

MINUTES
SQUAW CREEK TOWNSHIP TOWNHALL
JANUARY 24, 2024

Sheri Jandik opened the meeting with a welcome and a statement that this was not a Township Trustee meeting and that questions regarding the township should be sent to the township email address or posted on the facebook page. She then handed the meeting over to Crystal McIntyre, the Board of Supervisor representative for the rural community and Jake Zuercher, fire chief of New Virginia Fire Department.

EMS Essential Services Levy Presentation:

EMS is not an essential service and you are NOT guaranteed assistance when needed. In order to fix that in Warren County a board of six members are working on changing that. First the board of supervisors has to vote EMS as an essential service. Then the EMS board members are planning on a getting a tax levy on the ballot of .75/1000. They have three plans from which they will choose the best option.

Plan #1: Divide the county into two or four quadrants. If they went to four, this would improve response time. This plan puts employees under the cities' employment in which the fire house resides. It would also mean that fire departments may need updated if they do not already have a kitchen space. A person from the state is going to be at the next February Exploratory EMS committee meeting to give the specific things the county will need to update if the plan is to staff from 6am to 6pm.

Plan #2: Purchase two new ambulances and house them in a central location and the EMS services would be run by the county. They would hire five full time EMS to cover weekdays from 6am to 6pm. Volunteer departments would be available for nights and weekends.

Plan #3: Keep the current fire and EMS districts and give them about \$100,000. They can then use this money to hire full time staff or could do whatever they wanted as long as it is for EMS. We need to have the exact number that .75/\$1000 valuation would bring in based on our current valuations. Of course, if this passes and goes into effect—it would be based on next year's valuations, not current valuations.

This new tax levy will not take the place of the Squaw Creek Township tax already collected for Fire and EMS services.

Communications Project 2024:

Seven new towers were installed in Warren County. The county was going to get 9 but guaranteed communications coverage could be done with 7. The old radio system worked 48 to 56% of the time meaning if an EMT or the fire crew needed to communicate when out in the field, they could not always. New radios have been purchased for everyone by the county as not all districts could afford the new radios. Personnel can now communicate when in the field guaranteed 98% of the time. The old system was maintained, however each year it was based on need and not a maintenance fee. It varied from \$0 one year to \$10,000 another year. The county now pays \$250,000/year for the next eleven years after which, the cost will increase. The dispatchers and our communication system exist under Sheriff Carico. The Emergency Management Commission could be where the county communication system and dispatch could reside under however, Doug Eichholz, county attorney and Indianola City Manager, Ben

Reeves have proposed a Draft 28E agreement with 5 board of director members. A board of supervisor (only to represent the unincorporated citizens), rep from Indianola, rep from Carlisle, and two rural reps that those three members pick—they are not elected and therefore not accountable to taxpayers. Also, everyone needs to pay to be on that board of directors except for those chosen by the first three. Crystal, as a rural supervisor, opposes this plan and so do all the major city mayors! Dispatch went 20 years with 9 employees from 2001 to 2021. Since 2021, the board has added three more dispatchers for a total of twelve, plus a Communications Director over Dispatch.

Warren County Budget Update:

In 2023, the budget was \$300,000 over the baseline budget. Two of the three Board of Supervisors wanted to increase property taxes to cover that, and add \$1.37 to the rural levy and \$.81 to the general supplemental. Rural citizens pay all county taxes, urban citizens (within city limits their citizens pay a reduced urban levy) only pay the general basic and general supplemental. Rural citizens pay a higher general and all rural. However, the property taxes would be paid mostly by the Rural community, so there was push back. In 2024, the budget is \$10,000,000 over baseline. Crystal did mention that \$6,000,000 of that can be removed as the county engineer put full cost of projects over multiple years. \$2,000,000 of that overage is for the union for public safety who requested raises and more benefits. This was a previously known budget item. Other options were to penalize the rural community for their actions last year and not rock the secondary roads. Many of the residents politely voiced their opinion since their roads haven't been receiving rock and many have not been graded in a manner that they can drive on non-washboarded roads. Since this meeting, Crystal has reported that the General fund is still \$800,000+ over and the rural is only \$600,000+ over with more cuts to come from both funds. We can get there without increasing taxes.

Administration Building Remodel:

Warren County received about \$10,000,000 (\$9.9M to be exact) in ARPA funds. Some of that was used to bring big businesses to the cities in Warren County, which adds to our tax base and help taxes go down. One-third of the money was given to communities for their projects, and one-third to department heads. The remaining \$1,200,000 is allocated for remodeling the treasurer's and auditor's offices as they are running out of room. The Board of Supervisors area also needs two additional offices since we are now going from three to five supervisors. Initially there were plans for new bathrooms and kitchen area as well, but since there is already ample bathrooms and a break room, Crystal has asked those items be removed from the project.

G76 and S23 Paving:

S23 is on the five year plan. County Engineer applied for a federal grant of \$4,000,000 to redo 7.1 miles of G76 (Medora to New Virginia), however only \$2M is earmarked for our project by the federal government. Grant has not been approved as of yet, but they would like to start the project in Spring of 2026 so two more years of bouncing away. Even if the money were available today, it would not happen until Spring of 2026—IDOT governs when projects can start. It was mentioned that it will be a grind and repave project. One resident mentioned the road was initially paved in 1963. In the 80's a six-inch overlay was added. If the county does a grind and repave, the issues will reappear in ten years. In other words, if you are going to do it, do it right. Crystal made note of that comment and is going to check with

Engineer on why this type of construction because he must have good reasons. Engineer said, "We plan to mill the surface, mainly to profile the surface and place 3" of very high traffic HMA."

Board of Supervisors 3 to 5:

Warren county has been redistricted for the Board of Supervisors. This will allow for each supervisor to have more time to get out and see the people they represent however rural representation could end if city residents are elected. The new districts take effect in January 2025. This fall the ballot will have ALL 5 board of supervisors on it. District three is the district Squaw Creek Township will fall into. It looks like a lot of rural area, however, look closely (on the attached map) and you can see that someone on the northwest end of Indianola could run. If you want to keep rural representation, considering running as a member of the Board of Supervisors. Primary is in June with November election. Mark Snell will be running as will Crystal, but she will no longer be our representative. Darren Heater is moving out of the county and not interested in running, which he could not since he won't be in the county anymore.

Opioid Task Force:

County has received monies from many pharmaceutical suits. The money will come with restrictions, but should provide Warren County residents the assistance they need. The task force will consist of county attorney, sheriff, one mental health professional, one public health director and Crystal.

Organizational Meeting Update:

This is the first meeting of the year for the board of supervisors where they determine a new chair person, vice chair, time of meetings, who is over what board, etc. Crystal had been over EMS and 911 since 2017, but lost it last year. She did get 911 back and is an alternate for EMS this year. They are also to hold a vote on meeting times on January 25th. The Board has proposed a 5:00pm meeting as Crystal has accepted a full-time job with the State of Iowa. She has worked it out with her new employer to be able to attend one meeting a month during an early lunch break, but would like to have the second meeting be an evening meeting. This would also allow the residents to attend after hours. The request was approved, and the 2nd meeting of the Board is held on the 3rd Tuesday in the Boardroom at 5pm and Zoom is available (download or get a copy of the agenda, it has the link) as well. Or call 515-690-9100 and ask to be placed on the list to receive an agenda for each meeting directly to your email.

Recycling:

Crystal did apply for a grant of \$75,000 for a fenced in area at the new secondary roads building and bins for all recyclables. However, do not get your hopes up. If you want to recycle, TRM will charge a minimum of \$5.00 for 90 gallons of recyclables, not including glass, OR you can drive your recycling to Winterset, although they do not take glass either.

Q&A:

For those who reported issues with their gravel roads, Crystal did take some notes, however you are also encouraged to contact the secondary roads department complaint line: 515-690-9290

80th street is a Farm to Market Road, why hasn't it been paved? There is not funding for this road to be completed when it costs \$2M a mile for new construction on a new road.

Why did the new secondary roads building not include a sprinkler system? Contractor did not include it and said contractor will not be installing the sprinkler system, Warren County will hire someone else to install.

A huge thank you to Crystal for taking the time out of her busy day to inform our community of the hot topics within the Warren County borders. A large thank you to Jake for assisting Crystal with the EMS Tax Levy Presentation. Another large thank you to the Medora Methodist Church for allowing us to have this informative meeting and to Cindy Flaherty for opening the doors and providing coffee and lemonade. Finally, thank you to all who attended. We had a total of 32 guests.

The proposed map is the map that was approved by the State and the Board.

