

**Minutes of Watab Board Special Meeting
March 26, 2013**

A special meeting of the Watab Town Board was called to order on Tuesday, March 26, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Ed Kacures Jr. All board members were present: Ed Kacures Jr., Lloyd Erdmann, Craig Gondeck, Eileen Saldana, and Pat Spence. Audience members were: Randy Heyne, Jim Brownson, Jim Rau, Sandy Rau, Renee Zeleny, Bob Raveling, Brian Erdmann, Ralph Berger, Pete Yarmon, Jim Newberger, Jim Model, Dick Lunde, Lee Hanson, Jeff Hanson, Pat Lyon, Michael Lyon, Ray Schlichting, Mark Hanson, Rich Matthews, Maureen Graber, Nancy Kronlund, Deb Poirier, Cliff Weitgenant, John F. Olson, Claudia Dumont, Julie Fandel, Jeff Fandel, Jason Krueger, Tom Henkemeyer, Loren Popp, Chris Byrd, Debbie Schmitz, Jim Schmitz, Jerome Nelson, Dorothy Nelson, John Helmin, Mark & LuAnn Rice, Joe Wollak, Don Garlock, Jan Middlestadt, Mark & Roxie Saldana, Lance Kowski, Donna Smith, Dick Raveling, John Thompson, Allen and Sandra Saldana, and Jesse Krueger. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss potential access issues on U. S. Highway 10 when the interchange is installed in Rice and the stoplights are removed.

Following the Pledge to the Flag, Supervisor Kacures welcomed everyone, especially the honored guests. His presentation included a summary of the supervisors' points of concern in a conversation with Representative Jim Newberger following the Benton County Association of Township Officers meeting last month in Foley:

- Town board has great concern about the impact on Watab residents of construction of the interchange at CSAH 2 and U.S. Hwy 10 in Rice, which will result in the removal of the stoplights. Access to Highway 10 is already very challenging during busy travel times, especially on Thursdays through Mondays. Safety at all the intersections is primary.
- Watab has more than fifty registered housing developments plus Rockwood Estates, a manufactured home park. There are a dozen developments/neighborhoods that have Highway 10 as their only ingress/egress.
- At least 20 Watab businesses use Highway 10 as their main access; 12 have only Highway 10 as access.
- In 2006 a Constitutional Amendment was passed to insure that 60% of the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax will be allocated to highway funds and 40% to mass transit. None of these funds can be transferred to the General Fund.
- District 3 of the Minnesota Department of Transportation is the poorest funded district in the state; most of the transportation dollars go to the metro area.
- In the past 35 years, interchanges for Watab Township intersections of county roads and highway 10 have been in the 20-year plan. Other interchanges in the area have moved ahead without being part of a long-range plan.
- We need to work on funding to alleviate the challenges in Watab.

Supervisor Kacures then invited Jim Newberger, the newly elected representative for our area to speak. He described the area that he serves and his personal background as a paramedic at North Memorial Hospital. He commutes there from his home in Becker. Prior to that he worked at Murphy Ambulance in St. Cloud, and he has responded to many crashes in this area. He drives this district all the time and feels safety on highway 10 is a personal issue. He thanked the Supervisors for bringing this issue to his attention. He understands that the removal of the lights in Rice will significantly impact this township. He serves on the House Transportation Committee and right now there are drag down fights for money

for projects. Following the meeting with the supervisors he talked with Claudia Dumont of MNDOT and the highway patrol to learn more about what is occurring here. He feels the need to find the money to make the situation less dangerous. In a perfect world, he said all the interchanges would be installed that were planned in 2001, but each one costs a minimum of \$14 million. Next year is a bonding year, and then he might be able to get some funding, but he doesn't want to wait that long to find a more immediate solution. We don't qualify for TED grants, because they are only for economic development. We may qualify for safety funding (SAM), but those funding opportunities have been exhausted for this cycle. He will try everything possible to make something happen. Sitting on the Transportation Committee should give him more leverage. A resident of Golf Haven Estates said that no one was thinking of Watab residents' safety when they put safety improvements in Rice. He has no other access to Highway 10 from that development. Rep. Newberger then explained U. S. Representative Bachman's work to widen I 94; he said that the federal funds being proposed to widen I 94 might not be available for Highway 10. Claudia added that federal funds could be used, if they were available. Those funds were used exclusively for the interchange at County Road 33 and Highway 10. Jim Brownson asked about growth issues and how that would impact planning. Rep. Newberger said that one business would most likely not trigger a major improvement in roads unless it was quite large. He added that the legislature is looking at extending the Northstar line from Big Lake to Rice, but he feels the cost is too high at this time. He then invited Claudia Dumont to share information with those at the meeting.

Claudia first presented information from the past five years on crashes at Watab intersections. They are:

1. At 110th Street NW (Twin Pines): 7 northbound/west bound crashes at right angles; 2 northbound sideswipes, 1 northbound rear end, 1 southbound rear end, and 1 southbound/westbound right angle.
2. At 105th Street NW (Central Marble Products): 4 northbound/westbound crashes at right angles; 2 northbound rear ends; 2 southbound rear ends; 1 westbound rear end, 3 run off the road, and 1 other.
3. At 95th Street NW: 1 southbound/westbound right angle; 1 southbound/westbound left turn, 1 northbound rear end, and 4 run off the road.
4. CSAH 13 (Little Rock Rd NW): 4 northbound/westbound right angles, 1 westbound rear end, and 1 southbound rear end.
5. 85th Street NW (Golf Haven and Oak Hill Estates): 1 southbound/westbound right angle, 1 northbound rear end, 1 eastbound/westbound head on sideswipe, 1 deer hit, and 1 run off the road.
6. CSAH 4 (Seekers): 1 eastbound/southbound right angle and 1 southbound rear end.

Her next slide presentation was on the top five percent crash sites on at-grade intersections. The only one in our area that was in this category was the County Road 2 intersection in Rice (# 20).

The third set of slides Claudia presented gave the statistics on the highest hourly volumes of traffic during 2012. Northbound traffic on Saturday, May 26th between 11-12pm had a traffic count of 3,127 vehicles. Southbound highest volume was 2,375 vehicles between 11-12pm on Monday September 3rd. Highest traffic count for both directions was on May 26th between 11-12pm with 3,737 vehicles.

Claudia then presented the 2011 traffic volumes for Watab; there were approximately 30,000 vehicles per day on Highway 10 through Watab Township. The 2001 study anticipated about 43,000 vehicles at this time. She noted that the 2001 study was done at a time when the transportation commissioner instructed MNDOT to design the optimal plan with no funding constraints. The fiscal environment is entirely different at this time. Interchanges cost a minimum of \$10-\$20 each, with local cost sharing in

nearly all cases. With flat traffic volumes, reduced funding, an emphasis on preservation, and two interchanges having been funded in the corridor, it is highly unlikely that Watab can get more interchanges.

Residents were given the opportunity for input:

1. Concern was expressed by Renee Zeleny about excessive speeding on highway 10, particularly on weekends. Rep. Newberger stated that the construction in Rice should slow down the traffic. Claudia Dumont explained that the highway patrol is spread too thin with their cutbacks.
2. Dick Raveling asked why all the money goes to the metro area. Representative Newberger said that on the political side its metro versus outstate more than Republican versus Democrat. The metro trumps.
3. Lloyd Erdmann recalled the time that MNDOT proposed frontage roads and said that Watab had the possibility of getting funding for a frontage road on the east side of Highway 10 to connect with County Road 4, but the time frame did not allow time to acquire the needed property. Claudia said there is a local initiative program that allows for frontage roads, but all road access between County Roads 13 and 4 would have to be closed. The township would be responsible to get the necessary right of way through acquisitions or donations. Local MNDOT funds are allocated for a couple of years, but in the meantime the township could do planning. Claudia would work with the township on frontage roads if the township funds the right of way. Then MNDOT would fund the frontage roads.
4. Rich Matthews explained how five roads come together at Pines Edge and Rockwood Estates. He expressed that this spot should be reviewed. They would like acceleration lanes by the Pines Edge. Joe Wollak added that he likes the idea of them. A resident spoke in favor of acceleration and deceleration lanes even though Claudia says that people don't appear to know how to use them. He felt they would be especially beneficial in the northbound lane leaving Pines Edge since there are many trucks at that site.
5. A resident said that he doesn't like frontage roads because they only benefit commercial property.
6. Renee Zeleny asked again about patrols for enforcing the speed limit. Rep. Newberger said he would speak with the highway patrol about these concerns.

Claudia then reviewed the construction project in Rice, which will begin in July. Ramps will be built this summer, and there will be local detours through 8 construction stages that will continue through 2014. Residents can go to the City of Rice website to follow the progress. She stated that it is going to be messy, but there will be temporary signals and message signs that encourage people to take alternate routes.

Craig Gondeck asked Claudia what we would need to do as a first step to get frontage roads. She said that the township should invite her to a meeting for planning and then submit an application.

Bob Raveling asked Ed Kacures to comment on the railroad crossing projects planned for this summer, which include Quiet Zones. Ed described the bid process and the delay with Burlington Northern on the cost of the planks for Lakewood Shores. Bids have been awarded for both County Road 79 and Lakewood Shore Road.

The meeting adjourned with Representative Newberger and Claudia Dumont, as well as board members, remaining to answer individual questions and have discussion.

Respectfully submitted by Clerk Pat Spence