

**WHEATLAND TOWNSHIP, WILL COUNTY**  
**Wheatland Township Administration Center**  
**4232 Tower Court**  
**Naperville, Illinois 6564**  
**630-717-0092**

***2024 Annual Town Meeting***  
***April 9, 2024***

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Township Clerk Anita Liskey.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Clerk Liskey led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. ELECTION OF A MODERATOR**

Clerk Liskey called for nominations for a Moderator from the audience. Resident Raquel Mitchel nominated resident Kenn Miller as Moderator. Clerk Liskey requested a vote by show of hands. Mr. Miller was unanimously voted to serve as Moderator of the 2024 Annual Town Meeting by show of hands vote and was sworn in by Clerk Liskey.

**4. DISCUSSION OF THE SUPERVISOR'S ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT**

Moderator Miller introduced Supervisor Michael Crouner to lead a discussion of the 2024 Supervisor's Annual Financial Report. Supervisor Crouner, referring to copies of the annual report made available at the meeting, highlighted Wheatland Township revenue of \$3,189,169 and expenses of \$3,131,917 for the year, resulting in a surplus of about \$68k for the year. A resident asked if a surplus was normal operation procedure. Supervisor Crouner explained that Wheatland had been able to build up a base of reserves, identifying cost saving opportunities as well as taking advantage of the higher interest rate environment and moving some of its funds into an interest-bearing certificate of deposit.

**5. REPORTS FROM ELECTED TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS**

**Trustee Kelly Hickey** – Reported the Senior Committee had met and scheduled/confirmed dates for the 2024 senior lunch series. Thanked the Pastor from Wheatland Salem Church for continued support and providing the location for luncheon events to take place.

**Trustee Terry Jones** – Informed on a new bill introduced by Illinois State Representative Natalie Manley that would allow for local township road and bridge districts to be dissolved while consolidating those responsibilities into county operations. Encouraged constituents to review/consider the proposed legislation and vote their views accordingly.

**Trustee Colleen Rotkis** – Introduced herself and welcomed and thanked the residents who attended the Annual Meeting.

**Assessor Mary Katzburg** – Explained that with 20 years of Township experience, she had been appointed as Assessor to replace and complete the term of the previous assessor, Chuck Kern, who retired in December. Detailed the extraordinary growth taking place within Wheatland Township, noting the recent addition of more 1,000 new construction parcels, bringing the Township total to over 32,000 homes, plus several hundred home improvements underway. Reported the Assessor's Office was currently working with qualified residents to update and renew exemption status for seniors, disabled citizens and more. Highlighted construction on another new subdivision, Riverstone, was scheduled to begin later this year.

**Tax Collector/Cemetery David Scriven-Young** - Reported on the Wheatland Cemetery, located at 104<sup>th</sup> and Naperville Plainfield Road, that is available for all residents. Noted 11 burials had been completed in 2023 and explained that his priority ahead was to continue ensuring efficient operations to facilitate a peaceful and comforting environment within the cemetery. Expressed gratitude to the Wheatland Township Road Crew for their groundskeeping assistance, gave special recognition to Cemetery Board Trustee Jim Hofman who is on leave recovering from a medical emergency and thanked the residents who attended the Annual Meeting.

**Clerk Liskey** reported that all was well within the Clerk's office and with records maintenance and thanked those in attendance at the Annual Meeting.

**Supervisor Michael Crowner** informed he completed a review of Wheatland Township's tax levy and financial data in comparison with other nearby townships to provide a summary of performance achievements: The actual tax rate for Wheatland Township is the lowest of the 24 townships within Will County. Ranked at #24, Wheatland Township tax rate is 80% below the median in Will County. Wheatland levies only \$10.25 per resident annually, vs the average of \$43.05 levied by other townships. That is 76% below other townships and by far the lowest item on a Wheatland Township residents' tax bill. Even though Wheatland Township offers most of the same road services as other townships, the amount of tax dollars required from our residents for road services is among the lowest. Ranked at #22 (out of 24 townships in Will County) the tax rate for our Road District is 78% below the average road tax rate in the County. Wheatland Township levies the lowest amount of for road services of any township in the county. At only \$22.30 per resident, vs an average of \$86.83 across Will County, Wheatland Township is ranked #23 (out of 23 as one township does not have a road district). On overall spending, Wheatland Township levies almost 75 percent less than the county average. Wheatland levies \$32.50, vs average \$129.87, and ranks #23 out of 24 – coming in very close to the lowest (#24) township that does not have a road district. In closing, noted that based on historical averages, the taxes collected for both Wheatland Township and Wheatland Road District were the lowest they had been in the last 10 years. Emphasized the Wheatland Township Board and staff are taking very good care of its constituents' tax dollars, recognizing Wheatland's employees for their contributions and commitment to operating leanly. Noted the Decennial Committee had confirmed Wheatland Township was maintaining efficient, lean operations and highlighted an ongoing priority to identify new improvements and lead county in financial operations. In response to inquiries, Supervisor Crowner explained they levy process,



including considerations, ways the Board was adding revenue without seeking additional tax funds (i.e., by taking advantage of high interest rate environment to find better interest-bearing vehicles), etc., with a focus of outpacing inflation. Detailed electors' ability to put special requests to Board, for things like (hypothetically) new buildings or accelerated roads program but noted those types of initiatives would be submitted for a vote/approval by the electors before they could go forward.

**Commissioner Tom Wieser** - Reported on a planned continuation of road program, explaining the bids received were extremely competitive with all coming in under plan, with the winning bid at \$100k below estimate. Updated on several upcoming road-related initiatives within Wheatland Township including: (1) a new Woodman's Grocery Store to be constructed at the corner of 119<sup>th</sup> and Rt. 59. Noted that the organization was committed to working with all municipalities and government units to ensure seamless workflow and proactively address potential traffic issues. (2) installation of a 54-inch water main will take place from 95<sup>th</sup> to 75<sup>th</sup> Street under or next to Book Road. (3) The bridge going over DuPage River at 127<sup>th</sup> Street will be shut down for repairs later this year with traffic detoured to alternative routes.

**6. OLD BUSINESS: Approval of the April 11, 2023, Annual Town Meeting Minutes**

Trustee Rotkis motioned to approve the April 11, 2023, Annual Town Meeting Minutes, Trustee Jones seconded, and the April 11, 2023, Annual Town Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved without further discussion.

**7. NEW BUSINESS**

Confirm schedule for April 8, 2025, Annual Town Meeting: Supervisor Crowner motioned to approve the proposed date and Trustee Rotkis seconded the motion. The date for next year's meeting was set for April 8, 2025, at 7 p.m.

**8. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**Traffic Safety Concerns** - Resident Michael Wisniewski submitted a series of petitions to the Clerk requesting a special meeting for the purpose of the Highway Commissioner and the Board to discuss traffic safety issues within the Township, citing Illinois Township Code Article 30. Requested discussion of the following topics: (1) speeding vehicles in Wheatland South and other areas (2) Lack of safety at school bus stops (3) deteriorating roads within Wheatland Township. Proposed May 3, 2024, at 7 p.m. as the date/time for the special meeting.

**Objections to the Appointment of Trustee Jim Hickey** – The issue of Trustee Jim Hickey's appointment to the Board was raised by Raquel Mitchell, Wheatland Township Resident and Republican Will County Board Member. Several residents participated in this discussion to voice their opinions, ask questions, and raise issues about the process used for filling the open Board seat vacated earlier in the year by former Trustee Meghna Bansal who resigned to accept a position on another committee. The issues raised by Wheatland Township constituents fell into three categories:

(1) Questions re the legitimacy of the appointment: Citing the Open Meetings Act requirement of three affirmative votes, several constituents raised issues with the fact that Mr. Hickey was appointed while only receiving two votes, with one recusal.

(2) Complaints regarding nepotism and questionable Board ethics: Given that Mr. Hickey is the spouse of a sitting Board member, Township residents, including Raquel Mitchell who is also Republican member of the Will County Board, called out the Wheatland Township Board for a perceived lack of ethics and poor behavior.

(3) Concerns about the lack of transparency: Residents/meeting attendees also complained about the lack of transparency when Trustee J Hickey was swearing in as no public notice was made nor was his oath of office included on as an agenda item of a regular Board meeting.

Following is an abbreviated summary of the many comments and discussion points raised on this topic:

- The process for appointing Trustee Jim Hickey to the Wheatland Township Board was called into question for lack of transparency, concerns about whether Mr. Hickey was a "true" republican candidate, complaints of impropriety given his relationship with a sitting board member. A resident requested the Board reconsider the appointment and hold another vote managed via a "more fair and open" process.
- A resident asked about the need to have democrats and republicans on the Board. Supervisor Crowner explained Township Boards are filled via partisan election. Illinois Statute requires outgoing Board members resigning before term expiration be replaced with same-party candidates.
- Moderator Miller asked if legal Counsel was present at the meeting. Supervisor Crowner responded that the Board's attorney was unable to attend the annual meeting due to scheduling conflicts with other township annual meetings. Clerk Liskey recommended making Wheatland Township legal counsel available at another time/venue to respond to legal questions related to the appointment.
- A resident accused the Board of improper proper procedure, pointing out the fact that no public notice was provided for Trustee Hickey's swearing in. Supervisor Crowner confirmed Mr. Hickey's oath was completed legally.
- Moderator Miller asked if an agenda item was included on a Board meeting to appoint the new trustee. Supervisor Crowner confirmed there had been an agenda item re the appointment proceedings.
- Comment by Trustee Rotkis: Explained that she along with other trustees and Board members met in an executive session of the January Wheatland Township Board meeting to interview three of five republican-affiliated candidates who had applied for consideration to be appointed to fill the trustee vacancy on the Wheatland Township Board. Noted that the Board typically had five members who participated in all votes and detailed that in this case there were only three casting votes as former Trustee Meghna Bansal had resigned and Trustee Hickey, spouse of one of the candidates, had recused herself. Confirmed Trustee Jim Hickey received two



affirmative votes and one negative. Following the executive meeting of the Board where she objected to the process, Trustee Rotkis confirmed the Open Meetings Act requirement that all Board matters have three votes to ratify a decision. She explained she had subsequently reached out to the Will County State's Attorney's Office to raise the matter and is awaiting a response. She also gathered and submitted a 50-signature petition to request a special meeting and a new vote be held to appoint a Trustee to the Wheatland Township Board. She informed that she also spoke with Supervisor Crowner and Wheatland Township attorney Ed Mullens and plans to continue attempts to rectify the situation with another vote, emphasizing the constituents who signed the petition and those at the Annual Meeting deserved to have their voices heard and concerns addressed.

- A resident raised concerns about the fact that Trustee Hickey could be a legitimate candidate when his wife was serving on the Board to which he was appointed.

- Reiterating TOI requirement to have three votes, another resident suggested the Board should decide if it wanted to operate ethically or not. Several attendees took issue with an appointment being made with only two affirmative votes. One member stated a vote without a quorum was invalid. With another resident declaring the Board had "pulled a fast one."

- Moderator Miller acknowledged the Annual Meeting was not a forum in which the appointment issue could be settled and suggested the Board "make the situation right" and get the three votes needed to appoint a Board trustee. He suggested residents move forward with their petitions and cautioned that every Board vote in which Trustee Hickey participated going forward could be called into question. Suggested the Supervisor reconsider the issue and find a way to work out the concerns to reduce problems going forward. Supervisor Crowner responded that any changes would require a full legal process and ruling. Trustee Rotkis requested the Board consider addressing the issue directly.

- A resident asked Trustee Hickey if he had any qualms about his appointment given the many public concerns. Trustee Hickey responded he "has been a republican since many of people in the room were in diapers." Trustee Rotkis clarified that the question to ask if he was concerned about receiving fewer than the required number of votes. She also noted that Trustee Hickey was not required to recuse herself from the vote as there was no conflict-of-interest rule regarding spouses in the Open Meetings Act. Commenting that though some would still have ethical concerns, she pointed out that had Trustee Kelly Hickey voted the validity of Trustee Jim Hickey's appointment would not be in question.

**Objection to Wheatland Park Transfer** - Wheatland Township resident Michael Wisniewski raised concerns about the Board's decision to transfer Wheatland Park to the Plainfield Park District. Supervisor Crowner explained that Mr. Wisniewski's characterization of a sale was inaccurate and explained the Board had voted unanimously to transfer operations of Wheatland Park to be maintained and managed by the Plainfield Park District, made possible by the land transfer rights municipalities. He further explained the park would be consolidated into an adjacent park owned and managed by the Plainfield Park District providing a larger, better equipped public facility for Wheatland Township residents' use. He also detailed that the transfer would create significant efficiencies and cost savings for Wheatland Township,

eliminated the need for Wheatland to pay for expensive and overdue upgrades to the park equipment, parking lot and more, while providing enhanced benefits to residents.

**Support for Speed Bumps** – The topic of speed bumps was brought up with several residents in support of Wheatland Township reconsidering the ban it had instituted to help slow traffic in and protect children particularly around school bus stops and in certain perceived “cut-through area” such as Wagner Farms. Citing Naperville, Aurora, and Plainfield decisions to eliminate speed bumps, Road Commissioner Tom Wieser explained the reasons and justification for removing the speed bumps in Wheatland Township, including: the issues they create for emergency response vehicles, the expense and road wear and tear caused by the need to install and replace seasonally, as well as a tendency for cars to dramatically speed up after getting through a speed bump area. He also reviewed alternative measures the Township employs that are more effective at deterring speeding including: digital speed monitors, police patrol, door knocking outreach to residents, etc. He also referred residents to the City of Naperville website for more information on traffic safety studies and a review of the problems with speed bumps. Supervisor Crowner noted he had made a request for more consistent patrolling to the Will County Police.

#### **9. ADJOURNMENT**

A motion to adjourn was made by Supervisor Crowner and seconded by Resident Wisniewski. The motion was unanimously approved without discussion by a show-of-hands vote at 7:54 p.m. and the meeting was adjourned.

**Next meeting Tuesday, April 8, 2025**

Approved as presented:

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*Anita Liskey, Clerk*

Meeting Moderator:

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*Kenn Miller*