Pokagon Township Special Board Meeting

July 11, 2017 7:00 pm

Supervisor Linda Preston opened the meeting and welcomed the audience.

Roll call was taken. All board members present: Linda Preston, Gary Mihills, Renee Meiser, Kevin Young, Bob Shaffer.

Purpose of the meeting: Ambulance coverage in Sections 25-36 in Pokagon Township.

Letters were mailed to property owners in this area. Property owners in this area are covered by SMCAS Ambulance Service and are paying $20.00 per household per year. SMCAS has proposed changing that to $20.00 per parcel. Owners of multiple parcels will pay $20.00 on each.

Property owners in Sections 1-24 of Pokagon Township are serviced by Pride Care Ambulance Service without the $20.00 per household fee.

Representatives Marie Eisbrenner (Pride Care) and Brian Scribner (SMCAS) were present and were introduced to highlight their respective Ambulance Service and answer questions. Both provided membership and fee information.

Questions and Comments from the Audience:

R- Resident A- Ambulance B- Board

R- Dave Kramb- What are the finances of SMCAS that require this additional dollars from residents with multiple parcels? Does not seem fair to do it this way.

A- Brian Scribner- SMCAS finances are much improved over the past 3 years. This change to billing on per parcel is based on legal advisement.

R- Ed Dohm- How much increase does SMCAS get from the per parcel fee? It appears they (SMCAS) are doubling their fees for the same services.

B- Linda Preston- explained the per parcel process and how the fee was initiated in the beginning.

R- Rolly Wells- agrees with others, not fair to property owners with multiple parcels. His vote is no. He has many parcels and looking for another option besides the per parcel fee.

R- Sue Maxedon- How/and is the expense of Narcan impacting the finances of ambulance services and is this increase part of the need to fund?

A- Brian Scribner- The use of Narcan is very successful and not a direct impact on this financial decision.

R- Deb Hannewyk- If SMCAS receives $20.00 per household – what is Pride Cares funding?

A- Marie Eisbrenner- No cost to residents per tax assessment – billed by insurance

R- Deb Hannewyk- has 3 parcels – can I combine them to make 1 parcel?

B- Linda Preston – yes.

R- Deb Hannewyk- What about raising each household the same amount to equal what they (SMCAS) is asking for?

A- B- Brian Scribner/Linda Preston: That process does not fit the per parcel format that has been legally advised.

R- Sam Maxedon- Wants to keep SMCAS – only has 1 parcel- consider the millage route. Mentioned that SMCAS has an “ambulance on point” at 31/Walton- placed closer than some may consider. Asked about other possibilities/ options / more meetings.

R- Melody Van Zandt- What is one parcel?

Answer: One tax ID

R- Linda Kramb- Some are served by Pride Care, some by SMCAS- why is only SMCAS asking for money – if it is due to embezzlement issues that is not the residents problem.

A-Brian Scribner- The organization was able to recover a good amount of that money. We want to continue upward with the financial strength of the service.

R- Linda Kramb- Are we going to vote on this?

B- Linda Preston- It will be by consensus. A hand vote tally will be taken at the end of the meeting, ultimately a board decision.

R- Linda Kramb-Taxing the farmer at a detriment to everyone

R-Tracy Watson- The per parcel cost does not make sense nor does paying for SMCAS when another service is free. Would like explanation.

B- Linda Preston explained the split in districts and contract authority when it was worked out with the ambulance service.

R- Tracy Watson- How will the board decide about this?

B- Linda Preston- It is up to the people. We are listening to your voices tonight and the board will decide.

R- Diane Hover- When is the contract up (with SMCAS)-

B-Linda Preston - Oct 1st 2017

R-Diane Hover- other options?

B-Linda Preston:-all Pride Care

R- Kevin Waldschmidt- gave a description of distances of Pride Care vs SMCAS from Point A to Point B based on location of ambulance operations. Also: regarding farmers that have parcels within the township but don’t reside in the township @ $20.00 parcel fee – where does this come from- what is the money going for – is it for equipment or ?

B- Linda Preston explained the equal taxation process.

A- Brian Scribner explained their intent was not to double amount now receiving from the per parcel fee suggested by member municipalities.

R- Barb Cook- If 911 is called is a hospital choice given?

A- Marie Eisbrenner- Somewhat dictated by medical need – but yes.

R-Jeff DePoy- What is the number of parcels involved?

B-Linda Preston: 556 parcels – 385 households

R-Anne Davis: has used SMCAS service and has neighbor that cannot afford increase in taxes

R-Herb Miller: Is it the Townships intent to go to the per parcel way – just go with Pride and make it easy.

R-Norma Cousins: cannot afford increase – has 2 parcels- will double the amount she pays and does not want to lose her home because she cannot pay it. It is not right to impose burden on people struggling.

R-Molly Shaffer: How many parcels? Some property owners have 20-30 parcels – this is a huge increase to them.

R-Jim Akey- has 5 parcels at a cost of $100.00 need a more fair equation for the spread of the cost.

R-Larry Mihills- has used both ambulance services. SMCAS at a 13-15 minute response and Pride @ 7.5 minute response.

What is the proposed increase going to bring SMCAS?

B-Linda Preston: Currently receiving $8,000.00 @ the 20.00 per household – the per parcel would generate a little over $11,000.

R-George Frederick: How much is the per call for Pride Care and SMCAS?

Both services provided their BLS (basic life support) and ALS (advanced life support) rates and explanations. Pride @895.00 with variables and SMCAS @850.00 with variables.

B-Kevin Young: to SMCAS- are automatic membership letters sent to current members?

A-Brian Scribner: yes

End of questions at 8:05 pm.

3 letters / emails were received from residents:

Neil Benham- has 3 parcels – not a fair increase

Shirley Bell – a no vote to increase

Lois Foster- no additional tax – unfair

Board meeting on July 12, 2017 @ 7:30 pm

This item will be discussed but not necessarily decided.

Hand vote of audience regarding the ambulance service discussion:

6 – for SMCAS

18 for Pride Care

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Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Renee Meiser, Clerk