

A Regular Meeting of the Otsego City Commission was held on Monday, January 16, 2023.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Withee at 7:00 p.m. with the following Commissioners present: Lauri Krueger, Jason Smith, Chuck Moore, and Wayne Rayburn. Absent: None. Also present: City Manager, Aaron Mitchell; Police Chief, Brad Misner; and Fire Chief, Brandon Weber.

The audience joined the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The January 9, 2023, Regular Minutes, were approved as submitted.

REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE REGARDING AGENDA ITEMS

Nick Breedveld, 1101 Barton – he asked for more details on the millage increase. He asked if it is only for Public Safety. City Manager Mitchell indicated that the millage is for Public Safety.

Jean Ashley, 1103 Barton – she asked if the millage is for the Police Department and the Fire Department. City Manager Mitchell stated that the funds go into one fund, Public Safety. He commented that it is explained in the resolution what is being considered. She asked if the City has given up on purchasing a ladder truck. City Manager Mitchell stated that they have at this time.

I. PRESENTATIONS:

A. COUNTY COMMISSIONER GALE DUGAN UPDATE

County Commissioner Dugan gave an update on current Allegan County activities. He answered questions of the audience and the Commission.

II. PUBLIC HEARING:

III. PLANNING AND ZONING:

IV. ORDINANCES:

V. REQUESTS:

A. CONSIDERATION OF A REQUEST TO USE MEMORIAL PARK ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 5, 2023 FOR THE ANNUAL READY OR NOT RACE

City Manager Mitchell stated that this is an annual request with the same route. Commissioner Krueger moved to grant the request from Legacy Running to use Memorial Park on Saturday, August 5, 2023, for the Annual Ready or Not Race, seconded by Commissioner Moore. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

VI. AGREEMENTS:

VII. RESOLUTIONS:

A. CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION NO. 2023-04 – A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING BALLOT PROPOSAL FOR THE REPEAL AND REPLACE CITY DEDICATED PUBLIC SAFETY MILLAGE

City Manager Mitchell explained that the millage would repeal the two mills that is currently being collected for Public Safety and reset the amount to four mills, for an addition of two mills, for ten years. He explained that if the proposed millage is passed, the Fire Station would be staffed with a 24/7 model and medicals calls would continue, and if not passed, medical calls will be eliminated for the City. He explained that the Fire Department is implementing a new “sit-time” schedule, which is being implemented next week, that will ensure coverage from 8 a.m. until 12 a.m. daily. He discussed with the Commission the following and answered their questions:

- Legality of what the Commission and City Employees can do in regards to the communication of the millage proposal
- Example of cost – Taxable Value of \$100,000 X 4 mills = approximately \$400.00
- Election Timeline
- Public Safety is funded seventy-five percent by the General Fund (\$1.3M)
- Chief Weber explained Sit-Times for the audience
- Interim Sit-Time funding – Township and City (funds from full-time position, not currently filled)
- Complete Public Safety funding by General Fund – not an option

Commissioner Krueger offered the following Resolution and moved for its adoption, supported by Commissioner Smith.

**CITY OF OTSEGO
ALLEGAN COUNTY, MICHIGAN**

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-04

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING BALLOT PROPOSAL FOR THE REPEAL AND REPLACE CITY DEDICATED PUBLIC SAFETY MILLAGE

WHEREAS, in 2016 the electors of the City approved an ad valorem tax levy of 2 mills (\$2.00 per \$1,000.00 on taxable value of property located within the City) for a period of ten years beginning with the 2017 tax levy year and running through the 2026 tax year for the specified purpose of operating, maintaining, equipping and purchasing for the City’s police and fire departments and other public safety purposes authorized by law (“2016 Public Safety Millage”); and

WHEREAS, the City Commission has determined that funding is necessary in order to continue medical response calls within the City, and that it is necessary to increase the funding for the City’s police and fire departments and other public safety purposes authorized by law; and

WHEREAS, the City Commission has further determined that it is necessary to repeal the 2016 Public Safety Millage and replace the same with a new millage tax levy of a total of 4 mills (\$4.00 per \$1,000.00 on taxable value of property located within the City) per year for a period of ten years beginning

with the July 1, 2023 tax year and running through the 2032 tax year, which will raise in the first year of such levy an estimated revenue of \$414,890.90, for the specified purpose of operating, maintaining, equipping and purchasing for the City's police and fire departments and other public safety purposes, authorized by law including medical response services; and

WHEREAS, the City Commission wishes to submit the question of repealing the 2016 Public Safety Millage and replacing the same with a new ad valorem tax levy of 4 mills for the specified purposes to the voters at a special election to be held on May 2, 2023.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The following proposition shall be submitted to the electors of the City at a special election to be held on May 2, 2023:

CITY OF OTSEGO

Shall the City of Otsego repeal its 2016 dedicated public safety millage, an ad valorem tax levy of 2 mills that expires in 2026, and replace the same with an ad valorem tax levy of a total of 4 mills (\$4.00 per \$1,000.00 on taxable value of property located within the City) per year for a period of ten years beginning with the July 1, 2023 tax year and running through the 2032 tax year, which will raise in the first year of such levy an estimated revenue of \$414,890.90, to be used for the specified purpose of operating, maintaining, equipping and purchasing for the City's police and fire departments and other public safety purposes, authorized by law including medical response services?

YES _____

NO _____

A special election is called for May 2, 2023. The City Clerk, City Attorney and all other City officials are authorized and directed to take any and all actions necessary to have the Proposal placed on the ballot on May 2, 2023.

All existing or previous resolutions and parts of resolutions, insofar as they may conflict with the provisions of this resolution, are hereby rescinded to the extent necessary to avoid such conflict.

YEAS: Commissioners: Stacey Withee, Chuck Moore, Lauri Krueger, Jason Smith,
Wayne Rayburn

NAYS: Commissioners: None.

ABSTAIN: Commissioners: None.

ABSENT: Commissioners: None.

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

VIII. APPOINTMENTS:

A. CONSIDERATION OF THE RE-APPOINTMENT OF BECKY HOOKER TO THE LIBRARY BOARD, TERM TO EXPIRE DECEMBER 31, 2026

Commissioner Moore moved to confirm the Mayor's re-appointment of Becky Hooker to the Library Board, term to expire December 31, 2026, seconded by Commissioner Rayburn.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

IX. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

MANAGER'S REPORT

The City Manager gave updates on the following:

- Charter language on ballot – not an option, due to time restraints
- City Hall air conditioning will be installed next week

COMMUNICATIONS

None.

REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Nick Breedveld, 1101 Barton – he asked if the firefighters are covered under the City's insurance if they are practicing, and commented that they should be paid if they are practicing. He commented that Chief Weber's previous presentation was good, but he would like a breakdown of the City and Township calls. Commissioner Krueger gave Mr. Breedveld a copy of the report she just received from Fire Chief Weber that outlines the information, and commented that the report will be on the City's website. He asked why the Township and City share expenses fifty-fifty, if the Township has more calls.

John Pickron, 1104 Barton – he stated that he is a retired senior citizen and it is hard to keep paying higher taxes. He commented that it is ridiculous to pay more taxes – are we expanding services? Mayor Withee commented that it costs more to provide the increasing services and personnel would be added. He asked why a police officer can't provide these needs. Chief Weber commented that it is a Fire Department function. Mr. Pickron stated that before taxes are raised, how can we cut costs. He was asked what services he would like cut.

COMMISSIONER'S' COMMENTS

Commissioner Rayburn – he thanked County Commissioner Dugan and Fire Chief Weber. He commented that it is a tough time to be asking for money, we all need to work together, and we need input. He stated that this is being put on the ballot because of time constraints. He commented that we need to work on the details and put a presentation together that will help the citizens better understand the ballot proposal. He encouraged everyone to ask City Manager Mitchell questions about it before a meeting, as he deals with this every day. He asked that everyone be patient and be kind, as everyone has their own opinions. He commented that we have to have Public Safety. He stated that this is a lot for citizens to understand and a lot to absorb. He explained that he reviewed his tax bills and encouraged everyone to look at theirs. He stated that all of the collected taxes do not go to the City, for example the breakdown is approximately – County 17.7%; School 45.5%; Library 3.6%; City 33.2%. He asked everyone to look at where their tax money is going and realize the City is not getting all of the money from the taxes collected.

Commissioner Krueger – she thanked the audience for attending. She encouraged anyone that needs additional information regarding calls to contact Chief Weber. She stated that “this is not your grandpa’s fire department”, as there has been a three hundred forty three percent (343%) increase in Fire Department calls since 1996. She commented that the volunteer paid on-call firefighters have other jobs and families. She stated that we need to inform the citizens and make sure that the firefighter’s feel and know that they are being heard. She thanked County Commissioner Dugan. She wished everyone a good night.

Commissioner Moore – he thanked the audience for attending and Commissioner Dugan for his report. He commented that more funding is needed. He explained to the audience that “we hear you” and more information will be provided. He commented that once the legality of the role of the Commission is defined, more information will be provided. He encouraged everyone to keep asking questions. He thanked Fire Chief Weber and Police Chief Misner for attending the meeting and for their service.

Commissioner Smith – he commented that he is looking forward to having conversations and clarify what all of this means and provide more information. He stated that he sympathizes with the difficulty of paying taxes, as money doesn’t go very far. He commented that it is wise to put this proposal to the vote of people. He stated that information will be put together and everyone will be able to learn in the coming months. He commented that he wants to watch the finances of the City. He thanked the audience for taking the time to come and listen. He stated that he appreciates the opportunity to serve his community.

Mayor Withee – she thanked the audience for attending. She stated that this proposal is very dear to her heart and has had loved ones use the medical first responder services, and asked that everyone think about this. She stated that additional funding is needed for medical calls. She commented that she is open to hear any suggestions for cutting City services. She invited everyone to come to the informational meetings and express their opinions and ask questions.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Commissioner Krueger, seconded by Commissioner Rayburn. CARRIED – 7:48 p.m.

Angela M. Cronen, MMC
City Clerk