

WAKESHMA TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING

January 6, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

Supervisor Gatlin called the meeting to order at 7:00PM. *Present:* Gatlin, Fry, Munn, and Thole. *Absent:* Bennett

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion to approve the consent agenda moved by Munn. Seconded by Fry.

Motion carried unanimously. 4:0

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Munn reviewed the Treasurer's Report – to include the General Savings, General Checking, Tax Checking, Trust & Agency, and Michigan CLASS Account.

Motion to approve the Treasurer's Report moved by Thole. Seconded by Fry.

Motion carried unanimously. 4:0

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

A citizen inquired about the status of the South Kalamazoo County Fire Authority. Supervisor Gatlin stated that he planned to provide everyone with an update on the South Kalamazoo County Fire Authority towards the end of the meeting per the agenda.

A citizen inquired about the proper procedure to obtain a burn permit in Wakeshma Township. The citizen didn't know whether to go to Supervisor Jason Gatlin [Wakeshma Township] or Fire Chief Tracy McMillan [South Kalamazoo County Fire Authority] in order to submit the paperwork. Supervisor Gatlin responded that they recently consolidated some of the policies and procedures and he would seek clarification on the proper method to obtain a burn permit. Supervisor Gatlin stated that he would be in contact with the citizen to provide guidance on how to move forward with this process.

A separate citizen expressed frustration with never getting credited for a homestead exemption. Treasurer Munn responded that she cannot make this change in the system, rather it's the Assessor's responsibility to process the homestead exemption. The Treasurer simply handles some of the documents involved in this entire process. The citizen replied that the Assessor informed him that his property would need to be re-assessed in order to process the homestead exemption. However, the citizen was told that this re-assessment would go back a total of [8] years and the difference would be added to his next bill. Supervisor Gatlin collected the citizen's information and informed him that he would contact Ben Brousseau with Appraisals Plus Group to find out more information on what happened – and then contact the citizen once he learned more.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Contract Agreement For Assessing & Zoning Services

Supervisor Gatlin brought forward a contract renewal with Appraisal Plus Group in order to continue providing assessment and zoning services in Wakeshma Township. Supervisor Gatlin mentioned that the township has received a perfect score from the state of Michigan which is a direct reflection of Appraisal Plus Group's work and expertise in this area. The new contract is set to begin on April 1, 2025 and concludes on March 31, 2027. The new contract includes a 7% increase in payment for services. Motion to approve the contract moved by Gatlin. Seconded by Munn.

Motion carried unanimously. 4:0.

Cemetery Burial Rates

Clerk Fry introduced a proposal from DJL Dirtworx, LLC to continue providing burial services in Wakeshma Township in the new calendar year. The new burial rates include the following:

Description	Quantity	Rate	Total
Full Burial (Summer)	1	\$ 600.00	\$ 600.00
Full Burial (Winter)	1	\$ 700.00	\$ 700.00
Cremation Burial (Summer)	1	\$ 400.00	\$ 400.00
Cremation Burial (Winter)	1	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
Infant Burial (Summer)	1	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
Infant Burial (Winter)	1	\$ 600.00	\$ 600.00
Weekend / Holiday Fee	1	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00
Headstone Foundation Per Square Inch	1	\$ 0.65	\$ 0.65

Clerk Fry has been in communication with Township Clerks in the surrounding area (Climax Township, Pavillion Township, Brady Township, and Schoolcraft Township) and found that, despite the increase, these are competitive rates when compared to what other municipalities are paying for similar services. Motion to approve the contract moved by Gatlin. Seconded by Munn.

Motion carried unanimously. 4:0.

ROAD COMMITTEE

N/A

CORRESPONDENCE

N/A

ZONING ENFORCEMENT

N/A

SHERIFF'S REPORT

N/A

FIRE AUTHORITY

Supervisor Gatlin informed everyone that the South Kalamazoo County Fire Authority is continuing to experience turmoil within its ranks. Supervisor Gatlin previously reported that the Fire Authority appeared to be at a deadlock and did not come to an agreement to approve the "2024 Fire Authority Audit" for several months. However, it now appears that the Fire Authority never needed to vote to approve the audit in the first place. As a result, the approval of the audit was struck from the agenda at their last meeting.

Supervisor Gatlin mentioned that the deadlock appears to be three municipalities [Schoolcraft Township, Village of Schoolcraft, and Village of Vicksburg] being at odds with the remaining three municipalities [Brady Township, Prairie Ronde Township, and Wakeshma Township]. This was evident in the most recent meeting when the Fire Authority elected officers for the new calendar year. The Fire Authority was charged with electing a President, Vice President, and Secretary during their December meeting. However, the Fire Authority took three rounds of voting and several discussions to decide on a President after the initial two rounds of voting were deadlocked 3/3. The Fire Authority eventually came to an agreement on the matter – electing Mike Tomlinson [Prairie Ronde Township] as the President and Carl Keller [Village of Vicksburg] as the Vice President.

Supervisor Gatlin continued and stated that the most alarming development in their December meeting was when Randy Smith [Brady Township] announced that Brady Charter Township was "involved in an exploratory effort to determine the best alternative for providing Fire Protection/MFR/EMS services to the residents of Brady Township" and that they are "now ACTIVELY pursuing one of the three alternatives that was identified." This translates to the very real possibility that Brady Township decides to leave the Fire Authority in the near future. Brady Township currently constitutes 21% of the funding of the Fire Authority. This means that their Brady Township's departure would not only be significant but devastating for the future of the Fire Authority.

Clerk Fry prepared two maps for the audience to help illustrate the significance of Brady Township's potential and likely departure from the Fire Authority. The first map showed the coverage area of the Fire Authority including all six municipalities. The second map showed what the Fire Authority would look like – from a geographical standpoint – if Brady Township opted to leave the Fire Authority. Clerk Fry stated that there are real second and third order effects for Wakeshma Township and its residents if Brady Township decides to leave the Fire Authority. Clerk Fry believed that Wakeshma Township needed to be proactive in this situation and proposed that we begin exploring our options as well in case Brady Township decided to leave the Fire Authority. Clerk Fry stated that gathering information from other Fire Protection service organizations in the area [i.e. Climax Township, Pavilion Township, etc.] and understanding all of the options available to the board seemed to be the most appropriate decision given the circumstances. Trustee Thole inquired about the feasibility of entering into a partnership or agreement that crosses county lines [i.e. Calhoun County, Saint Joseph County] or if we had to stay within Kalamazoo County.

Motion to allow Supervisor Gatlin to begin having conversations with other Fire Protection services in the local area moved by Fry. Seconded by Munn.

Motion carried unanimously. 4:0.

Supervisor Gatlin expressed his frustration and disappointment with the entire situation because so much hard work has been poured into the Fire Authority for several decades by so many different people. He has personally invested a lot of his own time into the organization. The Fire Authority recently purchased a new truck, new equipment, and even hired new firefighters.

BOARD COMMENTS

Munn – None.

Gatlin – None.

Fry – None.

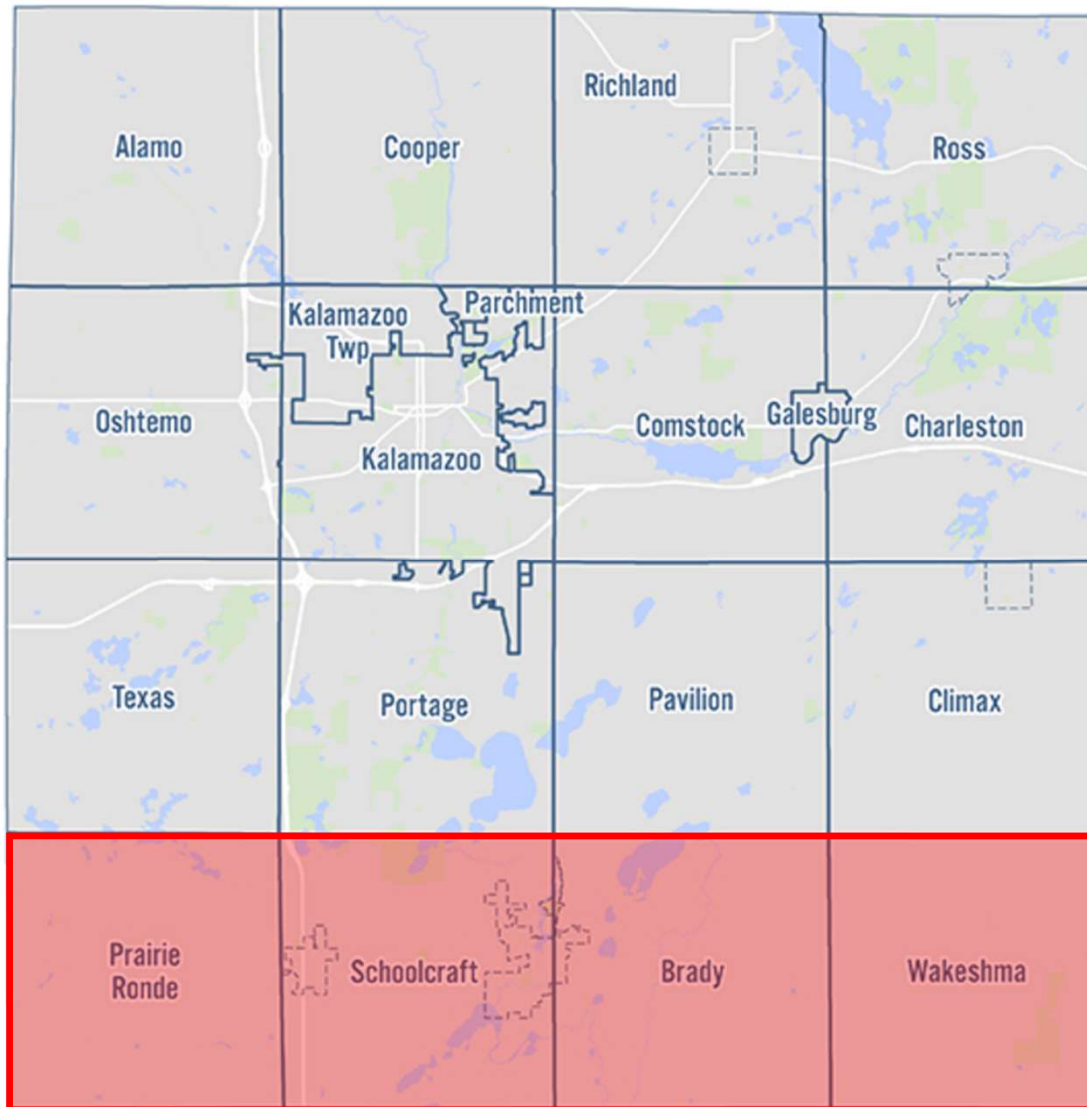
Thole – None.

Supervisor Gatlin adjourned the meeting at 8:07PM

WAKESHMA TOWNSHIP MEETING

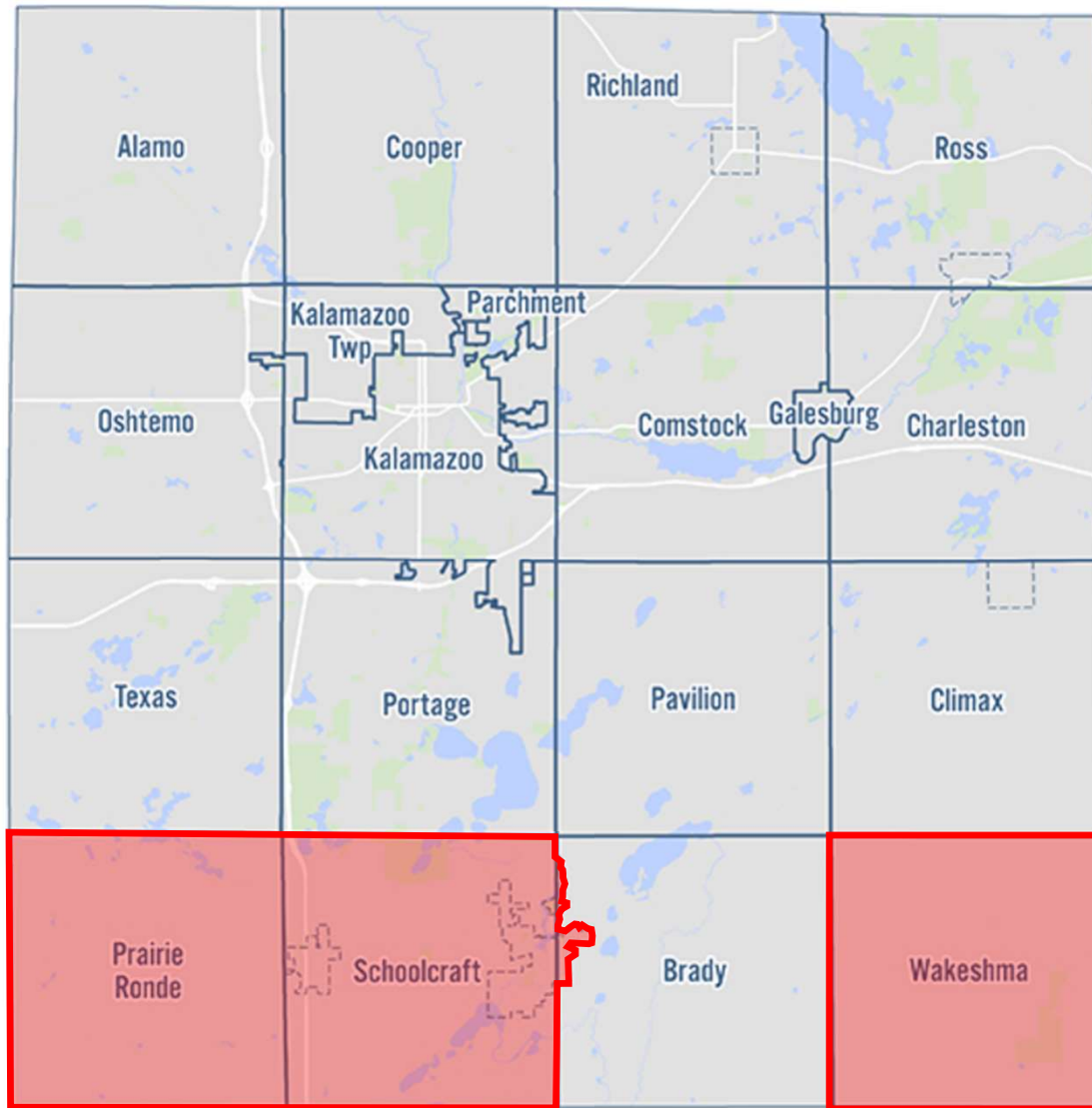
01-06-2025

**SOUTH KALAMAZOO COUNTY
FIRE AUTHORITY**



South Kalamazoo County Fire Authority

- **Prairie Ronde Township**
- **Schoolcraft Village**
- **Schoolcraft Township**
- **Vicksburg Village**
- **Brady Township**
- **Wakeshma Township**



South Kalamazoo County Fire Authority

- Prairie Ronde Township
- Schoolcraft Village
- Schoolcraft Township
- Vicksburg Village
- **Brady Township***
- Wakeshma Township

** Brady Charter Township has been involved in an exploratory effort to determine the best alternative for providing Fire Protection/MFR/EMS services to the residents of Brady Township.*