

TOWN OF NAMAKAGON
For - TOWN BOARD MEETING–Tuesday, December 8, 2020
At - NAMAKAGON TOWN HALL – 7:30pm
MINUTES

Chairman Rasmussen called the meeting to order at 7:30pm. Present were Chairman Rasmussen, Supervisors Jim Krueger and Jack McGregor, Treasurer Arlene Skultety, Clerk Laura Bjork and 18 others.

Agenda was posted at the Town Hall and on the website and the Daily Press was informed. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The minutes from the November 10th, 12th Public Budget Hearing and Board meeting on the 12th were presented. MOTION made by Supervisor Krueger to dispense the reading of the November 10th minutes and approve them as presented. MOTION seconded by Supervisor McGregor and carried. MOTION made by Supervisor McGregor to dispense of the reading of the December 12th Public Budget Hearing minutes and approve them as presented. MOTION seconded by Supervisor Krueger and carried. MOTION made by Supervisor Krueger to dispense the reading of the November 12th Town Board minutes and approve them as presented. MOTION seconded by Supervisor McGregor and carried.

The Financial Report was read by Treasurer Skultety; checks approved and signed #3629 through #3728. Town Financials are available to the public upon request to the Treasurer.

Comprehensive Planning Report – None.

Library Report – The Library report will be posted on the website.

MOTION made by Supervisor McGregor to suspend the agenda and move to agenda item 16, then item 13. MOTION seconded by Supervisor Krueger and carried.

Appointment of Fire Chief for 2021 – Supervisor McGregor stated at the Annual Fire Department meeting Henry Rieckhoff was unanimously elected for Fire Chief for 2021, and Dave Haan and Thomas Biasi were elected as Assistant Chiefs. MOTION made by Supervisor McGregor to appoint Henry Rieckhoff as Fire Chief for 2021. MOTION seconded by Supervisor Krueger and carried. Kathy Sill noted that the Fire Department received a little over \$8,000 in donations as a response to the letter sent out noticing the cancellation of the Hunter’s Dinner due to COVID. Thank you to all who made donations to support the Fire Department!

Discussion and possible action on letters of acknowledgement for donations to Fire Department – A letter was presented to send to people thanking and acknowledging their donation to the Fire Department. The Town Clerk and Fire Department Secretary will put together the letter and send.

Discussion and possible on opening Buffalo Lake Road as a snowmobile route –

Gene Dubiel explained that an issue arose with Trail 8 when someone bought property between White Bass Lake Road and the feds. The property owners gave 4 years to use their property as a trail. The club was trying to work with the landowner next door to re-route in that direction, and he currently will not work with the snowmobile club. The club even offered to put up sound barriers, but they weren't interested. The club worked on another route that ended up not being fit for a trail due to 100' of the property being marsh. They have been working with feds on a trail. The landowner located on Girls Camp Road would allow the trail through their property. If they chose to pursue this trail, then Buffalo Lake Road would need to be opened as well to connect back into White Bass Lake Road. The club continues to work on different routes for trails, but nothing else seems to be coming together quickly. Trail 8 is a state funded trail. If permission was given to cross property, the road would not need to be opened. Chairman Rasmussen received a letter from the Clam Lake Forest Riders in support of opening Buffalo Lake Road, since the previous route has been closed by landowners. Supervisor McGregor stated that he has lived off trail 8 for 27 years and has used the trail for many years. He has concerns about opening the 1.2 miles on Buffalo Lake Road. There are at least 7 driveways and some with multiple address signs. The terrain is curvy and hilly, and the lines of sights for driveways are not good. Its narrow, has low shoulders and there are a lot of ruts. If the route could go down to White Bass Lake Road, the level of sight lines are good; there are no curves and only 1 resident. If the Road Crew signs the route on Buffalo Lake Road, it will cost at least \$1,800 with signs, man hours and vehicle usage to put the signs up. As a corridor trail, there is an increased likelihood of confrontations with vehicles and snowmobiles. It's got inherent problems. It is the southeast part of the county and response times and communications are difficult for EMS and Fire. With ATV routes the town requires a petition. Should the town be considering this for snowmobile routes as well? The town has established Ordinance 17 which designates snowmobile routes. Currently there are 14 town roads/fire lanes that are open. Most are signed and are in use. These could offer alternate routes. Some are not groomable. Job Core Road is a designated snowmobile route. When County M was shut down, the detour went from 193 to Ehrman road to 191 and back to M; that was the DOT bypass. The town has not been presented with anything in writing or a petition as like an ATV route. Gene Dubiel responded that the current alternate route would change the trail by only a mile or two. This is the shortest, easiest way to keep the whole trail and only change a small section. If the trail is shut down, there will be a lot less funding for the trail groomers. That is how the club pays to groom and maintain the trails. He understands that no one likes change, but something needs to be done. The hard part of Namakagon is to go around the marshes. If we do not do something, a major corridor will be shut down. It works better if the community works together and helps. Supervisor McGregor stated that the club gave a week and a half notice to the town. The town should have been formally notified earlier. Gene Dubiel stated that the majority of snowmobilers are respectful other people's property. Heather Ludzack, representing the Cable Area Chamber of Commerce, stated if we lose this corridor trail it will be devastating to our area. It is vital to our visitors. We need those visitors coming to this area. Maybe the town could work on a one year opening until a better route can be finalized. The Chamber will pay for the signage. It is critical we don't lose the trail. There was discussion on placing

speed limit signs on Buffalo Lake Road. Brenda Brueske-Kolve stated that the portion closed on White Bass Lake is 4/10ths of a mile. The easiest solution would be to work with that landowner. If the board could talk with the landowner there may a change of mind and the problem could be solved. Tom Biasi stated that this problem has existed for at least 4 years. The club has had a lot of time to find an alternate route but has chosen to give residents 3 days' notice to open Buffalo Lake road for 3 months of usage. Residents don't need to be penalized for the lack of plans. Gene Dubiel explained that the club has worked on this for that long. Alternate routes being pursued were shut down over time, and it has come to this point. The route is never going to be a perfect. Tom Biasi responded that if there is a one year trial needed, then the town has given a viable alternative within Ordinance 17 by running a little north to get to Clam Lake. Gene Dubiel responded that snowmobiles would be running miles and miles on roads, which doesn't work well when melting and gravel is left. Roads get plowed off and get multiple gravel areas and not good for snowmobiles. Buffalo Lake Road is only 1.2 miles and it is wooded. Chairman Rasmussen stated White Bass Road is much safer. But there is a property owner not allowing his property to be used. Gene Dubiel explained that Buffalo Lake Road is not preferable, however it seems the only way to keep the corridor open this year. The new owner of Clam Lake Junction stated he has spent much time reviewing Profit and Losses of businesses in this area, and the places will not survive without snowmobile business. He would be willing to split the signage cost with the Chamber, and he is willing to talk with the property owner on White Bass Lake Road. Gene Dubiel stated that we should be able to work together for the community. Buffalo Lake Road is brushed and signed already, not sure what it would take to do that for White Bass Lake Road or what condition it is in. Chairman Rasmussen will reach out to property owners. MOTION by Supervisor McGregor to table this discussion to a meeting on Tuesday, December 15th at 7:30pm. MOTION seconded by Supervisor Krueger and carried.

Discussion and possible action on sign on the intersection of County Hwy M and County Hwy D – Heather Ludzack stated that the sign is historical; some of the businesses listed have been gone for 40 years. She has been researching having the sign redone. She also spoke with area businesses who would support putting their information on the sign and pay for that portion. The Chamber is willing to fundraise and/or cover the cost. It would be helpful if the Road Crew could help with labor if needed. She requested the Town Board not to take down the sign and allow her to present some options to the Town Board when put together. Supervisor McGregor noted to stay mindful of upgrades as the sign is historic in nature so that it stays compliant with the Bayfield County Sign Ordinance. The Town Board agreed to keep the sign until presented with further information.

Discussion and possible action of Driveway permit for 45160 Sugar Bay Drive – A driveway permit was received, and the property owner is willing to do what is needed for compliance. MOTION made by Supervisor McGregor to approve the driveway permit with the contingency that a culvert be installed if necessary. MOTION seconded by Supervisor Krueger and carried.

Discussion and possible action on Bayfield County Zoning correspondence –

Supervisor Krueger explained Rob Schierman, Director of Bayfield County Planning and Zoning Department, sent a response letter to the town and it basically gave minutes of the board of adjustment meeting where they made the agreement to cut out the towns. The problem is that they said they never received any information from the towns on zoning requests, but that is not true. In the past county zoning participated multiple times with representation at our Comprehensive Planning and Town Board meetings. That has not happened in the past 7 years. A letter will be drawn up in response and sent to all parties including Dennis Pocernich, County Board Chairman.

Resolution 2020-10 Establishing Refund Policy for Overpayment of Taxes –

Treasurer Skultety stated that many people round taxes and others simply have overpayments. Sometimes those overpayments are \$.50. WI Towns Association wrote an article about the towns creating a policy for this. MOTION made by Supervisor McGregor to approve Resolution 2020-10 as follows:

WHEREAS, the Clerk/Treasurer of the Town of Namakagon collects and receipts for real estate taxes paid by town residents: and

WHEREAS, from time to time, the payments received are in an amount that exceeds the actual amount due: and

WHEREAS, the cost of processing these refund checks can sometimes exceed the amount of the check itself; and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin state law does not provide specific statutory authority for towns to not refund small tax overpayments; and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin Towns Association attorneys recommend providing a refund, of any amount, if requested, unless the town has a policy in place to handle small amount refunds:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Namakagon Town Board does hereby authorize the Town Clerk/Treasurer to issue property tax refund checks for any and all overpayments of \$5.00 or more, and furthermore to authorize the Town Clerk/Treasurer to issue property tax refund checks of less than \$5.00 at the request of the taxpayer. Any amounts not refunded will be held in the General Fund of the Town of Namakagon.

This Resolution will be effective immediately.

Adopted by the Town of Namakagon Town Board on this 8th day of December 2020.

MOTION seconded by Supervisor Krueger and carried.

Discussion on referendum to appoint Town Treasurer – The Town Treasurer position is currently an elected position. Every two years, the Town Treasurer fills out nomination papers and is on the ballot for electors to consider. If the Town Treasurer position was appointed, it would be appointed by the Town Board and would not need the ballot process. The process for this referendum was discussed. The Town Board agreed to address an Ordinance at the next meeting for approval for this change. The referendum would be for the April 2021 election, however if approved, the change would not occur until the next election cycle in April 2023.

Discussion and possible action on clarification with Forestry on the town work being done on West Lost Land Lake Road – Chairman Rasmussen stated Mike Martin called concerned with removing a gate near FR203 which prevents vehicles from driving on the snowmobile trail. The town owns the 1.07 mile loop on West Lost Land Lake Road. The Forest Service also preferred that the road not be graveled at this time. There is a lot of logging going on in that area currently. The Town Board agreed to move the gate as it is a town road, but they will not gravel at this time.

Resolution 2020-09 2020 County Library Levy Exemption – MOTION made by Supervisor Krueger to approve Resolution 2020-09 as follows:

WHEREAS, Wisconsin Statutes S.43.64(2) provides for the exemption from the County Library Levy for any municipality which has higher municipal library expenditures than the municipality's share of the County Library Levy, and

WHEREAS, the Town of Namakagon has appropriated and will expend \$63,000 on local library service in 2021, and the Town of Namakagon's share of the 2021 County Library Levy is \$56,510.64.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Town of Namakagon hereby applies for exemption from the Bayfield County Library Levy for 2021.

MOTION seconded by Supervisor McGregor and carried.

Review Correspondence: Supervisor Krueger stated he received a call from a resident that complimented the work done for election day; it was very well done.

Public Comment – Treasurer Skultety stated that taxes were mailed yesterday, Merry Christmas!

Set date for the next Board meeting January 12, 2021 @ 7:30pm.

Special meeting Tuesday, December 15, 2020 @ 7:30pm. for opening White Bass Lake Road and/or Buffalo Lake Road.

Chairman Rasmussen adjourned the meeting at 9:09pm.

Respectfully Submitted by

Laura Bjork, Town of Namakagon Clerk