

ORANGEVILLE TOWNSHIP BOARD SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

JULY 9, 2024

Meeting called to order 7pm. All board members present, Fire Chief Ribble absent with notice, 22 guests

Pledge of allegiance

Reason for special meeting. Supervisor Rook stated that in reviewing questionnaire from the auditors the final question was maintaining ethical behavior and appropriate business practices. He asked Clerk Risner and Treasurer Ritchie if they had any question or input regarding the final question. Clerk Risner replied that she felt that it was necessary to bring up in a special meeting that Trustee Ribble allowed Candidate Corey Ribble who had not submitted a FOIA access to township invoices and made copies and left with them, as seen on security camera in the office of the treasurer where election tabulators were stored while charging in the treasurer's locked office. She felt it was necessary to be transparent so that voters could be assured no tampering of election equipment occurred and to preserve the integrity of the township board in being transparent. Treasurer Ritchie stated that neither Trustee Ribble or Candidate Ribble should have been in her office at 8:30 at night.

Trustee Ribble maintained that this special meeting was illegal and should not be occurring for two reasons. One, that the special meeting was being held without written approval by the board, even though the it complied with the 18-hour notice requirement. Secondly, that neither Linda Ribble or Corey Ribble had given their consent to the video recording.

Supervisor Rook allowed the meeting to go forth.

Clerk Risner was notified by Treasurer Ritchie that someone was in her office at 8:30 on the evening of July 3, 2024. Clerk Risner viewed Trustee Ribble and Candidate Ribble using her tabulators as a desk to sort through township invoices.

Clerk Risner stated she had contacted the township attorney on how to proceed in this matter. The attorney stated it was necessary to hold an open meeting for transparency and not do so under closed session. The attorney further stated since this involved access to election equipment with all the election issues Barry County had experienced it was important to be transparent. Clerk Risner also stated that this could have been avoided had Corey Ribble submitted a FOIA request. Clerk Risner maintained that Trustee Ribble had every right to review the invoices she had requested Clerk Risner leave out, but that Corey Ribble did not have a right to go through them or be allowed access to the tabulators especially with him being a candidate and an IT tech.

Trustee Ribble stated she used the tabulators as a desk, absent mindedly. Corey Ribble stated he didn't even realize they were tabulators; he only saw it as a black tabletop.

Treasurer Ritchie said she was unaware Trustee Ribble had a key to her office. Treasurer Ritchie was visibly upset that someone might have access to her office as she deals with thousands of dollars in checks and cash. Trustee Ribble said she'd had a key for 20 years and had only entered the office because that is where the copy machine was.

Trustee Ribble and Corey Ribble stated his presence was only there to assist his grandmother in using the copy machine.

Clerk Risner and Treasurer Ritchie contended that it was obvious Trustee Ribble knew how to operate the copy machine and that Corey Ribble was obtaining and going through the invoices.

Trustee Kraai stated that no one should have been in the treasurer's private office. He stated emphatically that Corey had no business being in that office and that an apology was owed to Treasurer Ritchie. He maintained that it was not necessary for trustees to have keys to the offices and that any township business should occur during normal office hours.

Supervisor Rook stated that no copies containing township account information and financial information should be made or leave the office. Corey Ribble confirmed he had made copies of a couple of the checks.

Public Comment;

Corey Ribble asked if other candidates had access to the treasurer's office. Treasurer Ritchie responded her deputy had access but was never alone in the office. Deputy Treasurer Brittnee Risner stated if elected you would have to resign her position before being allowed to take office.

Audience members questioned why the tabulators were in a room where someone else had a key. And whether any ballots were accessible to which Deputy Clerk Monroe and Clerk Risner stated the absentee ballots along with the other election laptops and equipment were stored in another locked room to which only Clerk Risner and Deputy Clerk Monroe had a key. Clerk Risner further stated that the Treasurer's office was the only locked room large enough to store the tabulators while they were charging for the preliminary and accuracy tests, hence the video surveillance as added security.

Some audience members were concerned township paperwork being taken out of the township offices.

Another audience member asked if the state had been informed.

One audience member asked what board members had relatives running for office.

Board Comment:

Conclusion by Supervisor Rook, to change the lock on the treasurer's office and to move the copy machine out of that office.

Motion Clerk Risner to rescind the previously approved motion for security cameras to be installed by Corey Ribble. Support Treasurer Ritchie, all ayes, motion carried.

Trustee Ribble reiterated that this meeting should not have taken place, considered it illegal.

Motion to adjourn, meeting adjourned 8:15 pm

Mel Risner/Clerk

Unapproved minutes