

**Minutes of the Watab Town Board Meeting  
November 13, 2007**

The regular monthly meeting of the Watab Town Board was called to order by Chair Craig Gondeck on Tuesday, November 13, 2007 at 7pm at the Watab Town Hall. Board members present were the Chair, Supervisor Lloyd Erdmann, Supervisor Brad McIntosh, Treasurer Eileen Saldana and Clerk Pat Spence. Audience members present were Rosie Johnson, Sandy Rajkowski, Bob Rajkowski, Maureen Graber, Ed Kacures, Ron Hommerding, Taunya Mastey, George Mastey, Keith Krueger, Laura Brand, Brian Erdmann, Allen Saldana, and K. Krych. The Chair indicated that this meeting is in honor of all our veterans who have served our country and lost their lives in service. The Pledge to the Flag was conducted. Chair Gondeck continued that he has heard from citizens that they will not come to meetings because of the shouting; therefore, he is changing the way the meetings are run and speakers will be asked to come to the podium, only one person speaking at a time, and showing respect for all.

Supervisor McIntosh asked for an addition to the agenda: River Road recommendation to the Benton County Highway Department.

Motion was made by Supervisor Erdmann and seconded by Supervisor McIntosh to approve the minutes of all three meetings in October with a change to the October 30 minutes. The last sentence should state, "Jim Hovda commended the Rice Fire Department for responding to EMS calls and fires on North Freedom Road." The motion passed.

The Treasurer's Report was given and approved on a motion by Supervisor Gondeck and second by Supervisor McIntosh.

Maureen Graber suggested that we get a trash hauling service for the town hall. Supervisor Erdmann said that he agrees because the building is getting so much use. Currently Supervisor Gondeck is taking the garbage home to dispose with his garbage. A motion was made by Supervisor Erdmann and seconded by Supervisor Gondeck to have Maureen Graber get rates from garbage haulers. The motion passed.

Presentation of bills: The Clerk stated that she and the Treasurer are questioning the amount billed by Certified Aggregate Products for the parking lot, since only \$5,175 was authorized by the board at the October meeting, but the bill presented by Ron Hommerding is for \$8,580.30. Ron stated that this was authorized in the field by Supervisor Erdmann. Supervisor Erdmann said that the extra blacktop was needed to complete the job properly, and the job had not been estimated adequately. Chair Gondeck and Clerk Spence noted that the board should follow a protocol of only spending \$500 beyond what is approved if there is an emergency situation; otherwise the board member should request a special meeting for the expenditure to be approved. Supervisor McIntosh backed Supervisor Erdmann on authorizing the extra \$3,000 without prior board approval. Ron Hommerding said that the board's mistake was accepting the quote that he presented. Supervisor Gondeck said that Henkemeyer's would have filled the pond for \$8,000, which he felt would have been preferable. Maureen Graber said that \$3,000 is a lot of money over and above a quote; "it is the township money, not Lloyd's money. The erosion is ridiculous; we are not in compliance on the pond and she will have nothing to do with the MS4 for the storm water pond." Supervisor McIntosh said that he understands change orders and thinks this was a good time for a change order and he thinks this is a dead issue and he would have approved it. Supervisor Gondeck moved to pay the bills as presented; the motion was seconded by Supervisor Erdmann. The motion passed with Supervisor Gondeck voting "no."

Resolution on Irrigation System: Supervisor Gondeck moved that Lloyd's Contracting be authorized to maintain the irrigation system. Supervisor McIntosh seconded the motion; motion passed.

Chair Gondeck welcomed Dick Raveling from Raveling Insurance to talk about fire insurance rates relative to distance from fire stations. He is a professional insurance agent who resides in Watab

Township. He stated that the rule-of-thumb for the lowest rate is to live within 5 miles of the fire station and/or 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant or have access to a pumper truck with 3500 gallon capacity. The 5-mile distance from Sauk Rapids Fire Station is the Watab Town Hall road. All companies follow basically the same formula. The Clerk asked how much more a homeowner would pay on a home valued at \$250,000 if they are within five miles versus outside the five miles. He responded that it would possibly increase from \$650 to \$775. Dick added, "You can shop around for property insurance but you cannot shop for taxes." Chair Gondeck asked if a centralized water system would affect insurance rates. Being within the 1,000 feet of the water hydrant is a major benefit. Dick said that one major carrier would give the protected rate if there is river or lake water available. The Clerk went through a handout that she had prepared which showed the cash flow for the fire budget and the tax increase that would result from changing the boundaries to have 12 additional sections served by the Rice Fire Department. She also explained the advantage of creating two fire districts, so the residents in each district would be taxed for only the service that they are provided; currently residents in the southern 24 sections of the township are subsidizing the northern 12 sections, because 2/3 of the fire fund levy is paid to Rice. Our contract with Rice runs through 2012. Rosie Johnson asked about the process for changing contracts when this one ends. Chair Gondeck explained how the Fire Board operates. Supervisor McIntosh said that he thinks the contract needs to be revisited. After listening to the Rice Fire Department presentation, he does not believe they are out of line in what they are requesting and that they wouldn't ask for more than they need. He felt they justified their request for the 29% increase. Ron Hommerding asked how the board can justify a 29% increase for any business stating, "it's bad business." Chair Gondeck said that our attorney stated we have three choices: create our own department, have Sauk Rapids protect the entire township, or pay what Rice requests. Creating our own department is not an option. Maureen Graber said that she hoped the board would vote to not change the boundaries. Ed Kacures said that he knows what the firemen go through for training. He feels we need to get rid of the Rice EMS service because Gold Cross is showing up to all the calls anyway. This is redundant. Ed believes Rice needs to convince Gold Cross to station full time at the Rice Hall and this would cut the costs drastically to the townships and the City of Rice. Ed continued regarding adding 2 more firemen: "if the budget needs to go up 29% they need to cut their numbers rather than adding." Brian Erdmann asked if the board would consider approaching Sauk Rapids to serve the entire township. Supervisor Erdmann made a motion to not change the boundaries, seconded by Supervisor Gondeck. With the numbers presented by Dick Raveling and the increased cost to the taxpayers for increasing the levy would not make sense. Motion passed unanimously. Mayor Fiedler said that this is a preliminary budget. Bob Erickson asked if the board thinks this is a one-time large increase. Supervisor Erdmann said that basically we are a renter paying for services, and we are gaining no equity. We should really be part owners of the department since so much of our money goes into the department. That is what Supervisor Erdmann tried to negotiate at the beginning of this contract. Supervisor Erdmann moved that Chair Gondeck should go to the Fire Board and try to negotiate a lower amount between 3% and 12-15%, and this was seconded by Supervisor Erdmann. Ed Kacures said that if they don't stick to the 3% the contract is worthless. The motion passed with Supervisor Gondeck opposed, because he believes it should not exceed 3%. He said he will also try to get them to have Gold Cross stationed there permanently and eliminate the EMS. Brian Erdmann asked if the board would talk to Sauk Rapids Fire Department.

Citizen Complaint Process: there are forms available and complaints need to be in writing. The League of Cities recommends that everything be documented in writing, because then you can document what action is taken to resolve the complaint. He urged people to complete the form. It is available at the hall and on the website. Supervisor McIntosh apologized to the citizens for the language he used at the last meeting, as a complaint form had been filed. Chair Gondeck reviewed the complaint

forms and the action taken. He made a motion, which was seconded by Supervisor McIntosh to process the complaints. The motion passed.

Filing System on Town Roads: There will be a history created for each road, so that whenever work is done, when it was adopted, maintenance will all be in each road file. The Deputy Clerk, Maureen Graber and Chair Gondeck have spent considerable time in organizing these files.

Storm water pond: Maureen Graber said that the MPCA permit is in place and we have the authority to begin creating the ordinances. She said that we are totally not in compliance on our pond by the parking lot. She doesn't want anything to do with it. She asked for Ron Hommerding's inspection plans; he said that Doug Boser and George Mastey are responsible for the plan. George got the permit from the State of MN. George said there are no inspection records and there is no paper trail. George will take care of fixing the problem at his expense in the next two days. We need to eliminate the erosion to be in compliance.

Snow Plowing Study: Chair Gondeck said that there was a meeting two weeks ago and he has been criticized for sending out notices inviting various contractors. He did so because these contractors asked to be notified. He then turned the meeting over to Bob Erickson. He said the board is trying to become more time and cost efficient. The number of inches of snowfall for the year was divided by the total number of miles plowed to get the cost per mile. The cost has gone up significantly in the past year. Supervisor Erdmann asked why rainfall totals were not included. Supervisor McIntosh said that wind is not recorded. Maureen said that she and Bob did what they are asked to do; the costs are high and we need to do something. The Clerk read Bob's letter with recommendations. Maureen said that we don't need Hwy 10 conditions in the township; we can't afford this level of service. Ed Kacures said that Bob did a wonderful job with the study; in order to contain the costs, he recommends that we split the township in half and have two different contractors do the plowing and salt/sanding so that there is a checks and balance system. Mrs. Popp asked how much more our cost per mile is that adjacent townships. They are about 1/3 to 40% of our cost. Kay Krych, 3544 55<sup>th</sup> St. NE, said that the weather can vary greatly within the township as well as the type of terrain surrounding the road. She doesn't think it would be a good idea to divide the township into two parts. She feels that the snow plowing has been excellent in the past five to six years on Frost Road. 2006 cost was \$18,000; so far this year from January through now it has cost \$44,000. Maureen said that the board has responsibility for managing the budget. It is not George's responsibility to manage the budget. What can we do to control costs? George brought forward a letter from him and his wife, which was read into the record. The board requested that it be printed in the minutes:

"The discussion we are having tonight on snowplowing seems to have been exploited. It is something we should have been able as adults to sit down at a table and hash things out. I think that it is wonderful and great that the board is concerned about the budget. But by predicting what mother nature is going to do in the future you must have some magical powers that nobody else has. You are using the \$67,000 dollar amount on a projected cost that does not exist. We are almost to the middle of November and have had no precipitation to account for, which means there have been no dollars spent thus far for your predictions. Is it really in the best interest of the people and the board or is it a personal issue with one person on the board stirring up trouble? And now that we are talking about ways to cut the budget, why don't we look at the whole picture—meaning what wages has Mr. Gondeck and the township road consultant been paid in the past for things like Mr. Gondeck and the township road consultant getting wages for the new town hall project when Doug Boser and Ron Hommerding were put in charge of the project by the board, and how many special meetings were held and they got paid for all of them. Another example of money spent on something that didn't need to be was the township attorney. How much extra was that, until the rest of the board decided that Mr. Gondeck needed to stop seeking advice or info. from the attorney. Where did the money come

from to pay the township road consultant for the analysis of snow plowing? And where did the money come from to hold a special meeting on Oct. 22 about snowplowing that us as the contractors were never notified about (rumor has it that Craig tried to contact us the night of the meeting at 20 minutes to 7:00, which there was no message left and no numbers on caller ID to indicate that he even called). But Brian Erdmann and Ray Thompson and Bob Erickson were all personally invited by mail 2 weeks prior to the meeting from Craig Gondeck. It is really sad that we have to stand here and defend ourselves for services that were provided to the people with next to nothing for complaints in the past 5 years. To my knowledge it states in the contract on page 2 of the resolution 2006-2: contractor must remain free to exercise initiative, judgment, and discretion in how best to perform or provide the services. It also states on page 7, paragraph 13: "Complaints and requests for further services regarding snow and ice control or damage will be taken during normal working hours and handled in accordance with Town procedures. Complaints and requests for further services should be directed to the Board. If the Contractor is aware of complaints or requests for additional services, the Contractor shall forward such complaints or requests to the Board for consideration and be addressed at its Board meeting." It also states that the town will pay undisputed claims promptly submitted under this agreement's terms on a monthly basis. Bills were turned in on a monthly basis and paid with no disputes. If there had been or was a problem we should have never gotten paid. It is easy to throw darts at somebody a year later, and then like I said before we have to stand here and defend ourselves (for what?) We have done some of our own analysis for snow plowing, which consists of a more detailed graph like wind factor, freezing rain and thawing and compared them to the Watab road consultants graph. The Watab road consultants graph only has temps and snow fall, when he as asked why wind factor and freezing rain and thawing wasn't considered he responded with that's what I was told to do by Craig. When George questioned by who? The Watab road consultant said, "I mean the board." Watab Road Consultants study was done on 35 miles total and resolution 2006-2 states we have over 39 miles of road. Plus there are more roads added since this on March 7, 2006: Pirates Cove, Hansens Development, Road west of Hansens Development, 3 cultisaks minimal more."

Maureen Graber stated that she had invited George to a meeting with her and Bob, but he didn't have time to get together with them. Chair Gondeck said that the board agreed to his involvement, the salary he is paid by the township is set by the board and he documents all the time he spends and turns in an itemized statement. He drives the township every night and does not charge the township for that. Supervisor Erdmann said that all of this should have gone to a committee rather than being drug out into the public. Sandy Rakowski said that she complains all the time about the amount of salt/sand and it continues to be overloaded on their road by their home on the straight part of the road. Mrs. Popp said it is obvious that we are over the budget and something definitely needs to be adjusted. Ron Hommerding asked for totals for each year compared to the amount. Supervisor Erdmann said that the winter of 2006-07 had more incidences of ice and this doesn't show up on the snowfall reports. Maybe it was a different type of winter last year. Supervisor McIntosh said that someone in the township needs responsibility for directing George. He recommends we follow Benton County guidelines. Maureen suggested that the contractor provide a more detailed report of billing to note the conditions of the roads. The contractor was asked to provide more itemized detailing with his bills. Bob Erickson recommended that other snow plow contractors should have some input in our cost containment. Supervisor McIntosh says that the board will need to be more watchful but he does not feel comfortable telling the contractor what equipment to use. George was directed to make itemized lists and the board will watch the bills. George asked for the priority roads. Supervisor Erdmann was directed to make the list with Bob Erickson for George before the next meeting.

The Clerk asked for a change in the rental agreement for the town hall since Benton County does not require a special use liquor license for one-time use. The change was approved on a motion by Chair Gondeck and second by Supervisor McIntosh.

The Clerk read the monthly correspondence. There is an opening on the Planning Commission. Chair Gondeck nominated Maureen Graber to fill the position representing Watab Township, seconded by Supervisor Lloyd Erdmann, and motion passed. The Clerk was asked to write a letter of recommendation and send it to Commissioner Joe Wollak. Chair Gondeck noted that the election judges did an excellent job at the school board election, and there was a lot of interest expressed in renting the town hall. There were over 800 voters. He reported that the deadline for seeking homestead status on property is December 15<sup>th</sup>. He also reported that he sent a letter to Joe Wollak seeing if Benton County is getting money for a study to upgrade septic systems.

Supervisor Brad McIntosh wants a letter to go to Bob Kozel regarding County Rd 55 upgrade to say that the widening should occur on the north side of the road. He offered to fertilize the grass at the hall. Ed Kacures asked about the rust on the outside of the building. It will cost \$250 to have it removed. Chair Gondeck moved that we go ahead with the removal process; the motion was seconded by Supervisor Erdmann to go ahead with the stipulation that there be an iron filter added to the irrigation system. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 10:45pm.

Respectfully submitted by Clerk Pat Spence