

White Township supervisors approve grant application for White's Woods study

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Stock photo of the White Township sign.

Tom Peel / Indiana Gazette

White Township supervisors on Wednesday unanimously approved a resolution to apply for a \$25,000 Greenways, Trails and Recreation grant to bring professional foresters into White's Woods for on-sight studies and analyses.

If awarded, the Department of Community and Economic Development grant would be utilized by the Stewardship Committee to help execute the township's stewardship plan.

Information gathered by the foresters would help guide the stewardship committee in providing oversight and protection over White's Woods, according to township manager Chris Anderson.

In other news Wednesday, township supervisors brought up the need to look into future funding for Citizens' Ambulance to remain operating in the area. Supervisor Sandi Gillette said the ambulance service provider, like many ambulance companies across the country, "is in dire straights."

"They were very fortunate this past year," Gillette said. "The county had funding they could (provide). (Citizens') had a number of grants that ... came in. Lots of odds and ends that sold them through. That's not going to be the case for 2023."

Gillette said this is the first time Citizens' is reaching out to municipalities for funding. Some townships are considering levying fees based on property taxes, but White Township does not have a property tax and will need to consider other ways to raise the \$398,000 projected to keep the company running in 2023.

"They're looking how they can remain a county-wide service," Gillette said. "And the only way they can do it is if we as a county and municipalities come together and support that."

White Township has donated more than \$100,000 in the past to keep the ambulance service operating, but that won't cut it with rising costs of gas, decreased ambulance memberships, COVID, inflation and other economic variables, according to Gillette. Vice chairman Rich Gallo said if Citizens' can't operate in the area, there may not be another ambulance company that could come in and take its place.

"People don't think about (how) when you dial 911, they come," Gillette said. "No one thinks about it as essential because they've been here for 58 years."

Gillette mentioned a few potential ways to raise money to fund Citizens', including charging each household a set fee, levying fees based on the number of people living in households and working with corporate sponsors and business partners.

Also Wednesday, township supervisors approved a number of motions and resolutions.

Supervisors unanimously approved purchasing a \$7,950 inflatable shoring kit to prevent cave-ins during spot repairs on sewer pipes.

"Right now, our sanitary sewer crews (are) undergoing spot repairs," Anderson said. "They find an isolated section that needs repaired, they go and they dig down and repair sections of sewer pipe. The shoring is what's installed in the trench so that the trench doesn't cave in."

Supervisors unanimously approved the removal of three dead trees from Fourth Ward Park for \$900. Township chairman George Lenz expressed concerns over whether there would be a conflict with jurisdiction, given Fourth Ward Park is in Indiana Borough, not White Township.

But township supervisor Gail McCauley said the present safety hazard outweighed any jurisdictional concerns.

"This is dangerous," McCauley said. "This is a park. There's a playground there. All we would need is a dead tree to fall on a child, and how remiss would we be?"

Supervisors unanimously approved renewing the township's 2022-23 vision and dental benefits, at no cost increase, for all township employees who elect to use those benefits. Though, the board agreed to revisit the vision and dental plans in August to consider combining plans for better benefits at a lower rate.

Supervisors also unanimously approved paying Curry and Kepple Inc. \$48,059.49, at Anderson's discretion, for their work on phase three of the Chevy Chase Stormwater project.

In other news Wednesday, two residents raised concerns over the deterioration of stormwater infrastructure along Edgewood Avenue. A resident who lives along Edgewood Avenue by a pipe leading into the stormwater pond said the pipe and nearby catch basin are failing, which has caused unsafe erosion and property damage to the point he cannot maintain his property.

Supervisors said they will need to come up with a plan to address the issue and make necessary repairs.