

GRAFTON TOWNSHIP REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Grafton Township, McHenry County, Illinois
Grafton Township Office, 10109 Vine Street, Huntley, IL 60142

MONDAY, January 15, 2018

The Regular Township Board Meeting of the Grafton Township Board, McHenry County, Illinois was held on Monday, January 15, 2018 at the Township Offices.

1. **Call to Order** -7:30 p.m. Clerk Watson will be recording the meeting minutes.
2. **Roll Call** – Board Present: Trustee: Cratty, Ziller, and Welch; Supervisor Ruth; Road Commissioner Poznanski; Assessor Alan Zielinski, Attorney Gottemoller, Clerk Watson. Trustee Cooper was absent.
3. **Pledge of Allegiance** was said.
4. **Approval of Agenda**
A motion was made by Trustee Ziller, 2nd by Trustee Cratty, to accept the Agenda as posted
Roll call vote taken, all ayes recorded, motion carried.
5. **Regular Business**
 - A. Supervisor Ruth corrected the word “stripping” to “striping” in “#5, Regular Business, C.” of the minutes. Supervisor Ruth made a motion, 2nd by Trustee Welch, to approve the minutes as corrected. Roll call vote taken, all ayes noted, motion carried.
 - B. The audit of the Town Fund unpaid bills reflected that there is not enough funds to pay PO #20717, Line Item #1759. A motion was made by Trustee Ruth, 2nd by Trustee Cratty to approve the payment of unpaid bills/Warrant check detail for the Town Fund except for PO #20717. Roll call vote taken, all ayes noted, motion carried.
 - C. During the audit of the unpaid bills and check detail for the Road District, a discussion ensued regarding vehicle maintenance and resulting invoices. Trustee Ziller asked the Road District to be more mindful of maintenance to avoid future maintenance fees. A motion was made by Trustee Ziller, 2nd by Trustee Cratty to approve the payment of unpaid bills/Warrant check detail for the Road District. A roll call vote was taken, all ayes noted, motion carried.
6. **Public Comment:**
Resident John Mueller asked to speak to Assessor Zielinski. He asked that the contents of his presentation be made part of this minutes as Exhibit V Grafton Township.

7. Response to Public Comment:

After Mr. Mueller spoke, questions were asked and answered of Assessor Zielinski by resident Mueller, Board Members, and residents registered to speak (Exhibit I Attached to Original Board Meeting Minutes).

8. Executive Session

Supervisor Ruth made a motion, 2nd by Trustee Welch to hold Ececutive Session pursuant to State Statute 5ILCS 120/2(c)(11) Open Meetings Act to discuss possible Litigation, State Statutue 5ILCS 120/2(c)(1) Employment Matters, and 5ILCS 120/2© 21 Board approval of executive meeting minutes. Roll call vote taken, all ayes noted, motion carried. Regular Board Meeting closed @ 8:52 p.m.

9. Discussion and potential action of items as discussed during Executive Session

A motion was made by Supervisor Ruth, 2nd by Trustee Ziller to reconvene the Grafton Township Regular Board Meeting. Roll call vote taken, all ayes noted, motion carried. The Regular Board Meeting reconvened @ 9:11 p.m.

Supervisor Ruth made a motion, 2nd by Trustee Cratty, to approve the corrections as noted on the Executive Meeting Minutes for December, 2017 for content but not for release. Roll call vote taken, all ayes noted, motion carried.

10. Old Business:

A. The Huntley Chamber of Commerce Banquet will be attended by the Township Board. A motion was made by Trustee Cratty, 2nd by Trustee Ziller to attend the Huntley Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Banquet with the Township paying for Board Members expense. Roll call vote taken. Trustee Cratty-Yes, Trustee Ziller - Yes, Supervisor Ruth - No, Trustee We;ch - Yes. Motion carried. If a spouse of an official attends, the Township will not pay for the spouse to attend. Please contact Trudy if you would like to attend.

11. New Business - None

12. Committee and Officers Reports

A. SUPERVISOR REPORT

- i. Budget season is starting soon.
- ii. Statement of Economic Interest will be sent out by County/ All must respond.
- iii. Annual Meeting will be Tuesday, April 10, 2018
- iv. Chamber of Commerce State of Huntley is coming up soon; all invited.
- v. Friendly reminder to Road Commissioner Poznanski and Assessor Zielinski that 1,000 hours/year must be worked to be eligible for IMRF.

B. TRUSTEES - None

C. FACILITY UPDATE COMMITTEE - None

D. ASSESSOR'S REPORT

Copier Lease is expired.
E. ROAD DISTRICT REPORT- None

F. CLERK REPORT - None

13. ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business, a motion was made by Trustee Ziller, 2nd by Trustee Cratty to adjourn the Regular Board Meeting. Voice vote taken, all ayes noted, motion carried. Meeting adjourned @ 9:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen M. Watson
Grafton Township Clerk

Attachment: Exhibit V, John Mueller Public Comment 1.15.18

Hello,

My name is John Mueller of Lake in the Hills, IL. Before I make a statement, I would like to ask Mr. Zielinski, the Grafton Assessor some questions to get clarification for the record:

- Are you no longer an employee of Boone County?
- Why are you no longer an employee there?
- How do we know you weren't fired or told to resign? According to the Boone County website, you had submitted a budget for 2018. You also had a yearly County Assessor meeting where you delivered a 62 slide presentation on December 15th.
- Did you work full time there?
- Why should you return to this position? When you first notified this board that you were headed to Boone, you recommended that your position not be filled, and that a Deputy Assessor resume your duties. The office would drop from five to four. Now you return. So it's still five. Why are you useful now?

Now here is the thing: I don't believe you, and I don't think the residents of Grafton believe you. I don't think the Grafton Township Board believes you. I believe Boone County removed you from your position, or forced you to resign likely because you behaved in the exact same manner that you have been with Grafton the past four years. You have been dishonest, misleading and uneven in your assessments so far with Grafton.

And you should resign.

Let's talk about your duplicity for a second, with one of your slides that you presented to the Boone County Assessors. Now here, you talk about Equalizers, stating the Equalizers cannot be used for any means of valuation. Which is correct.

Well, then why did Al Zielinski, the township assessor, use the Equalizer to tout his accuracy when he was presenting to my neighborhood in 2015. He was bragging how he had the best in the county. But it means nothing.

Now the reason I bring this up is because I believe you were trying to mislead us from a more infuriating lie. You see at this meeting, Zielinski also talked about how there is a metric for a township or a neighborhood, called the Median Sales Assessment Ratio. It's complicated to explain, but it's where you take the assessed value of a home, which is 1/3 of Fair Cash Value, and divide it by the sale price of said home. In a township or a neighborhood, the target for this metric is 33.3%. Zielinski also said that the IL Department of Revenue has an accuracy specification, where the township must be between 35.33% and 31.33%.

Now, Zielinski reassessed Grafton in 2014. He wasn't supposed to, because by law you reassess every four years, the next time being 2015. But he reassessed anyway, because he said neighborhoods like mine were well below that 33.3% figure. My neighborhood of Cheswick, was around 29%, while another, called the Gates was at 31%. He only gave us figures for a few neighborhoods, even though he created close to 100. But at that meeting, he never told us what happened to the township's median sales ratio AFTER he reassessed.

He probably didn't do it, because his final numbers were nowhere near the target. Now Zielinski has bragged, multiple times, how his assessment process is revolutionary and hyper accurate. But guess what? The year Zielinski reassessed, 2014, the median sales assessment ratio was 31.16% in 2014. Below this IL Dept of Revenue target. And then in 2015, when he was supposed to be LAWFULLY reassessing everyone, it fell to 29.06%. In 2016, per the McHenry County Assessor's office, it went to 28.62%. Did you see the Grafton Assessor bragging about this? Of course not.

And this is blatantly hypocritical. Why is it when my neighborhood was at this 29% metric, the sky is falling and he must reassess the ENTIRE TOWNSHIP. But when he reached that median 29% sales ratio himself, it's all OK.

And it makes you wonder what the Median Sales Assessment Ratio for Grafton was before Zielinski took over. And look at it! Courtesy of the Illinois Department of Revenue. Now again, the target is 33.3%. The sales ratio for Grafton in 2013, the year before Zielinski took over, was 33.6%. Just 0.3% off the mark!

Zielinski's contention...that he had to reassess the township in 2014? That was a big fat lie. In fact the only time I think he was being honest that year was when he called Bob Ross, the County Assessor and said he made a campaign promise.

And by the way, this 35.33% to 31.33% requirement? There's no set law for this! I checked the Illinois Department of Revenue, and here's the funny thing, it's all about the Assessor making a little extra cash. If the three year median ratio falls within this range, the Assessor gets a \$3000 bonus. That's it. If it falls outside this number, no one goes to jail. The county makes an equalizer adjustment. The objective is to make sure everything is evenly assessed.

By the way, Mr. Zielinski, have you earned this bonus?

Another thing Mr. Zielinski never released was Sales Ratio numbers from neighborhood to neighborhood. Again, in 2014 Zielinski just singled out a few neighborhoods, saying they were overassessed or underassessed. And he said he created a large number of "homogenous" neighborhoods in his reassessment. But he never stated what happened to those neighborhood sales ratios AFTER he reassessed. Now the sales assessment ratio for the township was near perfect in 2013, and then dropped significantly in 2014. And my neighborhood and a few others, saw their values go up. Some must have gone down. Significantly. Do you know what that means? Someone got some shade.

Now after that 2014 reassessment, my neighbor, Bryan McKnight, started clicking around, and observed some weird valuations outside our subdivision. So, he filed a FOIA request asking for data for a handful of different Grafton neighborhoods, including calculations and neighborhood codes. And Zielinski rejected the FOIA. Multiple times. So Mr. McKnight took the Township to court, and a judge ordered the data be handed over. Which makes sense, because that's the public's data, paid for by our tax dollars, that determines how we are taxed. We have the right to see it and passages in the IL Property Tax Code, namely 35 ILCS/9-30, back that up.

And here is what we found with the data: there was favoritism with at least one neighborhood: Mr. Zielinski's. The Fair Cash Value of that neighborhood dropped, while sale prices rose in the same period.

For giggles, I later did a FOIA to the Grafton Assessor, to get neighborhood codes for the rest of Grafton Township. Just to see how sales ratios were, from neighborhood to neighborhood. The Chicago Tribune did the same thing with Cook County. And despite the findings with my neighbor's lawsuit, Zielinski denied the data again, using a lot of the same reasons. Never mind that I could go to the Grafton website, and look at each individual house and determine the neighborhood code. But with 20,000 parcels, that would take me six weeks of work. Plus there is the just the principle. This is open government. That database is there.

Now I didn't feel like sitting in a courthouse, so I submitted a Request for Review with the IL Public Access Counselor. They will review my FOIA, and Zielinski's response, and make a ruling. That hasn't been completed yet. However, it's a non-binding ruling, so I get the feeling that even if they rule in my favor, which is likely, Zielinski will find some other excuse to not hand the data over.

And here is the reason: The Grafton Assessor is hiding something. He really doesn't want us to know how the sausage is made in his office. And I have a bad feeling why.

And here's the thing: even if we get the data, and find something wrong, here's what I could do: NOTHING. We can't recall him. We can't boot him to the State's Attorney, though trust me, they have a file on him. We can only hope someone runs against him in the next election.

And now I've heard Mr. Zielinski is reassessing neighborhoods again. Are you still using that phrase, *"the assessor may revise and correct an assessment as appears to be just?"* Did you just decide to ignore the court rulings about non-quadrennial reassessments? I personally read to you key passages of the Court Case, Albee vs. Soat, where a non-quadrennial assessment was struck down. The key line: *"The assessor does not have the authority to revise or correct.*

ie legislature so intended it would have so indicated." You revise if there is an error in the assessment. Or you revise if a change is made to the home. Breaking down an entire neighborhood and re-assessing IS NOT THE DEFINITION OF REVISE. If you want to assess again, you wait for the next quadrennial. Like everyone else. Otherwise, things get really screwed up.

And despite all these shenanigans, Mr. Zielinski, we are stuck with you.

But news flash, you are stuck with us. We will take you to task on all your lies and transgressions, and make sure they are in the public record at these meetings. And don't forget, the minutes are posted on the Grafton website. At some point, we will vote you out, and you'll need to seek employment. If a prospective employer turns to the Grafton minutes, they will know the Al Zielinski they are dealing with.

Why do I get the feeling that is what happened at Boone?

And by the way, I have filed a FOIA with Boone County. They will soon be releasing documents on your very brief term there. And when they are available we will be back here to make sure it is public record.

You see, for a township assessor, we need two things: someone who is consistent in assessments, and someone who is honest. You have been neither. You have been misleading and manipulative. You attempt to maintain this pathetic charade with blogs and press releases that you are the greatest assessor ever. Even now, you are probably trying to think of a way to explain yourself out of this, even though I am citing Illinois Department of Revenue Data. Because that's what you always do.

But we know better. And we deserve better. You need to resign. We do not want you here.

Thank you for your time.