

Union Township
Public Hearing
July 10, 2008

Meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Board President Dan Montgomery who led the Pledge of Allegiance. Dan turned the meeting over to Trustee Candace Ulmer to conduct the Public Hearing on the Resolution 2008-1 to reorganize the governments of Eagle Township, Union Township and the Town Zionsville.

Candace welcomed everyone and explained that we have had the first and second readings of Resolution 2008-1 and that this is the Public Hearing on the Resolution as required by statute (IC 36-1.5-1-1 et.seq.). She explained that the hearing would be recorded and that speakers will need to sign in and state if they are “for”, “opposed” or “undecided” regarding the resolution. Speakers will be recognized in order of the sign in register, and alternating position on the resolution.

Candace then introduced the members of the Union Township Board and also recognized Alan Townsend and Joe Turk, Union Township residents who participated on the Reorganization Committee. She also introduced Judith Essex the Eagle Township Trustee. Candace continued with a brief overview of the history of the statute and the process to implement it.

Judith Essex explained that the Eagle Township Board began investigating the reorganization statute after being approached by township residents that were getting annexed into Whitestown. Under current Indiana law, there was nothing the township could do.

Alan Townsend remarked that when the committee began looking at the plan, it made sense in that the “new town” would encompass the Zionsville Community School district and provide for more consistent planning for growth of both the area and the school district. He also noted that the existing township boards and trustees would go away, but the “new town” council would be increased in size and you would still be voting for local representatives. The council would be made of five members voted on from five new districts and two at large council members that would be voted on by everyone.

Joe Turk briefly discussed the financial impact of reorganization. He noted at the outset that in the short term there wouldn't be much in the way of savings for the simple reason that neither township spends very much money. It also seemed logical that as there would be different levels of services, police, streets, that there be different tax levels as well. These two areas would be called “town” and “rural”. If the reorganization passes, then the “new town” town area would be the existing Zionsville town boundaries, and the remainder would be the rural area. A rural area can change to a town area under the following conditions: it is contiguous to the town area, it is served by a water utility and it is served by a sewer utility.

There were several questions, informally, asked regarding if the town had or could waive the contiguous requirement. While it is possible for the council to change any ordinance, it was felt that it would be impractical. It had been considered by the committee but later rejected.

There were also questions regarding policing jurisdictions. It was explained that in general sheriffs have a larger jurisdiction than local police. It was also noted that it will be necessary that Memorandum of Understanding will need to be created regarding policing and street and road maintenance to define specific responsibilities.

A member of the audience expressed the concern that merely adding the two trustees to the existing five member town council did not give adequate representation for Union Township and they felt that we would always be out voted. There was some explanation that even in this transition period from a straight population perspective it would difficult for Union Township to justify even 1/7 th. The person also stated that they felt that there were times that township issues might be heard more favorably by the county plan commission than might be heard at the town plan commission.

Candace requested that we return to individual statements be made as part of the hearing for the record.

Jim Yater, is for reorganization. He noted that when he was on the school board, he received many calls from people outside his district. Jim also thought it was important that we look ahead 20 to 30 years and ask who we want planning this area – someone locally or from outside the area.

Mike Deiss is not in favor of reorganization. His concerns are that while everyone seems to be getting along now, he is uncertain if that will be true in the future. His other concern is that we are just creating another larger piece of government, and he is for smaller government.

Frank Brye is not in favor of reorganization. His concern is the lack of hard copies of the resolution for the public to consider. He also was concerned if our lawyers and/or independent lawyers have given an opinion on the resolution. He stated that he felt that not enough consideration had been given to the existing town department heads, regarding their view of the plan.

Steve Muller is for reorganization. He felt that there may be some slight increase in cost in the short term but that the benefits outweigh that. He stated that it was important in who is representing us. Steve felt that planning in the new organization would benefit the township and also that he was concerned about the possibility of forced annexation.

Dr. Davis is for reorganization.

Benny Jones who was both undecided and opposed spoke. His major concern is that it might be possible that depending on how the districts were drawn, there might not be representation on the council by someone actually living in Union Township.

There being no other speakers the hearing was closed. Candace spoke briefly about the need to get some legislative relief for the statutory size of “reorganized” plan commissions and park boards. While it seems that the statute provides that the reorganized unit can define anything, it would be good to have that specifically defined in statute.

Jim Sanford asked if there was any time limit on when the Board must act. Alan Townsend researched the statute and you have 30 days after the close of the public hearing to vote on the resolution.

Several members asked if hard copies of the report and/or are available. Candace stated that copies can be requested at the township office, 769-5641, and we will try to see that some are available in the school and library.

The hearing was closed at 8:40 pm.