

Watab Township Annual Meeting Minutes
March 8, 2011

The annual meeting of Watab Township was called to order on Tuesday, March 8, 2011 at 8:05pm by Clerk Pat Spence at the Watab Town Hall. Everyone joined in the Pledge of Allegiance. Those signed in included: Craig Gondeck, Bob Rahn, John Olson, Earl Tuttle, Todd Waytashek, Traci Balder, Bill Jacquemart, Eileen Saldana, Ed & Rosie Johnson, Maureen Graber, Keith O'Brien, Donna Poganski, Pat Spence, Kevin Reiter, Pat Hedlund, Ennis Arntson, Michael Barringer, JoAnn Baumgart, Geno Beniek, Sandra Saldana, Allen Saldana, Brian Erdmann, Wendy Erdmann, Lloyd Erdmann, Ed Kacures Jr., Bill Bettendorf, Nancy Scott, Guy Spence, and Cliff Weitgenant. Other residents attended but did not sign the attendance roster.

A Moderator was elected through a motion by Pat Spence and second by Craig Gondeck to nominate Ed Kacures Jr. There were no other nominations and the vote was unanimous for his election. The printed agenda was approved, with the addition of Rice Recreation and Benton County Fair Board to requests for donations by non-profits, through a motion by Sandy Saldana, second by JoAnn Baumgart, and motion passed. Craig Gondeck commended Clerk Pat Spence and Treasurer Eileen Saldana for the financial work for the township; applause was given by the audience. Clerk Spence presented the printed annual audit report. Geno Beniek questioned how board time was able to be reduced; the clerk responded that it was largely due to less time spent by the Supervisors on road projects. Minutes of the 2010 annual meeting were approved as printed through a motion by Maureen Graber, second by Bob Raveling, and passed.

Supervisor Lloyd Erdmann gave a **railroad crossing report** noting that there are five crossings in Watab. He recommended improvements to the Lakewood Shores, Saldana Road, and 105th St NW crossings because of steep slopes and other problems. He presented a priority order for the work as follows: 1) Lakewood Shores; 2) 105th St. NW; and 3) Saldana Road. Maureen Graber questioned the need to raise the grade of the road on the approaches to the tracks, except on Lakewood Shore Road. Lloyd explained that it is a safety issue for school buses. Lloyd also explained the benefits of expanding the widths of the roads when the crossings are improved to prepare for quiet zones. Kevin Reiter asked if the crossings would immediately be made silent zones. Bill Jacquemart asked why there would be a cost for silent zones; Lloyd explained the need for adding medians or other means to block the traffic from trying to go around the arms. He said that cost should first be determined and that he believed they could be done cost effectively. Bill stated that he would like a silent zone at the Lakewood Shore crossing. Lionel Kull asked what the cost is for starting the application process for the silent zone. Bill Bettendorf asked about the safety ratings with the crossings improved. Lloyd explained that the township has to approve the process and make the application. He reviewed risk indexes citing 40% improvement in safety with improved crossings. He suggests readying for silent zones as we make improvements on the crossings, one at a time. Benton County would have the authority on improving the County Rd 79 crossing. Geno Beniek said he noticed four wheelers like to go up the embankment at Lakewood Shores and wondered if that affects the breakup of the blacktop. Lloyd responded "yes." Can we add fences? Lloyd's response was, "No, because of liability." Marty Reker said he likes what's he's hearing about quiet zones and thinks it's a good idea to work towards this. Motion was made by Bill Bettendorf to get the ball rolling on improving the Lakewood Shores Rd crossing; second by Bob Raveling. Rosie Johnson asked a question about adding horns at the crossings and if that would be cheaper. Lloyd said that he doesn't know the exact costs. Brian Erdmann asked to have the issues of silent zones and improving the crossings as separate issues. Kevin Reiter asked for clarification about the motion. Lloyd said it would be best to upgrade the crossing with the first motion and another motion could be made to pursue a quiet zone. Motion passed to improve the Lakewood Shore crossing by widening the road approaches and correcting the slopes. Then, Rosie Johnson made a motion for Lloyd to look into the most cost effective way to make silent zones at the Watab crossings; motion was seconded by Todd Waytashek. Bill Bettendorf asked about getting something going on the county road. Motion passed. John Olson asked about the priority list order: Lakewood Shores, then 105th, then Saldana Road. John made a motion that after Lakewood Shores, the 105th crossing be considered for repair and to make it a quiet zone; motion was seconded by Bob Raveling; motion passed. Bill Bettendorf made the motion to ask Benton County for work on the Co. Rd 79 crossing to make it a quiet zone; motion was seconded by John Olson; and motion passed. Lloyd said he would contact Benton County. It will be discussed by the town board.

Requests from Non-Profits for donations:

1. Jessica Peterschick appeared for **Tri-County Humane Society**. She thanked the township for the invitation. Tri-County Humane Society provides contracts with counties and local units of government for animal control. Watab Township currently has no formal animal control, and the town board did not enter into a 2011 contract;

they could do so in the future. Jessica recommended a formal animal control policy and program to protect the township from excessive legal costs for accidents, biting, etc. She said there were three rabid animal cases in Stearns County in the past year. In 2009 16 strays were picked up by the humane society from Watab; and \$535 was donated in 2009 by the residents to cover that cost. In 2010, 23 animals (9 dogs & 14 cats) were picked up from Watab and sheltered. They must legally be held for 5 days; cost is about \$10 per day per animal. They received \$110 in donations in 2009 and \$79 in 2010 from those who brought the animals in. In 2011, the society has had an initiative to spay and neuter every cat & kitten before it goes out the door; they are working toward 100% neutering for cats and dogs in the future. Jessica said that any donation would be greatly appreciated. Craig Gondeck asked if the township donates money, if residents would have to give a donation when a stray is delivered. Jessica explained that the main source of funding is surrender fees, fund raising, adoption fees, merchandise fees, and that there is no government funding. Pat Spence asked for advice from Jessica about dogs running loose in township neighborhoods. Jessica said that Holdingford, Sauk Rapids, Sartell, and Randall are units that have an at-large fee for loose dogs. If someone finds a stray animal, the finder brings it in, it's verified where it came from, and then the humane society takes it in. Loose leash fees need to be paid to the township before the animal can be reclaimed and paid for by the owner; the owner pays the fee. She recommends having an ordinance with something in place for animals running off leash. Jessica said that it's legal to shoot an unleashed dog if it comes on your property. She also advised everyone to spay and neuter your pet. Live traps can be rented out from the shelter to trap a cat. JoAnn Baumgart made a motion to donate \$1,000 from Watab Township to the Tri-County Humane Society, seconded by Sandy Saldana, and the motion passed.

2. **Little Rock Lake Association** request was made by President Guy Spence. He thanked the residents for the \$1,200 donation made last March, which was used for development of two buffer strips on the lake. This year 4-5 more buffer strips will be installed, which will comprise over 1,000 feet of buffer strips on the lake. He feels that the association is making major progress on creating the buffer strips of native plants and grasses, which will prevent pollution and erosion. The strips extend fifteen feet back from the lake shore. Another project of the association is a plan to reduce the carp population, which does considerable damage to shoreline, fish habitat, and cloudy the water. They can't be eliminated, but the numbers can be reduced by hiring a fisherman to net them. Guy said that the initial Total Maximum Daily Load study results are in: the lake has reached 100% of its carrying capacity of phosphorous; the goal is to reduce it to 60%. Excess phosphorous comes mainly from agricultural run off. The LRLA will need to try to help the county and BCSWD plan for strips on the farms through education. Guy requested \$1,200 to be used for the upcoming buffer strip projects. He said the association can get matching funds from the county and from other grants. Lloyd Erdmann asked about the buffer strip maintenance; Guy said they are checked. Lloyd made a motion to donate \$1,500 to LRLA; second by Bill Bettendorf; and motion passed. Craig Gondeck applauded Guy for his work and all the projects of the association; there was applause by the audience. Guy thanked Maureen Graber and all the members of the association who are doing so much good work.
3. **Rice Recreation:** Keith O'Brien, representing Rice Recreation, reported that from 2007 through 2010 about 15 to 20% of the participants were from Watab Township; 60 to 70% are from the City of Rice; and the rest are from Langola and Brockway Townships. They seek donations to sponsor teams. Younger children play ball at the Rice Elementary School and older children at the Rice ball fields. 2008- 15 Watab kids; 2009-20 Watab kids; 2010-12 Watab kids. Motion was made by Bill Bettendorf to donate \$2,000 for Rice Recreation; second by Lionel Kull; motion passed.
4. **Benton Co. Agricultural Society:** Karen Sakry, director from the Fair Board made a request for a donation; she said that the organization is a non-profit, 501-C3, and she described upcoming projects. Karen said that the fair board would appreciate any donation and that the funds would go back to the community. Lloyd Erdmann made a motion to donate \$500; second by John Olson; motion passed.

Citizen's Issues: Marty Reker said that if the township continues to develop property with more than eight lots, a centralized sewer and water system is required, which forces high density. These are expensive and costly systems to maintain; and they are a source of controversy because a system can't work well until all lots are developed; then a homeowner's association needs to maintain the system. Marty has 140 acres on the Mississippi River. He could get hundreds of lots under current zoning, but would like to do far less density with lots of five to six acres in size. He wants to inform everyone of this bad rule in Benton County and wants the system changed, saying that it's bad for our economy. Traci Balder asked about his goal for total number of lots; Marty said about 40 averaging between 3.5 to 6

acres each. Commissioner Joe Wollak asked for clarification on the requirements for centralized sewer. Joe said he'll check into it for Marty. Craig Gondeck commented that he supports Marty's comments. Joe Wollak also said he supports it. Geno Beniek asked about the sewer system Marty would use, and Marty responded he would use pressurized bed, gravity systems. Bob Raveling asked about the status of a public address system for the town hall. Craig Gondeck said he is waiting for more quotes.

Joe Wollak, Benton County Commissioner, spoke on county issues. He said that MNDOT has been awarded a \$14.5 million interchange grant for Rice at the intersection of U.S. Hwy 10 & Co. Rd 2 to be completed in 2014. \$3 million in local matching funds are required for tying in local roads. Joe said that he will shuffle funds to make that happen. He reviewed other county road projects, the Benton Co. Emergency Mgt. planning for flooding; and he thanked Allen & Sandy Saldana for letting the county use their gravel pit for the sand bag operation. The county budget was adopted with a 0% levy increase. The county will also save \$150,000 per year by contracting out custodial services; this is currently going to mediation with the employees. County Rd 33 had a blowout this past spring; it is used by numerous Gold N Plump trucks; it will be patched this year and improved in two years. Lloyd Erdmann asked Joe about the process toward getting a quiet zone for the Co. Rd 79 railroad crossing; Joe said the board would consider such a request. Geno Beniek asked about replacing custodial staff with a private contractor, wondering if the contract is with a Benton County business. Geno added that the county might pay severance to Benton Co. residents who had been employees and then award a contract to a firm outside the county. Traci Balder talked about how much money she thinks it can save government units by using private contractors rather than employees. She has a contract with the township as the Assessor.

Presentation of the budget: for 2011 and 2012. Clerk Spence gave the board presentation on the budgets prepared by the town board.

1. Maureen Graber made a motion to levy \$100,000 for the General Fund; second was by JoAnn Baumgart; motion passed.
2. John Olson made a motion to set the Road & Bridge Fund levy at \$205,000; second was by Bob Raveling; motion passed. This was \$5,000 higher than the board recommendation. Reason for the increase was to work on the crossing improvements.
3. Geno Beniek asked about reimbursements for fire calls. Clerk Spence said that \$3,172 was collected during the past year. Sandy Saldana made a motion to set the Fire Fund levy at \$70,000; second was by Rosie Johnson; motion passed.
4. Maureen Graber made a motion to set the Building Fund levy at \$25,000, saying that she loves the building and having flush toilets and that the hall was well worth the money; second was by Bob Raveling; motion passed.

Fire Report: Ed Kacures Jr. reported that we renewed a two-year contract with Sauk Rapids Fire Department. The Sauk Rapids Fire Department contract is totally based on our valuation, and with the City of Rice we pay for a portion of the operating budget. Sauk Rapids covers 2/3 of the township and Rice 1/3. He said that the township should set up two fire districts and will look at doing so this year; residents would pay for the contract which covers their area. The contract with the City of Rice ends on December 31, 2012. The Rice Mayor wants to start negotiations in the third quarter of this year. Ed said that the township received information today on 2011 costs, so he has not had time to evaluate the report and will do so in the next couple of days. He was granted authority by the town board to work with Rice's city administrator on the budget. He apologized for not having the information for the annual meeting. Craig Gondeck said that Sauk Rapids Fire Department would bring the new fire truck to a township meeting so residents can see it.

Nancy Scott, Building Inspector Report: 46 re-roofs and re-siding in the township last year because of the wind storm. No rate increases are projected this year for permits. To get a building permit for new construction, a deck, addition, etc., first contact Benton Co. for the land use permit, which is a zoning issue. When you have the land use permit, contact Nancy about obtaining a building permit. Lloyd Erdmann asked about the change in law about re-roofing and needing to tear off old shingles. Nancy said that it's state law; residents need to tear off all old materials. Nancy said that comes out when forms for a foundation are in place, and she'll issue the building permit. She reviews five processes and George, her assistant, comes four times for plumbing and heating inspections. These are minimums on a house. They also do the septic connection inspection, which the excavator requests. On re-roofs, Nancy said that she asks for a photo and then inspects one time to keep the permit fees lower. Cliff Weitgenant asked if there are many violations of the building permit process and if there are penalties for violations. Penalties for work without permits are double fees;

Nancy usually doesn't give penalties if it's a re-roof and residents say they didn't know about the permit process. Marty Reker told the board that Nancy does a good job.

Traci Balder: Assessor for Watab Township Report: Traci presented a preliminary report for the year, and she reviewed her process for assessing. She reviewed 474 properties physically during the past year. There is some new construction. Watab had seven new homes built during the past year. Values have gone down somewhat (\$306,448 million down to \$289 million valuation in Watab.) This reduction is based on actual sales two years ago. She said that unfortunately foreclosures continue.

Preliminary Election results: Clerk Pat Spence reported that Eileen Saldana for Treasurer received 59 votes; Ed Kacures Jr. for Supervisor received 56 votes, and there were two write ins. Winners were congratulated.

2010 Road Project Report: Ed Kacures Jr. showed slides of work in the past year on Fifth Avenue and Timberlane Loop. Cliff Weitgenant asked about progress in Lake Andrew Development. Craig Gondeck said that there are currently five homes, one built in the past year. Geno Beniek asked about the inspection for seal coating and would like Sanbur Trail reviewed; Craig said that the board would go on a township road tour in April and then let bids for seal coating.

Road Plan for coming year: Lloyd Erdmann said that the board would work on crossing rebuilding on Lakewood Shores and seal coating two to three miles of town roads. No decision has been made on the projects. He asked people to let him know if there are needs; Geno Beniek asked that Sanbur Trail not be forgotten again this year for ditch mowing. Ditches are rough and steep so mowing needs to be done by the township. Ditch mowing has been changed during past year to do a first cutting around 4th of July about 7-8 feet wide and later in the year when the grass is done growing.

Potential flood management update: Craig Gondeck said that there is a high risk of flooding in our area, similar to 1987. If EMS is activated, there will be a phone call to your residence or cell phone—you can get registered with the county website. Benton County will take over the town hall as a staffed emergency center. A sand bagging operation will be set up at Saldana Pit, and he thanked Sandy & Allen for their cooperation. 20 free sand bags? He described the process. If anyone wants to volunteer, they need to register and will get a colored arm band. Craig feels that there is better preparation than in the past; he said we will be prepared for the worst and will hope for the best. He said that Caleb Voigt was present earlier and works at the paper mill, so he's knowledgeable about the control of the Sartell dam. JoAnn Baumgart asked how the flooding will affect septic systems. Craig said that she should contact Jim McDermott.

Watab History Day Report: Craig Gondeck said that there was a reunion of former King's Inn employees on October 30, 2010 at the town hall. He thanked the people who attended and expressed his belief of the importance of having celebrations to get people back to the community.

Watab Clean Up Day Report: the day was held on Sept 18th. Craig Gondeck thanked Lloyd Erdmann for help with the event, which was funded by a Benton County SCORE grant, in-kind donations from local businesses, and about \$600 in township funding. Funding for a 2011 clean up day has been requested from Benton County. John Olson said that he appreciates the work on clean up day and that it keeps the ditches clean and the township looking great.

Preferred legal newspaper for legal notices: Motion was made by Craig Gondeck and seconded by Sandy Saldana, to continue using the Sauk Rapids Herald as our legal newspaper. Motion passed. **Desired posting places:** Rosie Johnson made a motion to do three sites: Town Hall; Channel 3; and Pines' Edge; motion was seconded by Geno Beniek; motion passed.

The 2012 Annual Election and Meeting: Motion was made by Craig Gondeck and seconded by Rosie Johnson to have election hours from 11am to 8pm on Tuesday, March 13, 2012, followed by the Annual Meeting. The motion passed.

Announcement of 2011 Board of Equalization Date: April 8th at 2:30pm at the town hall.

An unidentified resident of Riverview Loop thanked the town board for the work on Riverview Loop Road during the past year. A motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:45pm was made by Rosie Johnson and seconded by Bob Raveling. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted by Pat Spence, Township Clerk