



Edwardsville Township approves 2015-2016 budget reduction; addresses Township Park issues

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At the monthly meeting of the Edwardsville Township Board of Trustees held on Tuesday, April 28, the Board approved budgets, reviewed contracts and projects and addressed issues regarding the operating hours of the Robert C. Stille Edwardsville Township Community Park.

Township Supervisor Frank Miles opened the meeting with a moment of silence in honor of Marvin "Bird" Braundmeier, former Edwardsville Township Trustee, who passed away earlier in the week. According to Township Supervisor Miles, Mr. Braundmeier was very active with Township youth programs and both he and former Supervisor Bob Stille spearheaded the development of Township Park.

The Board then honored the Main Street Community Center, which is celebrating 40 years serving the greater Edwardsville Area. Supervisor Miles acknowledged this milestone by providing a proclamation to the Center which proclaimed April 29, 2015 as Main Street Community Center Day. Deb Ellis, President of the Board of Directors for the Main Street Community Center was on hand to accept the proclamation. The Township is a key supporter of the Center along with the City of Edwardsville.

The Board also approved the extension of two contracts with Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville's Department of Public Administration and Policy Analysis for the continued support of Graduate Assistant interns. According to Supervisor Miles, these graduate student interns support projects related to the Supervisor's Office and Township Park. The new contracts will be in effect from May 16, 2015 to August 14, 2015.

Supervisor Miles said, "The graduate student intern supporting the Township Office will complete projects related to the implementation of the Township's communication and

marketing strategies with the Township's website and social media accounts and complete our website transparency project for all Township records, information, reports and actions." Miles said another new project will be to develop a way to directly engage residents via citizen surveys over the internet on what they want to see and direction of their Township government.

Previous projects of the current graduate student intern assisted with the development of a new website and the creation of a compliance program with the Illinois Policy Institute's Sunshine in Government project. This program will post all available Township records, reports, financial documents, checkbooks, contracts and agreements online. The previous intern, April Crew-Kelly, who developed these is graduating with her Master's in Public Administration.

The other contract approved with SIUE for a graduate student intern from the Department of Public Administration and Policy Analysis is to support projects related to Township Park. This contract is also from May 16, 2015 to August 14, 2015.

According to Supervisor Miles, "This graduate student intern will complete projects including planning the Township's special Park events, which include the 2015 Touch-A-Truck, planned for early October, the 2015 Business After Hours in August, and the Township's participation in the Route 66 Festival and the Rotary Criterium. The student will also assist with coordinating several capital improvements at the Park including the installation of the year round restroom, the solar lighting project and PEV charger and other park projects like implementing the ADA Transition plan to make more of our park amenities accessible."

Mary Castillo, the previous graduate student intern, spearheaded the development of several park projects such as the Touch a Truck Event, Business After Hours, Family Kite Day and created our ADA Transition Plan. According to Miles, the creation of the ADA plan itself would have cost the Township thousands of dollars to complete should they have hired that out to a private firm.

Supervisor Miles said, "Both of these graduate student interns provided invaluable service to the Township and their contribution to our community will be missed. I am hopeful we can obtain two other interns through the University to help us as we grow our projects and programs."

In other action, the Township Board approved the FY 2015-16 Budget and Appropriation Ordinance. Both Supervisor Miles and Trustee Randy Williamson detailed issues regarding the budget to the Board, who approved the budget unanimously.

Supervisor Miles said, “This budget outlines spending for the Town Fund, IMRF Fund, Social Security Fund, and GA Fund. It also provides for the first time, a Capital Development Fund and an Accrued Time Fund, as established by the Financial Reserve Policy the Board approved and was recommended by the Financial Services Committee.”

Trustee Williamson noted that this budget is a 14% reduction in overall spending when compared to the FY2014-15 budget. The General Town Fund Budget, includes the costs to operate the Assessor’s office of \$212,169.00 and includes the operation of Township Park which has a budget of \$160,000.00 which includes salaries of our park maintenance staff and equipment and building maintenance and development. The budget also includes an overall Supervisor’s office administration budget of \$234,800.00 – which is a 32% reduction from last year’s administration budget and includes elected official’s salaries, most of which have been cut in half, office staff salaries and health insurance, insurance – general liability, unemployment, work comp, equipment maintenance and improvement, and community projects in the park and elsewhere.

Supervisor Miles said, “Per the new Financial Reserve Policy, we are now transferring \$150,000 from the Town Fund to the Capital Development Fund for the purpose of specific capital improvement projects.”

“This will be important to maintain the new playgrounds which have been constructed, in addition to funding needed capital improvements at the park. We anticipate receiving \$43,500 in grant funding for these larger park improvement projects which include assistance with the renovation of the A-7 Corsair, installation of the year round restroom, installation of the solar panel and PEV charger and renovating the front restroom to meet ADA compliance,” according to Supervisor Miles.

Supervisor Miles said, “We anticipate spending nearly all of this fund for park capital improvements, as has been our priority these past two years and as public use increases – we need to meet the challenges with keeping the park operating and all amenities in working order.”

The Township’s IMRF Fund, or retirement fund, is the Township’s contribution to the employee and official pension program. The Trustees, Supervisor, Highway Commissioner and Clerk do not receive pension benefits, nor are covered under any other benefit program.

Supervisor Miles said, “The Township received a notice from IMRF increasing our contribution rates but we were still able to reduce this budget by 8 percent by some of our elected officials opting out of these programs.”

Regarding the General Assistance Fund, Supervisor Miles said, “The Supervisor has sole responsibility to manage the Township’s General Assistance or GA Fund, This fund includes the monetary assistance given to recipients and administration of the General Assistance and Emergency Assistance programs (a portion of staff costs, supplies, equipment, etc.) The Township has established partnerships and relationships with area agencies and churches to increase the awareness of the General Assistance program and have reached more residents that may qualify.”

Supervisor Miles reported, “Our efforts have increased the number of GA recipients by 63 percent. Still, typically, only one in four applicants will qualify for assistance, but each applicant’s eligibility must still be determined and that is where there is significant staff time.”

The Board then turned their attention towards the issue of the opening and closing times of the Park. Supervisor Miles said, “At the March 2015 meeting of the Board, we discussed closing times for the Edwardsville Township Community Park. As the popularity of our amenities at the park grows, the number of park guests has risen and it is becoming difficult to clear the park at closing time. In addition, guests are parking in the lots and then utilizing the trails past dusk, leaving their vehicles to be locked in the park. EPD has been called at least two times this spring to unlock the gates after dusk. Taking the comments and suggestions from the board and staff, we will establish winter and summer hours for the park. Summer hours will be from 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. and will take place between April 1 and November 30. Winter hours will be from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. from December 1 through March 31. We will order signage and publicize the new closing hours at the park and on our website.”

Supervisor Miles said, “We will also begin to stagger park staff schedules to ensure the park is staffed during all hours of operation. This step is probably one of the most important since the park is now heavily used and maintenance or certain resident needs requires staff to be on site to address matters as they arise.”

The Board also received an update on the recent Family Kite Day held at the Park on April 18. Supervisor Miles reported that more than 350 parents, children, and even grandparents attended the event which included free kite making activities and a stunt kite show from 180 Go!.

Supervisor Miles also informed the Board on the progress of the transparency initiative that he started undertaking more than two years ago. Using a check list provided by Illinois Policy Institute, the Township has evaluated the information available on their website and have identified ways to improve the website to meet the guidelines set forth by the Illinois Policy Institute.

“We have a goal of 100 percent transparency and are close to reaching it. Our SIUE intern has been working daily on setting up our website to comply with these transparency guidelines. A challenge here is that much of the items from before our administration have been hard to identify. The transparency score is based on the past five years. We have the past two and a half years of information, but we will work on this to see if there is information that can be reconstructed,” reported Supervisor Miles.

Supervisor Miles also updated the Board on the status of the Wi-Fi project at Township Park. Supervisor Miles said, “Since installing this free service at the park, we have seen the Wi-Fi traffic explode. In the last month alone, we have had more than 300 unique devices access our Wi-Fi which have transmitted more than 27 GB of data through our system. Usage significantly peaks during on the weekends and after 4:00 p.m. on weekdays.”

Related to that, Supervisor Miles also told the Board that as part of the marketing of our Kite Day event the Township tried a FaceBook ad campaign for five days prior to the event. “We targeted users within a 10 mile radius with interests in parenting, outdoor rec and fitness. This campaign resulted in 10 fold increase in our FB page likes from 31 to 343. These new likes have increased our FB page and website visibility as well. The Township website has seen a significant increase in views with those following the page with automatic updates has increased from 4 to 64,” said Supervisor Miles.

Supervisor Miles said “Finally, analytic data from FB and our website indicate that the individuals accessing our sites are younger than the average township voter, primarily women between the ages of 18-44. The cost of this effort was \$100.”

Supervisor Miles also announced the beginning details of an event coming up that he has been advocating for some time. “It’s what we are calling our Social Services Safety Net event scheduled to take place on Friday, June 7. As you know the Township has a role in ensuring that the most basic needs of citizens are met. This is the foundation of the GA and EA programs. This event is being designed to bring together all the social services providers, like the churches, food pantry and others, within the Township to help establish a collaborative effort to better coordinate resources and best serve our

residents in need. With declining funds from the state and the federal government, there is an even more pressing need to collaborate. We are working with the Glen Ed Ministerial Alliance to make this a reality and more details to come on this event in the coming days.”

Edwardsville Township is comprised of the City of Edwardsville, Village of Glen Carbon and unincorporated areas just outside of these two municipalities. The Township Supervisor’s office is located at 300 West Park in Edwardsville and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.on Monday and Friday and from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Learn more about Edwardsville Township online at www.edwardsvilletownship.com or contact the Township Offices by phone at