

## Greetings!

**Julie Johnson, Chair**

2020 was quite a year! We all learned how to work, play, learn, and stay at home as much as possible.

The board made the switch to limited audiences during Township meetings and has been using Zoom as an option for attendees. While it has its limitations, it has worked pretty well. The Annual Township Meeting on March 9 will present a host of in-person attendance problems to be solved. Watab has a history of great attendance at the Annual Meeting, however, we are only allowed so many spots and they must be 6 feet apart. The Annual Meeting is where you the elector get a say and a vote on how much you are taxed locally and how it is allocated. The Annual Meeting is run by local residents and the board has limited interaction. We present the budget and the levy and let you, the residents, decide to approve, adjust, or deny the levy amount. For the Annual Meeting we will be having a Zoom audience of 100 spots available to log in. We will create polls for voting and can record your vote for an accurate count. The Zoom laptop will be at the podium and every speaker will need to come to the podium to present or interact with the audience.

Our new Township Engineer, Kevin Kruger, WSB Engineering will also be presenting the results of the Paver Program. This program collected data and evaluated all the Township roads in a standard procedure so that we can be well-informed going forward on how to best allocate and spend your tax dollars to improve our roads. MANY roads are in need of serious attention, but there are only so many dollars to complete projects each year. The Board is committed to a project every year going forward to move us to a more sustainable road management plan. Road costs are extremely expensive (currently

estimated at 1 million dollars per mile for reconstruction), and with 38+ miles of roads, it will take a lot of thought and planning to achieve a better maintenance schedule.

So, read on to see how we are doing financially as a Township, what projects we tackled this year, and what 2022 will bring.

## Watab Township Annual Meeting Notification

The Town of Watab will hold its annual election and meeting on Tuesday, March 9, 2021.

Election poll hours are from 12 noon until 8:00 p.m. at which time the voter will elect:

- A. Treasurer for a 2-year term of office
- B. Supervisor for a 3-year term of office

The Annual Meeting will commence at approximately 8:15 p.m. to conduct all necessary business as prescribed by law. Due to Covid 19 restrictions, we request that most residents attend virtually through the Zoom link. You will still be able to vote and make motions as if in person. The Annual Township Election and Meeting will be held at the **OLD VILLAGE HALL, Rice, Minnesota**. Please contact the Township Clerk (320-240-2270 or watabts@gmail.com) if you would like to receive an absentee ballot via mail, or if you would like to set up an appointment to vote absentee.

## Email & Electronic News

Sign up for electronic updates from the Township. On the lower left page of the newly designed website is a form to enter and submit to receive emails, updates, agendas, and minutes, and the latest happenings. Or request to be added via email at watabts@gmail.com.

**[www.watabtownship.com](http://www.watabtownship.com)**

## Financials

### Deb O'Keefe

Below are the yearend 2020 financial statements. For a full detailed report please attend the annual meeting in March or access online at the township website.

#### Revenue/General Fund:

Beginning Balance	\$151,041.18
Receipts	\$210,747.42
Disbursements	<u>-\$215,341.20</u>
<b>Ending Balance</b>	<b><u>\$146,447.40</u></b>

#### Road/Bridge Fund:

Beginning Balance	\$(16,283.20)
Receipts	\$566,272.35
Disbursements	\$452,866.65
Ending Balance	<u>\$97,122.50</u>
<b>R&amp;B Savings</b>	<b><u>\$255,796.73</u></b>

#### **Fire District 1 (Rice)**

Beginning Balance	\$71,639.05
Receipts	66,364.65
Disbursements	<u>45,076.74</u>
<b>Ending Balance</b>	<b><u>\$92,926.96</u></b>

#### **Fire District 2 (Sauk Rapids)**

Beginning Balance	\$37,309.13
Receipts	64,504.71
Disbursements	<u>48,157.00</u>
<b>Ending Balance</b>	<b><u>\$53,656.84</u></b>

#### **Debt Service Fund (Road Project 5<sup>th</sup> Ave)**

Beginning Balance	\$69,592.16
Receipts	62,353.13
Disbursements	<u>58,477.50</u>
Ending Balance	<u>\$73,465.78</u>

**Indebtedness Balance - December 31, 2020**  
**\$345,000. Note: Bond Matures in 2027**

## Budget/Audit Report

### Julie Johnson

Each January the Watab Town Board meets to conduct its annual audit of the previous year's financial records, to set the preliminary budget for the current year, to make recommendations for the Annual Meeting, and to set the Levy for the next fiscal year.

The Board met Tuesday, January 25, 2021, and conducted a full review of every disbursement in 2020. Both the Clerk's and Treasurer's books balanced. Several corrections were needed in both sets of records in regard to coding and were made during the meeting. The Township is in good financial shape and we have made strides to reduce costs and be more efficient with your tax dollars. Below is some of the miscellaneous receipts received in 2020.

BCA Fine Share	\$5,989.91
Ag Market Value Credit	\$1,632.26

## Proposed Levy 2022

Watab Township Levy for 2021 was \$765,000.00

Below is the proposed 2022 levy that will be finalized at the Annual Meeting.

General/Revenue Fund	\$ 80,000.00
Road & Bridge Fund	550,000.00
Fire District 1 Fund	35,000.00
Fire District 2 Fund	55,000.00
Bond Fund (Road Project)	<u>60,000.00</u>
<b>Total Proposed Levy</b>	<b><u>\$780,000.00</u></b>

The Board is proposing a reduction in the Fire District 1 Fund (\$-10,000) and an increase in the Road and Bridge Fund (\$25,000), representing an increase of 1.9% (\$15,000) from the 2021 Levy.

## Fire Contracts: What do I owe?

Julie Johnson

Every year the town officers receive many questions, calls, and emails concerning Fire, Rescue, and Medical call billings. So, here is how it works. The Township has two fire districts: Fire District 1 is the Rice Fire Department; Fire District 2 is the Sauk Rapids Fire Department. Each entity has a separate 2-year contract with Watab Township. Both contracts cover only the cost to cover the **availability** to have fire, medical, and rescue services. It is a service umbrella and helps offset their budgets.

**Fire District 1 (Rice Fire Dept).** Each call from Fire District 1 is billed to the Township who in turn bills the individual who needed services.

**Each person utilizing the Rice Fire Department is responsible for the costs of their call (including cancelled calls).** The Township covers the first \$75 of a resident's call. In 2020, the City of Rice presented their new 2-year contract. The total contract is \$27,571.21 for 2021 and \$29,080.71 for 2022. A big change is the reduction in the cost of cancelled calls.

These charges have been reduced from \$350 to \$150. Cancelled calls happen, however, our fire department members still leave work to get outfitted and the trucks moving so there still is a cost, even though they may not come to your home. Medical calls also were reduced from \$350 per hour to **\$150 per half hour**. Many medical calls are short-term calls and have a tendency to be lift assists. This is a great savings to our residents!

**For Fire District 2 (Sauk Rapids).** In 2020 the City of Sauk Rapids presented their new fire contract. The cost of the 2022 and 2023 contract will be \$49,0000. The City also made a change in their billing system. Medical (Ambulance) calls are still billed directly to the recipient of the services. Fire and rescue calls will now come to

the Township who will in turn bill the person receiving the services.

Watab continues to see an improvement in individuals paying their fire bills over previous years. For 2020, Fire District 1 residents paid 62% of their bills; for Fire District 2 the percentage was 49.

We will continue to set a goal for a higher percentage of payments and to obtain better information on highway accidents for billing individuals. If you have any questions on your billings, please contact the Township Treasurer Deb O'Keefe.

## WSB Engineering

Kevin Kruger

In 2020, Watab Township hired WSB as the new engineering firm who is a forward-thinking design and consulting firm specializing in engineering, community planning, environmental, and construction services. WSB has had an office in St. Cloud for over 20 years and more information can be found at [www.wsbeng.com](http://www.wsbeng.com).

The first project WSB started working on was the Pavement Management Program. A pavement management program provides a systematic method of inspecting and rating the pavement condition of the roads, including the analysis of various maintenance and rehabilitation strategies. Each roadway is reviewed by counting cracks, potholes, surface conditions, and other items rendering a rating from 0-100, with 100 being a perfectly new roadway. This allows the Township to perform lower cost maintenance at the proper time and preserving the pavement over a longer period of time.

The collected data are used to evaluate funding needs and how and where to best allocate funding. Analysis is conducted on various budget scenarios to help forecast the funding required to maintain the network of roadways at the current

rating, or the funding required to improve the overall rating. By properly implementing a pavement management program, the Township can improve the overall performance and life of the roads, saving the Township and taxpayers time and money.

The results from the study showed that the overall condition of the roadways throughout the Township are a 55 out of 100, with 41% of the roadways in poor condition and only 48% of the roadways in the good to excellent category. The next step in this process is to evaluate the funding options and determine what average rating the Township would like to maintain going into the future.

WSB has also been assisting with a Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) grant for Sucker Creek Road. The LRIP grant is a MnDOT program that applies additional funding for routes of regional significance. Hopefully a successful grant application will result in helping to fund about \$250,000 in roadway construction for the Township this upcoming year. WSB is motivated to search and apply for grants whenever there is an opportunity that will assist the Township and taxpayers. **If you live near, work or walk along Sucker Creek Road we need letters of support to include with our grant application. Please contact the Township Clerk for more information.**

## Sentence to Serve

### Steve Wollak

With the pandemic this past year, Darin Williams, the STS Supervisor, was unable to get help from offenders and approximately 95% of the time we could only get Darin to do the work.

When Darin worked by himself, we as a Township, were charged ½ rate because he didn't have help. This amounted to \$75 per full day. Darin did the crack filling on 5<sup>th</sup> Ave NE and

Riverview Loop and he got about ¾ of Jasmine Loop completed.

Thank you, Darin!

## Road Reports 2020

### Steve Wollak

This past year we tried someone new for our potholes. We used Midwest Asphalt Maintenance, LLC, out of Belgrade, MN. Here is a little about their process; they prepare the area by blowing off debris and excess moisture and then they coat the area with CR52 oil. Next, they fill the area with a mixture of oil and granite chips. The top then gets a final coat of dry granite chips. So far, we are very impressed with the quality of the material and workmanship. Come spring time we will certainly know more, but the material appears to be holding up very well so far.

Ditch mowing was completed once again by Chuck Ertl. Chuck mows twice a season. The first time he makes only one pass, while the second time he makes two passes. This keeps the weeds down and further off the road for snowplowing and allows motorists more visibility to see animals entering the road.

## Building Construction 2020

### Nancy Scott, Building Inspector

2020 Total Permits:	81
Total Single-Family Homes:	12
Total Manufactured Homes:	2
<b>2020 Total Building Permit Valuation:</b>	<b>\$8,228,200.00</b>

## Road Construction 2020/2021

### **105<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW**

For the past 4 years Watab has prioritized collector roads for reconstruction and 2020 was no different. 105<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW was widened and the base course put in place. The Board continues to work with BNSF to obtain a contract for the last quiet zone project in the Township so that in 2021 the wear course and quiet zone can be built. The small stretch east of the railroad tracks to Highway 10 NW will be widened and the grade improved to the tracks. Planning for the wear course for the entire stretch of road is in the planning stages for 2021.

Expected cost to BNSF for the last quiet zone in Watab Township is \$96,000. That is Watab Townships portion of the railroad construction cost to install the quiet zone. It is a significant expense that Watab will have to budget for 2021/2022 payment.

## Road Construction 2021

### **Sucker Creek Bridge & Road**

Sucker Creek Bridge has been on the Township radar for the last 2 years. It is nearing the end of its life cycle and was scheduled to be replaced within the next 4 years. In conversations with Chris Byrd, Benton County Engineer, Watab Township was informed that Watab qualified for the Township Bridge Replacement Funds that are part of the State Aid Bridge Fund. Benton County will be the project sponsor.

Watab Township is required to pay the Engineering costs of approximately \$10,000 and the first \$10,000 of construction costs for a total of \$20,000. The balance of the construction costs will be covered under the above-named fund.

Along with the bridge project WSB Engineering has applied for a grant for reconstruction of Sucker Creek Road.

Under the 2020 Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP), WSB will apply for this grant. If awarded, it would cover the cost of the design and construction to widen and rebuild Sucker Creek Road and improve drainage, travel, and safety to local residents. Watab will know sometime in May, 2021 or later, if we are awarded this grant.

With Sucker Creek Bridge and potentially the road being under construction in 2021, the Board approved, at their budget meeting in January, 2021, to designate \$5,000 of improvements to the minimum maintenance road as it is the only viable detour route during construction. Our goal is to do both projects at the same time, **if possible**, to minimize the disruption to local residents. Funding and budgets will need to be managed closely.

If Watab Township is awarded the LRIP Grant, this will free up significant budget dollars to put into another project the board approved designing the reconstruction of Sharon Place next to Sucker Creek road and to keep our focus on improving our roads. Many of our roads are in dire need of significant repairs, replacement, and maintenance.

## Summer Storms, 2020

Watab experienced a brief but intense storm this past summer. We had quite a few trees down on around Little Rock Lake and a washout on Sucker Creek Road.

A big thank you to the neighbors on 105<sup>th</sup> Street NE when an exceptionally large pine tree came down and blocked the road. By the time Julie Johnson got there from checking on other storm damaged areas, the neighbors came out in force with chain saws, cut it up, and had it all removed!

Thank you for being excellent neighbors!!

## Reserve the Town Hall

**Steve Wollak**

While renting the Town Hall we have to follow the rules of the executive order from the Governor. The hall is being rented out at 50% capacity and with social distancing in mind. We do expect by spring some restrictions will again be lifted and you may be able to host your family gatherings again at the town hall.

All of the forms you need are on the Watab website. There is a calendar to show you when our regular meetings are and the availability for rental. Submit a form via email and mail your check to:

**Watab Town Hall  
660 75<sup>th</sup> St NW  
Sauk Rapids, MN 56379**

### Town Hall Rental Fees:

- \$0 Watab based youth service groups
- \$0 Local government entities
- \$0 Watab Home Owner Associations & LRLA
- \$75 Residents
- \$100 Non-residents
- \$75 Non-Profits (with proof of 501c status)
- \$100 For Profit entities

Forms and other information about fees and damage deposits are on the Township website. If you have further questions, please contact the Clerk at watabts@gmail.com or 320-240-2270.

## Tree Trimming Projects

For the past 2 years the Town Board has made clearing our right of ways a priority to help preserve and maintain our roadways for their full expected life cycle.

As trees grow, their roots and debris impact roads in many ways. While trees are very important to reducing carbon emissions, they also directly affect roadways. Roots lead to road heaves and potholes. Debris build up can expedite road surface deterioration. Clearing the right-of-ways to 15 feet back from the edge of the tar will help with winter snow and ice melt, dry roads, sight lines for buses and cars, and extend the life of the roadway.

In 2020, Watab undertook six tree removal locations: Frost Road, Riverview Loop, Sanbur Trail, Shoestring Loop, 107<sup>th</sup> St NE, and 95<sup>th</sup> Street NW.

Shoestring Loop and 95<sup>th</sup> Street NW were in major need of road right-of-way clearing. The impact was immediately seen this winter with both roads for travel and ice melt.

Residents can help with this project! Any tree that is outside of the right of way but overhangs onto the road way should be trimmed back to the base of the tree to 15 feet in height. That will save tax payer dollars and improve the overall sight and maintenance of our roads. Small shrubs should also be removed.

Also, please do not use mulch, rocks, bricks, etc. in road right-of-ways. Just grass please!

For 2021 Watab Township is looking at clearing the right of ways on 66<sup>th</sup> Street NE and West Lake Road. If you notice a particularly bad area, please feel free to contact any Township Supervisor.

## Watab/Langola Clean Up Day September 19, 2020

Bill Little

The annual Township Clean-up day on September 19, 2020, was held once again at the south lot of Pines Edge Parking lot. This year we used the Township website, flyers, and word of mouth to advertise. This year, with COVID-19, and so many other clean-ups in surrounding communities including Benton County, our turnout was less than last year which kept the wait time down compared to previous years, but we still had a great turn out.

The event is designed to offer residents of Watab a way of getting rid of items that they cannot get rid of easily. It also allows residents to clean up small item such as tires, metal items, appliances, and pretty much anything else except for building materials.

The Township will continue this great project if the community needs and wants it. Benton County Score Grant Pays the majority of the cost, 75%, while Watab Township pays 25% along with a contribution from Langola Township.

This Project has helped keep our streets and ditches clean and free from trash and debris. Watab Township also wants to once again THANK THE VOLUNTEERS from **The LITTLE ROCK LAKE ASSOCIATION** for their participation in making this event a fun time for everyone and again a successful Clean-up Day. With-out their help, we could not have done it, looking forward to next year.

**Clean-up DAY 2021 is tentatively scheduled for:  
September 18, 2021**



## Watab Township Contact Information

Town Hall Phone Number 320-240-2270

660 75<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Sauk Rapids, MN 56379

Kathy Sauer, Clerk watabts@gmail.com  
Deb O'Keefe, Treasurer watabtres@gmail.com

Supervisors:  
Julie Johnson johnson4watab@gmail.com  
Steve Wollak swollakwatab@gmail.com  
Bill Little bill.watabtownship@outlook.com

## Watab Township

### Annual Meeting Location Change!!!

Join us Tuesday March 9, 2021

Starting at approximately 8:15 pm

OLD VILLAGE HALL, RICE MN

Moved for the need of larger distancing space due to Covid 19 restrictions.