Members Present
Mr. Snipes, Ms. Polk, Mr. Liehr, Mr. Howard, Mr. McConnell, Mr. Sirois, Mr. Mulcahy, Mr. James, Mr. Reid, and Mr. LaGesse

Members Absent
Mr. Arseneau and Mr. Enz

In Attendance
- **Board Members**
  Mr. Bossert
- **Department Heads**
  Roger Diercks, Bruce Clark, Julie Boudreau, Lori Gadbois, Jamie Boyd, and Mac Shoopman
- **Media**
  None

1. **Call to Order**
   The meeting was called to order by the Committee Chairman, Mr. James, at 9:00 a.m. Quorum present.

2. **Public Comment**

3. **Approval of minutes – May 28, 2013**

   A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. McConnell and seconded by Mr. Sirois. Motion carried.

4. **County Clerk: Bruce Clark**
   - **Monthly Report**
     The Committee reviewed the reports.

   A motion to accept the report as presented was made by Mr. Liehr and seconded by Mr. Howard. Motion carried.

   Mr. Clark stated that he wanted to bring the committee up-to-date on the genealogy on-line. Their vital records go from 1853 to today. They are the local registrar and also the repository for birth, death, and marriage records. They have an automation fund that has been in existence for 8 to 9 years. They charge an additional $2 on each record which goes into the Vital Records Automation Fund which is specifically for converting paper records to an electronic format. They used that fund in September of 2011 when they launched their online genealogy program. They scanned all of the records, put them in an electronic format, put them on a website, and then they allow people to access those records online and to print them which saves a lot of staff time. In 2010, they provided 270 genealogical records which amounted to $1894 in revenue for the year.

   Mr. Clark stated that they started the program in September of 2011 and for that year they issued 52 records which amounted to $585. It went up in 2012 and generated $3,026.25 and for the first six months of this year it has already generated $2,823.75. They also
added up the number of records that they are still producing over the counter and they found out that they are still searching about the same number as they did in 2010 so the revenue generated from their online website is extra revenue. When they do it over the counter now his staff does not have to search through books as all the records are in electronic format which makes the process a lot quicker.

Mr. Clark stated that right now they are continuing to do quality checks with their images. They still need to add their original birth books that are in bound volumes. It is a time consuming and hard process to convert them because individual sheets cannot just be scanned. They also want to advertise so they are distributing a handout at the Friendship Festival. They want to advertise what they do and get it out to the public more. They have also linked up to some nationwide search engines. They have not yet fully connected with ancestry.com but once they do open those doors it should generate some more business and revenue.

Mr. James asked how they collect the $15 fee.

Mr. Clark stated that they do not do anything. It is all credit card based. It is direct deposited into their bank. They just simply account for it.

Mr. Howard complimented Mr. Clark on the great job that he is doing as the county clerk.

Mr. Snipes asked what “Miscellaneous Certificates” on his report includes.

Mr. Clark stated that that is birth and death certificates.

5. GIS – Roger Diercks

Mr. Diercks stated that his intern has been working on their ongoing site address project. It is one of the base layers that GIS is supposed to maintain. The goal is to create a countywide site address layer. It is a big project as there are about 56,000 parcels in the county. Trying to get source information can be difficult as the county is not the addressing the authority for every address in the county. Municipalities have jurisdiction over their own addresses.

Mr. Diercks stated that last month he mentioned some software upgrades for one of the databases that some of their desktop GIS users use. He is at the point where it is working well and he has started to migrate users over to it. He got a user at the Health Department switched over to it and it seems to be working well for him. The next phase is reaching out to some of the municipalities that are accessing our database this way.

Mr. Bossert asked if he is referring to vacant parcels when he is talking about adding addresses to parcels.

Mr. Diercks stated that if they can determine that it has an address they will add it. In most cases, they are just looking at parcels with structures on them but there are cases where a vacant parcel may have an address; although, it is not always clear whether or not it has one.
Mr. James asked if he works with the postal service in getting information.

Mr. Diercks stated that they do not. They are not easy to work with.

Mr. James stated that when they were doing the road map years ago the post office would not give them any information.

Mr. Diercks stated that a few years ago one of the post offices in the county actually reached out to him for an address map.

Mr. James stated that they found that they had a lot of properties that had been vacated but still had an address on them. People would put a mailbox on it and use that address while they actually lived someplace else.

Mr. Howard asked what happens when the structure has been destroyed and is no longer on that parcel of property.

Mr. Diercks stated that he thinks that in most cases the address stays with the parcel.

Mr. James stated that the advantage now is that there is aerial photography which was not available 25 years ago.

Mr. Diercks stated that that is a good point. They have aerial photos going back multiple years. They can also go back and look at the history of the property and see what might have been there in the past.

6. Assessor – John Mac Shoopman
   - Monthly Report

Mr. Bossert made a motion to approve the report and Mr. Liehr seconded it. Motion carried with a voice vote.

Mr. Shoopman stated that their Farmland Assessment Review Committee met on the 10th and had their annual hearing which was to review the certified assessments for the 2014 farm year. The meeting was well-attended. They had some input from the Farm Bureau who of course is interested in the legislation that seems to be moving forward on the methodology that calculates the EAV’s for each of the individual 49 PI’s that dictate what those values are for those soil types on that farmland that calculates when the assessment is formulated.

Mr. Shoopman stated that presently in their office they are processing township assessment changes for the 2013 year. They have received and processed six townships and they have commitments from three townships for July deliveries. They are working on establishing a delivery date for those remainder books that are outstanding. The sooner that they get those books in the sooner they will get them processed and moved through the assessment cycle. When they have completed all of the changes, it will allow them to
prepare a tentative abstract, perform equalization, and begin their Board of Review appeals period.

Mr. Shoopman stated that he has noted on his report that there are certain townships each year that are designated as their quadrennial reassessment. If those townships are not updating their assessments annually, he would be required to review all of their assessed values in a four-year cycle. They are hoping to get in some more township books in earlier than in years past in order to help alleviate some of the issues with receiving those books all at the same time. It would help spread out his office’s work load.

Mr. Howard asked what happens when a structure is removed off of a parcel of land. Does the county automatically change the assessment value on the property or does the homeowner have to come in and notify the county that there is no longer a structure on that parcel?

Mr. Shoopman stated that hopefully those changes are being reported to the township. The property owner may not always get that info back to the township assessor. If a structure is destroyed by fire, there is a fire report filed and put on file and then it would be made available to the township assessor. Buildings that are intentionally demolished remain on the books for the remainder of the year and then would come off the first of the year in the next tax cycle. Those that are unintentional, such as by an act of God, then as of that date they would reduce the amount of the building improvement assessment according to how much of the improvement was removed.

Mr. Snipes asked if they do an aerial will they see that the property is not there or if the township assessor goes out should he have noticed and amended it instead of having the property owner come in and report it.

Mr. Shoopman stated that it is a combination of things. He would hope that the property owners would report the demolition to the assessor so they are aware of it. There is some reporting that is required by fire districts. The assessor’s own awareness of what is going on in their jurisdiction also plays a part in this.

Mr. Bossert stated that over the last couple of months there have been some questions raised about perhaps real or perceived unequal assessments, particularly in Pembroke Township. What are his thoughts on what the problem is and how we might view the situation?

Mr. Shoopman stated that he thinks that in a number of our townships in the county the townships assessors have been harried with situations that come in the office where a lot of those values have become inequitable over time. The uniformity is not what it could be had there been a general reassessment occur. The general reassessment is a requirement by statute every four years but it has not always been completed to the extent that every property was reviewed. By that effort, those non-farm parcels would be assessed according to how the market in that jurisdiction would dictate one-third of fair market value so they are trying to establish that market value and apply that to all those properties within that jurisdiction by class. That effort in many townships is ongoing from year to year where they
pick up changes throughout the multi-township jurisdiction that are not necessarily performing a full reassessment. He thinks that is where we need a better model to put in place. We need a better way to communicate the information as opposed to the old pencil to paper way which is not the most efficient way for them to maintain that information in a sustainable fashion over a period of time so they want to put something in place to deal with that information once it is obtained. He thinks that has to be consistent at the township level and at the county level for that to work the way that we would all like to see it work over an extended period of time rather than coming and doing reassessment and finding ourselves in a position of having to do it all over again.

Mr. Bossert stated that one of the problems that he perceives is that a township may have limited resources and therefore a limited ability to do a full quadrennial reassessment when it is required.

Mr. Shoopman stated that he thinks that that is at the root of the problem.

Mr. Bossert stated that they have had a discussion as to how they might attack an issue when a township gets behind on reassessments. He knows that Mr. Howard is concerned about that issue and the thinks that they all share that concern as to how we get a good baseline set of numbers.

Mr. Howard asked what the timeframe was for getting this problem corrected.

Mr. Shoopman stated that obviously it is a problem that has unfolded over an extended period of time. How quickly it would be corrected would be a factor of how many resources are brought to bear on the problem and the quality of information that is being obtained. He thinks that the most problematic component of the reassessment is “What is the actual cost of having feet on the ground to obtain the information that is to be inputted into the system that would be used to maintain that assessment going forward?” Establishing the cost and resources available to meet that cost is what they have been discussing. The time can take anywhere from a tax cycle to several tax cycles depending on how it is funded.

Mr. Howard asked if the county has the resources at this present time to start this process.

Mr. Shoopman stated that the burden is on the township. The county is looking at how they might facilitate that effort by creating something that would be available for other townships that are in need, as well, not just Pembroke.

Mr. Howard stated that we are all aware that the township does not have the resources to do what he is saying so how would they go about getting this problem cleared up.

Ms. Polk asked if there is a program or a model that they can get.

Mr. Shoopman stated that for some months they have been talking about how they might approach the problem.
Mr. Reid asked if there was some kind of state or federal grant for low-income townships that might help with something like this.

Mr. Shoopman stated that he is not aware of anything.

Mr. Bossert stated that from time to time there might be some capital grants available to townships for anything from infrastructure to some particular project but those types of things tend to be for brick and mortar type projects, not so much for obtaining background information. That might be something that they can talk to our legislators about to see if they can find a little bit of help through some economic development funds to help out with. Or they can ask the taxing jurisdictions, everybody has a stake in this. It is the township’s responsibility but it is not just their problem; this affects schools, fire districts, etc.

Mr. Sirois stated that basically it falls back on the local tax assessor. They have to do the work first by assessing those problem properties. Is that correct?

Mr. Shoopman stated that it is.

Mr. Sirois asked if we are just stuck if they fail to do their job.

Mr. Shoopman stated that there is some legislation in recent years that would allow the county to provide for that effort and bill and collect if it is collectable.

Mr. Snipes stated that we can look at properties and they can appear to be unequally assessed but one property might be not-for-profit or have a senior exemption. He sees how the process could be tedious. Right now the county is limited with regards to its resources. Is there a way that a township assessor could be held responsible if they are getting compensated for doing that job?

Mr. James stated that the tax assessment process was designed to fail. It is impossible to fix it the way that it is structured. Until they make a drastic change to the program, we are going to be doing this over and over again.

Mr. Shoopman stated that going forward we need to make sure that the information that we accumulate is used in such a way that it is sustainable going forward. The funding mechanism has to be determined, also.

Mr. Snipes stated that nothing is stopping someone from getting a professional assessment to use.

Mr. Shoopman stated that there is an annual appeals process. The homeowner may go out and get an appraisal which is usually for refinancing purposes or lending purposes which would bring that information to bear on that property but it doesn’t solve the issue of assessment mass appraisal. If they went out and did an appraisal performed on each property within a jurisdiction the cost would be phenomenal.
7. **Recorder: Lori Gadbois**  
   - **Monthly Report**  
   The Committee reviewed the Monthly Report.

   **A motion to accept the Monthly Report was made by Mr. McConnell and seconded by Mr. Snipes. Motion carried.**

   Ms. Gadbois stated that there is some renovation going on up on the second floor.

   Ms. Gadbois stated that for the month of June on her website they have had almost 1000 page downloads, unique visits have been over 500, and first time visitors have been close to 400.

   Mr. James asked how the Property Fraud Alert Program is going.

   Ms. Gadbois stated that it is working. If there is any kind of activity on your property under your name you will get a notification. If it is something that you have not done then you would call her office. In the last month they have had no calls of concern which is a good thing.

   Mr. Sirois stated that it is a great service. He refinanced and he had a call on his home phone and they left numerous messages for him to call them back. They are very persistent about letting you know that some action has taken place under your name. He thinks it is a great service to offer to the citizens of our county.

   Ms. Gadbois stated that she did a presentation to the Manteno Rotary Club in the first part of June sharing with them information about property fraud alert, the online access that is available, and the activity of the Recorder’s Office.

   Mr. Snipes asked about grave titles.

   Ms. Gadbois stated that they do not issue the title. They only record the deed for the cemetery plot. They only do it for two cemeteries in the county. It doesn’t happen very often anymore. They do have the original plats of some of the cemeteries in the county.

   Ms. Gadbois stated that her budget is on track and things are good in the Recorder’s Office.

8. **Animal Control: Julie Boudreau**  
   - **Monthly Report**  
   The Committee reviewed the Monthly Report.

   **A motion to accept the Monthly Report as presented was made by Mr. LaGesse and seconded by Mr. Mulcahy. Motion carried.**

   Ms. Boudreau stated that her office did attend a training conference down in Bloomington and each of her employees got to go at least one day and get some training on various
things, such as, how to make dogs more adoptable, how to deal with wildlife, report writing, prosecution, etc. There is a really good program out of Fort Wayne, Indiana, regarding investigations and crime scenes. They do offer a training that she may look into for the future.

Ms. Boudreau stated that their population is still not overwhelming for this time of year. Their bite reports are the same as last year. It does look like more of them were in compliance so they were able to stay home and do a home confinement instead of being impounded.

Ms. Boudreau stated that House Bill 733 has been sent to the Governor so they are just waiting for his signature. It is an amendment to the Domestic Animal Running at Large Act so that they can more quickly deal with the horse issues. They will have more options instead of having to haul them to auction.

Mr. James asked if the possibility of a slaughterhouse is coming back.

Ms. Boudreau stated that there is a lot of opposition to that from groups that carry a lot of weight. It is something that neither she nor the state organizations that she is involved with have made a stance on. She has heard no word of it coming back to our area.

Mr. Snipes asked about the current status of her building.

Mr. Boudreau stated that she has heard no news on it.

Mr. Sirois asked what in-house bites impounded and bites impounded at home are.

Ms. Boudreau stated that the in-house bites impounded are animals that are not in compliance with their rabies so they have to be impounded at her facility or at an animal hospital. The bites impounded at home mean that they were able to do a home quarantine. Even if an animal is current and they find that the owner is not capable of doing a proper home confinement, they can order the animal to be impounded to do a quarantine at their facility and that has happened a couple of times.

9. **Old Business**
   None

10. **New Business**
    None

11. **Adjournment**
    A motion was made by Mr. LaGesse and seconded by Mr. Reid to adjourn the meeting at 9:55 a.m. Motion carried.

    Stan James, Committee Chairman    Joanne Langlois, Executive Coordinator