

Greenwood Township Supervisors Board Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

Meeting is being recorded for transcription and archival purposes

DATE: **February 9, 2021** 6:30PM This meeting will be a Telephone Conference Call

Roll Call - Chair Ralston / Vice Chair DeLuca / Supervisor Skubic / Supervisor Tahija /
Supervisor Beihoffer / Interim Treasurer Fazio / Interim Clerk Spicer

All Motions are by Roll Call Vote

Additions to Agenda: corrections and additions

Motion- Request to accept Agenda **Carmen/Larry 5/0**

Motion - Request to approve December 8, 2020 minutes **Byron/Paul 5/0**

Motion - Request to approve January 12, 2021 minutes w/time correction **Carmen/ Larry 5/0**

Treasurer Report: Belinda – Beginning Fund balance \$590,792.22, Receipts \$6,171.90,

Disbursements (\$24,913.49), Ending Fund balance \$572,050.63, Checking account \$85,877.67,

Long Term Investments \$252,180.33, Savings account \$233,992.63, Total \$572,050.63

Schedule 1 \$572,050.63, Restricted Funds \$53,497.40. Receipts made up of

Motion - Request to approve Treasurers Report **Paul/Carmen 5/0**

Motion - Request to approve Claims **Carmen/Byron 5/0**

Motion - Request to approve Payroll **Byron/Carmen 5/0**

Old Business

8.3 Broadband update: Mike spoke with Joe @ CTC and Whitney @ IRRRB and issues of a company taking over many of the area here and have the rights for extensions that affect possible funding. We'd Have to move forward with them to develop a more ridged budget with us. It has been suggested we do a Bond sale which opens another process. First step would be to get CTC to bring down their budget, get with an attorney and a financial advisor in order to develop the bond sale. Because it wouldn't affect all the township properties there would have to be a special taxing district that would require a 1 or 2 public meetings, the sale of the bonds, what properties would be involved in the taxing district to levy the bonds and pay for the bonds, and a timeline to pay the bonds. Because Greenwood Township has already received one Border to Border Grant, we are ineligible to receive additional grants from that funding source at this time. Because we are currently underserved with recent changes in the funding mechanisms, there may be additional grant funding available. Agency funding will be still be looked into, if there is any available.

John Bassing added that we are no longer eligible for any state funding at this time. More may be known later in the month concerning the legal problems LTD is having and how that may affect us and the possibility of the Federal government withdrawing also.

Mike agreed and stated however it goes we will probably be spending a lot of our own money. Our next step is to arrange meetings with an attorney and a financial advisor and that it will be quite a project getting all aspects set up, advising we start sooner than later. After additional discussion Mike stated we will continue moving forward and asks anyone interested in doing some of the legwork to please contact him.

12.1 Budget update – Levy recommendation: Belinda- the difference between the two projected budgets is 1 is for \$150,000 and the 2nd is for \$200,000 for general property taxes. They both include changes for Administration salary items, Fire Dept turnout gear, as well as \$25,000 for broadband. The projections allows an increase of 3% from what was projected last year.

Mike states the \$150,00 proposal is at 1.1% and the \$200,000 proposal is at 1.25% of our annual budget and the state recommends a balance of 1.52% of our annual budget. Asks for a Board recommendation to put forth for the budget at the annual meeting for a levy.

Carmen recommends keeping the levy at \$150,000 and start a new restricted fund of \$25,000 for broadband and place a 5 – 6 year limit putting it back in the general fund if not used. Making the total budget \$175,000.

Motion to accept Carmen’s recommendation **Carmen/Paul 4/1 Ralston no**

1.3 Annual meeting – Discussion: No ideas brought forth from public on how we can hold the Annual Meeting. Mike spoke with MAT attorney Fenske – because of COVID it is recommended the Clerk puts out an agenda for the annual meeting, the Clerk calls the meeting to order, the Clerk announces the election results and the Clerk announces that the Annual Meeting will be continued to June 8, 2021 at 6:30 pm on the township property, in the firehall or parking lot to be determined by weather conditions at the time, with a contingency for bad weather. Kristen will send information she has for meeting.

New Business

2.1 Discussion – LIRP grant - Birch Point Road extension –Application was prepared and sent to county, (base and new paving from landing to area near Eichel’s driveway. If successful with the grant, it need be spent by end of 2024 construction season. Special assessment would be set up for Birch Point Road Extension property owners, requiring public meetings, etc. Our township commitment is \$62,499.55 for this project. If successful we can accept or deny. We don’t have to act on this now.

2.2 Paving County Roads – Request from Lee Peterson to have county pave the county roads within the township. Mike received letter from SLC Eric Fallstrom stating our traffic levels are under the county guidelines, therefore, we do not qualify.

2.3 MATIT Insurance - Trustees looked at Greenwood Township to get 100% back on with MATIT. They will not sign with us again until nuisance lawsuits are resolved. We will check back again in August.

2.4 Clerk and Treasurer pay: Clerk will be at \$16,700/yr paid in 12 monthly payments and Treasurer will be at \$11,000/yr paid in 12 monthly payments per proposed budget.

Motion to Approve **Mike/Carmen 5/0**

2.5 ADP – Payroll: Tammy-Automatic Data Processing are experts in on-line payroll, taxes, etc. Allows direct deposits, takes care of all payroll related taxed and many other benefits.

Motion to Approve outsourcing to ADP **Carmen/Paul 5/0**

2.6 Tower Ambulance – Larry - they want to raise the fee again. We're staying at \$15 through the end of the year.

Motion to stay with \$15 fee for Tower Ambulance **Larry/ Carmen 5/0**

Supervisors reports: Carmen - Safety / Maintenance Report - Fire extinguishers were service and stove in kitchen all inspected and other routine maintenance and safety stuff is done or scheduled.

Mike – reminder that the Board of Audit Meeting will convene immediately after this meeting is adjourned and everyone is welcome to stay on the conference call for that meeting.

Dave - Fire Chief – Run Report - 6 Fire, 14 EMS, 1 Meeting, 1 Fire Training, 1 EMS Training.

Received notice from PERA regarding Pension. The yearend numbers for 2018 = \$676,000+, for 2019 = \$713,973+, and 2020 was nearly \$840,00 and continue to grow. Healthy state. SCBA Tanks and air tanks scheduled for testing. SCBA masks had FIT tests done and 1st Responders had FIT tests on N95 masks.

They had their AWARE Program at the end of January and in December they had their EBots. The grant for the washer/dryer, Reichel Electric is scheduled to do the necessary wiring/outlets as required.

Continued free COVID testing and vaccinations are available for all Firefighters and 1st Responders.

Firefighters are finishing up on-line classes that have been paid for. Towers program is up and running again. Firewise update – Suggestion for all homeowners in the township - Clear, visible Fire #'s are really encouraged and please brush your driveways so the fire equipment can get in. Expecting reimbursements thru MN Board Firefighters of Training & Education in August for fiscal year ending in June. \$700 for AWARE and EMR refresher course from October will be qualifying for reimbursements.

Correspondence

Contacted SLC Fair Assoc. (donation) – As of now they will be holding fair but I will call them early June.

Lake Vermillion Chamber of Commerce Membership renewal \$100.00. Carmen has not heard of this.

Motion - Request to hold off donating until we find out more. **Carmen/Byron 5/0**

TimberJay Newspaper renewal 1 yr @ \$39.00 or 2 yr @ \$72.00

Motion - Request to approve Subscription – **motion failed**

Vermilion Lake Association returned our \$100 check stating our membership is free.

Motion - Request to send a Thank You. **Carmen/Byron 5/0**

Received letter from Barbara Lofquist that stated “Please send in the ballot enclosed, if you do not want to vote in person.” This statement alarmed me so I contacted MAT attorney Steve Fenske, who asked me to forward the letter to him, which I did. His response includes more information on Option B and was as follows:

I don't know how they would have a ballot and I think that may be a misstatement. They may have included an absentee ballot application. I have not found any prohibition against including an absentee ballot application in a campaign letter.

This letter raises the issue of Option B – Appointed Clerk/Treasurer. Again, I have been told that in last year's election, some individuals suggested MAT advised against adoption of Option B.

This is not the case – MAT expressed no opinion about this matter. We were consulted about the process and details of Option B and stated this issue is left to the voters. To avoid any misstatement of information from MAT on this issue, I want to summarize the law and policy related to Option B.

Town voters have several optional forms of township government, one of which is the appointed clerk or treasurer, called Option B. Many townships have adopted Option B to make the clerk and/or the treasurer appointed – it is not rare by any means, but a majority of towns still use an elected clerk. Regardless of the options selected by other towns, the purpose of township government is to allow for local control, and Option B provides that control.

When towns adopt Option B, it is usually for one of two reasons. First, is when a town has trouble finding a clerk or treasurer from within the town. One advantage of an appointed clerk is that the person holding it no longer needs to be a resident. This gives a larger pool of people to fill the job.

The second reason is because of conflict between the board and the clerk or treasurer. The Board of Supervisors is the governing body of the town – the clerk and treasurer are not supposed to govern or ‘run’ the town. The duties assigned to clerks and treasurer are ministerial in nature – they are given a set of tasks to complete and they complete them. There is little to no discretion in those office. For example, a clerks’ obligations to administer elections are the same in either method. The supervisors cannot interfere with those duties. Another example, the clerk holds the town’s data but doesn’t have ownership control over it. All data requests are supposed to be decided by the Board – not the clerk.

On the other hand, Supervisors have a lot of discretion in their duties. This is important because the clerk and treasurer should understand the limited role they play in the town. The clerk and treasurer are not supposed to work against the supervisors using their offices.

This is complicated by the fact that elected clerks and treasurers are not employees of the town so they do not “answer to” the board. If an employee took town information without board approval, for example, giving it out to people, the employee would be disciplined or dismissed. An elected officer cannot be dismissed by the board. The problem is that a person with power to interfere with the board refuses to respect the rules placed by the board, and there is no consequence other than to elect someone else, reduce the officer’s pay, or adopt Option B.

The advantages of Option B are: (1) larger pool of candidates to fill the job; (2) clerk/treasurer ‘answers to’ the board and is less likely to cause conflict; (3) Board can review and manage the clerk/treasurer’s administration of duties; and (4) duties that are not assigned to an elected clerk/treasurer by law can be made part of the job. The downside to Option B is that the voters remove their power to elect the person to the clerk or treasurer position. The voters retain the power to select town supervisors and if the choice of appointed clerk or treasurer is inappropriate, the blame may fall to the Board that hired those officers. In other words, there is still accountability to voters.

The decision of whether to adopt Option B is left to voters. Given Greenwood Township’s tumultuous history and refusal of prior officers to stay in their lanes, adopting Option B would be an effective means of restoring good governance and management with the board and clerk position.

After several years of observing Greenwood Township, it is clear there are deep divisions among some people concerning the town's governance. Greenwood's voters need to choose a direction for their local government by selecting its supervisors and then selecting a clerk and treasurer who will work with the Board. Continuing to select officers that are prone to conflict has not helped the township, and has cost it a great deal of time, money, and credibility.

Mike - Request to Adjourn regular town meeting of February 9 and immediately convene the Board of Audit. A separate recording would be better.

Motion - Request to Adjourn **Carmen/Larry 5/0 7:57**