

Greetings!

Julie Johnson, Chair

The last year has been an interesting one to say the least. From the Township perspective it has been a very productive year in planning for the future.

Roads, infrastructure, clean water, bonds, building permits, cleanup day, and many other projects filled our year. Watab has built a 5-year schedule for future for road projects. The board secured a large bond payable over 15 years to move forward with several large road projects. We've updated and looked at ordinances and policies and made a commitment to using your tax dollars efficiently.

Township government is one of the purest forms of democracy. The electors have the ability to contact their local elected officials with their concerns and can sit in on every meeting and learn what is happening within their local government decision-makers. It doesn't mean you see everything that is happening behind the scenes: such as conversations with the clerk and treasurer, emails with the Township attorney, or MN Association of Township officials, but decisions are made transparently and in real time and concerns are heard in real time by your local officials.

It also doesn't mean that you are always pleased with our decisions. As a board we can't always look at the individual request in the here and now. We must look beyond today and evaluate how decisions we make now affect future projects and future land use, all while weighing the best interests of the Township as a whole. Our decisions have consequences for future Township officials down the road.

Another focus for the current board is full transparency about our salaries and the budget for the Township. In this year's newsletter you will see the financial disclosures by fund (there are five main categories) and our gross salaries for the year. The clerk is the hub for all communications and the position requires a tremendous amount of organizational skills. I am very thankful for Kathy Sauer, Clerk. She has been an excellent addition to the Township officials. The treasurer's skills in financial administration are vital. The Supervisors take the bulk of the calls, pick up the roads, fix signs,

attend meetings and trainings and are the decision-makers. Surprisingly, the three Supervisors' combined salaries are lower than either the clerk or treasurers combined. The current board is doing a good job of controlling costs, managing finances, and keeping salaries in check.

So, I hope 2022 brings you good health, some time outdoors in our beautiful Township, visits with neighbors, and a return to "normal." Feel free to call any of your local officials with your concerns.

Watab Township Annual Meeting Notification

The Town of Watab will hold its annual election and meeting on Tuesday, March 8, 2022

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

- A. Supervisor for a 3-year term of office
- B. Ballot Question to make treasurer's position appointed.

The Annual Meeting will commence at approximately 8:15 p.m. to conduct all necessary business as prescribed by law. Watab Township will have a zoom link as an option to attend virtually instead of in person. The Annual meeting will be held at the Watab Town Hall.

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 website is a form to enter and submit to receive emails, updates, agendas, minutes, and the latest happenings. You may also request to be added via email at watabts@gmail.com.

Financials

Deb O'Keefe

Below are the 2021 year-end financial statements. For a full detailed report, please attend the annual meeting in March or contact the clerk for an electronic copy.

Revenue/General Fund:

Beginning Balance	\$146,447.40
Receipts	\$211,386.21
Disbursements	-\$218,605.04
Ending Balance	<u>\$139,228.57</u>

Road/Bridge Fund:

Beginning Balance	\$ 97,122.50
Receipts	\$593,503.03
Disbursements	\$473,313.35
Purchase of Investment	\$ 45,043.88
Ending Balance	<u>\$172,268.30</u>

Fire District 1 (Rice)

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

Fire District 2 (Sauk Rapids)

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

Debt Service Fund (Road Project 5th 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, 2021
\$295,000. Note: Bond Matures in 2027

2021 Road Bond Indebtedness 12/31/2021
\$3,395,000.00

Road & Bridge Savings Account	\$ 300,840.61
Townhall Savings Account	\$ 5,000.00
ARPA Funds	\$ 155,090.04

Salaries:

Supervisor Johnson	\$ 3,812.50
Supervisor Wollak	\$ 3,962.50
Supervisor Little	\$ 2,875.00
Clerk Sauer	\$ 20,662.50
Treasurer O'Keefe	\$ 18,761.25

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, make recommendations for the Annual Meeting, and to set the Levy for the next fiscal year.

The Board met Tuesday, January 25, 2022, and conducted a full review of selected records for 2021. Both the Clerk's and Treasurer's books balanced. The Township is in excellent 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 2021.

BCA Fine Shares	\$ 2,788.09
Ag Market Value Credit	\$ 3,557.44
Gravel Tax	\$ 6,072.57

In 2021, the board approved hiring the accounting firm Conway, Deuth & Schmiesing to have a full audit of the 2020 accounting records. This was done at the recommendation of our bonding company to ensure secure, competitive rates for any future bonds. The audit was completed with only a few changes, recommendations for the treasurer, and an overall good report.

Proposed Levy 2023

Watab Township Levy for 2022 was \$780,000

Below is the proposed 2023 levy that will be finalized at the Annual Meeting.

General/Revenue Fund	\$ 80,000.00
Road & Bridge Fund	600,000.00
Fire District 1 Fund	10,000.00
Fire District 2 Fund	55,000.00
Bond Fund (Road Project)	<u>60,000.00</u>
Total Proposed Levy	<u>\$805,000.00</u>

The Board is proposing a reduction in the Fire District 1 Fund (\$-25,000) and an increase in the Road and Bridge Fund (\$50,000), representing an increase of 3.2% (\$25,000) from the 2022 Levy. Our goal is to eventually have the Road & Bridge levy get to \$750,000/year. This is the break point to having a full maintenance and replacement schedule for all the Township roads.

Fire Contracts

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. **Each person utilizing either Sauk Rapids or the Rice Fire Department is responsible for the cost of their call.**

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. 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 are 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). The Benton County Townships met with the Sauk Rapids Fire Dept Chief on Wednesday, February 9, 2022. Discussed was the new contract for 2022 and 2023. The new contract is \$49,000. All Sauk Rapids Fire Department calls (Fire District 2) will be billed by Watab Township to the individuals/businesses needing services. Medical calls are billed direct from Mayo Ambulance. Cancelled calls and false alarms are billed at a rate of \$415.00 each to the township. These are not currently billed to the individuals.

For 2021 the number of cancelled calls and false alarms rose dramatically in Fire District 2. This, plus the destructive fire at the Kings Inn, caused a dramatic drop in paid services to a low of 17% for 2021. Several notices have been sent to owners for payment. While Watab Township does not bill cancelled calls/false alarms, there is still a cost to the Township. Please make sure to have your fire alarms serviced and good working order every year to reduce these calls.

Watab Township is looking at Ordinance 3 for the possibility of updating billing procedures on some of these calls.

If you have any questions on your billings, please contact the Township Treasurer Deb O'Keefe.

Sucker Creek Bridge

Bridge replacement for Sucker Creek Bridge is expected to begin in mid-summer 2022. This is a Benton County Project. The cost share for Watab Township is \$20,000. Reconstruction of Sucker Creek Road and Sharon Place Road will take place in conjunction with construction of the Sucker Creek Bridge to avoid closing the bridge for too long.

All residents and businesses to the **north** of Sucker Creek Bridge will need to use the Minimum Maintenance Road (115th Street NE) going to the east and connecting with County Road 78 during construction. The minimum maintenance road had additional gravel placed in 2021 in anticipation of this road being the only way in and out.

Additional gravel may need to be placed. Road grading will be done in the spring and on a “as needed” basis.

Road Reports 2021

Steve Wollak

Once again, we have been satisfied with Midwest Asphalt Maintenance, LLC out of Belgrade, Minnesota. They have been repairing potholes for the past 2 years and the material that they use is holding up better than what had been used in previous years.

Ditch mowing takes place twice a year. Chuck Ertl is hired for all township mowing. He complies with all DNR requirements.

Snow plowing has been contracted with Marson Contractors for the past two seasons. Issues and praise have been brought to our attention at times and Marson's have been very responsive to our concerns. Just a reminder, please do not deposit any snow from your driveway onto the roadway.

Building Construction 2021

Nancy Scott, Building Inspector

2020 Total Permits:	103
Total Single-Family Homes:	10
Total Manufactured Homes:	0
2020 Total Building Permit Valuation:	\$8,917,600.00

Road Construction 2021

105th Street NW & Quiet Crossing

2021 brought the completion of 105th Street NW and the Quiet Crossing. This is the last quiet crossing in the township. Work on the documentation with FRA (Federal Railroad Administration) is in progress and should be completed in 2022. This project has been a long time in the making and the board is very happy with the results of this collector road.



Future Road Construction Projects

The Watab Town Board set the 5-year road plan to include the following roads: Sanbur, 15th Ave NW, Shoestring, Lakewood Shores, West Lake Road and Court, and Ferry Point Place.

Road Construction 2022

Sucker Creek Bridge & Road, Sharon Place, Indian Road & Lake Andrew Development Roads

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.

Benton County awarded the Bridge Contract to Marvin Tretter, Inc. out of Pierz, MN. The supply chain back up for box culverts has pushed the start of this project to sometime in the summer of 2022. The box culvert is expected to arrive around mid-June. Watab Township and WSB will try to have back-to-back construction with the bridge being replaced first, and then Sucker Creek Road and Sharon Place starting as close together as possible. All residents/businesses north of Sucker Creek Bridge will need to use the minimum maintenance road for access to Country Road 78 during construction. There will be a few days when the road will be impassable due to reconstruction. Please follow us on facebook or join the Watab E News (email updates) so you can stay informed of those days.

Indian Road will be bid as a package with Sucker Creek and Sharon Place and construction will follow the same timeline.

Lake Andrew road plans are in progress and we expect WSB Engineering to put this project out to bid in late spring. The Lake Andrew Roads are a

MN Statute 429 process. This is a local improvement project with special assessments to the land owners of the Lake Andrew Development as the roads in Lake Andrew are still privately owned.

The Township will bond the project and a special assessment property tax will be paid by the land owners over 15 to 20 years (tbd). All costs associated with the Lake Andrew roads will be paid by the land owners. Once the roads are bid out and contracts in place it is expected that Watab Township will accept the roads as is and move forward with construction.

Reserve the Town Hall

Steve Wollak

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

In 2021 the board approved trimming several more roads that need site lines and overgrown limbs removed. Streets where trees were trimmed back included 15th Avenue NW, 81st Street NE, and Ferry Point. Watab tries to save the trees where we can and just cut back overhanging limbs to the tree.

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 and 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-way's. Just grass please!

MS4 Annual Report

Julie Johnson

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 allocated dollars to every public government entity for sewer, water and broadband. Our first allocation was received in 2021. Watab used roughly \$20,000 to vacuum culverts and storm sewers in Oak Hill, 95th Street NW, and 85th Street NE. Close to 6 tons of sand, dirt, and debris was removed from the storm sewers and culverts. This is an amazing amount and it opens them up for proper water infiltration without solids back into the soils.

Proper composting or removal of leaves, grass and yard debris is extremely important to our local waterways. Never rake debris, leaves, or grass into Little Rock Lake, the Harris Channel or the Mississippi River. As the materials break down into nutrients, they reduce oxygen and cause algae blooms which damage the water eco system. Compost them or take them up to the Rice Compost Site.

Watab also completed their annual report to the MPCA and it was accepted as complete and on time. The renewal process for 2021 was also started with the MPCA for our permit and ordinance updating and that will continue into 2022.

One area of concern for the board is the continual problem of ditch dumping. This year Watab had several very large items, tires, boxes, broken small appliances, cans, tv's and even a very large hot tub. Please keep an eye out for these people and call any board supervisor or the sheriff to report. The sheriff can fine these people and make them pay for the cleanup. All of these dumps are illegal and harm the environment and costs the township dollars to clean up. Please dispose properly of any items you no longer need. Utilize the multiple clean up

days available in the area or take items to the local haulers for disposal.



Appointed vs Elected Treasurer Clerk Sauer

This March there will be a question on the ballot that will ask voters if they are in favor of changing the Treasurer's position from elected to appointed. The same question was on the ballot in 2020 for the Clerk's position and passed.

The Clerk and Treasurer's positions have grown in volume and complexity and the Board recognizes that there is a need for qualified individuals in these positions. An appointed status would also provide more retention probability rather than be subject to change with the election cycle every 2 years. Both the Treasurer and the Clerk are "non-voting" members of the Board.

Please remember to vote March 8. Polls will be open at the Town Hall from 12:00-8:00 pm.

Kings Inn Fire

Certainly, the biggest story of the year in the Township was the destructive fire on September 12, 2021, of the Kings Inn. Clean up of the site has been delayed while the County processes legal documents with the land owner. Once they are signed and in place, the materials will be removed to a hazardous waste site. A silt fence is in place to keep any runoff from reaching Little Rock Lake. Please stay out of the site (for fishing) until the cleanup has been completed.



Watab/Langola Clean Up Day September 18, 2021

Bill Little

The Watab/Langola Township Clean-up Day was once again a successful event with 143 township residents from Watab and Langola townships taking advantage of the opportunity to clean up their properties.

A big thank you to Little Rock Lake Association for being there to collect tires, appliances, electronics, etc. throughout the day. Residents paid \$644 in fees and donated \$80 to the Rice Area Food Shelf.



Watab Township Contact Information

Town Hall Phone Number 320-240-2270
660 75th 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

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Vote 12 noon – 8pm

**Annual meeting will start at
approximately 8:15 pm**

Watab Town Hall