

## **Watab Town Board Meeting Minutes for January 5, 2016**

The regular monthly meeting of the Watab Town Board was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 5, 2016 at the Watab Town Hall by Chair Ed Kacures Jr. All board members were present: Chair Kacures, Supervisors Craig Gondeck and Lloyd Erdmann, Treasurer Eileen Saldana, and Clerk Pat Spence. Audience members were Anna Saldana, Commissioner Ed Popp, Representative Jim Newberger, Jason Kruger, Paul Jacobs, Kevin Reiter, Bob Raveling, and Pete Bushman.

Following the Pledge to the Flag, approval of the agenda was given with the additions of presentations by Benton County Commissioner Ed Popp on Economic Development and a Legislative Report by Representative Jim Newberger, the Wacosa Contract Renewal, Benton County Planning Commission Issues, Issuance of Building Permits in Lake Andrew, Set Board of Audit, Set Budget Planning Meeting, and Replacement of Message Board at town hall through a motion by Supervisor Gondeck, second by Supervisor Erdmann, and passed.

Benton County Commissioner Ed Popp was welcomed to the meeting to explain the progress with developing a county-wide economic development authority. He presented a letter from the commissioners, which contains a request for a donation of \$1 per capita from each governmental entity in the county. They are also requesting donations of businesses, industry, etc. They currently have six members on a founding membership committee. There seems to be a fair amount of interest in being founding members of the new economic development authority. Eventually, there will be an operating board of nine members of which one will be one township board member, one county commissioner, and private sector people. Bylaws are completed, non-profit status has been applied for by an attorney who volunteered his time. The new board will operate under the umbrella of the Initiative Foundation or Benton County Telecommunications Foundation until 501C3 status is formalized by the State of MN. They are modelling the organization's structure after Morrison County Economic Development. Falcon Bank has offered office space. The director's position will be full time; also Commissioner Popp assured the town board that the county wants to continue to partner with the Greater MN Development Corporation.

Representative Newberger was welcomed to the board meeting for his annual visit to Watab. He apologized for offending two of the board members at the September Benton County Association of Township Meeting and said it was not intended. He congratulated the board for the state award for safety. He has two bonding requests he will bring to the legislature including the Highway 10 safety issues and an interchange at Halfway Crossing. This will be a bonding year; and he said he supports bonding for infrastructure and feels there are better odds of getting Watab's interchanges included this year. He feels it is a good project. He will also work on an immigration bill that says that if you are an immigrant or refugee and still on relief after six months, the sponsoring organization would pay for the assistance. Broadband expansion is also on his agenda and he favors stimulus for businesses that want to extend broadband. He also is concerned about the shutdown of the Sherco Coal Plant. He will work to make sure the gas plant goes in where the coal plant is located. The community will lose about 140 jobs in about seven years, so he said this is a priority for him. Energy production will be a big issue in the future, but he doesn't agree with what President Obama and Governor Dayton

are doing. The legislative session will start the first week of March. He talked about the surplus and that taxpayers should be reimbursed for it or get tax relief or debt relief. If it is going to be spent, he believes it should be spent on infrastructure. He encouraged everyone to respond to a survey on his website page. Chair Kacures asked Jim to work to reinstate some of the Local Government Aid that was removed for townships. Jim explained how it is a rural/metro issue. Supervisor Gondeck thanked Representative Newberger for his work on Highway 10 safety. Supervisor Erdmann asked if MNDOT takes their direction from the legislature. Commissioner Popp asked about state reserves. Representative Newberger was thanked for taking time to attend the meeting.

The minutes of the regular December meeting were approved through a motion by Supervisor Gondeck, second by Supervisor Erdmann, and passed. Eileen Saldana gave the Treasurer's Report with a cash balance of \$434,149.46 in the two checking accounts. Motion was made by Supervisor Gondeck, second by Supervisor Erdmann, and passed to accept her report. Motion was made by Supervisor Gondeck, second by Supervisor Kacures, and passed to pay monthly claims number 5933 through 5953 and electronic transfers for IRS and PERA totaling \$85,062.60. There were no Citizen's Issues.

Old Business included:

- A. Lake Andrew: MPCA official told Supervisor Gondeck that they have worked with Lake Andrew owners on the sewer issue. Supervisor Erdmann said that he believed the township should continue to withhold building permits. Supervisor Gondeck said that there are four more lots sold. The township should request a letter from MPCA that Lake Andrew is in compliance. Supervisor Erdmann also said that we should hear from the owner about plans to progress with sewage treatment. Clerk Spence was asked to invite him to the next meeting and include that he needs to present his plan for sewage treatment and a timeline before building permits are issued.
- B. Retaining Couri and Ruppe: Clerk Spence has contacted the law firm to prepare a resolution for consideration by the Benton County Association of Townships regarding the option for billing property owners for unpaid bills.
- C. Harris Channel Runoff: Supervisor Gondeck said that the water is not coming from Oak Hill Estates. Supervisor Erdmann disagreed and said that when the stormwater pond runs over, it goes into a small pond, and then into a creek, which comes into the Harris Channel. The board chair asked about the recommendations from Wayne Cymbaluk, and asked Clerk Spence to invite him to a future meeting to discuss this further.
- D. Lights at the Town Hall: Supervisor Gondeck replaced all of them with LED bulbs; Xcel Energy rebate was received at the time of purchase. Old bulbs from the meeting room will be used for storage rooms and hallways.
- E. Langola Donation for Cleanup Day: Supervisor Gondeck attended their monthly meeting and they donated \$200 for the participation of Langola residents. It is greatly appreciated.
- F. 115<sup>th</sup> Street Speed Study: Clerk Spence sent a letter to MNDOT requesting the study. A MNDOT representative phoned Supervisor Gondeck, and asked that, in the future, the township include specific reasons for the request for speed reduction including such things as hills, number of parcels and driveways, or any other safety concerns. He also recommended painting a center line on the roads.

- G. Ordinance for Cable Franchise Fee: Cheryl Scapanski will have Benton Telecommunications attorney draft a direct ordinance between them and the township for the franchise fee.
- H. Legion Donation of American Flag: The Rice Legion Post has given a \$200 grant to the township from gambling funds for the purchase of flags for outside the town hall. It is a sturdy, five by eight foot flag. Commander Fred Segler has purchased the first flag, and the township will reimburse him for it.

New Business included:

- A. Clerk Spence presented a summary of the SCORE Grant report for the Adopt A Highway project. Total project costs were \$2,644.38; the SCORE Grant reimburses the township for 75% of the total costs, which includes expenditures and in-kind donations.
- B. Motion was made by Supervisor Gondeck, second by Supervisor Erdmann and passed to publish monthly emergency calls in the news media and township website.
- C. Motion was made by Supervisor Erdmann, second by Supervisor Gondeck to write off \$18,642 in uncollectible bills for emergency calls due to bankruptcies, deaths, and inability to make contact with recipients of services. Clerk Spence presented a written report that shows a total of \$16,305 placed with a collection agency, \$3,018 brought to conciliation court, \$12,383 in final notice status, and current bills totaling \$3,112; this is in addition to the \$18,642 that is written off at this meeting.
- D. Supervisor Gondeck reported that the Sauk Rapids Fire Department conducted testing of the dry hydrant at the DNR landing; there was excellent water pressure.
- E. Motion was made by Supervisor Kacures, seconded by Supervisor Gondeck, and passed to set the February meeting for Tuesday, February 2 and the March meeting for Wednesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> due to the change in dates this year for precinct caucuses; caucuses were previously held on the first Tuesday in February and have been moved to the first Tuesday in March. The board was not aware of this change when it set the meeting schedule for the year.
- F. Supervisor Gondeck suggested that the board continue to issue the annual newsletter and to dictate the articles to Clerk Spence in her office by the first week in February. Clerk Spence was asked to contact Palmer Printing and Tom Conners to see if they will continue to publish the township newsletter.
- G. Clerk Spence received an email from Traci Balder that she will not be seeking to renew her contract as Assessor for the township. The current contract expires on February 1<sup>st</sup>. The board discussed the ramifications of the report received from the Benton County Assessor reflecting concerns about work that needs to be completed; the board will spot check before final payment is made.
- H. West Lake Road Parking is a concern to several residents. Pete Bushman appeared before the board to talk about safety concerns with difficulty passing between vehicles parked on both sides of the road while the owners go ice fishing. Emergency vehicles would not be able to drive through the area, and it was extremely tight with his pickup truck. Supervisor Gondeck reminded the board that there was a complaint brought forward last year by Jerry Lage, and that Sheriff Heck said that the county would enforce parking restrictions. Motion was made by Supervisor Gondeck, second by Supervisor Erdmann, and passed to have No Parking This Side signs erected on the northwest side of the affected area.

- I. Supervisor Gondeck reported on his attendance at the county board meeting to thank the commissioners for the support of the SCORE Grants. Commissioner Popp added that the board likes to hear good things.
- J. The town hall has been rented for every Saturday and Sunday in December plus two week-night Christmas parties. It is also being rented for three parties in January. Everyone has done a great job of cleanup and has been very appreciative of being able to rent the hall. Clerk Spence read the thank you letter from Delores Brown.
- K. Motion was made by Supervisor Gondeck, second by Supervisor Kacures, and passed to renew the contract with Wacosa for monthly cleaning of the town hall. They do an excellent job for a low cost of approximately \$50 per month.
- L. The board discussed the issues that will be coming before the Benton County Planning Commission in January. The board has already expressed support for Derek Nelson's project; Commissioner Popp has heard from some neighboring residents that oppose the location of the driveway. The town board has not received any complaints.
- M. Monthly communications included a notice of a potential rate hike by Xcel Energy, which will go before the Public Utilities Commission. The Board of Equalization will be at 2:30 p.m. on April 14<sup>th</sup>.
- N. Supervisor Gondeck reported on his attendance at the Greater MN Development Corporation, the availability of grant money from US Bank for park projects, and that the former mill site has been cleared by EPA and is available for purchase. Also, Benton County Highway Department has repaired the crack filling machine, so it will be available for township use this summer.
- O. The Board of Audit was set for January 26<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. and the Budget Planning Meeting for January 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.
- P. Kevin Reiter asked about the house on Sucker Creek Road that was being considered for a group home/halfway house. Supervisor Gondeck said that the township and county are not supporting it, so it is not likely to move forward. Commissioner Popp added that he has not had further contact from the buyers of the property. Kevin also asked about results from the letter the township sent regarding 911 calls. Supervisor Gondeck said that the mobile home court owners would attach the township letter to their newsletter. Jason Kruger inquired about the used light bulbs that were replaced in the meeting room; they are in storage. Bob Raveling asked if anyone had filed for town board positions; Clerk Spence reported that at this time only incumbents (herself and Supervisor Gondeck) had filed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Pat Spence