

## MINUTES OF WATAB TOWNSHIP ANNUAL MEETING – MARCH 14, 2017

The Annual Meeting of Watab Township was called to order at 8:10 p.m. by Clerk Pat Spence. Those present include: Ray Thompson, Gene & Mary Kivi, John Polcher, John Olson, Jeff Fandel, Ed Kacures, Jerry Kostreba, Jill Lundquist, Paul Lundquist, Sandra Saldana, Allen Saldana, Anna Saldana, Guy Spence, Erik Forsberg, Wayne Larson, Jason Kruger, Kevin Reiter, Jean Potts, Ron Potts, Marit Ortega, Richard Raveling, Geno Beniek, Jerome Walker, Diane Walker, Brian Erdmann, Wendy Erdmann, Todd Waytashek, Bob Raveling, Roxanne Wilson, Kenneth Graber, Maureen Graber, Lloyd Erdmann, Donna Poganski, Eileen Saldana, Craig Gondeck, Pat Spence, and a few additional residents who did not sign in on the roster.

Following the welcome and Pledge to the Flag, Clerk Spence called for nominations for a Moderator. Maureen Graber nominated Sandra Saldana, and Lloyd Erdmann nominated Jason Kruger. There were no other nominations. Sandra Saldana was elected Moderator with fourteen votes; Jason Kruger had thirteen votes. Moderator Saldana called for additions to the Agenda; there being none, a motion was made by Craig Gondeck, second by Dick Raveling, and passed to approve the agenda as printed.

The minutes of the 2016 Annual Meeting were approved through a motion by Craig Gondeck, second by John Olson, and passed.

Clerk Spence gave a summary of the Board of Audit report on a slide; there was also a handout with a detailed breakdown of income and expenses for each fund. Property tax is a large component of the receipts for each of the township's funds, although the General Fund also received \$98,000 from Building Permits. The Road and Bridge Fund had over \$211,000 from Property Tax and \$31,000 from the State of Minnesota for Gas Tax and Road Allotment. The Rice Fire District Fund doesn't have an adequate year-end balance to cover the expenses for the first half of 2017 because of the high usage and unpaid bills. Jason Kruger asked about the status of the Rice Fire Contract. Pat responded that there is another three-month extension, because the City Council wasn't ready to decide. The Sauk Rapids Fire Fund also does not have a sufficient balance to cover the payment for the Fire Contract, because the contracts had larger increases than anticipated. They went from about \$32,000 in 2015 to \$36,000 this year, and \$39,000 for 2018. If the board had known this, they would have asked for a larger increase in the levy at last year's annual meeting. Finally, the Indebtedness Report was shown with a balance of \$501,181 for the Road Debt and \$61,557 for the Town Hall Debt. The town hall will be paid off in August 2019. There were no further questions on income or expenses for 2016.

Clerk Spence reviewed the budget process and financial information for the 2017 and 2018 budgets along with the reasons for the board's levy recommendations. The General Fund Levy is recommended to stay at \$70,000. The Road and Bridge Fund has a recommended increase of \$20,000 to be able to do the projects people are requesting and keep ahead on maintenance. Fire District I won't have enough at the end of 2017 to make the 2018 payments to Rice unless they give up the medical calls, so the board is recommending an increase of \$8,270 or \$54,250 to be able to meet anticipated expenses. If Rice gives Watab a contract without the medical calls, the board can decrease the Levy before it is finally certified to Benton County in the fall. Fire District II also has a \$10,000 shortfall to be able to make the contract payment to Sauk Rapids, and they have hinted that they may be asking for the townships to have a bigger share in their budget, so the Town Board is recommending a levy increase of \$18,000 to bring it to \$50,000. The Town Hall Debt Fund is adequate at \$21,000; but the Road Debt Fund needs an additional \$2,643 to cover the additional \$5,000 in principal payment that will be made in 2018. Principal payments on both debt funds are made in February.

Supervisor Lloyd Erdmann came forward to present the Road and Bridge Fund needs. He talked about the items that are included as set costs: snow plowing, tree trimming, ditch mowing, sign replacement, grading, and routine repairs to roads. The seal coating that was done in 2016 came in

\$9,000 less than the estimated cost. Crack filling cost \$5,910; Saldana Road/95<sup>th</sup> Street engineering was \$15,206; 85<sup>th</sup> Street engineering cost \$8,000, and Highway 10 frontage road planning was \$1,800. The Road and Bridge Fund balance at the end of 2016 was \$321,413. In 2017 the board plans to spend \$7,500 for crack filling materials, \$17,000 for engineering, \$294,158 for Saldana Road/95<sup>th</sup> Street reconstruction and quiet zone, \$30,000 for BNSF planks, and \$7,500 for frontage road planning. 2018 projects would be reconstruction of 85<sup>th</sup> Street from U. S Highway 10 to the entrance of Oak Hill Estates and a Quiet Zone on 105<sup>th</sup> Street. The 2018 projects depend on the wishes of the residents and available funds. Paul Lundquist lives on 85<sup>th</sup> Street and asked where the frontage road would be located. Lloyd responded that it would be aligned with Indian Road. Paul asked about safety of car stacking and concerns for only one exit from the developments in case of a fire, trees blocking the road, or other reasons. Lloyd said that when 85<sup>th</sup> Street is reconstructed the board would like to get it more on the centerline of the right of way, so the road would move north. Paul also gave input that he didn't think a walking path/shoulder would be a good idea, because it would be a path to nowhere going out to Highway 10 and might make the traffic go faster. There was additional conversation between Lloyd and Paul about safety concerns, and Lloyd said that the Town Board would have a public meeting to get input from all the residents of the developments on 85<sup>th</sup> Street. Lloyd talked about the board's hope that a frontage road be built connecting County Roads 33 and 13 along the east side of Highway 10. The township needs to secure the right of way and do the planning; then the township can apply for a state grant for the construction. Kevin Reiter asked Lloyd to explain the status of overpasses for those who haven't been attending meetings. Lloyd said that overpasses were in a 20-year MNDOT plan, then dropped, and now not in the next 20-year plan due to traffic and accident counts. Todd Waytashek added that in conversations between the board and MNDOT staff they don't consider all the drivers that divert from U.S. Highway 10 because of the heavy traffic. Lloyd said another obstacle to getting overpasses in the township is that Benton County must provide partial funding when they connect to county roads, and they don't have the money to do so. He doesn't think there is a good chance to get overpasses in Watab. Maureen Graber asked a question about whether the township is levying what other Urban Townships do for road projects. Pat Spence referred to the chart in the newsletter with information from the State Auditor's website that shows per capita township tax levies for 2015: Watab - \$124.88; Langola - \$335.09; Graham - \$153.31; Minden - \$93.28; Sauk Rapids - \$105.48; and Haven - \$182.71. She added that the Township Engineer has stated that most of the Urban Townships he works for levy in the \$400,000 to \$500,000 range. Lloyd talked about some of the township roads being beyond repair and not getting the attention that they need. Jerry Kostreba said that there is a six to eight inch drop off and tar cracking off township roads where the heavy farm trucks come out of their fields onto the roads and said the board needed to address this problem. "The farmers need to protect the blacktop." Ray Thompson asked why the farmers don't have the same rules in the township that the contractors have. Craig Gondeck explained that these issues are governed by state law, and the farm lobby groups got them exempt from some of the contractor's requirements. Ray advised the 85<sup>th</sup> Street people to carefully watch what the town board is doing. "They are moving the road to the section line, and I have said that they should leave it where it is. I and Mr. Walker live on 95<sup>th</sup> Street and his property will be destroyed. I have nothing to gain. The board wants to make it correct now and if it keeps doing that there won't be enough money to fix the roads. They are p\*\*\*\*\*g the money away. They should have had a public hearing at the beginning, and I came in January and the road wasn't on the agenda. Now the board has redone the engineering seven or eight times. Do the meeting first." Jerome Walker said the board was railroading the project over his objections. Lloyd responded, "When the township spends money to rebuild a road, it is common sense to put the road in the right of way as much as possible. The board took another look at the project by Jerome Walker's house. It is built too close to the right of way, so we tried to compromise. The engineer redid the plans and moved the right of way eleven feet further from Mr. Walker's house. The board is trying to compromise, but it also wants to

have roads as much as possible in the right of way to protect future property owners.” Ray went on to explain measurements he had made by his property, said that he had lived in the township for eighty years, and the board shouldn’t move the road. Instead they should keep it where it is and move the gas pipes. Todd Waytashek asked about what must be excavated to build a nine-ton road. Jerry Kostreba asked when 105<sup>th</sup> Street is planned; Lloyd replied in 2019. Jason Kruger asked if the board had located the party that hasn’t signed a Permanent Easement by the large curve and how that would affect the project. Pat Spence answered that they have not been able to be personally served; if that is impossible the board may have to move forward with the reconstruction and leave the large curve in place. Ray Thompson said he wanted to talk about 95<sup>th</sup> Street again. Moderator Saldana said that she wanted to move ahead with the agenda; Ray said he wasn’t done and that Pat had told him the people could vote on this tonight. Maureen Graber made a motion to accept the current plan for 95<sup>th</sup> Street as it has been redone many times and have the board move forward with it; the motion was seconded by Bob Raveling and passed with three nays on a voice vote and the remainder in favor.

Marit Ortega, Director of Philanthropy for the Tri-County Humane Society, presented a request for \$1,300 to cover the cost of the non-profit taking care of Watab stray dogs and cats for 2015 and 2016. This request was based on sheltering 35 Watab animals during the two-year period. Brian Erdmann asked Commissioner Ed Popp if Benton County donates to the shelter and thought they had donated \$1,400. Motion was made by Lloyd Erdmann, second by Guy Spence, and passed to recommend that the board donate \$1,500 to the Tri-County Humane Society. Craig Gondeck said that the Benton County Historical Society does a fantastic job and made a motion to recommend a donation of \$1,000; motion was seconded by Ken Graber, and passed. Tracy Scapanski-Schumann gave a presentation on behalf of the Benton County Fair, which is one of the last free fairs in Minnesota. Jason asked if the board has evaluated keeping it free. Tracy said that the fair board believes it is important to keep it free so that more people can come and participate. There are many educational activities. They want to build a new FFA barnyard that will be like the birthing center at the State Fair. Motion was made by Brian Erdmann to recommend a \$1,000 donation to the County Fair; second was made by Donna Poganski; motion passed. Sandra Saldana gave a brief presentation about the Benton Economic Partnership and that Watab had given \$2,500 to be a Founding Member. She gave a progress report including having more than fifty members, a new Director, and that it is a Small Business Administration Satellite Office through a partnership agreement. She read a letter of appreciation from John Uphoff, Executive Director. Lloyd Erdmann stated that any business expansion in Benton County benefits everyone, and he made a motion to donate \$3,500; motion was seconded by John Olson. The motion failed on an eleven to ten vote. Brian Erdmann made a motion to donate \$1,500; this was seconded by Ray Thompson; motion passed.

Mary Kivi, Vice-President of the Little Rock Lake Association Board of Directors, made a presentation to enter into a contract with the township for monitoring the public access areas for animal waste, which is one of the major contributors to excess nutrients and bacteria in the lake; to monitor for potential and on-going erosion by reporting to the proper officials; and to install as many buffer strips as possible in the public accesses and Watab properties, as the Lake Association prepares to partner with the DNR for the lake drawdown in 2018. These will contribute to the greater recreational use by the public of Little Rock Lake in the township. The amount of \$1,500 was requested. Someone asked for an explanation of a buffer, and Mary talked about the planting of native grasses and flowers along the lakeshore. Maureen Graber made the motion to enter into a contract as described for \$1,500 for 2018; motion was seconded by Guy Spence. Maureen added that it costs \$1,000 per day for the conservation corps to help with the planting. Jason Kruger asked if this would fit the township budget. The motion passed. Lloyd Erdmann made a motion to give an additional \$1,700 to the Benton Economic Partnership stating that he didn’t think \$1,500 was enough and that Watab should be helping to make sure that the organization is successful. A total of \$3,200 would represent one dollar per resident. John Olson

seconded the motion. During discussion, Kevin Reiter asked why it isn't a county department. Sandra Saldana explained the benefits of having it be a non-profit making it more comfortable and private for businesses versus everything being public information when it is done at the county level. Commissioner Popp said that Benton County is donating \$75,000 per year for the first few years and that people are more open to talking about growing their business with a non-profit director than going into a government office where everything becomes public. Lloyd added that he thinks this is money well spent as an investment and that we should not be starving the organization out when it is just getting started. A vote was taken and the motion passed with sixteen in favor and twelve opposed to give an additional \$1,700 in 2018 to Benton Economic Partnership.

The next topic on the agenda as approval of the levy amounts:

- Motion was made by Ray Thompson, second by Dick Raveling, and passed to levy \$70,000 for the General Fund.
- Motion was made by Dick Raveling, second by John Olson, and passed to levy \$350,000 for the Road and Bridge Fund.
- Motion was made by Ray Thompson to levy \$54,250 for Fire District I. Dick Raveling asked if that is enough. Jerry Kostreba asked why there needs to be an increase. Motion was seconded by Dick Raveling, and passed.
- Motion was made by Ray Thompson, second by Jerry Kostreba, and passed to levy \$50,000 for Fire District II.
- Motion was made by Lloyd Erdmann, second by John Olson, and passed to levy \$21,000 for the Town Hall Debt Fund.
- Motion was made by John Olson, second by Ken Graber, and passed to levy \$60,575 for the Road Debt Fund. Motion passed.

Ed Popp, Benton County District 2 Commissioner, gave a county update on the levy, the efforts to have legislation passed to allow the county to appoint the Recorder, road projects, union negotiations, refinance of county debt, water plan to complete in 2017, possible changes to the state buffer law, and the space crunch in Human Services offices. Todd Waytashek asked if the board is still considering office space for social workers in East St. Cloud; Ed responded that they are looking at a bank building in Foley. Todd urged him to reconsider. Jerry Kostreba asked Ed about the number of employees in Human Services. Ed said that it is one hundred twenty-five. Dick Raveling told Ed to work on getting better county roads; "River Road is terrible. We need it widened and to be a nine-ton road. There is much more traffic on it." Brian Erdmann reminded Ed to get rid of bad soils before a road is rebuilt. Ray Thompson asked that County Road 55 be rebuilt from 95<sup>th</sup> Street/Saldana Road north to Rice to accommodate the truck traffic.

Craig Gondeck gave an update on the status of the Rice Fire Contract. He said that he was sorry to report that all the township has is a contract extension for another three months. He had asked the city council for a decision, but they wouldn't make one at their March meeting. He thanked Pat Spence and Maureen Graber for giving an excellent presentation to the Rice City Council in February. Now, he said the township is levying over \$100,000 for fire contracts; people are constantly having medical calls and not paying their bills, and the township can't keep on writing off bills and raising taxes. Jason Kruger asked if the township could have its own department since Rice holds all the cards and won't work with us. Craig said that the board would consider that or try to set up a sub-station. John Olson said, "This has gone on for years, and it is tiresome. I make a motion to instruct the board to come up with an alternate to having a contract with the City of Rice and to provide fire and rescue services in a new way. Motion was seconded by Maureen & Ken Graber. Dick Raveling said the township has space to put up a building for a couple of trucks, ambulance space, get used fire trucks, try to get trained under another

department, and greatly improve response time to three or four minutes. He added, "We need to do this now." He also said he would volunteer his time to help and thinks that Sauk Rapids has more open-minded people to work with. Lloyd Erdmann said he would be in favor of investigating another option, but additional funds might need to be levied to get something off the ground. Roxanne Wilson asked if the board had given up on the option to pass an ordinance that would allow the township to assess unpaid bills on property owners. Craig Gondeck said that the board hadn't discussed it since the opposition at the Public Hearing on the ordinance. Moderator Saldana called for a vote on the motion; it passed unanimously.

Clerk Spence gave the preliminary report on the election results: 53 votes were cast. Todd Waytashek had 50 votes for a three-year term as Supervisor; Maureen Graber had 49 votes for a two-year term as Treasurer. There was one write-in vote for Erik Forsberg for Supervisor; one write-in vote for Phil Nelson for Supervisor; and one write-in vote for Scott Voigt for Treasurer. Everyone joined in congratulating Todd and Maureen; Clerk Spence thanked them for stepping forward to run for office since many townships do not have candidates.

Ray Thompson said that Watab businesses didn't get the township newsletter; Pat Spence explained that if the business and residence shared the same address only one newsletter was sent to that address. Sandy Saldana said that they have a different address than their home for their business; they received a newsletter at each address. Pat said that she would check the mailing list to make sure that Saldana Concrete was on the mailing list. Other business people present said they got the newsletter.

A motion was made by Geno Beniek, second by Maureen Graber, and passed to hold the next Annual Election and Meeting on Tuesday, March 13, 2018 with polls to be open from 11:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. and the Annual Meeting to begin at 8:00 p.m.

Finally, a motion was made by John Olson to recess the Annual Meeting to Tuesday, July 11 at 7:00 p.m. at the Watab Town Hall to discuss alternatives to the Rice Fire Contract and any potential changes in the Fire Levies. The motion was seconded by Maureen Graber and passed. The meeting adjourned at 11:00 p.m.

#### **BOARD OF CANVASS MINUTES**

The Town Board called the Board of Canvass to order at 11:30 p.m. They recounted the votes and found a small change with Maureen Graber receiving 50 votes and one additional write-in vote for Erik Forsberg for Treasurer. Documents were signed and the Board of Canvass adjourned at 11:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Clerk Pat Spence