

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF PIKE TOWNSHIP,
MARION COUNTY, INDIANA**

May 1, 2019

In attendance: Board Members Present: Peggy Simmons, Marcia Lomax, David Willis, Steve Anderson, and Claudette Peterson. **Present:** Trustee Annette Johnson.

Opening Comments by Present Willis: President Willis called the meeting to order and explained that the meeting was an informational one.

PTFD Report re: Dive Team: Chief Borel gave an introductory presentation on his thought process for removing the Dive Team from PTFD's Water Rescue Program. In essence, the dive team creates an unnecessary risk to diver safety when the potential for reward is virtually non-existent. Additionally, there are vacancies within the dive team that are not being filled by certified divers within the Department, yet those divers who refuse to be on the dive team still receive technical pay since they are certified divers.

Chief Borel then gave the floor to Chief of Operations, Steve Mitchell, who offered the following information:

- The Water Rescue Program includes more than "dive." Dive is only one part of the Water Rescue Program and its job is "recovery" not "rescue."
- Mitchell explained that virtually all water rescues are top water rescues. Divers do not rescue people. Divers only come into play when someone or something goes underwater; the divers then recover that item or body.
- 2017 – Dive team only dove once.
- 2018 – Dive team dove four times. Three times for a vehicle and once to recover a dead body.
- 2019 – Only 1 dive to date, and it was in Putnam County. This was not a rescue operation, but a recovery operation as the individual had been underwater for 5 hours.
- In the last 20 years, PTFD has never rescued a live person. No live person has been rescued by any dive team across the State.
- In this same time period, 32 divers across the country have died during recovery efforts or during training.
- Pike residents will still have access to a dive team through IFD, DNR and the Indiana State Police.
- Bottom line/takeaway: Once a person goes underwater, a life is already lost, why risk lives trying to save folks who have already passed?

The following questions/concerns from the Board and Public were addressed:

- Dive team equipment will be repurposed for Swift Water Rescue or will be sold.
- The Board was not informed about the decision because the administration decided to tell the divers first. Unfortunately, the messaging got away from PTFD and the divers took matters into their own hands by calling the media, HOAs, etc. Chief Borel apologized to the Board for catching them off guard.

- Chief Borel and his team did have conversations with the divers before making this decision. Mitchell was the captain of the dive house before being promoted to admin. The admin staff knew that the divers were unhappy with this decision, but the administration made the decision because it is in the best interest of the diver's safety. This administration is not going to put fire fighters lives in danger when there is no chance of saving a life.
- Divers are not losing their jobs. They are still fire fighters with the department and won't be reclassified into different houses.
- PTFD is still in the water rescue business. Top water rescue remains intact and stronger than ever.
- The discontinuation of the Dive Team will become effective June 15, 2019.
- Diving is unsafe because there is limited visibility underwater. Also, divers can get caught up with the communication lines getting tangled with cars, debris, etc.

Trustee Vehicle: President Willis explained that Trustee had permission from the Board to use a "pool vehicle." Per Indiana Code, Trustees can either collect mileage reimbursement or drive a department car. Initially, Trustee was driving an old pool vehicle, but then President Willis got calls that Trustee was driving a new car. The Board wanted to understand why Trustee was driving a new vehicle.

Chief Borel explained that there were three pool vehicles that were in operation at the beginning of the year. All three vehicles were "junk" and there was money in the budget to buy new vehicles, so Trustee got one of them. Chief Borel explained that the car was purchased the same way all PTFD cars are bought, through the State's QPA.

Township Attorney: President Willis wanted the minutes to reflect that he wants the Township Board to have its own attorney. He feels as though Russ Sipes is not representing the Township, but simply representing Trustee Johnson.

Deputy Trustee Brishon Bond: Attorney Sipes explained to the Board that news of Mr. Bond's arrest became known to the Trustee through social media. Mr. Bond was immediately placed on administrative leave without pay. When charges were filed against Mr. Bond, the Trustee terminated his employment as Deputy Trustee. Mr. Bond did not have access to Township funds and his access to the building, computer systems, etc. has been disconnected.

Meeting was adjourned.

Secretary of the Board

Marcia Honey

Attested by

Annette M. Johnson