

Annual Meeting Minutes: March 12, 2013
Watab Township

The Annual Meeting of Watab Township was called to order by Clerk Pat Spence at 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 12, 2013 at the Watab Town Hall. She welcomed all present and reminded them to sign in. Those present were: Paul Jacobs, Ed Kacures, John Olson, Jerry Kostreba, Kevin Reiter, Maureen Graber, Eileen Saldana, Mike Landwehr, Keith O'Brien, Craig Gondeck, Keith Krueger, Jim Brownson, Donna Poganski, Guy Spence, Pat Spence, Wayne Larson, Jason Krueger, Mike Barringer, Phillip J. Nelson, Mary K. Ostby, Anna Stratton, Ray Thompson, Bob Raveling, Lucy Palmer, and Lloyd Erdmann.

Following the Pledge to the Flag, the Clerk asked for nominations from the floor for Moderator of the Annual Meeting. Craig Gondeck nominated Ed Kacures; the Clerk called for other nominations, and there were none. Ed Kacures accepted serving as moderator.

Motion was made by Maureen Graber, seconded by Bob Raveling for approval of the agenda, with the addition of approval of the 2012 Annual Meeting Minutes; motion passed. Motion was made, seconded by Craig Gondeck to approve the 2012 minutes as printed; motion passed.

Clerk Spence read the Board of Audit report with the 2012 audited financial statement, indebtedness report, and summary of income and expenses. Maureen Graber suggested listing only gross payroll with expenses.

Lloyd Erdmann, town board supervisor, presented the five-year road plan, which was developed in January. It was presented in a power point, which will be placed on the township web-site. Proposed projects for 2013 include: 1) widening of Lakewood Shore Rd NW from 10th Ave NW to Iten Road & Quiet Zone for railroad crossing; 2) Quiet Zone for railroad crossing on County Road 79; 3) Crack filling and sealing of approximately three miles of town roads including Sharon Place, Sandra Lane, Hawthorne Rd, Hemlock Rd, Holly Place, Havlet Rd, Ideal Rd, Indian Rd, and Bayview Court; 4) fog seal of Sanbur Trail if it is possible; and 5) slope and fill or place culverts at two depressions on Lakewood Shore Rd NW. Jerry Kostreba asked if 105th Street could be widened since it is difficult for large trucks and buses to meet; Lloyd responded that when the railroad crossing is widened, the board will likely widen the road.

There were some requests for donations from the township:

1) Anna Stratton, Customer Service Director for the Tri-County Humane Society reported that 19 strays were brought in from Watab Township. They are required to hold each animal for a minimum of five days before they can be adopted. Cost per day for basic care for each animal is \$10, so the cost for the Watab animals was \$950. The \$10 does not include vaccinations and medical care. Maureen Graber made a motion to pay \$1,000 to the Tri-County Humane Society for the care of the Watab strays; motion was seconded by Guy Spence. Paul Jacobs asked Anna how many people donate the \$10 when they bring in an animal; Anna responded that about 10% will pay. Ray Thompson asked how much it costs people to adopt an animal; Anna responded that it varies since some of the animals are free and others vary in price depending on the breed and type of pet. The moderator called for the question; motion passed with all voting in favor.

2) Mary Ostby, Director of the Benton County Historical Society described the funding for the non-profit organization. The historical society houses many of Watab Township's historic records including minutes' books and treasurer's records. Mary invited residents to bring in

historic items. Craig Gondeck commented on the fine job that Mary has done and her organizational abilities; he made a motion to pay \$1,000 to the Benton County Historical Society. Motion was seconded by Bob Raveling. Paul Jacobs questioned why Watab would give \$1,000 if other townships only donated \$100. Mary responded that the most researched topic at the historical society is the "little town of Watab." Motion passed with all voting in favor.

3) Keith O'Brien, representing Rice Recreation for the City of Rice, reported that about 30% of the youth in the recreation program comes from Watab, and they have participated in a number of sports throughout the past year. He would like more children to become involved, and this spring he'll be speaking to classes of Rice Elementary children about summer ball. Ed Kacures inquired about the availability of coaches; Keith said he has an excellent coaching staff. Maureen Graber asked Keith how many youth were involved; Keith responded that there were about twenty. Motion was made by Lloyd Erdmann, seconded by Keith Krueger, and passed with all voting in favor to donate \$1,500 to the City of Rice/Rice Recreation.

4) Mike Landwehr, representing the Benton County Fair Association, spoke about the fair board's goals for the 2013 fair. Donations help them continue a free fair. Guy Spence made a motion to donate \$500 to the Benton County Fair Association, seconded by John Olson, and motion passed with all voting in favor.

Pat Spence, township clerk, presented the 2013 budget and the town board's recommendations for the 2014 tax levy through a power point presentation. Questions and comments were provided by Jerry Kostreba, Kevin Reiter, and John Olson. Pat explained that there will be a bond sale to refund the 2006 bonds for the town hall building project and the 2009 road projects. The award is scheduled for March 19th at 7:00 p.m. at the town hall. Savings may be in the \$90,000 range due to lower interest at this time. The board has also sought a Standard and Poor credit rating to help lower the interest. Maureen Graber asked Pat if the board feels that the amounts recommended for the levy are adequate; Pat responded that the General Fund levy is to maintain about one-year's operating budget for the General Fund and keep funds available in case of a short fall in another fund. The board can transfer funds through a unanimous motion. The other recommendations Pat felt are conservative, but the board did not want to increase them further due to the number of people that are unemployed and the economy just starting to recover. Maureen made a motion to approve the levies as recommended by the town board:

1. General Fund: \$75,000
2. Road & Bridge: \$225,000
3. Fire: \$70,000
4. Building: \$25,000

Her motion was seconded by Guy Spence; motion passed with no opposition.

County Commissioner Joe Wollak requested to speak and gave a report from the county. He announced that he got a \$9,375 SCORE Grant for this year's clean up day. Following his report, Ed Kacures asked him what the county's involvement has been in seeking buyers for the paper mill. Joe said that Commissioner McMahon was involved in meetings with the City of Sartell. Ed expressed his concern that forty hours a month is not enough time investment for our county in seeking a replacement for Verso and expanding the tax base. Joe said that the board will expand the hours if the new economic development director is getting results and is effective. Maureen Graber asked Joe how the board would measure effectiveness. Joe said it would be number of projects. Kevin Reiter asked Joe if County Road 55 improvements are in the five-year plan; Joe said they are not. Joe invited Chris Byrd, County Engineer, to speak at the annual meeting and seek input on a new formula for distributing the gas tax from the state.

Currently the formula for distribution is based 50% on the miles of roads in the township and 50% on the population if a township is meeting its minimum levy threshold. The state law has changed and there is no longer a minimum levy threshold, so the board will add the amount levied to the formula. He showed three different scenarios, which all would result in varying amounts of decrease in funds to Watab. John Olson, Maureen Graber, and Pat Spence spoke in favor of the formula that uses 1% levy amount, 49.5% population, and 49.5% number of miles of roads, since this formula most benefits Watab. The county board will make the final decision for the amount to be distributed in 2014, so this will not affect the 2013 budget.

Results of the annual election were presented: 82 people voted of 2,085 registered voters. There were no new registrations. Craig Gondeck was elected for a three-year term as Supervisor with 79 votes; there was one write-in vote for Allen Saldana and one for Phil Nelson. Eileen Saldana received 81 votes and was elected to a two-year term as Treasurer. They were congratulated.

Craig Gondeck reported that the town board has decided to apply for grants to help cover the cost of an outdoor warning siren, since the FEMA grant was not approved. The first step is to secure funding, and then decide on the location, and interview siren companies. There will be a public hearing when funding is secured. Craig said his hope is that next year he can announce that the siren was funded and is in place.

Craig also reported on his work to establish a Dry Hydrant System in the township. These are popular in rural areas to tap into rivers and lakes so a fire truck doesn't have to keep going back to the fire station. Craig showed a map with possible locations. He said a system will be donated by Sauk Rapids Fire Dept. to put one in on Fifth Avenue. He explained how fire insurance costs would be reduced for people within one mile of a hydrant if we put in the dry hydrant system. Currently there are only fire hydrants in Oake Hill Estates and The Cove Development. Sauk Rapids Fire Department would maintain the hydrants at no cost to the township. The next step is to identify locations and get numbers recommended from Sauk Rapids Fire Department. Again, Craig said the goal is to reduce homeowners' property insurance. Work will be done this summer. Maureen Graber asked what costs would be involved. Craig described that it's a PVC pipe coming out of the ground with possibly the addition of a hydrant to prevent freezing. He passed around a diagram. Estimated cost is \$100 per hydrant. Keith Krueger spoke in favor of the system; Jerry Kostreba asked if Sauk Rapids would maintain such hydrants in the Rice Service Area; Craig said that they would not, but that he will be talking to the Rice Fire Department to see if they recommend it for their service area.

Pat Spence explained the board's request to potentially have the establishment of two Fire Districts in the township on the 2014 ballot. The need comes from the potential for significant cost increases to the fire contract with Rice, which will be negotiated during 2013. If these costs are realized, she explained that the board does not feel it will be fair to tax payers in the southern two-thirds of the township to pay higher property insurance since they are more than the low-rate distance from the fire station and also not receive the first responder service that Rice service area residents receive. State Statute requires the town board pass a resolution to establish the Fire Districts, hold a public hearing, and then place the item on the annual election ballot. Paul Jacobs asked if Sauk Rapids could serve the entire township. Pat said that they would do so; and it would be a significant cost savings to the township. However, she knows that it would increase response time to those in the northern part of the township, and they would have higher property insurance rates. Ray Thompson commented about the historic change in the service areas; he said he would object to Sauk Rapids serving the entire township because of response time. Maureen Graber thought the fire districts would be a good idea and fairer since you'd be

taxed for the service you receive. Keith Krueger asked where the line was that divides the two service areas. Craig Gondeck responded with the information. Jerry Kostreba asked why it has taken so long to get a contract with Rice and why the city leaders are always so difficult. Ray Thompson said the bickering has gone on for many years due to personalities. He said that the township should own half of the fire hall and equipment because of the costs we have been covering. Paul Jacobs made a motion that the board approve a resolution for the establishment of fire districts for a vote on the 2014 annual election ballot; his motion was seconded by Jason Kruger; motion passed with all voting in favor.

A motion was made by Lloyd Erdmann and seconded by Craig Gondeck to have the annual election on March 11, 2014 between the hours of 11am and 8pm at the Watab Town Hall with the annual meeting to immediately follow the election; motion passed.

Craig Gondeck recommended that Pine's Edge Grocery be used as a posting site for township notices.

Citizen's Concerns:

- Maureen Graber commented that the town board puts in lots of thankless work and does a great job.
- Jerry Kostreba asked what happened to the big plans for Pirates Cove. Lloyd Erdmann said that the downturn in the economy has slowed everything down.
- Ray Thompson asked when 95th Street will have a no-whistle zone on its railroad crossing. Ed Kacures responded that with problems for trucks going over some of the crossings such as 95th Street, that the board would like to improve all of them; at that time, they would be made Quiet Zones. Lloyd Erdmann explained that the crossings aren't in the five year road plan but if the people want to levy more money, the board can try to do them sooner. Craig Gondeck also said that the township could approach the APO, if we become members, to pay for the engineering studies. If we had belonged to the APO a year ago, we would have saved the cost of design for the current two railroad projects, but Craig said that our county commissioner sits on the APO Executive Committee and didn't tell us about the possibility. Membership in the APO is based on population; for Watab it would be \$2,700, and Craig said that the town board will look into it.
- Bob Raveling said he's one of the only ones to come to every town board meeting; he applauded the town board for what they have to deal with.

Maureen Graber made a motion to adjourn the Annual Meeting at 10:22 p.m.; motion was seconded by Ray Thompson, and motion passed.

Respectfully submitted by Clerk Pat Spence