## Clinton Township's planning, zoning meetings to be available to public

Features

By: Nick Mordowanec | Fraser - Clinton Township Chronicle | Published October 29, 2018

CLINTON TOWNSHIP — Residents will be getting more of an inside look into the decisions that shape their community.

Nearly two years after the Clinton Township Board of Trustees unanimously approved the archiving of past and future videotaped

Board of Trustees meetings, on Oct. 15, the board unanimously approved for Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals meetings to be broadcast live and made available online for the public.

Per a request from Trustee Mike Keys at the board's Aug. 6 meeting, the decision to place videos online was referred to the Budget, Ways & Means Committee for further discussion.

On Sept. 12, Community Relations and Media Services Director Jim Perpich met with the committee, highlighting different options moving forward. Initially, the committee agreed to move ahead with a video capture option, allowing digital video files to be uploaded to the township server for on-demand viewing and archiving.

The NewTek LivePanel software would have cost \$995 to purchase, with laptop and network cable costs bringing the final amount to approximately \$1,795.

In a letter to the board dated Oct. 10, Perpich said that while he was in support of any kind of option to give residents the ability to watch such meetings, he was more in favor of another option which would involve staffers from his department handling all aspects of recording, including multiple camera angles and live broadcasts.

That second option, which was ultimately approved Oct. 15, eliminated the need to purchase the software. Perpich said the change would add about three more monthly meetings to his staff's schedule, adding that he "can't see it ever being a problem" based on time or availability."

"To me, it's a service that we provide, and we would do anything to provide the service. ... I don't see us using it in any other way, unless there was nobody in the department who could handle a live meeting, Perpich said. "There's just never a time when nobody's there."

In 2017, there were 24 Board of Trustees meetings, 20 Planning Commission meetings and 12 zoning meetings, averaging about 100, 61 and 75 minutes, respectively.

Trustee Ken Pearl, who worked with Perpich and Keys on devising the two options, said he was happy that Perpich found a way to cut costs by invoking flex time, or overtime.

Keys and Trustee Jenifer "Joie" West expressed concern at how many overtime hours would accumulate. West used the example of a planning or zoning meeting having just one agenda item, consuming potentially 30 minutes of a staffer's time.

"I don't know any other item we've had this board discuss for four months in a public setting like this," Keys said, alluding to the drawn-out process.

Treasurer Paul Gieleghem expressed concern over schedules, recommending the utilization of both options based on time and cost.

"I think they are important meetings, and I do want them to have professional production," Gieleghem said. "But at the same time, I think you also need this other option of buying this equipment so someone can hit a button so at least it gets out there to the public."

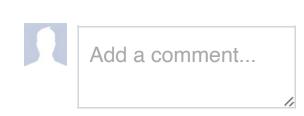
Trustee Joe Aragona admitted that he wasn't even sure whether planning and zoning meetings should have been recorded and placed online in the first place, but he has changed his tune.

"If we're gonna do it, let's do it right," he said. "We're the biggest township in the state. Let's lead by example."

Perpich said the agreed-upon option is not foreseen to result in staff increases in his department.

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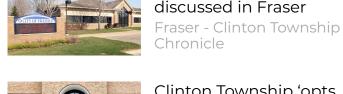
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