

Minutes – Annual Meeting of Shields Township Electors

STATE OF ILLINOIS,)
Lake County,) } SS.
Town of Shields)

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ELECTORS OF SHIELDS TOWNSHIP occurred on Tuesday, April 13, 2010, at 6:30 p.m. at the Lake Bluff Elementary School, pursuant to the Illinois Township Code, to the Annual Meeting agenda approved by the Shields Township Board at its monthly meeting on March 18, 2010, and to the Notice of the Annual Town Meeting given by the Shields Township Clerk.

1. Meeting Called to Order

Deputy Clerk Kathy O'Hara called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Deputy Clerk O'Hara led the electors in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Nomination and Appointment of Moderator for Annual Meeting

Deputy Clerk O'Hara called for motions for the nomination of a Moderator for the Annual Meeting. A motion to nominate Don Russ was made and seconded, and, without any further nomination, he was selected as Moderator by acclamation. Deputy Clerk O'Hara then administered the Moderator's Oath of Office, which Mr. Russ signed.

4. Consideration and Approval of the Minutes from the 2009 Annual Meeting

A motion to waive the reading and approve the minutes of the 2009 Annual Meeting was made and seconded and adopted on a voice vote.

5. Presentation of Supervisor's Annual Financial Report

As required by the Illinois Township Code, Deputy Clerk Kathy O'Hara read from a summary of the Supervisor's Annual Financial Statement for the fiscal year beginning March 1, 2009 and ending February 28, 2010.

6. Discussion and Vote on Authorizing an Advisory Referendum on Township Grants to Selected Organizations

Moderator Don Russ explained that this matter had been added to the agenda approved by the Shields Township Board pursuant to the state law that allows agenda items to be added to the Board-approved agenda by the timely submission of a petition signed by at least 15 Township voters. The language of the advisory referendum was read by the first person to speak on its behalf, Dan Rogers of Knollwood. It was worded: "Shall Shields Township continue to offer grants to selected organizations that provide cost-effective senior citizen, youth, mental health, and transportation services which allows the Township to avoid duplicating those services." He said he thought this question was very different from the advisory referendum that had previously been submitted to Township voters asking whether Shields Township property taxes should be used for grants to private charitable organizations and for college scholarships, and he said that voters should have the opportunity to vote on the question next November and to gain more information in the meantime. Don Russ re-read the question.

Jon Hirsch of Lake Bluff spoke in favor of putting the advisory referendum on the ballot, saying that he had "brought it forth" and that he felt the previous referendum was misleading. He said that the Township as a whole is a "community" and that if the Township takes grants away from the organizations in question, the Township's residents will be the ones who lose. He said the voters should have the opportunity

Jan Schnobrich of Lake Bluff said that townships had not been set up to provide General Assistance, but that several of them had undertaken the practice of giving excess tax dollars away to social service organizations and that it should be paid back to the taxpayers instead.

Chuck Fitzgerald of North Chicago, the previous Shields Township supervisor for 14 years, said that Shields is the most diverse township in Illinois and that people need to understand the needs in North Chicago, that he called the third poorest community in Illinois. He contrasted what he characterized as the lack of return of tax dollars paid to Springfield and Washington with the investment of dollars to these organizations in the Township. He said the grants had been fairly distributed in the Township.

Rick Bull of Lake Bluff acknowledged the social needs of the Township but questioned whether the Township was the appropriate body to address them, and he noted the administrative overhead involved in collecting and disbursing the tax dollars when done by the Township.

Mary Jane Hender of Lake Forest mentioned the example of Warren Buffet giving a great deal of his wealth to the Gates Foundation. She said that Shields Township had identified worthwhile social service organizations to support, and she represented one of them, "Reading Power, Inc.," involving volunteer tutors in North Chicago that had worked with 900 students. She said that the Township had provided critical support. She said that \$16 in taxes was insignificant compared to the amount of support the Township had provided to hers and other organizations.

Linda Heinsen of Lake Bluff said that we control of money when we keep the money and make our own donations to charity. She said the wording of the proposed referendum was misleading in that the Township would be duplicating. She said the organization wishing to receive funds would have to show that the Township would otherwise be offering the service, such as tutoring in reading, which she said was not a Township service.

Audrey Nixon, a County Board member from North Chicago, said that her town has the highest unemployment rate at 14 percent and that the social programs addressing the needs of her community need help.

Priscilla Brown of North Chicago said she had benefited from the NICASA program to combat alcoholism and substance abuse and stressed the importance for support of the NICASA treatment facility in North Chicago.

Aimee Messner of Lake Forest asked what the purpose of the referendum question was if it was only advisory. Moderator Russ pointed out that there was an earlier advisory Township referendum on the question of tax relief for senior citizen and that advisory referenda do not change laws or make policy.

Larry Bridges of North Chicago, a former trustee of Shields Township trustee for 17 years for Shields Township, said that other townships provide similar support for social service organizations and Shields Township had previously done so for many years.

Laurel Tustison of Lake Bluff, the executive director of Youth Build Lake County, said that her program provides a significant return of eight to fifteen times of the investment made in it in the cost that would otherwise be required. She made a motion to put the proposition on the ballot, seconded by David Tustison of Lake Bluff.

Gale Strenger Wayne, the current Shields Township supervisor, said she had held certain impressions of what the Township does before she took office. She invited the public to visit the Township to see what services are provided. She mentioned Health Reach as a worthwhile organization that had been supported by the Township and said that it had provided \$51,600 of value to Township residents by serving 172 individuals and filling 1,700 prescriptions. She also claimed that the grant of \$10,000 to I-PLUS, which manages government benefits for homeless individuals yielded \$100,000 of value. She said that if the organizations supported by the Township were allowed to flounder, it would prove more costly in the long run. She said that agencies supported by the Township are required to prove the benefits they will provide to the Township. She made the point that the majority of current General Assistance recipients are from Lake Forest and not from North Chicago.

Waddell Brooks from North Chicago spoke of the history of trying to obtain a loan to build Daisy's Resource Center in North Chicago, a residential facility for young, undereducated women who have often been wards of the State, which facility is headed by his wife, Dr. Daisy Brooks. He said that Waukegan Township provides many more services than Shields Township and that Daisy's Resource Center had only received \$2,000 as a grant from Shields Township in comparison to other organizations that had been awarded much larger amounts. He pointed out that the Township's trustees could take action without a referendum.

John McIntosh of Lake Bluff said he was interested in more information and that putting the question on the ballot would enable the public to learn about the issue before voting on it.

Debbie Burns of Lake Bluff said it was her understanding that the voters of Shields Township had already voted on this question and had voted "no," indicating that they did not want the Township's tax dollars to be used to support private charities. She said it was wrong to contend that the voters did not understand the issue when they voted on it previously, that a vote had been cast and a decision was made. She added that there a lot of good reasons for individuals to support the worthy causes that had been mentioned but concluded by saying that the previously expressed "will of the people should be heard."

Cheri Richardson of Lake Bluff, the Executive Director of Mother's Trust Foundation, said that her organization had received \$12,000 from Shields Township in the past year. She said that their organization had helped 211 children with about that same amount of money. Their mission is to help needy children in small but important ways with grants averaging one hundred dollars. She noted that

North Chicago is not the only community experiencing financial distress in Shields Township, saying she learned that there are 79 homes in the foreclosure process in Lake Bluff. She says that they often partner with Shields Township and other social service organizations, such as Catholic Charities and the Salvation Army, to address certain family problems. She argued that it was important for the residents to have a better understanding of the Township's past practice of making social service grants and that there would not be any harm in putting the question on the ballot.

Mark Goodman of Lake Bluff said the question should not be whether a significant number of Township residents are suffering in some ways or whether the organizations attempting to address various social service needs are worthy of support. Rather, he said, it should be a question of whether supporting them was a proper function of township government and expressed the view that it is not. He added that giving the charitable donation role to government cost the taxpayers the right to decide individually what organizations they wish to support.

Ashanta Wiley of North Chicago said that she had participated in the Youth Build program after having been in trouble. She expressed her appreciation for the past support that the Township had given the organization, which she said had led to her employment.

Peter Sexton of Lake Bluff, a former Township trustee, said he agreed with Mark Goodman. He pointed out that a surplus equals its annual governmental expenses. Without excessive taxation, he said there would be no debate. He suggested asking the Township's trustees to give back the unneeded instead of having them consider where else to spend it.

With no further speakers on the question, Moderator Don Russ then suggested that the group was prepared to vote, noted that eligible voters had been issued a green sticker, and instructed the group to place their green sticker on the paper ballot after voting "Yes" or "No" on the question.

Moderator Russ said he had counted the number of signatures on the sign-in sheets and said it was the same as the number of ballots that had been cast. He announced that the result as 72 in favor of holding the advisory referendum on the question that had been discussed and 88 opposed to it and that there would, therefore, not be a referendum.

7. Resolution Setting the Date for the 2011 Annual Town Meeting

A motion was made and seconded to set the date for the 2011 Annual Town Meeting on the second Tuesday in April and was then adopted on a voice vote.

8. Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded and adopted on a voice vote to adjourn the 2010 Annual Town Meeting of the Shields Township Electors at 7:45 p.m.

Attest

Donald E. Russ, Moderator

David N. Barkhausen, Town Clerk