

Tippecanoe County Board of Commissioners

Fairfield Township Poor Relief Appeal

Meeting Minutes

Friday, January 13, 2023

9:00 am

Tippecanoe Room, Tippecanoe County Office Building
20 N 3rd Street, Lafayette, Indiana

Commissioners present President Tracy A. Brown, Vice President Thomas P. Murtaugh and Member David S. Byers.

Also present: Attorney Doug Masson, Auditor Jennifer Weston, Commissioners' Assistant Paula Bennett, and Recording Secretary Samantha Perez.

I. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** – President Brown called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. **FAIRFIELD TOWNSHIP POOR RELIEF HEARING**

Attorney Masson stated that the purpose of this meeting was to hear an appeal of the denial of poor relief and to determine if the townships standards were applied correctly in the case of Aman Martin. The township can cross examine as well as the Commissioners can ask any clarifying questions. The Commissioners have five days to render an opinion.

Attorney Masson swore in both parties.

Aman Martin stated he applied for financial assistance from Fairfield Township in December 2022 and provided documentation with his application. Mr. Martin originally worked at Nike in Lebanon, Indiana but due to unforeseen complications with vehicle repairs he did not have reliable transportation and was terminated from his job. This put him behind on his rent which includes utilities to about \$730 dollars. He started a new job at Wabash east plant on January 13, 2023 but will be on a company shut-down for the first two weeks due to Wabash receiving new machinery. On December 25th, 2022, around 9:00 p.m. the pipes in his apartment failed due to the extreme cold weather which caused the roof to cave in and damage the electrical, drywall, and carpeting in the living room. The fire department responded and advised the apartment was no longer in livable condition. Mr. Martin said he lived in a hotel for two days at \$150 per night because his landlord could not provide him with a vacant unit. Since he had already started the financial assistance application, he added that now this is an emergency/crisis and applied for emergency assistance too. He then provided pictures of the roof and living room to add to his application. Mr. Martin said he tried all avenues of assistance while he waited for help from the township. He originally filed for unemployment benefits when he lost his job at Nike but due to a \$2,500 overpayment from unemployment years ago his current unemployment benefits are paying back the \$2,500. He also applied for emergency SNAP benefits which provide him with \$180 a month for three months. Mr. Martin also reached out to LUM which provided him with \$75 in rent assistance. Due to needing financial help, a roommate moved in. Ms. Odom moved in one to two days before the meeting with the township office and since her move in date happened before the application meeting the township requested Ms. Odom provide her financial information because she is listed on the lease. She complied and due to the income being over the two-person income threshold Mr. Martin was denied assistance.

Attorney Masson asked Mr. Martin how long he was in the hotel and Mr. Martin replied two days. Attorney Masson also asked what the status of the apartment is. Mr. Martin stated he is currently living in the apartment, there is new carpet, the drywall is up, but the electrical still

needs to be fixed. Since the light switch is not functioning, the lights stay on; they do not shut off.

Commissioner Murtaugh asked if Ms. Odom had previously been on the lease and Mr. Martin relied yes, in July 2022. She had lived on and off with Mr. Martin due to work release requirements.

Attorney Masson called Fairfield Township Trustee Monica Casanova to the podium and asked her to walk through the application process and timeline.

Ms. Casanova stated December 13, 2022, the application was first completed as a single person household, and a follow up appointment was set December 28th, 2022, due to the township rescheduling the first meeting. Once the meeting took place, the application was updated due to the roof collapsing, and Ms. Odom was added to the application due to her being listed on the lease. The assistance was denied for being over the two-person income threshold because during the interview Ms. Odom stated she worked two jobs.

Attorney Masson asked Ms. Casanova how the household number is determined, and she stated everyone living in the house is included in the household number.

Attorney Masson asked what the household income is for two people. Ms. Casanova stated \$2,289 and Ms. Odom reported her income alone was \$3,200 a month with no expenses listed on the application. He then asked when the interview with Ms. Odom was held and Ms. Casanova stated December 28th, 2022, and that is also when she issued the denial and the process for appeal.

Attorney Masson asked Ms. Casanova what the two-person income threshold guidelines and she are stated for two people its \$2,289 a month. He asked if the expenses matter to the income threshold and Ms. Casanova stated it does not matter but the township likes to see what finances and expenses are coming in and out.

Commissioner Murtaugh asked if these decisions are not made on a percentage of disposable income and Ms. Casanova stated it is based on overall income.

Commissioner Byers stated he sees the income guidelines as \$2,115 for a two-person household. Ms. Casanova stated those are 2019 income guidelines. He stated these guidelines were received in August and we do not have the new guidelines. Ms. Casanova stated they were just adopted on January 3rd, so the 2022 guidelines were used for Mr. Martin and Ms. Odom.

Commissioner Brown asked what the new income guidelines are and Ms. Casanova stated its \$2,289 for a two-person household.

Commissioner Murtaugh asked if the original application was amended due to adding Ms. Odom and Ms. Casanova stated yes. She submitted the original application, and employment verification for the record. Ms. Casanova stated Ms. Odom was receiving a weekly paycheck from one job and biweekly from another.

Attorney Masson asked if the income threshold was the only reason for denial and Ms. Casanova stated yes.

Attorney Masson asked Mr. Martin if he had any follow up information.

Mr. Martin stated Ms. Odom never received a check from her two jobs due to being part time, having work release and house arrest fees. Mr. Martin also stated the denial was based solely on Ms. Odom's income and not on his income which was zero due to being unemployed at the time of filing.

Commissioner Byers asked Ms. Casanova if she took into consideration the emergency circumstances and she replied no she only looked at income.

Attorney Masson stated the commissioners can take the information under advisement and notify both parties within five days.

Commissioner Murtaugh motioned to take this meeting under advisement, second by commissioner Byers.

President Brown adjourned the meeting.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF
THE COUNTY OF TIPPECANOE

Tracy A. Brown, President

Thomas P. Murtaugh, Vice-President

David S. Byers, Member

ATTEST:

Jennifer Weston, Auditor 01/17/2023

Minutes prepared by Samantha Perez, Recording Secretary