The meeting of the White River Township Board was called to order at 7:00 PM by Supervisor Mike Cockerill with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Mike Cockerill Supervisor - Present, Patti Sargent Clerk - Present, Deb Harris Treasurer - Present, Laura Anderson - Present & George Dufresne – Absent, Trustees

1. Approval of Agenda: Sargent moved to correct the agenda in item 6c, where Pigeon is spelled wrong, and then approve the agenda. Harris supported the motion. All in favor, none opposed. (Dufresne AB) The agenda stands amended and approved.
2. Approval of August 8, 2023, Township Board meeting minutes, and August 30, 2023, Special Township Board meeting minutes. Sargent moved to approve both meeting minutes. Harris seconded the motion. All in favor, none opposed. (Dufresne AB). Both meeting minutes stand approved.
3. Public comment: Limited to 3 minutes each.
   1. Mike Cockerill, WRT Resident. Mike read a prepared statement about the recall petition. His statement is attached to these minutes.
   2. Pam Balcom, WRT Resident. In October 2022, her husband was at the township board meeting and asked the board about solar plans and no one replied. Either the board didn’t know about the solar plans or they knew and didn’t choose to respond.
   3. Rose Roen, WRT Resident, People didn’t come out to meetings in 2020 because of Covid.
   4. Melissa Lorenz, WRT Resident. Said the supervisor had a conflict in interest.
   5. Jack Woller, Grant Township. Supports Mike. Says every meeting about solar was posted on the window and all meeting minutes were available to view.
   6. Mary Jo Ernst, WRT Resident. Told the audience that the Supervisor lost his court hearing and lost 3-4 appeals due to the recall. Asked the board to be transparent and make all meeting minutes available on the website.
   7. Oscar Kent, WRT Resident. Asked if all the meeting minutes could be made available. The board responded that all meeting minutes are available to the public at the township hall. They are not all online because of limitations on the website.
   8. John Degen, WRT Resident. Be prepared to recall the governor because she supports the solar industry and the township won’t have a say.
   9. Fritz Kwant, WRT Resident. There is no reason to recall Mike Cockerill as supervisor. He has supported the township and there is no conflict of interest.
   10. Clarice Kwant, WRT Resident. Mike Cockerill has been targeted by people that don’t want solar.
   11. Bill DeNuet, WRT Resident. White River Township is a zoned community. This issue is not about solar, it’s about zoning. Zoning protects residents.
   12. Kim Cyr, Muskegon County Commissioner. The County Commissioners have a new publication that has articles that inform residents of what is happening in the county.
4. Special Order of Business: (Comments by Board Members) Nothing to report.
5. Old (Unfinished) Business:
   1. Millage proposal for White River Township will be on the Nov 7th Ballot. Harris wanted the opportunity to explain why the township is asking for an increase and to answer any questions the attendees may have. She explained that before the Headlee Amendment, WRT millage rate was 1.3 mills. Our current millage rate is 0.7326. The township is asking for an additional 0.2674 mills to bring the total millage rate to 1.0 mills. (Still below the 1.3 mills previously). The township is paying out a lot to legal fees this year and the increase in revenue would help.
6. New Business:
   1. November 7, 2023 Election information. The ballots are not here yet. We are currently processing Absentee Voter applications. The applications have a box on the top right that voters can check to be placed on the permanent ballot list for future elections. If voters do not check this box, they will be taken off the Absentee Voter list and will need to request applications for each election.
   2. Request for ultrasound of Mouth Cemetary. A resident suggested that an ultrasound scan be made of Mouth Cemetary to see where the open plots are. The cost is $4,000 and the resident suggested fund raising. Mouth Cemetary has been closed to plot purchases since the 1970s. Sargent moved to not allow any ultrasound to be taken by either residents or the township. Cockerill supported. All in favor, none opposed. (Dufresne AB). Ultrasounds will not be allowed in Mouth Cemetary.
   3. Complaint about the old (Pigeon Hill Resort) and the junk in the bushes and people living in the laundry room. The constable will go and check on this.
   4. Zoning Administrator. Sargent moved to nominate Craig Harris and Don Kline as interim Zoning Administrators while George Defresne is temporarily out. Anderson seconded the motion. 3 Members voted to approve, none opposed. (Dufresne absent, and Deb Harris abstained)
7. Reports:
8. Financial August 2023 report: Harris. Noted.
9. Constable report: Cockerill. All life rings are in good order. Replaced a road sign at Meinert and Old 99.
10. Solid Waste: Harris. Nothing to report.
11. CEIC / recent meetings: Anderson. CEIC has been approved for a grant to study Sadony Bayou. They are currently looking into Hazardous Waste Laws that affect the environmental clean-up. They are preparing for a meeting this fall with the Hazardous Waste section at EGLE. Barb has been in communication with Paul Schroeder about ideas for re-purposing the lime pile. John Degen suggested the Drain Commission be involved with CEIC, since they couldn’t finish the project due to issues with Chemours. Anderson suggested the Drain Commissioner come back and talk to the township about what happened.
12. Recycling: Goericke. There was a recorded Zoom Townhall meeting on August 29, 2023. The townhall meeting was to inform attendees of the work done by the committee to identify recycling improvement in the county. The feasibility study is finished and a leadership team has been formed moving forward.
13. Planning Commission. Lloyd or Dufresne: Susan Lloyd asked if the Planning Commission could use the township hall to hold informal Townhall Meetings with residents once a month. The meeting would have 2 planning commission members and would not constitute a quorum. They would like to meet on the first Tuesday of the month, 7-8:30pm. They would like to have the meetings posted on the website. Anderson moved to approve the Townhall Meetings. Harris supported. All in favor, none opposed. (Dufresne AB)
14. Ambulance: Cockerill. A third paramedic has been hired. The new ambulance is in service and is working great. The average response time is 7.48 minutes.
15. Fire Authority: Cockerill. Fire Chief Ron Anderson had a great evaluation in August, 2023. He was given a $1,000 raise. The Fire Authority is considering paying off the bond early.
16. Accounts Payable: Sargent. Money ($75,000) needs to be moved within the budget from the General Fund into the Township Board in order to cover legal fees. Anderson moved to move the money. Sargent supported. Roll Call: Patti Sargent - Yes, Deb Harris - Yes, Laura Anderson – Yes, Mike Cockerill -Yes, George Dufresne – AB. The motion passed and $75,000 will be moved from the General Fund to the Township Board. Sargent moved to approve the Accounts Payable. Anderson supported. Roll Call: Patti Sargent - Yes, Deb Harris - Yes, Laura Anderson – Yes, Mike Cockerill -Yes, George Dufresne – Absent.
17. Other Business or Correspondence: Nothing to report.
18. Public comment: Limited to 3 minutes each.
    1. Tracy Dobson, WRT Resident. The Michigan Legislature is considering taking local control away from local governments because local governments have solar ordinances that are too restrictive.
    2. Melissa Lorenz, WRT Resident. She spoke to the sponsor of the bill in the Michigan Legislature. She wanted to reiterate that no one on the board has said ‘no’ to solar. The 2023 Ordinance allows up to 500 acres of solar. The township owes nothing to the solar company.
    3. Deb Hopkins, WRT Resident. The governor has suggested 2% of agricultural land for solar, not 2% of all the land. The 2023 Ordinance allows 500 acres for solar, which is 13% of our agricultural land. The township is doing more than their share. The 90 homes bordering the array will suffer the most from a loss in property value.
    4. Bruce Froelich, City of Montague. The Historical Society will honor the Roesler family at Lebanon Lutheran Church on 9-21-23.
    5. Lauren Wackernagel, WRT Resident. Resident for 20 years. She would like to thank Mike for his leadership on the Ambulance and Fire Authority Committees. She also states that there has been a conflict of interest with Mike ever since the Township has been in litigation with the company he has signed contracts with.
    6. Nathan Nagelkirk, WRT Resident. His family lost 6 acres to the Pierson Drain, and they were told it needed to be done for the farmers. How many farmers communicated that the land wasn’t for the farmers and the drain, but for the farmers and the solar. Has anyone on the board asked the farmers to help pay for the township lawyer fees? Sargent replied that the township will not be asking the farmers to help pay the township lawyer fees.
    7. Fritz Kwant, WRT Resident. Since the legal action was initiated, maybe the people against solar should pay the legal fees.
    8. Susan Lloyd, WRT Resident. There are many legal constraints as to how money changes hands within governmental bodies.
    9. Bill DeNuet, WRT, Resident. If this land goes to solar, how will it be zoned or taxed? Harris replied that the farmer pays the tax on the land and the solar company pays the tax on the equipment..
    10. Oscar Kent, WRT Resident. He pays a lot of taxes and we shouldn’t spend our money on lawyers. Suggested we accept donations toward legal fees so the township taxes can be spent within the township.

11. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:44pm by the supervisor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julie Goericke, Deputy Clerk

Patti Sargent, Clerk