

Minutes of December 6, 2016 Meeting of Watab Town Board

The regular monthly meeting of the Watab Town Board was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 6, 2016 by Chair Craig Gondeck at the Watab Town Hall. Other board members were Supervisor Lloyd Erdmann, Treasurer Eileen Saldana, and Clerk Pat Spence. Supervisor Todd Waytashek was excused. Audience members were Bob Raveling, Maureen Graber, Jason Krueger, Ed Kacures Jr., Doug Harden, Kevin Reiter, Anna Saldana, Sandra Saldana, and Marty Reker.

Following the Pledge to the Flag, Supervisor Gondeck thanked all the Election Judges who worked in the General Election noting there were 1,606 voters on Election Day, and everything went very smoothly. He also encouraged those present to spread the word: "Don't drink and drive during the Holiday Season; instead, call a friend." This is a campaign that he and his wife Jana are involved with during this time of year.

The agenda was approved through a motion by Supervisor Gondeck, second by Supervisor Erdmann, and passed. The minutes for the November regular meeting, diagnostic meeting parts 1 & 2, fire contract committee meeting, and public hearing were all approved through a motion by Supervisor Gondeck, second by Supervisor Erdmann, and passed. Eileen Saldana gave the Treasurer's Report with a cash balance of \$473,381.03. Her report was accepted. Authorization to pay the month's claims and withdraw the necessary funds from the appropriate accounts for claims #6218 through 6257 and electronic transfers for PERA, IRS, and MN Dept. of Revenue totaling \$57,132.51 was given through a motion by Supervisor Erdmann, second by Supervisor Gondeck, and passed.

Citizen's Issues: Kevin Reiter made complaints about the snowplowing.

New Business:

- A. Nancy Scott's presentation on how building permit fees are set was tabled, since she was not present.
- B. Diagnostic Meeting on 95th St. NW Railroad Crossing: Supervisor Erdmann reported on the meeting and stated that all agencies were represented. The officials were happy with the township's plan for the Quiet Zone. Clerk Spence reported for the township engineer: the gas line locations are currently being marked, and they are working on the Notice of Intent. Once the township receives it, it will be sent to all the necessary parties along with the minutes of the Diagnostic Meeting.
- C. Frontage Road update: Clerk Spence will make an initial approach to the new owner of the Oak Hill Golf Course and get a meeting set up with them and the board.
- D. Snow Plowing Issues: Supervisor Gondeck said that Marsons had three trucks out, and with the very heavy snow two of them broke down. Because our first snowfalls have been heavy and before the ground is frozen, he encouraged people to place reflector stakes at the edge of their lawn. He also went around the township with Jeff Hanson to review the plowing after the first time. In the future, they will use a pickup truck.

Supervisor Erdmann added that the township needs two or three feet back from edge of the road for snow storage. The stakes will help the drivers know where the edge of the road is, but with a heavy snow if they are close to the edge of the road, they will be damaged. He said that complaints on not plowing close enough to mailboxes are difficult to resolve, because mailboxes are different distances off the road and often placed close together; the driver has to choose the one closest to the edge of the road. If everyone installed mailboxes to the postmaster's design, the wing of the plow could go under the mailbox. Drivers cannot get close to those on a post, and if they do they will be likely broken if the snow is heavy.

- E. Finalize Grants: Supervisor Gondeck said that he will meet with Clerk Spence this month to prepare the final reports for the Clean Up Day and Adopt a Highway Grants with SCORE Funds. They will be submitted to Benton County Department of Development before December 31st.
- F. No board action was taken on the ordinances that were discussed at the November 29th Public Hearing. Supervisor Gondeck thanked everyone for coming, and said the board is considering what they heard.
- G. STS Crew: all work for the year has been completed. The crew cleaned up brush at corners that were requested.
Supervisor Gondeck said that the board hopes to use the STS Crew again next year for crack filling, brush removal, and help with ditch cleaning. It saves the township considerable dollars.
- H. The request for a speed study by MNDOT for the section of County Road 13 between Sucker Creek Road and Highway 10 was passed unanimously by the Benton County Commissioners. Supervisor Gondeck provided the reasons for the request for lowering the speed to 35mph, which was requested by several residents along that section of County Highway.
- I. Road reimbursement: Supervisor Gondeck has not been able to meet with the party that damaged the edge of the township road near their field approach. He will do so before the next town board meeting.

New Business:

- A. Clerk Spence and Maureen Graber will meet with Dale Rogholt, Rice Mayor, and Scott Janski, Rice Fire Chief on December 14th to discuss the proposed 2017-18 Rice Emergency Services Contract.
- B. Land Disturbance Permits: Supervisor Gondeck reported that all the recent inspections have gone well.
- C. January 3-17 is the filing period for two positions on the Town Board: Treasurer for a two-year term and Supervisor for a three-year term. These positions are currently held by Eileen Saldana and Todd Waytashek.
- D. Clerk Spence reviewed communications: (1) Benton County Assessor schedule for Watab's Board of Equalization is set for May 13th at 2:30 p.m. Supervisor Gondeck asked to see if the time could be changed to an evening; (2) A letter was sent to a resident on 5th Avenue who built a pole shed without a land use or building permit. A double

building permit fee was assessed; (3) the Clerk received the signed Rice Fire Contract for 2017-18 and said that the committee/board is not willing to accept it; (4) Tina VonEschen sent an email that she has hired Steve Behrenbrinker to complete the 2017 assessment work, but this was after he had already begun work in the township. Tina has taken a position as the full-time Assessor with Kanabec County. Clerk Spence and Supervisor Gondeck both said that Steve did an excellent job, and his credentials are now on file with the township. Steve and Tina have found a lot of measuring errors and significant value changes as well as some buildings that were not assessed that should have been. They will come back to the board in April to update the board; (5) Steve Wollak was not happy with the condition of the town hall for his rental in December and suggested that the township purchase a new mop; (6) a meeting will be held with Supervisor Gondeck, Clerk Spence, Town Attorney Mike Couri, and the owner of Rockwood Estates – Kevin Wright at St. Michael on Tuesday, December 13th. The board will ask Mr. Wright for another solution to collecting the large amount of unpaid accounts from Rockwood Estates, since he is opposing the amendment to Ordinance 3 that would allow the township to assess unpaid accounts to the owners of the property where services were received; (7) a request for a donation was received from Foley C.A.R.E.

- E. Board Member Reports: (1) Supervisor Erdmann reported on the Annual Meeting of the Benton Economic Partnership that was held recently at Coyote Moon. Everyone was introduced to people on the board, the new director, and Community Development Directors from the City of Sartell and Sauk Rapids. He described the discussion about the former paper mill site and disappointment with how AIM has left the property; they also sold the electric plant at the dam. Sartell is doing well with downtown development, and taxes are going down with the new development. (2) Clerk Spence gave a positive report on the new Executive Director and how much he has already accomplished. (3) Supervisor Gondeck attended a meeting regarding the Mississippi River in St. Cloud; they heard that drastic changes are coming for people who are going to develop property on the Mississippi River with greater setbacks and less impervious surfaces. They heard that the lobby of 85,000 farmers kept agriculture out of SWPPP requirements. Supervisor Gondeck also reported on his attendance at the Minnesota Association of Township's Annual Convention in St. Cloud where he met with the state fire marshal. Many fire departments are not requesting training reimbursement, and \$8 million that was budgeted was not utilized. He also met with MPCA staff. (4) Supervisor Erdmann said that he felt that the SWPPP restrictions should be equalized between construction and agriculture; all parties should be held responsible for pollution prevention rather than all the weight on contractors. He said that there is an area in the township where the banks of the stream are plowed. Maureen Graber said that agriculture will be improving with the new buffer strip rules. (5) Clerk Spence reported on the MAT Convention speeches on the need for improved broadband accessibility. The Department of Economic Development at the State level is focusing on how communities can attract/keep talented people; broadband connectivity is key. 85% of Minnesotans use the internet. A home with broadband connectivity is worth, on average, \$7,500 more than a home that does not have access. The only areas in Benton

County that have strong broadband access are Watab Township, Sartell, and Sauk Rapids, so we have opportunity for improvement. There are Federal and State grants available for public/private partnerships between the providers and local units of government. Minnesota Association of Townships has been lobbying for the legislature to allocate more funds. (6) Supervisor Gondeck requested that residents call Benton County Soil and Water Department if you see water pollution throughout the county.

- F. Town Board Work Plan: Supervisor Gondeck will close out land disturbance permits and get them transferred to new property owners; he asked that board members start planning articles for the newsletter and dictate them to the Clerk; he received approval to get quotes for a storage rack for plats. Clerk Spence and Supervisor Erdmann will work on the frontage road issues. Clerk Spence asked board members for budget input and reminded the board that a budget meeting will need to be set for January.
- G. Supervisor Gondeck thanked Clerk Spence for the excellent job she did with overseeing the election and noted that he was very pleased with how everything went that day. Supervisor Gondeck is working with Benton County Highway Department on getting changes made on Google maps to correct the labels for Plaziak Road/10th Avenue and the town hall. He also met with a Benton County Human Services employee to set up a protocol when the township gets excessive medical calls for an individual in hopes of cutting back on the medical calls. Motion was made by Supervisor Gondeck, second by Supervisor Erdmann, and passed to thank Joe Janisch in the minutes for the excellent work he did for our township in his past position as the Director of the Benton County Department of Development.
- H. The board presented its first Bi-Annual Award for Excellence in Stormwater Pollution Prevention Best Management Practices to Reker Construction Company. Marty Reker was called forward to accept the award and was thanked by the board chair for the way he conducts his construction projects. Photos were taken of the Supervisors with Marty.

Citizen's Issues:

- A. Sandra Saldana asked what the board has done to collect for the damage to the township road. Supervisor Gondeck reported that he has the estimate from Saldana Excavating and Aggregates to repair the damage and has not been able to meet with the owner of the property where the damage occurred. He will try to do so this month.
- B. Jason Krueger inquired about the voter turnout and asked why the township doesn't have a "Welcome to Watab" sign on Highway 10 when it is the most heavily used road. Supervisor Gondeck responded that MNDOT is no longer allowing smaller signs along the highway, because they feel they are a safety hazard. The large signs cost a minimum of \$2,700. This can be reviewed during the budget planning for next year.
- C. Kevin Reiter asked how the board would move forward with the fire contract. He asked why people should have to pay so much for internet if companies get grants. Clerk Spence noted the high cost for providing service, especially in rural areas. He recommended that the township install a sound system. Finally, he asked about the speed study on County Road 13. The supervisors explained the process. Supervisor Erdmann asked Supervisor Gondeck to see if MNDOT would reduce the speed to

35mph before the curve that is east of Sucker Creek Road, as there have been near accidents.

- D. Maureen Graber agreed that the township needs a sound system.
- E. Jason Krueger asked for an update on the Lake Andrew Development. Supervisor Gondeck will contact Scott Jarnot to see how the installation of the new wastewater treatment system is progressing. The power has been installed.
- F. Chuck Ertl was praised by the board for his work on the ditch mowing. Supervisor Gondeck also thanked Ed Kacures Jr. for initiating the double mowing program in the township.

A motion was made by Supervisor Erdmann, second by Supervisor Gondeck, and passed to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Clerk Pat Spence