

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of

Blendon Township Board of Trustees Meeting

Meeting

DAYTON LEGAL BLANK, INC., FORM NO. 10148

Held July 31

20 24

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Chairperson Heichel. She welcomed everyone in attendance.

Trustee Heichel led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Present

Chair Heichel, Vice-Chair Shinaberry, Trustee Ciamacco.

Also in attendance were John Belford, Police Chief; Matt Newman, Service Department; Pat Myers, Administrator; and Brian Miller, Fire Chief.

Administrator Myers—

Administrator Myers made a statement to the audience regarding public comment being moved to the beginning of the meeting. This was done so that residents could speak during public comment and not have to stay for the entire meeting if they chose.

Public Comment

Time was permitted for meeting attendees to make comments.

Franklin County Soil and Water Presentation - The presentation was canceled for this meeting and will be moved to a future meeting in September.

Trustee Comments

Trustee Ciamacco— Trustee Ciamacco wanted to thank the many residents who reached out to her in support of the decision the Trustees made at the last meeting to extend the marijuana dispensary moratorium in Blendon Township. While many may not be aware, the moratorium was passed previously in our Township by resolution. It was brought up by a resident at the last meeting that we are missing out on revenue opportunities. What was not discussed are the possible negative factors. Trustee Ciamacco was asked why she voted the way she did, and in response to that, she read a list of what current host communities have reported. In states where marijuana sales and use have been legalized, employers face increased use, reduced safety, reduced productivity, and legal confusion.

-More hospital calls for children eating marijuana/THC-infused gummies, cookies, brownies, etc. The number of adolescent marijuana-associated emergency department visits in Colorado increased significantly from 161 in 2005 to 777 in 2015, coinciding with legalization in that State.

-Dispensaries have been associated with an increase in traffic accidents and arrests for driving under the influence in which marijuana was implicated. Increased calls, accidents, and arrests place additional stress on local authorities.

-Residential fires have been caused by improper electrical modifications to facilitate marijuana cultivation.

-Many California cities with medical marijuana dispensaries have experienced an increase in crime associated with these dispensaries. Storefront dispensaries have been targets of violent, take-over-style armed robberies and assaults.

-Police from other jurisdictions have also reported an increase in burglaries at or near dispensaries. Patrons going to or leaving medical marijuana dispensaries have been robbed for their cash and medical marijuana.

-Police agencies also reported increased loitering and public marijuana smoking in the vicinity of dispensaries.

-Operators of medical marijuana dispensaries have been associated with a variety of illegal activities such as organized crime, illegal weapons sales, illegal drug sales, selling to minors, money laundering, and patrons buying marijuana legally and then walking outside to resell it illegally.

-Neighborhoods and retail districts with medical marijuana dispensaries have reported an increase in noise, traffic, and other activity that negatively impacts neighboring land uses.

-Dispensaries have also had an adverse impact on neighboring businesses, including a loss of business as a result of the above mentioned impacts. Two businesses neighboring a dispensary in Anaheim relocated because of problems associated with the dispensary. One was left out of fear for the safety of their employees after the dispensary was robbed. Another left because it could find no solution for the marijuana smell permeating through a common wall of the dispensary.

From 2017 to 2019, the Ohio Medicaid program paid for 54 percent of births in the State. Increased use of marijuana during pregnancy has the potential to increase Medicaid expenses in Ohio due to the potential for complications and associated costs. According to the Colorado Department of Transportation, after recreational marijuana was legalized in 2012, the number of fatalities in crashes in which drivers tested positive for THC rose from 18 in 2013 to 77 in 2016. However, if crashes, especially fatal crashes, were to increase in Ohio as a result of legalization, aside from preventable tragedy and societal impacts therefrom, there would also be a general fiscal impact on the Ohio economy. The CDC reported in 2018 that fatal crashes cost Ohio \$17 million in medical costs and \$1.67 billion in work-lost costs. Law enforcement expenses may also increase if there are more serious traffic incidents requiring response.

In addition, Colorado experienced a 98.1 percent increase in marijuana-related calls to the Poison and Drug Center in the first year after marijuana was legalized. The increased level of calls continued with the next three years, representing 81.5 percent, 141 percent, and 152 percent increases in 2011, 2012, and 2013, respectively, above the 54 calls that were received in 2009. If all of that is not enough, the legalization of marijuana may negatively impact Ohio's environment. A review of cannabis cultivation performed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife in 2018 shows a significant use of pesticides and fertilizer, an increased usage of water, and harm to wildlife. Pesticides harm wildlife in a multitude of ways, including poisoning, reproductive failure, and changes in behavior, such as decreased coordination and motor skills. Excess fertilizer used to fertilize cannabis washes into water streams and impacts ecosystems and drinking water, something the State is currently working to address with farming, generally. The legalization of cannabis could directly work against investments the State has made to improve Ohio's water systems. Which she knows from the meetings since she has taken office, many are very passionate about.

Pat had previously spoken with The Ohio Department of Taxation, The Ohio Auditor of State, and a local lobbyist for The Poison Control Center and reviewed the Ohio Legislative Commission Report. The feedback received to this point is the language currently states that "Host Communities" would share in revenue, based on an early formula allowing for the division of 36% of the 10% of retail sales of the dispensaries. The legislation on revenue share is still being discussed, and nothing is final at this time. Feedback received from these entities is that everything is still up for discussion, including the fact revenue would be population-driven as it pertains to "Host Communities". Based on discussions thus far, it appears that the possible revenue loss to our Township, as quoted by a resident at the last meeting, was grossly overstated.

If we follow what other communities have done, we would undoubtedly be forced to hire more officers. The projected tax benefit would possibly not cover even a portion of the cost of hiring one additional officer. This revenue stream is not projected to begin until 2026 based on dispensaries not being open until at least September of 2024. Before we make decisions on the issues brought before the Board, each of us takes the time to research and understand the issues. Regardless of our personal views, we make decisions for the betterment of the entire Township. That is what we were elected to do.

Trustee Heichel— Trustee Heichel discussed the following:

Fiscal Report Process:

Overview: The Township has started live streaming meetings, increasing viewer engagement. To help the audience understand the fiscal report process, Trustee Heichel shared the following processes:

Preparation: Joann Bury (Fiscal Officer) and Amy Rose (Assistant Fiscal Officer) prepare bills, purchase orders, and bank reconciliations for Trustee review, along with related documents like invoices, reports, and contracts.

Review: Trustees visit the office independently within a two-week period to review the documents, ask questions, and ensure they fully understand the reports before approving them.

Approval Process: During Board of Trustees meetings, the Board Chair confirms that Trustees have reviewed the documents before they are approved or paid. These added procedures, including layers of checks and balances, were implemented when Joann Bury became the Fiscal Officer for Blendon Township.

Township Business: Motions, Resolutions, and Voting:

Voting Process: Trustees receive agenda items before meetings and discuss them individually with the Township Administrator, Department Directors or legal counsel. If a Trustee isn't ready to vote, the item is removed from the agenda.

Trustee Heichel: Marijuana Dispensary Vote: Trustee Heichel addressed questions asked by a resident regarding her decision to not allow Marijuana Dispensaries in Blendon Township. She explained her vote to prohibit marijuana dispensaries in Blendon Township was a continuation of prior actions from past Board of Trustees, her being on those Boards, including Resolutions passed in 2017 and 2018 to prohibit marijuana-related activities. Her decision was based on legal advice, previous precedents, and, more importantly, the need for further review of state regulations.

Concerns: Trustee Heichel addressed resident misunderstandings regarding potential revenue from marijuana dispensaries, emphasizing that state funding for townships remains uncertain and that expecting significant financial benefits is unrealistic. She also noted that state law says that marijuana dispensaries cannot go within a defined proximity to schools, daycare centers, churches, or parks. This eliminates many areas in Blendon Township for dispensaries including the Glengary Shopping Center, the Sunbury Road Shopping Plaza, and possibly Westerville Road and Cleveland Avenue. Additionally, there are many areas not yet defined by the State on the dispensaries that still need to be resolved.

Commitment: Moving forward, Trustee Heichel pledged to focus on clearer communication during meetings to prevent misunderstandings and encouraged people to visit the Blendon Township website and/or Blendon Township's Facebook page for the most accurate information regarding Blendon Township.

This summary captured the key points related to the fiscal report process, decision-making in township business, and specific concerns around the marijuana dispensary vote. Trustee Heichel thanked the residents for their comments and appreciated their feedback.

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Trustee Shinaberry— Trustee Shinaberry stated that she also had people reach out to her in support of the Board's decision in the the last meeting concerning marijuana dispensaries. Her information showed the same basic results as those already shared by Trustees Ciamacco and Heichel. She reiterated that the two previous resolutions in 2017 and 2018 were passed unanimously by the previous Board.

She stated that, as she posted on our Township Facebook page, she wanted to thank our Parks Advisory Committee for their planned effort to remove invasive honeysuckle from the creek bank in Ridgewood Park. She stated she couldn't be there the whole 3 hours last Saturday due to another commitment, but she did join the other volunteers for an hour, helping cut and pull honeysuckle and wild grapevines and helping load for hauling. She thanked all the volunteers, both from the committee and the community, who are helping to improve & preserve our township parks.

She also received the 2023 Annual Report from Franklin Soil & Water Conservation District, of which Blendon Township is a partner and whose mission is "to promote responsible land use decisions for the conservation, protection, and improvement of soil and water resources by providing information and assistance..." She reported that the Community Backyards rebate program that she talked about at a previous township meeting reimbursed county residents with a record-setting \$97,765. They also sold over 16,000 native plants in their annual tree & plant sale. She offered to share the full report with anyone.

Fiscal Officer Report -Introduced by Chairperson Heichel

Minutes—Trustee Heichel asked the other Trustees if they had reviewed the Minutes from the July 17, 2024 meeting. Trustee Shinaberry made a motion to approve the Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes on July 17, 2024. Trustee Ciamacco seconded. All voted yes.

Trustee Heichel asked the other Trustees if they had reviewed the Minutes from the July 25, 2024 meeting. Trustee Shinaberry made a motion to approve the Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes on July 25, 2024. Trustee Ciamacco seconded. All voted yes.

Approval of Purchase Orders—Trustee Heichel asked the other Trustees if they had reviewed the Purchase Orders presented. Trustee Shinaberry moved to approve Purchase Orders as presented. Trustee Ciamacco seconded. All voted yes.

Bills—Trustee Heichel asked the other Trustees if they had reviewed the bills presented. Trustee Shinaberry made a motion to approve the bills. Trustee Ciamacco seconded. All voted yes.

Administration

Administrator Myers—OTARMA Property, Casualty, and Liability Insurance Renewal: Administrator Myers discussed that it is time to renew the insurance in the amount of \$84,031.48, which is slightly higher than the year due to adding \$2 million in coverage to the policy. Administrator Myers was able to obtain approximately a \$7,000.00 loyalty credit on the original quote. Trustee Shinaberry moved to approve the renewal as presented. Trustee Ciamacco seconded. All voted yes.

Composting Pilot Program Request: Administrator Myers asked the Board for approval of a composting pilot program on behalf of the Parks Advisory Committee with The Compost Exchange. Administrator Myers will have more information at the next meeting. Trustee Shinaberry moved to approve the implementation of the pilot program. Trustee Ciamacco seconded. All voted yes.

Discussion about cancelling 8/7/2024 Trustee Meeting: Administrator Myers recommended to the Board that the August 7, 2024 Regular Trustee Meeting be cancelled, because there would be three meetings occurring in a 30 day period. Trustee Shinaberry moved to cancel the meeting at presented. Trustee Ciamacco seconded. All voted yes.

Human Resources—Nothing to report.

Trustee Heichel— Trustee Heichel made an announcement regarding road work being done by Franklin County on La Paz, Brazzaville, and Spohn which will occur August 1st-August 8th.

Maintenance/B&G/Parks/Cemetery

Nothing to report.

Police

Chief Belford— Chief Belford discussed National Night Out which will be on August 6, 2024 from 6 PM-8 PM.

Fire

Fire Chief Miller—Fire Chief Miller stated that they recently purchased a new medic that was a demo from off the lot. Those normally take 2-3 years to arrive once ordered, so they cancelled the one they had on order. Since the medic came in white, they are in the process of getting it wrapped to match the rest of the medics. He will also be ordering a new engine next year and it will take 3-4 years to arrive.


Announcements

Wednesday, August 21, 2024, will be the next Board of Trustees Meeting at 6:30 PM at the same location, 6330 Hempstead Rd., Westerville, Ohio, and live streamed on YouTube.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the Board, Trustee Heichel made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:16 PM. Trustee Shinaberry seconded the motion. All voted yes.

Approved by: 
Jan Heichel, Chairperson

Approved by: 
Joann Bury, Fiscal Officer