



WEESAW TOWNSHIP
New Troy, MI 49119



SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
Wednesday, August 3, 2022

CALL TO ORDER: Supervisor Sommers called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Board Members Present: Art King, Gary Sommers, Robert Warmbein; Members Absent:
Wanda Green and Michelle Tackitt

Others Present: Mike Metz, Weesaw Township Cemetery Committee; Kraig Pike, Pike
Funeral and Cremation Services

Note: The following has been prepared from an audio recording of the August 3, 2022, Special
Board Meeting. The recording was made by Mike Metz and summarized by Jack
Dodds.

Approving membership in the Merit Network: Chairman Sommers indicated that James
Pelletier, chair of the Township's broadband committee, has requested that the
Township become a member of the Merit Network. [Note: The Merit Network is a
nonprofit organization created by Michigan's public universities to "provide network,
security and community services to member organizations."] Membership is free for 2
years and then \$1,500 per year thereafter. Sommers' name would appear on the
account.

Motion by King, support by Warmbein, to approve subscription for 2 years, to be
reviewed by the Township Board at the end of that period. Motion carried
unanimously.

Update: Berrien County Emergency Management Plan: Rocky Adams, Berrien County
Emergency Management Division Commander, has been promoting the update to the
County's Emergency Management Plan and asking local units of government to review
the plan and suggest revisions. Sommers and Warmbein have reviewed the 25-page
summary of the 800 page document. Neither saw any need for significant changes.
Warmbein noted that the plan has worked effectively in the past.

Motion by Warmbein, supported by Sommers, to endorse the plan. Motion carried
unanimously.

Columbaria for Weesaw Township Cemeteries: Mike Metz presented a columbarium Power
Point review of various kinds of columbaria in local cemeteries and as offered for sale.
Drawing upon comments by Kraig Pike of Pike Funerals, Warmbein and Metz observed
that Lake Township had not planned effectively for the installation of their columbaria
nor for future needs. Also, they both preferred a different design, hexagonal in shape
rather than rectangular, as in Lake Township.

Metz and the Board discussed differing columbarium designs (rectangular, round, hexagonal, curved), cost, and practicality of design. They also considered a variety of locations for placement in New Troy and Glendora cemeteries.

Kraig Pike of Pike Funeral and Cremation Services joined the discussion and made a number of observations and recommendations that covered the following topics:

- Planning: He encouraged the Board to recognize that the first columbarium the Township purchases will not be the last. Cremation has become 75% of his business. They are “the wave of the future.” The cost of cremation and interment in a columbarium niche runs approximately \$1,450 (\$900 for a niche in a columbarium that will accommodate 2 sets of ashes, \$150-\$200 for opening/closing of the niche, and \$300-\$400 for a plaque or engraving). By contrast, a funeral and interment in a grave runs \$10,500 to \$11,800. Families find cremation a much more affordable alternative. The Township should plan carefully for location, design, and size (Pike recommends that to be economical, a columbarium should have at least 72 niches).
- Columbarium ordinance: Pike emphasized the importance of an effective ordinance. He indicated that Lincoln Township provides a good ordinance to provide a model. A good ordinance covers guidelines for keeping the niches neat in appearance (e.g., only plaques or engravings on the niche, no pictures) and the display of flowers (for 30 days, their height above the vase not to encroach upon the niche above). Note: urns within a niche are not required. Pike recommends engravings rather than plaques on the niches.
- Construction/installation funding: Pike noted that columbaria won’t make a lot of money for a Township, but they pay for themselves, and they help to reduce cemetery maintenance costs. The first columbarium generates funds to install the second, which in turn pays for the third, which then goes to help pay for cemetery maintenance. The cost of a columbarium (\$22,000-\$35,000) is determined by materials + foundation + surrounding walkway. The construction process: footing, then columbarium, then surrounding sidewalk. Throughout the process of planning, columbarium purchase, installation, niche sales, and interment, Pike recommends careful budgeting by the Township to ensure that it recovers all of its costs. (For example, Pike recommends setting non-resident fees to ensure that Township columbaria don’t become “a dumping ground” for non-resident burials.)
- Columbaria as an investment: Pike and Mike Metz briefly discussed the practice of an investor purchasing a block of cemetery plots, erecting a columbarium on that space, and then selling the niches to make a profit. (The Township would own the columbarium.) Metz recommended that a columbarium ordinance should forbid the sale of blocks of lots to columbarium developers.

Following Kraig Pike’s departure, the Board turned to specific planning for columbaria: (1) the economics of two columbaria, one each in New Troy and Glendora cemeteries, (2) differing designs to allow choices by residents, (3) possible locations in each, (4) necessary site work to permit installation.

Metz proposed that deciding on a basic columbarium design would allow the Township to approach columbarium sellers for prices. Those present favor a hexagonal design as most attractive and functional. It was decided to approach the Coldspring company and one other for designs and pricing. King proposed getting prices for two designs and two sizes (72 and 96 niches), one for each cemetery.

Adjourn: Motion by Warmbein, supported by King to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m.
Approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted, Jack Dodds