

BELGRADE TOWNSHIP
MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETING

March 8, 2022

Belgrade Township Shop, North Mankato, MN

Present:

Supervisors: Sandy Howe, Gerri Krueger, Cheryl Michels, Mary Milbrath and Craig Smith
Town Treas.: Ashley Hanley
Town Clerk: Joan Untiedt
Employee: Harlan Olson
64 Residents

Meeting called to order by Clerk Untiedt at 7:00 p.m. Pledge of Allegiance recited by all in attendance. Reminder of meeting etiquette was read. Introductions were made of all board members.

Nominations for moderator of the annual meeting were Wallace Michels and Scott Weilage. Weilage was appointed moderator by majority vote.

Chris Frederick/Randy Gish move/second to approve the minutes from March 9, 2021 and August 10, 2021 meetings, approved after correction to spelling of Deb and Gary Gintner name.

Fire Report - Smith

1. Tribute was expressed to firefighter Andy Anderson who passed away last fall.
2. In 2021, there were 138 calls with the majority for medical reasons.
3. Discussion on importance of the Nicollet Fire Dept. to the township.
4. The fire department budget for 2022 will be \$101,700 which Belgrade Township paying approximately 30% of the total.
5. The 1988 water truck needs to be replaced and will be ordered in the next year.
6. Fire Chief Joel Polzin has been with the department for 31 years and the chief for 17 years. He shared the following statistics for 2021:
 - 31 calls were in Belgrade Township
 - 15 calls were fire related
 - 70 calls were EMS related
 - Fire department is all volunteer run with up to 28 members
 - Training takes considerable time and has increased over the years
 - In addition to fire training, there is a 44-hour responder class the volunteers must take.

Road Report – Milbrath

1. Printed report was distributed for the 2021 road tour.
 - Most roads are gravel and maintained throughout the year.
 - Road tour is done each spring to evaluate the condition of the roads.
 - Roads are on a three-year rotation for adding gravel.

- FEMA work from 2019 was completed and the final reimbursement was received.
 - Kern's Estates culvert on the east side is deteriorating. Nicollet County has agreed to finance the project with portions of the project the township will be responsible for. If funds are available in the special township bridge fund, project will be done in 2022. If funding is not available, may be deferred to next year.
 - Asphalt roads are contracted for maintenance.
 - Xcel Energy requested maintenance on four roads in the township for the Huntley-Wilmarth extension project. Project is complete and reimbursement has been received from Xcel.
 - Reminder given to residents to help maintain the roads. No parking or dumping stuff on the road or ditches. In addition, snowmobiles and four-wheel vehicles should abide by the rules of the road.
 - Damage to signs have been reported. If any resident notes damage, they should call the sheriff's office.
2. Gae Larson (Old River Bluff Road) noted the surface is deteriorating and asked about plans to repair. Supervisors will include this request with the spring road tour and note what needs to be done.
 3. Small portion of asphalt road by North Links Golf Course needs maintenance. This portion was initially done by the golf course and they agreed to maintain the asphalt.
 4. Deb Groebner (Deerwood Trail) asked if there is a written plan for road maintenance in the township. The three-year cycle was described. Also asked about ditch maintenance and plowing. Tree trimming needs to be reviewed in this area and clean the right-of-way. She was concerned about the impact on the road surface and debris floating to the river. She said the sides were ripped up with the grader and snowplow. Harlan Olson (employee) explained the issue he has with this road. He tries to leave a little snow and not push gravel into the ditch. He has also received complaints that the road is not plowed bare on a few roads east of Highway 13. Only hills are plowed bare for safety.

Financial Report – Untiedt

1. The actual 2021 financial results were consolidated on one report to compare with the budget set for 2021.
2. Total cash in the bank as of December 31, 2021 was \$647,428.45. The fund breakdown:
 - General Fund - \$250,134.49
 - Road and Bridge Fund - \$10,111.50
 - COVID Relief Fund - \$57,482.46
 - Equipment Replacement Fund - \$329,700.00
3. Highlights of the financial statement:
 - Unusual revenue received included:
 - Xcel Energy reimbursement - \$126,208
 - FEMA payments (from 2020 expenses) - \$144,955
 - ARPA funds - \$57,482
 - Annexation - \$1,210
 - Delinquent taxes - \$7,244
 - Paid off the International truck loan of \$27,764.
 - Freightliner repairs were \$15,565. Total repairs to this truck over the past 3 years was \$50,781.
 - Grader repairs and warranty contract was \$40,290.
 - Wages for employees and board paid in 2021 = \$99,575

4. Tim Wachter (Deerwood Trail) asked why such a large number of repairs is put into an older piece of equipment.
- A new truck has been ordered for 2022.
 - Freightliner has been in service 22-23 years. He suggested it should have been replaced after 10 years.
 - Tom Langdon (Deerwood Trail) said the left side of the truck broke and had to be fixed because it was needed for maintenance. The process for new equipment takes a long time.
 - Freightliner is dangerous to use.
 - Michels (supervisor) said it takes time to order and customize equipment.
 - Olson worked with Milbrath and Michels to speed up the process to get a new truck by a year. Hope to have the order placed this year and receive in 2023.

Other Business

1. Milbrath described the process on replacement of the Kern's Estates culvert.
 - Started working on the process 3 years ago.
 - County agreed to take over the project. The township share is estimated to be \$30,000-\$35,000.
 - Angie Elliott (Kern's Drive) asked what route would be available to access their homes when the culvert replacement was done. The golf course has agreed to let the residents park in the maintenance area and use golf carts to get to their homes. Initial replacement timeline would be 2-3 weeks. A full remedy would be done to fix the land when project completed.
 - Dale Hoehn (Timber Lane) asked how an emergency vehicle would access the area if needed. Conversations have started with the county to look at the issue and have that part of the plan.
 - Dave Rippon (Kern's Drive) inquired about the plan to stop erosion around the hill and culvert. An engineer will contact him.
 - Loren Lindsay (Valley View Circle) said residents drove around the edge of a field when the culvert was replaced on Deerwood Trail.
 - Elliott again expressed concern about the cost when multiple surveys must be done.
 - Greg Borchardt (472 Lane) said survey work is done now for design and to collect data.
2. Krueger reviewed the request from last year's annual meeting regarding a new equipment shed.
 - In November 2021, an estimate was given for a 100 x 50 building with three doors in the amount of \$300,000. The longer we wait, it becomes more expensive.
 - Langdon asked if the new shed was put in the budget and can we afford one.
 - Michels said all township monthly meetings could be held at the town shop for more room instead of the Nicollet County satellite office in North Mankato. Most other townships have a town shop that includes a town hall for meetings.
 - Wachter expressed concern there is no bathroom in the current building.
 - Weilage said the township should look at options – build new or add on to the current structure.
 - Langdon commented the levy has not changed for 5 years; no additional funding saved.
 - Edward Olson (387th Street) works part-time for the township and said there is no room in the current shop to move around and work on equipment. Future new equipment will only get bigger.
 - Untiedt gave a high-level review of the calculation of tax capacity used for allocating the township levy to the residents.

- Edward Olson/Tom Langdon move/second to start looking and getting quotes for a new building including setbacks and design. Motion approved by majority vote.
 - o Hoehn said to look at design and decide if the current building can be used, added on, or fully replaced.
 - o Issue with the current cement floor and pooling of water which needs to be manually pushed to the drain.
 - o Cheryl Olson (387th Street) said we should move forward and not wait another 3 years to get it done.
 - o Lindsay added the building permit will need to have a well included to get water available.
 - o Shayna Koppendrayer (Timber Lane) wanted to clarify the motion. Board will work on options and design and come back in 3-6 months with a proposal.
 - o Rippon asked if there is an option to change the levy to include the building.
 - o Lindsay also commented the property extends in the adjoining field. Survey needs to get property lines.
- 3. Nicollet County Sheriff's report was read by Michels.
 - 219 calls compared to 215 in 2020 and 199 in 2019.
 - 911 calls were 4,080 for the county in 2021.
 - Traffic accidents included 33 for property damage and six for injury.
 - Sheriff Dave Lange was introduced and said the complete annual report is available online. COVID was hard on everyone in the past 2 years. Drivers are going too fast and are distracted.
 - Any vandalism on signs should be reported.
- 4. Untiedt shared the list of annexations to the City of North Mankato over the past 3 years. Gerard Lorentz (512th) asked how the city does an annexation. Attorneys have been consulted regarding the issue and told we can do nothing about it. The township cannot prevent the city from taking the land or have any say in the matter.
- 5. Deb Gintner (County Road 13) asked why minutes are not posted on the web site. Untiedt responded with they are after approved at a meeting. However, the township is not required to have a web site or post the minutes. They are available at each meeting. The web site is only a convenience.

Levy for 2023 – Howe


1. Expected expenses in 2023 = \$413,700
2. Concerns on continued rising prices.
3. Levy has not been raised for 5 years.
4. To meet the proposed budget, the levy would need to be raised 14.69%.
5. Howe said we should have been raising the levy 1-2% each year to keep up.
6. Proposal to raise the levy for 2023 7-8%.
7. Questions from residents:
 - Cheryl Olson asked what the average increase was for townships in the state. The largest increase for Nicollet County was 3 ½%. Courtland raised their levy 5%. The average is 3 2/3%.
 - Craig Smith (supervisor) noted the recent article in the Free Press with a township lowering their levy. He believes the current levy is enough to run the township.

- Harlan Olson said input on an acre of land has gone up. Farmers must increase their yields or get a higher price per bushel to keep up. Same for the township, the proposal is to provide the same services, but the cost has increased significantly over the years, especially for fuel and equipment parts.
- Weilage stated a sizable reserve would be necessary to sustain the expenses.
- ARPA funds were designated to cover lost revenue and to pay for a portion of the new Freightliner.
- Keith Burg (Rockford Road) asked about the commitment to help pay for the new fire department water truck. Smith replied with in the past, joint coverage was with City of North Mankato and Nicollet. On all occasions but one, Nicollet responded first. Township made the decision to join the Nicollet Fire Department joint owners board. The funding of the water truck is more important per Smith.
- Edward Olson asked about the need for the township to plow the roads for emergency vehicles compared to the fire department needing a new truck.
- Langdon said the township is obligated to pay for the truck and their budget because Belgrade is part of the joint powers board of that department.
- Cheryl Olson said COVID pandemic hurt many families. Residents would have been better off paying for a slight increase each year instead of leaving the levy stagnant.
- Howe stated the township should have looked at raising the levy 1% for the last 5 years instead of doing all at once.
- Howe/Chris Fredrick (526th St.) move/second to increase the current levy by 8%.
 - o Dave Peterson (no address given) asked if the township expenses could be reviewed and decreased.
 - o Edward Olson said additional funds would be needed for traffic engineering expenditures for the new breakaway posts. Eventually, the state mandate will be enforced, and all signs need to be done. This would be under a contract since the township did not have the equipment to install the posts.
 - o Hand vote was taken on the motion. Affirmative votes – 40, negative votes – 16. Motion carries to increase the levy by 8% to \$389,500.

The next annual meeting will be on Tuesday, March 14, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. with a location to be determined.

Mike Milbrath (409th Ave.) expressed his appreciation for all the work the supervisors have been doing even with all the negative comments. Residents were polled if they would consider meeting at the shop in the future which the majority agreed. However, many expressed it was hard to hear and a microphone system would help.

Langdon/Fredrick move/second to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m.



 Scott Weilage, Moderator



 Joan M. Untiedt, Town Clerk

3-14-2023
 Date

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 Date