Emmet and Otsego Counties. This distribution center started on April 22nd. To date the center has received 45,248 items of PPE and have delivered a total of 39,663 items to entities. He reported that as of today, entities in Cheboygan County now have a 30-day supply of PPE and efforts are being made to bump that up to a 60-day supply.

Sheriff Dale Clarmont commented on the Blight Ordinance. In the past, when the issue of a county blight ordinance has been brought up at county board meetings, civil counsel has advised commissioners that blight ordinances are something that must be adopted at township level. There may be another avenue the county could look at and research. Sheriff Clarmont stated that the Sheriff's Department has been inundated right now with issues involving blight and he wasn't sure if this had anything to do with the stay at home order. Commissioner Sangster wanted to encourage this as the Board has talked about this many times through multiple jurisdictions or other units of government. Commissioner Gouine stated that he thought the best approach was to expand the authority of the building safety officials to address some of these blight issues. Commissioner Matelski was in agreement to have this researched. Commissioner Newman who noted that the past jurisdictional issues and asked if something has changed with the laws. Sheriff Clarmont stated that nothing has changed as far as the laws go, but what he wants to look into it to see if it would be possible for the county to contract with the townships that may be interested to enforce township blight ordinances either through the building department or the sheriff's department. He was not sure that the county could do that, but he would like to research it. Chairman Wallace stated townships were always looking for the county to provide blight enforcement and he felt it was worth looking into. It was the consensus of the Board of Commissioners to have the Sheriff research it and bring the update back to the Board at the next meeting.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Administrator Jeff Lawson reported on the Tuscarora Township DDA. Tuscarora Township has scheduled a Public Hearing for May 5, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. to receive comments concerning the amendment to the Township's Downtown Development Authority and Tax Increment Financing Plan. The amendment identifies proposed projects within the district as well as amends the district's boundary. Within 60 days of the hearing, taxing jurisdictions including the County may exempt their taxes within the expanded district area from capture. The County has not exercised this option in the past.

Administrator Jeff Lawson reported on the Marina Fuel Dock and Service Dock Replacement Project. The Marina Fuel Dock and Service Dock Replacement Project are out for bids. Due to the Governor freezing all Waterway Grants, the bid opening has been extended until May 1, 2020 at 2:30 p.m. The bid

opening will need to be extended again if the Governor does not lift the freeze of grant funds by April 30, 2020. The bids will be read by phone at the time of opening to contractors.

Administrator Jeff Lawson gave an update on the Ambulance Millage. The Ambulance Millage is to provide funding to area ambulance services, which expired in 2019. The Cheboygan Ambulance is scheduled to attend a meeting in June to identify the need for millage funding. It is anticipated that an increase in cap millage funding will be requested at that time. The Board of Commissioners will need to approve a resolution authorizing the millage to be placed on the November 3, 2020 ballot by July 28, 2020.

Administrator Jeff Lawson gave an update on the Cheboygan County Building Staffing. The Governor's Executive Order 2020-42 that came out a couple days ago extended the work from home for the majority of the staff. The county building has what is labeled under critical infrastructure workers that report to work in the building, with the approval of the elected official or department head. This is scheduled to continue through the executive order of May 15, 2020. Information has been received that there would be more Court activities and more employees in the building with their dockets being back logged. A lot of the governmental units across the state are looking at the financial impact of this COVI-19 pandemic. Last week, Michigan Association of Counties sent out a survey identifying if any counties have done furloughs. The majority have indicated that they have not, but would be looking at that going into the month of May. Staff has been looking at staffing levels and talking with elected officials and department heads to identify their positions and workloads. If this extends farther into May, staff would expect some positions to have reduced hours or furloughing. If this doesn't happen, then the plan is to move start opening up the building strategically keeping social distancing.

OLD BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS

Administrator Jeff Lawson presented the Memorandum of Understanding-Board of Commissioners-Cheboygan County Sheriff-FOP Command. MOU would change Command Officer's shifts during the COVID-19 Pandemic to 12 hour shift- (84) hours in a bi-weekly pay period. Any hours over (84) hours per pay period to be paid at time and one-half. Schedule will support mission to lower the risk of possible workforce impact from COVID-19.

Motion by Commissioner Warfield, seconded by Commissioner Newman, to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with FOP Command Officers, authorize Chair to sign MOU and authorize any necessary budget adjustments. A roll call vote was taken. Motion approved 7 yes, 0 no and 0 absent.

Administrator Jeff Lawson presented the MDOT Project Authorization 2017-0032/P16 5311 FY 2020 Operating funds. This is the contract that supplies federal operating funds to Straits Regional Ride. A maximum of 18 percent of allowable expenses from this contract may be reimbursed. This contract has been reviewed in the past by civil counsel and is the standard boiler plate funding agreement for transit operations.

Motion by Commissioner Sangster, seconded by Commissioner Tryban, to accept MDOT Project authorization 2017-0032/P16 5311 FY 2020 Operating Funds, authorize the Chairperson or the County Administrator to sign and authorize any necessary budget adjustments. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried with 7 yes, 0 no and 0 absent.

Veterans Director Rick Wiles presented the County Veteran Service Fund Grant-COVID-19 Emergency Relief. Application to apply for the County Veteran Service Fund (CVSF) grant through Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) requires a Board signature. Due to the State of Emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic, MVAA is waiving some eligibility criteria for the CVSF grant to allow counties to provide emergent, immediate, and direct financial assistance to its veterans and eligible family members. Grant is available for any emergent/ indigent veteran issues, even if not directly caused by COVID-19.

The amount of the grant is \$25,000 plus an amount based on the County veteran population.

MVAA is offering two (2) options for administering the grant from State of Michigan MVAA office dated 04/09/2020 as follows: (Option 1 is preferred choice for better control and speed) 1. County Administers the Grant directly either on a reimbursement basis or up-front funding basis. 2. MVAA will be the fiduciary of the grant and will administer it from the Lansing Office.

The grant will be capped at no more than \$1200 per FY per veteran household. This grant will be used in conjunction with both the Soldiers Relief Fund and Veteran Assistance Fund. It can also be used as a standalone fund when those funds are exhausted or unavailable. The initial grant application must be sent to MVAA on or before May 1, 2020 at noon.

Motion by Commissioner Gouine, seconded by Commissioner Tryban, to approve submittal of MVAA Grant Application, authorize Board Chair to sign necessary Agreements and authorize any necessary budget adjustments. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried with 7 yes, 0 no and 0 absent.

Administrator Jeff Lawson presented the Budget Adjustments – Raise Revenues and Expenditures. Do to the shortage of PPE supplies across the country the County is facilitating the distribution of PPE supplies to long term and adult foster care facilities within the County. The increase in revenue and expenditure in the Disaster Contingency Fund represents the purchase of PPE supplies from vendors and the sale of PPE supplies to facilities. Many vendors selling PPE supplies at this time do not traditionally sell PPE supplies and have requested one agency to sell to for distribution.

Motion by Commissioner Sangster, seconded by Commissioner Gouine, to approve the budget adjustments to raise revenues and expenditures for \$11,000 in the Disaster Contingency- Fund 258. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried with 7 yes, 0 no and 0 absent.

Administrator Jeff Lawson presented the Covid-19 Preparedness and Response Plan to Executive Order 2020-42. In order to respond to the current state of emergency related to the novel coronavirus (“COVID-19”) and to comply with relevant state and local orders related to COVID-19, Cheboygan County has prepared a COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan (“Plan”). This Plan may be updated as this situation evolves or as state or local orders related to COVID-19 are issued or amended.

Motion by Commissioner Tryban, seconded by Commissioner Matelski, to adopt the Cheboygan County COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan to Executive Order-42 and Related Orders and authorize the Board Chair to sign.

BOARD MEMBER MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

Administrator Jeff Lawson gave an update on the Building Repair. MacMillan Associates, the structural engineer for the project have completed their field work to develop plans and specifications for the repair project. MacMillan has provided two options to repair the walls. The options depend on the final use of the area. Treasurer Weldon would like to convert the room from a vault into office space with windows. The estimate to complete this project is approximately \$155,000 with two new windows and requires the removal of the entire upper wall area. This is considered by the engineer as a more long term permanent repair.

The engineer also identified that the current walls could be left in place by adding anchors at the second floor which would allow continued flexing of the wall for masonry growth, but provide restraint for any wind loads. The walls would be anchored to the second floor and roof level beams. The lower portions of the second floor walls would be grouted in place at the anchors and reinforcing added. The estimated cost of this alternate approach would be approximately \$35,000.00. The Engineer has stated that this approach would not provide a guarantee that the walls would not move in the future but the anchoring would eliminate any safety concerns. Under this configuration, there would be no

exterior windows.

Discussion was held as to which of these options each of the Board of Commissioners were comfortable with. Commissioner Newman asked Administrator Lawson for his suggestion. He stated that Treasurer Weldon identified that she would like to convert the room from the vault into office space with the addition of windows. Treasurer Weldon commented that office space is needed and she might be the only elected official or department head that does not have a separate office space within the department. She understood that the expense is difficult to approve at this time, but there were options. Tax rolls from four (4) or five (5) years at a time have been sent out to a company that has been scanning them and were able to save them to a thumb drive, a CD and a cloud. The space that was needed to store the tax rolls is becoming smaller and smaller with the remainder of the tax rolls being located in the hallway outside of the Treasurer's Office on shelving. She believes in the next four (4) to five (5) years, all of these old tax rolls will be scanned and available electronically. Commissioner Wallace concurred with Treasurer Weldon. There was little need for a vault since the county has gone to electric records and he suggested going ahead with the more expensive improvement. Commissioner Sangster agreed to Commissioner Wallace's two points of going digitally, less space for needed vaults and the need for more office space. Commissioner Gouine stated that the wall should be replaced and to have two (2) expansion joints installed. Commissioner Warfield had hoped that when the Board made this decision that a contractor would be brought in and be able to take advantage of this mobilization cost, and save on some other projects that the Board knows is desperately needed such as window replacement. It was hard to think this way under the new normal, but he was in support of doing what is necessary in converting that to office space. Administrator Lawson stated that staff will move forward with the engineer to get the final blue prints drafted. The actual cost wouldn't be finalized until bids were received. There may be some issues with finances in the future due to COVID-19 and the potential long term impacts of the virus.

Sheriff Clarmont gave an explanation on two (2) questions that came up under citizen's comments. The USDA Emergency Food Distribution distributes through a Food Bank in Flint, Michigan who then distributes to Cheboygan County through the Salvation Army. There have been three (3) food distributions with one in Afton, Wolverine and Cheboygan County. Currently, the supply is greater than the demand and they are storing food right now. More shipments were due in the future. If there is any concern for food, citizens can contact the Salvation Army. The second item was the Emergency Alert. There is currently an Emergency Alert System. Cheboygan County's is thru the Tri-County and each individual county has that capability thru the CCE911 center, which is called "BE ALERT."

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Louis Vallance citizen of Grant Township commented that the two (2) food distributions that were scheduled in Cheboygan County were cancelled. He questioned how to get the emergency alert system and the collaboration with the County, City and School system on the Cheboygan County wide internet service that was supposed to be brought in. Sheriff Clarmont stated that the next food distribution was scheduled for April 29th from 1:00 – 3:00 P.M. at the DPW Building. Commissioner Wallace stated that the alert system can be installed on your cell phone and alerts have been received over the television.

CCE 911 Director Pamela Woodbury gave an update on CCE 911. Everything was going well. A lot of precautionary measures were implemented and continuant of operational plans. All of the employees are healthy and they were there to answer the call. The emergency alert system "BE ALERT" is in place and it does display across the television and the state themselves puts out the alerts.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Commissioner Warfield commented on the lifeblood of our community with our local businesses and the pay checks that support our families. He has spoken with numerous business owners, operators, managers and unanimously they agree moving forward will require considerable and frequent change to their business models. In anticipation of the long awaited opening of the local businesses and what will remain of the summer season, the time has come to stand with these businesses and support their efforts

toward economic recovery when and, wherever, possible. Should a bar or restaurant desire to move their business to a tent in the parking lot or should a retailer need signage to convey a message of changed circumstances to their customers would we in the situation that we find ourselves not want to accommodate? The current planning and zoning requirements could burden local businesses as they rapidly adjust to an ever changing situation. Now is the time to afford the businesses as much flexibility as possible to try new ideas, and adapt quickly. The Board should address planning and zoning requirements that could prove to be cumbersome and onerous. Be it by a resolution or by executive order, to provide temporary relief to those who write the pay checks, which are the local businesses. This could best be accomplished by a committee of three, comprised of staff from Administration, Planning and Zoning and the OEM. These reviews would be budgeted for a 48 hour turnaround time. These reviews would waive from consideration, parking and numerous other requirements that would typically be used for a permanent change to use status. Wherever practical and safe solutions are proposed, these businesses should be accommodated. A temporary waiver/permit for change to use should be made valid until at least November 30th, the close of deer season for existing businesses located in Cheboygan County. With an anticipated opening of businesses on May 15th, he would like to see this formalized at the next Board meeting on May 12th. This can be sent to Civil Counsel for review, where without doubt it will result in consternation and gnashing of teeth, but in the final equation the Board is the leaders and must act upon what is best for the people. Assisting in the recovery of the economy of the local businesses and the families they support would be a fine example and he was willing to head this up.

Commissioner Sangster commented that he agreed to so many of Commissioner Warfield's points and when people start to open, they are not going to want to hear about the bureaucracy. Things are slow with some businesses getting back to work because of COVID-19. The County wants to be prepared to deal with these issues and this was a great way to do that.

Commissioner Wallace stated that a new ADHOC Committee was just formed and would consist of Commissioner Warfield, Commissioner Sangster and Administrator Lawson to see what can be done to alleviate the suffering of the small business people in Cheboygan County for the remainder of this year.

Commissioner Sangster also commented on the President of the Cheboygan Economic Development Group Sharon Lange's update on the Orion Renewable Energy Solar Field project in Grant Township. When the Board of Commissioners asked the Planning Commission to come up with a zoning ordinance for this solar project, a lot of work went into it and he encouraged the Planning Commission to continue to move on this project.

Commissioner Wallace questioned where the County was at with the Economic Development Corporation within the County. Commissioner Sangster stated that it is a continued work in progress trying to push Cheboygan County in a positive direction. Staff was asked to contact Ms. Lange to get the ball rolling during this time of inactivity because of COVID-19.

Commissioner Newman commented on the movement with the Finance Director's position. Interviews were conducted with two (2) excellent candidates and he asked staff to hold off with any future applicants until staff had completed their research.

Commissioner Warfield commented that the County chose to participate in the 2-1-1 Northeast Michigan Program and he would like staff to put this information on the county website. This might be helpful with some of the concerns that citizens may have with public services during this pandemic.

Motion by Commissioner Sangster, seconded by Commissioner Newman, to adjourn to the call of the chairperson. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried with 7 yes, 0 no and 0 absent. Meeting adjourned at 10:56 a.m.

Karen L. Brewster
Cheboygan County Clerk/Register

John B. Wallace
Chairperson Board of Commissioners