

**Minutes of Watab Town Board Meeting
December 2, 2014**

The regular monthly meeting of the Watab Town Board was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Ed Kacures Jr. All board members were present: Supervisors Kacures, Lloyd Erdmann, and Craig Gondeck; Treasurer Eileen Saldana; and Clerk Pat Spence. Audience members were: Jerry & Char Lage, Earl Tuttle, Daniel Ohmschenk, Mary Lepinski, Cliff Weitgenant, Janel Vaillancourt, Ron Potts, Ed Rowan, Ray Thompson, John Olson, Cindy & Dave Hiedeman, Kevin Reiter, Bryon Marketon, Sandra Saldana, Lynn Waytashek, and Bob Raveling. Following the Pledge to the Flag, the agenda was approved through a motion by Supervisor Gondeck, second by Supervisor Erdmann, and passed.

Chair Kacures called for public discussion of the District I Survey on First Responder Service provided by the Rice Fire Department. The following individuals spoke:

1. Ed Rowan, Supervisor of Rockwood Estates, expressed that it was difficult to give a vote with the information provided. He feels that it is important to maintain the service and asked a question how Rockwood Estates would be assessed. The response was that they would be assessed on the value of the land, which is about \$400,000; the mobile homes are classified as personal property and taxed at about 1/10 the rate of a residential homeowner. For approximately 200 mobile homes, they would be assessed at the rate of two average Watab houses.
2. Jerry Lage said that he spoke with Rice Fire Chief Scott Janski, and he asked him for his thoughts about retaining First Responder Service. He feels that it is too bad that Rockwood Estates cannot collect the unpaid bills. Rice feels that the contract offered to Watab is very fair, and that the entire township should have the same coverage. Jerry said that EMS is very important if you are waiting for an ambulance.
3. Lynn Waytashek did not understand the letter completely when she got it. She called a number of agencies to get answers on how Watab could collect the unpaid bills and couldn't find any solutions; she thinks it is very important to keep the First Responders.
4. The Clerk explained the contract expenses and the billing process and why there are difficulties in collecting. Supervisor Kacures explained that Watab is charged more than the other two townships served by the City of Rice (Langola and Graham). Supervisor Erdmann said that we are charged a higher rate because of the mobile home park and their lower tax rate. He also explained that the City of Sauk Rapids covers the southern two-thirds of the township, and they do not provide First Responder Service to that portion of the township.
5. Daniel Olmshenk asked for the results of the survey. He has a concern that if someone is not paying for something because of hard times he understands; otherwise, he doesn't think township residents should be paying so much extra to cover their unpaid bills. He doesn't want to have the service on this basis. Chair Kacures commented that the results would be given after everyone who wishes has the opportunity to speak.
6. Kevin Reiter said that he looks at what we pay for township taxes and it's reasonable; however, we shouldn't have to increase our taxes as residents to take care of Rockwood Estates. The entire township shouldn't have to be paying for them. There's got to be another way. We need to get some money from Rockwood.
7. Ed Rowan, Supervisor of Rockwood, said that he battles day in and day out to get rent paid and mortgages paid from their residents. They can't collect for other bills.
8. Cindy Heideman asked for clarification about fire districts.
9. Mary Lepinski asked if there was no First Responder Service what residents would do in case of an emergency. Chair Kacures answered that residents would have to rely on Gold Cross and the Benton County Sheriff's Department. Mary said that she has lived here since 1979 and had two

medical calls. Gold Cross came out and went the wrong direction. Supervisor Gondeck responded that dispatching used to come out of Rochester, but now Gold Cross has GPS, so this problem should not occur. She added, "I live on a fixed income and am considered low income but don't receive any financial help; I think everyone should have to pay their own bills."

10. Supervisor Erdmann thanked people for expressing their feelings and explained that the board decided to do the survey because they want to know what the people think.
11. Ray Thompson asked how long there has been a problem collecting the bills from Rockwood Estates. He doesn't feel that the park is being maintained as well now as in the past and is attracting different clientele.
12. Mary Lepinski asked if the township allows a payment plan. The response was "yes."
13. Brian Marketon recommended that the township should let people know that when they call 911 they can ask not to have First Responders. This should go in the township newsletter.
14. Ed Rowan said that he would approach the owners of Rockwood Estates to kick in \$2,000 toward the contract cost with Rice. He would let Supervisor Gondeck know within a couple of days.
15. Dan Olmshenk asked where the Gold Cross Ambulance is housed. Supervisor Gondeck gave a bit of history. Gold Cross looked at the number of calls every four hours and stationed ambulances according to that. They are more mobile now than being stationed in one place.

Clerk Spence read the results of the survey. There were 90 who want to continue receiving First Responder service from the Rice Fire Department and are willing to be taxed for that service; there are 109 who responded to the survey who do not want to continue receiving First Responder Service from the Rice Fire Department to reduce tax costs. She summarized the total calls for the Rice Fire Department in Watab during 2014 through November: 35 first hour calls billed at \$350 per hour and 2 second hour calls billed at \$300 each for a total of \$12,850. In addition, the base contract is \$22,967.22, which is 2.60% of the 2012 NTC of Sections 1-12 plus a 2% Cost of Living Increase. Of the 35 calls, 20 were for medical calls to Rockwood Estates and 7 bills were paid. Another concern expressed by residents is the number of First Responders entering their home (between 7 and 20). The Chair closed the floor for discussion and addressed the board. He opened the floor for comments or questions to the board. Supervisor Erdmann said that he liked the potential donation from Rockwood Estates to help offset the base contract cost, but it doesn't address the unpaid bills. Could those who don't pay their bills in Rockwood have the unpaid township bill added to their rent? The manager responded that it is illegal to do so.

Supervisor Erdmann made a motion to have a request go to the City of Rice requesting another contract proposal that does not include the First Responder service and to also request a two-month extension of the current contract for negotiation time. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Kacures. Supervisor Gondeck said that he personally is willing to pay more for the First Responder service. Sandy Saldana recommended signing this contract as is and not asking for an extension. She asked if we have any liability as a township if we drop the first responders; the Board said that we have checked these legalities and we would have no liability. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Supervisor Erdmann, second by Supervisor Gondeck, and passed to approve the minutes of the two November meetings. Eileen Saldana gave the Treasurer's Report with \$334,124.02 in checking accounts. Motion was made by Supervisor Gondeck, seconded by Supervisor Erdmann, and passed to accept her report.

Citizen's Issues: Kevin Reiter expressed concern over all the ice on the roads; Jodi and David Kessler said they have an issue with the Building Inspector over the remodeling of their home; they have struggled. They have been remodeling their homes for months. A meeting will be scheduled when Nancy Scott returns from vacation.

A motion was made by Supervisor Gondeck, seconded by Supervisor Erdmann, and passed to approve payment of monthly claims as presented and to withdraw funds from the appropriate accounts for Claims #5608 through 5634 and electronic transfers for PERA, IRS, and MN Dept. of Revenue totaling \$66,281.51.

Old Business:

- A. Motion was made by Supervisor Erdmann, seconded by Supervisor Gondeck, and passed to authorize signatures on the Road Right of Way Ordinance.
- B. Dry Hydrant System: Supervisor Gondeck reported that the installation was completed yesterday for the two dry hydrants; hose adapters for \$175 will need to be added for the Sauk Rapids Fire Department; the township will keep the adapters at the town hall. The township will include an article in the newsletter about contacting insurance agents if you live within 1000 feet of the hydrant to lower your homeowner's insurance cost.
- C. Supervisor Gondeck reported on the Crack Filling: Hemlock Road and Fifth Avenue might be able to be finished next week if the weather cooperates.
- D. Stormwater Ordinance: A motion was made by Supervisor Erdmann, seconded by Supervisor Kacures, and passed to hold the Public Hearing for the new ordinance at the beginning of the meeting in January.
- E. Brush Cutting on Frost Road: Supervisor Gondeck will contact Chuck Ertl to see if this can be completed.
- F. The SCORE Grant application for the township newsletter was denied; the committee turned it down because they believed that only 7% went for recycling; the board decided to emphasize key items and reapply during this month.

New Business:

- A. A motion was made by Supervisor Gondeck, seconded by Supervisor Kacures, and passed to approve the Notice of Intent for Quiet Zone on Frost Road and to authorize the Clerk to sign and submit it to BNSF.
- B. A motion was made by Supervisor Erdmann, seconded by Supervisor Gondeck, and passed to approve the SCORE Grant Request for Watab Clean Up Day at a total cost of \$12,595.19; the request for 75% reimbursement is \$9,446.40. Paid expenses were \$10,636.35; In-kind donations were \$1,958.84. Over 270 people brought in items; over 400 lbs. of food were donated.
- C. Report on the SWPPP Inspections was given by Supervisor Gondeck. He reported that the silt fence is down on the West Lake Road project and will need correction by spring; one lot entrance needs sweeping; overall, people have been responsive.
- D. Benton County Meeting on Economic Development at Coyote Moon: Supervisor Gondeck said the commissioners were questioned about why they cut the economic development director position to 10 hours per week, because many opportunities for new businesses were missed. They also questioned why the economic board was discontinued. There will be a lot of pressure for Benton County to restore the full-time director position and the economic development board. The meeting was facilitated by the Initiative Foundation. Supervisor Gondeck thanked the board for having him attend the meeting.
- E. The board discussed snow plowing issues. Supervisor Kacures asked why there isn't a belly blade on the truck. Daniel Olmschenk spoke about seeing the belly blade on a truck. Jerry Lage asked about response time in the contract and requirements for dealing with salt/sand; Brian Marketon on 107th Street, which is a boulevard road with 14 feet road surface, said they aren't plowing the full width. Supervisor Gondeck said he will go out tomorrow with Hanson's to check on the problem areas. Ray Thompson said that there should be a cutting edge to scrape the

middle of the road. He asked that one of the supervisors inspect the plow. Supervisor Erdmann will follow up to do this.

- F. Watab Town Hall Signs: Supervisor Gondeck said that all the small blue signs are going to be replaced with larger green signs by MNDOT for safety purposes. The new ones will be four feet by six feet. A decision was made by the board to table discussion of this until the budget meeting in January
- G. A motion was made by Supervisor Gondeck, seconded by Supervisor Erdmann and passed to set January 20th for a Budget Planning meeting and January 27th for the Board of Audit.
- H. Monthly Communications: Clerk Spence summarized the monthly communications to the board; Supervisor Gondeck showed pictures of the roads where there had been complaints.
- I. Supervisor Reports: Supervisor Gondeck said that the Greater MN Economic Development Board is encouraging area residents to use the flights from St. Cloud to Chicago; they also discussed the economic boost from the Sauk Rapids bridge project. Clerk Spence said that a staff members from Rep. Newberger's office called about our meeting dates. He may attend one of the township's upcoming meetings.
- J. Citizen's Issues: Kevin Reiter said that there is a lot of oak wilt in our area.
- K. Motion was made by Supervisor Gondeck, seconded by Supervisor Kacures, and passed to add an additional cleaning time during December due to the heavy rental schedule.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30pm.

Respectfully submitted by Pat Spence