

TOWN HALL

May 3, 2012

Chairman Jim Dickinson called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. Trustees Jim Mueller and Justin Madden were present. Mrs. Gerri Heck, Mr. Gene Layne, and Chief Carroll were present from the Township. Mr. Bob Phillips and Mr. Joe Cattell were present from Geauga County. Many Russell Township residents attended the meeting to participate in the discussion.

This was a special meeting called for the purpose of hosting a forum for the discussion of the Hemlock Point Road project. This meeting was properly sunshined. The reading of the minutes and other formalities were dispensed with until the next regular meeting.

Mr. Dickinson identified five issues that need to be addressed regarding the Hemlock Point Road widening project: Safety, Aesthetics, Liability, Costs, & Efficiency. In answer to Mr. Dickinson's question about the safety of Hemlock Point Road, Mr. Phillips, Geauga County Engineer, responded that "It (Hemlock Point Road) is not unsafe, but it could be made safer."

Mr. Phillips went on to describe the "clear zone" that he would like to see on Hemlock Point Road. Based on the speed of Hemlock Point, trees and large obstructions should come down within 13 feet of the edge of the road, and 23 feet from the centerline of the road. Many shaggy bark trees have already been removed from the clear zone due to the presence and imminent nesting of the endangered Indiana bat.

Mrs. Pincus, Hemlock Point Road resident, experienced the removal of approximately 70 trees from her property with no advance notice. She does not support the widening and feels strongly that the speed on Hemlock Point Road will increase if the road is widened. Mr. Phillips noted that speeding on newly paved roads increases for a 30 day period and then settles down. Police Chief Carroll has observed an increase in speed on Caves Road since it was widened.

Mr. Frank Mecklenburg, Hemlock Point Road resident, asked where the pressure for this road widening project was coming from. Mr. Phillips responded that he took an oath as a professional engineer to uphold safety in the State of Ohio.

Mr. Tom Warren, Russell Township resident, asked Mr. Phillips directly if he would return Hemlock Point Road to Russell Township. Mr. Phillips' response was that he would not return Hemlock Point Road to Russell Township.

Mr. Dickinson asked if there are other alternatives or a Plan B. Mr. Phillips explained that the Ohio Department of Transportation has the ultimate authority on whether or not to give the road back to the Township.

Mr. Mark Davis, Hemlock Point Road resident, asked if there is any pressing calendar need to perform the Hemlock Point Road widening this year instead of in the future. Mr. Phillips responded that the age of the pavement, 17 years, is what precipitated the project. He explained that the road is not impassable, and that the road would survive one more winter. Mr. Dickinson took that to mean that Mr. Phillips

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was willing to put the project on hold for one year. Mr. Phillips explained that delay in the project would cause him to lose the window to build in the summer season.

Dr. Barbara Berkeley, Hemlock Point Road resident, expressed her objection to delaying the project. The momentum to protect Hemlock Point Road must be maintained. She wants to continue to seek commitments from the Trustees and the County Commissioners that they will stop the widening project.

Mr. Mueller explained that eliminating \$350,000.00 of paving expenses by trading Hemlock Point Road to Geauga County seemed like a good idea at the time. The Trustees did not know that the widening project was coming. Mr. Mueller now acknowledges that the Trustees made a bad trade.

Mr. Madden stated that he is not in favor of the road widening project if it is an unnecessary one.

*Mr. Jim Mueller made the motion for the Russell Township Trustees to send a letter to the County Commissioners indicating that the Trustees have had considerable opposition from residents to the Hemlock Point Road widening project, and that if the County Commissioners offer the road back to the Township the Trustees will accept it. Mr. Madden seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

Dr. Barbara Berkeley will be sent a copy of the letter, and it will be placed on the Township website.

Upon the motion of Mr. Madden and seconded by Mr. Mueller the meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

James G. Dickinson  
Chairman

Gerri Heck  
Fiscal Officer  
Recorded by: M. Palmer