

AMSA BOARD
Area Metropolitan Services Agency
W.K. Kellogg Airport
Airport Conference Room
15551 South Airport Road
Battle Creek, MI 49015
Tuesday, June 4, 2019
10:00 AM

Members Present: Susan Baldwin, Rebecca Fleury (10:30), Marcie Gillette, City of Battle Creek: Tim Hill and Steve Buller, Emmett Township: Kevin Catlin (10:30), City of Springfield: Jason Farmer, Convis Township: Dave Morgan and Barb Darlington, Pennfield Township: Troy Radcliff, Newton Township: Marty Uldriks and Bill Scutt, Bedford Township: Kelli Scott, Calhoun County

Members Absent: Chris Simmons, City of Battle Creek: Terry Blanair, City of Springfield: Laveta Hardish and Doug Chapman, Leroy Township: Rande Johnson, Bedford Township: Steve Frisbee, Calhoun County (non-voting members).

Guests: Rick Bolek, Chief Building Official, City of Battle Creek

Others Present: Vicki Houser, Battle Creek City Clerk

Call to order/Recognition of Quorum: Mr. Morgan called the meeting to order at 10:04 am, noting a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made by Susan Baldwin, supported by Tim Hill, to approve the March 5, 2019 AMSA Board minutes. All yes, none opposed. Motion approved.

Discussion of Large Scale Solar Panel Systems

Jason Farmer, Convis Township Supervisor, shared information regarding a large scale solar system project discussed with his Township Planning Board, noting there would be an open house to obtain more information on Monday, June 10th, beginning at 5:00 pm. Mr. Farmer noted the solar panels would cover about 1,200 acres, and the use would be compliant with their ordinances, noting the planning and township boards have been reviewing the application, stating he expected the request to pass. Mr. Farmer noted the size of one structure would be 15ft x 300 ft., set on an axel, with a pivot to turn east to west, which would require soil borings for the pier. Mr. Farmer confirmed the company would have an administrative building, approximately 2-3,000 feet, which would include building, mechanical, electrical and plumbing inspections, along with some transmission structures, and utility connections.

Mr. Farmer requested the Board provide recommendations for the fees for this type and size project, noting the current \$0.28 per square foot fee for vacant space would amount to \$400,000, which would be too much for a large scale operation. In addition to the fee structure, Mr. Farmer noted the 180 day expiration on permits would need to be addressed, as the project was planned over 3 years.

Board members noted a permit would not expire if progress was being made, while another member noted the permits could be set up on a per parcel basis, to be issued as being installed. Board members also considered using the state method of valuation, instead of the current method of basing the fees on the square footage. Board members discussed exemptions for agricultural use, including barns, green houses and sprinklers.

Mr. Buller noted the State of Michigan charges a permit fee of \$1,000 per \$1 million investment.

Mr. Farmer noted the new governor may change how solar power is assessed, taking it out of local government control. As to the proposed project, Mr. Farmer stated the township gains nothing, the residents who lease the property would. Mr. Farmer also noted their ordinance included a decommissioning clause, offering to share the ordinance with the board members.

Mr. Radcliff confirmed Newton Township has been approached, with questions regarding zoning regulations. Mr. Radcliff stated local homeowners have installed small projects for residential use. Mr. Radcliff also noted the electric companies will not pay for the power generated, but will issue a credit.

Mr. Bolek noted the ICC model uses the Dodge reports and Builders Exchange to determine construction costs in the region the project is in, allowing for an average or reasonable idea of what the fees should be. Mr. Bolek stated that by breaking the project down into individual structures, there would be an admin fee and inspections for each structure, allowing for multiple inspections per day, stating they needed to determine the man hours needed.

Mr. Buller expected the need for two electrical inspections.

Mr. Bolek asked if the panels would all be connected, to become one unit.

Mr. Farmer confirmed there would be a connection between each unit, plugging them together.

Mr. Farmer stated an inspection would be needed to ensure the steel I beam was placed properly, 8-10 feet depending on what the soil is like.

Mr. Morgan asked if it might be wise to have one municipal attorney work on a proposed ordinance and guidelines for all of the AMSA municipalities to follow. Mr. Morgan also volunteered to contact Greg Moore, Consumers Energy, to provide additional information to the Board on other municipalities' practices and impacts.

Mr. Farmer stated it may be better for each municipality to work with their planning commissions and attorneys, noting the many differences in each jurisdiction. Mr. Farmer informed the Board that Marshall's ordinance contains coverage percentage guidelines, such as 15%, which means only 15 acres could be used for every 100 acres. Mr. Farmer stated Convis does not currently over regulate, allowing property owners to use their property as they wish, but to keep it clean and maintained.

Ms. Scott asked if the energy company is required to purchase alternative energy.

Mr. Farmer confirmed the energy company is required to purchase alternative energy, also informing the board that solar energy production receives less federal funding than all other energy producers.

Responding to Ms. Baldwin, Mr. Farmer noted there are 660 acres per section, and 36 sections per township, noting his township was 6 miles by 6 miles. Mr. Farmer also noted their landfill produced methane, with turbines generating power, stating they would be considering solar panels at this site eventually.

Ms. Scott noted the City of Ann Arbor has expedited permit fee, charging \$20 per 3 piece set.

Mr. Farmer stated the project would have logs and soil reports, along with installation instructions, for inspection.

Mr. Radcliff asked if the inspectors were trained to ensure compliance with the depth of the holes for installation.

Mr. Bolek stated the inspector would be the municipal's representative to ensure the project complies with the engineering plans. As to the fees, time to review the plans and reports, along with time to drive to the site, should be considered.

Mr. Farmer noted one single inspection could cover 300 panels, taking one to two hours.

Mr. Buller suggested a minimum \$600 administration fee.

Board members agreed actual costs for each municipality would depend on wages and benefits, or if contracting inspections to outside agency.

Mr. Buller suggested an AMSA Board workshop.

Mr. Farmer, noting the investor needs to get 10% of the concrete installations in this year, stated they needed something soon. Mr. Farmer stated it may be best to work independently, possibly charging per inspection, one inspection per concrete pad.

Mr. Morgan suggested the board meet on Tuesday, July 16th, at Battle Creek Department of Public Works.

Ms. Scott recommended researching other municipalities' fees.

Ms. Baldwin also suggested reviewing other states fees and requirements, stating they do not want to discourage this type of investment.

Municipal Services: Collaboration

Mr. Morgan summarized the previous AMSA Board meeting, noting local fire chiefs could work together to standardize equipment and participate in joint purchasing and grant opportunities to benefit all of the local department. Mr. Morgan asked if the County could institute a purchasing program that everyone could participate in.

Ms. Scott, confirming the County has a purchasing department, stated the problem was that the equipment was not all the same throughout the county departments. Ms. Scott stated it was important to standardize the equipment to get the economies of scale.

Mr. Morgan stated the municipal leaders should set the standards, directing the local fire departments to work together.

Mr. Radcliff and Mr. Uldriks discussed the different equipment used among the county departments, stating there are adaptors, but they are difficult to use, also stating it takes time for the departments to get on the same purchasing schedules to standardize equipment. Both agreed it would be great if they could take the best from all of the manufacturers into one great product. Both stated it is ultimately a safety issue, stating standardization would allow all departments to work seamlessly on large incidents.

Ms. Scott recommended each municipality create an inventory of all equipment and an analysis of the replacement schedule, and to research future purchasing savings, getting everyone on the same purchasing cycle.

Mr. Uldriks emphasized the importance of working together on grant applications, stating there was a better chance of being awarded a grant when more population is included.

Mr. Morgan also suggested the municipalities consider collaborating on insurance and benefit policies, resulting in lower costs and better products.

Ms. Scott noted there are health care collaboratives in the area, particularly for municipalities, stating they would each need to determine if they would save, recommending they have someone come to a meeting to present information.

Ms. Fleury noted MML has a health pool for municipalities, suggesting MTA may also.

As to Inspection services, Ms. Gillette stated it was difficult to compete with trade professionals, noting the continued difficulty finding qualified inspectors. Ms. Gillette noted the local municipalities have shared inspectors for a long time.

Ms. Scott recommended they create a roster of qualified individuals who will be available as back-up inspectors, noting the county does this with attorneys.

Mr. Radcliff informed the board that Athens has hired a company, Safebuilt, that handles all inspections and paperwork, noting it is a simple and efficient process. Mr. Radcliff stated all projects in Newton Township start with zoning, which must begin with the administrative personnel.

Mr. Hill cautioned all inspectors enforce state codes, noting he has heard complaints about other municipalities enforcing the code differently.

Ms. Gillette stated it was important that each trade be analyzed, to determine the volume of work, to understand the level of personnel needed.

Reports

4th Quarter Treasurer Report

Mr. Catlin presented the 4th Quarter Treasurer reports, noting there were few expenses, with printing and reproduction expenses under last year's amounts. Mr. Catlin stated they were currently under budget, at 83.6% spent, noting there were no legal fees.

A motion was made by Mr. Farmer, supported by Mr. Hill, to approve the 4th Quarter Treasurer reports. All yes, none opposed. Motion approved.

FY 2019-2020 AMSA Budget

Mr. Catlin noted he kept the amounts the same in the next fiscal year, stating he is unsure how the dues for each municipality are calculated. Mr. Catlin also asked if the secretarial contract was rotated among the AMSA municipalities.

Mr. Buller stated Emmett had the secretarial contract before Battle Creek.

Mr. Catlin stated his municipality was not interested in serving as secretary.

A motion was made by Mr. Farmer, supported by Mr. Scutt, to approve the FY 2019-2020 AMSA Budget. All yes, none opposed. Motion approved.

Member Comments

Board members congratulated Convis Township, stating it was an exciting project.

Next Meeting: AMSA Workshop, July 16, 2019 at 10:00 am, Battle Creek Department of Public Works: AMSA Board meeting, September 3, 2019: location and time to be determined.

Adjournment : Mr. Morgan adjourned the Board meeting at 11:35 pm.