

**TOWN OF NAMAKAGON
MINUTES FOR ANNUAL MEETING
TUESDAY April 15, 2025, AT 7:00 P.M.**

Chairman Rasmussen called the annual meeting to order at 7:01pm. Present were Chairman Robert Rasmussen, Supervisors Jack McGregor and Jim Krueger, Treasurer Arlene Skultety, Clerk Laura Bjork and 11 others; Carol McGregor, Mary D'Andrea, Mike D'Andrea, Amanda Westlund, Ray Ebert, Philip Rasmussen, Kathy Sill, Ted Peichel, Wayne Spitzer, Tom Schuette and Dave Gebhardt.

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

MOTION made by Ray Ebert to dispense the reading of the minutes from the April 16, 2024, Annual Town Meeting and approve the minutes as presented. MOTION seconded by Carol McGregor and carried.

MOTION made by Ray Ebert to approve the minutes from the Special Elector Meeting held on June 11, 2024, and November 14, 2024. MOTION seconded by Mike D'Andrea and carried.

2024 Financial Report was presented by Treasurer Skultety.

Account balances as of January 1, 2024, were \$1,030,823.84. Total Revenues for 2024 were \$1,258,026.69 and Advance Tax Collections were \$674,476.03. Total Disbursements for 2024 were \$1,181,173.28. Account balances as of December 31, 2024, were \$1,352,576.41.

2024 Highlights on Finances:

Income:

- (41210) It is worthy to note that Room Tax was down quite a bit last year. In 2023 we received \$172,013.08 and 2024 \$143,155.90 (due to lack of snow).
- (43221) We received a \$1,000 Bayfield County Forestry Grant for maintenance on Old Grade Road.
- (43410) Shared Revenue increased due to a law change. It used to be between \$7,000 and \$8,000; this year we received \$43,269.88.
- (43529) We received a DNR Wildfire Grant of \$10,879.67, which allowed us to clear road-of-ways on several roads including Garmisch Rd Junek's Point Rd, East Lake Five Rd, Namakagon Sunset Rd, Harmon Dr, Chicago Ave, Birch Bend Rd and Garden Lake Rd.
- (43690) The Fire Department received a DNR Grant of \$939.49 for foam.
- (43790) We received the reimbursement from the Bayfield County Infrastructure Grant of \$5,000.
- (46310) There was a significant increase in collection of highway charges from \$4,983.50 in 2023 to \$10,014.82.
- (46431) There was an increase in revenues from the transfer site from \$26,996.50 in 2023 to \$43,430.

- (48110) Thanks to Treasurer Skultety, there was an increase in savings interest from \$5,403.64 in 2023 to \$16,144.88.
- (48200) There was an increase in rent revenue from \$9,618.55 in 2023 to \$15,688.89.
- (48500) There was an increase in Fire Department donations from \$20,825 in 2023 to \$36,195.98.

Disbursements:

- (51400/51500/51600/53631/53311) There was an increase in expenditures due to raises.
- (51600) A new Town Sign for the Town Hall was purchased and will be installed this Spring.
- (53315) Half of Garmisch Road was reconstructed with TRID funds.
- (56700) An engineer (Schubbe Consulting) was hired to research a possible walking/biking/hiking trail system to connect to other townships.
- (57620) A couple of pieces of equipment and a couple of benches were installed with funds from the Bayfield County Infrastructure Grant.

Room Tax – Philip Rasmussen asked about how the Chamber was spending Room Tax expenditures. The town will pursue a room tax commission meeting to discuss further.

Ambulance Report – Given by Laura Bjork, Business Manager for Great Divide Ambulance Service.

First, we would like to thank all the people who have donated funds throughout the year to support the ambulance service. We'd also like to thank those who made efforts to raise support in the community for the service.

The ambulance service donation drive at the end of 2023 brought in \$24,548 (2023 \$16,538 and 2024 \$8,010) from the community! We asked for \$20,000 for the purchase of IV Infusion Pumps and Stair Chairs. The cost of this equipment was \$15,154.96. The remaining \$9,393.04 will help go towards the purchase of the power loaders this year. The donation letter that was sent in 2024 was requesting funds to go towards this purchase, which we noted at the time was approximately \$66,000. The cost of the power loaders is \$68,351.25, and there are now upgrades that need to be made and installation is needed, which will be quite a bit more. To date we have received \$12,005 from our donation drive (\$7,155 in 2024 and \$4,850 in 2025). The remaining funds needed for this purchase will be taken from the Medical Equipment Fund. Thank you for your continued support!

Great Divide contracted with 6 events in 2024; Birkie, Hungry Bear, Epic Bike Race, La Pointe to La Pointe in Bayfield, Ashland County Fair and Fat Tire. This brought in \$12,250.

We received a Bayfield County Grant in May 2024 in the amount of \$20,000 to help with the cost of the service.

We received our FAP Grant of \$6,886.43, which we get every year. It is great to note that we brought in over \$30,000 in interest from our fund accounts and savings from re-investing in the LGIP system and higher interest money market accounts.

Our patient income was \$1,116,070.73 (patient income & subtracting the refunds). Even though we had more calls this year than last year, our patient income decreased. This is where it is extremely difficult to budget. Depending on who we transport, their insurance and whether or not they are paying the bill makes budgeting the income for the next year so very difficult because it is not a set amount. It varies according to the circumstance.

Our billing company was bought out this past year from LifeQuest to EMSMC. It was a very difficult change, but it is finally working out to be beneficial with the reporting system they have and the access that we now have. Hopefully this will help us during our budgeting process.

We purchased a new chassis for one of our older trucks this past year (\$40,206). We still have not received the truck to date, but we look forward to seeing how this truck holds up compared to buying new.

We stayed below budget with payroll costs. This is worthy to note because this January the board approved significant raises to the employees, making their wage competitive in the area. We cancelled the QSEHRA benefit to implement Health Benefits, and we also implemented an ICI (Disability) Benefit. The Board has been watching the expenses for payroll and will continue to watch them throughout the year to know the effects on the budget.

The 2025 budget is currently using \$370,000 of reserved funds and carryover funds to balance the budget. The ambulance board continues to work towards making the service a sustainable service for this area.

I mentioned last year that there is a WI Ground Emergency Medical Transport Program being offered that creates supplemental reimbursement under Wisconsin Medicaid (MA) to public ambulance service providers. The program has still not opened for reporting, but we will be participating once it opens.

In 2024, Great Divide Ambulance went on 1,074 Runs, compared to 1,052 Runs in 2023, 1,256 Runs in 2022, and 1,259 runs in 2021. The runs were billed out for a total of \$2,504,169. The patient income was \$1,136,522.55. This reflects a 55% deduction in what we bill. A breakdown of the runs has been presented to you.

The ambulance service continues to make payments on their building loan. 2024 was the fourth year of payments, one more to go. (\$150,000 total loan for 5 years) The service made its second payment on the ambulance vehicle loan; three more to go.

There have been many changes in employees this past year. Rob Puls notified the board that he would be retiring from management effective December 2024. We want to thank Rob for his service to the community and for all his efforts in bringing Critical Care to

our area. He has worked and volunteered in this community since June of 1998, 26 years, going on 27. Ever since working for the service, he made it a goal to petition a change in legislation to allow for ALS Care with one Paramedic and one EMT. He made several trips to Madison for this and was successful in 2003 when the WI State guidelines changed for ALS care. Before 2003 to be considered ALS, 2 Paramedics were necessary. We were the first service to be upgraded to ALS care in the State of Wisconsin. But that didn't stop Rob. He continued to reach for better care in this area. In 2008, GDAS was operating as a Critical Care service. This was before the state even had a license for this! The passion that Rob had to bring the best care to this community is, to say the least, compelling. The service since 2008 has had its ups and downs, but it has always been here to provide Critical Care to its community. Words cannot express our appreciation for the endless hours of time and commitment that Rob has served in this community. He will be surely missed.

We welcomed Monica Bigo (also a Paramedic with the service) to the position of Compliance Officer, and we wish her the best in the transition into this position. The ambulance service started 2023 with 4 Paramedics, one part-time and 3 EMTs. We welcomed Amy Kohlwey, Steve Traaholt and Gina Winther to our EMT staff in 2024 (one left due to medical reasons). Congratulations goes out to Paul Popelka for passing his exams to raise to a Paramedic Level with the service! This is a huge accomplishment and deserves recognition. In 2025 to date, we welcomed Makena Roubaud (left due to relocation) as an EMT and Jessi Cook, Patrick Hanson and Tim Schmidtke as Paramedics and re-hired Brian Cody as a Paramedic. To date we have 9 Paramedics (6 full-time and 3 part-time) and 4 EMTs (all full-time). We continue to need more staff for the service.

We continue to serve our communities to the best of our ability providing Emergent 911 ALS Service to the area on call 24/7.

Thank you all for your support to the ambulance service.

Fire Department Report – Submitted by Dave Haan, Fire Chief.

There are 12 Members, with 1 in Entry Level to be finished next month to make 13 members.

Three members have completed the Fire Officer class and are now just finishing the 36 hr. Part C of FF1. This increases the knowledge needed to lead an entry team and fire ground management.

There were 22 calls for Service in the last 12 months.

All NFRS reports up to date for 2% dues.

In the last year we were involved with the normal events, i.e. Birkie, Wienie Roast, Northend Ski Classic and Fat Tire.

The Pancake Breakfast will be on Sunday May 25th, 2025.

The Annual Fire Department Open House and Fire Extinguisher Service will be held on Saturday, June 7, 2025.

Projects:

- Yearly Hose testing was completed in June 2024 and will be done again this year although I have not been updated on a date.
- We have finalized the DNR Grant for an AED unit to be carried on Squad 30 as a responding Wildland Fire unit.
- Through the Bayfield and Ashland County Communications Dept. being combined we will be using eDispatches to our phones as a backup to pagers. This will give us more information than the Fire Text Response did and at a lower cost per year, \$250 from the previous \$600 last year.

Some things that are still on the radar for action in the near future:

- Looking at revising the permit application for short-term rentals to include bringing all driveways (grandfathered in) to current new driveway standards.
- The money set aside for a high flow well should be kept in place as we are still researching the strainer bought for reloading tenders and engines.
- Replacement of the 1985 Tanker/Tender.
- Replacement of 1994 Chev. Suburban and 1980's pickup with another newer model straight box for existing brush skid unit. This option would reduce the fleet of apparatus by 1.
- We continue to replace Turnout Gear that was acquired by an AFG grant over 10 years ago. We did replace 18 SCBA bottles with new bottles as the old bottles had reached the EOL of 15 years.
- We are looking for funding for the replacement of a crowded and inefficient main station fire hall
- Noted changes in chief duties.
- Proposed changes to OSHA recommendations that could change required equipment and personnel. This item has had some setback from the open comment time offered last year and is being looked at again, as with any comment period, we need to voice our concerns with the costs involved. I will be joining an online meeting in the next few weeks that will provide more information.

Airport Commission Report – Submitted by Doug Rowe, Cable Union Airport Commission Chairman.

We had a busy 2024 and it continues into 2025. Very productive but not without its challenges.

The Phase 2 Hangar Development. The development area was mostly completed last Fall. Lots for an additional eleven hangars now exist. All eleven sites are spoken for. One of those hangars is currently under construction. The remaining ten are expected to go up this year.

Snow Removal Equipment Building. We have been working with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Bureau of Aeronautics (BOA) and Cooper Engineering (project consultant) on this project. The building design, zoning, and bid are complete. We are awaiting the approval for funding from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). We expect the funding to be approved and construction to begin in late Summer to early Fall.

Terminal Building Restoration. This project is nearing completion. This will be the culmination of a multi-year undertaking to update the terminal while keeping Libby's legacy in mind. The restoration includes the replacement of siding, windows, floors, ceilings, and doors. There will be a flight planning area, pilot rest area, conference room, Manager's office, and upgraded bathroom (to include a shower). A huge thank you to those in the community who have contributed materials, time, and their unique skills to help make this happen.

Environmental Assessment (EA). This continues to be our largest and most drawn out project. In review, our primary runway is 3709' long. The FAA has deemed, by the classification of our airport, we are entitled to federal funding to maintain a runway length of just 3400'. The EA is the study that will ultimately determine the placement of the threshold lines and the obstruction clearing requirements for these runway thresholds to meet the safety standards for arriving and departing aircraft, as dictated by the FAA. The EA was initiated some ten years ago to address obstructions (primarily trees) that have grown into the flight paths causing a hazard to aircraft. In my assessment, the primary reason for the frustratingly slow progress has been personnel turnover and manpower shortage at the Wisconsin BOA, compounded with bureaucratic red tape. It appears the progress will continue to be slow. We do our best to be "a squeaky wheel". I make frequent calls to the BOA for updates and to express our frustration at the slow progress.

Residents of the Gordon Correctional Facility have proved to be a very good and cost effective source of labor for clearing trees on airport property. We used them for two stretches of days in 2024 and intend to seek their services again in 2025.

Hayward airport will be closed for approximately 6 weeks for runway reconstruction following the lifting of road bans. We are expecting an increase in traffic at the airport in Cable during that time.

The airport maintains a good relationship with our neighbors. This includes frequent and open communication with the ABF, Cable Rod and Gun Club, and Telemark Properties.

Upcoming events at the airport include the grand opening of the newly remodeled terminal (TBD), hamburger fly in June 24, young eagles, and pancake fly in which corresponds with the Saturday of Fall Fest.

Special acknowledgment and a huge thank you to Sue Thurn. Sue has served on the Airport Commission for many years with great enthusiasm and effectiveness. Her contributions over the years are too many to list comprehensively but include

spearheading the remodeling of the terminal building and guiding the Commission on budget and process matters.

We welcome Jeff Smits as the Cable Town Supervisor representative on the Airport Commission. Jeff is a quick study. He is quickly getting up to speed with what's is going on at the airport. He is hitting the ground running.

June 24th: grand opening for terminal area and dedication to Libby Parod.

Comprehensive Planning Report – Jim Krueger reported that the Plan Commission has been working on updating the Comp Plan. Also, the commission has been working on input with the county zoning re-write.

Road Report – Submitted by Clay Burditt, Road Foreman.

Garmisch Road project consisted of culvert replacement and grinding of the pavement. Multiple trees were removed to break up the canopy effect as was a number of spot ditching projects. Two French drains were created to deal with the water run off issues and Geogrid was placed in key areas. The Harmon/Garmisch Road intersection was moved south and raised for better traffic flow.

The 2024 Wildfire Grant was completed by reducing vegetation along roadsides in key areas netting the town a reimbursement of over \$10,000. Many hours were spent cutting, limbing, chipping, mowing and hauling to reduce the fire hazard along our town roads. This year a new Case 150 was purchased to replace our aged 2001 John Deere 7210 Mower Tractor. The new tractor has attachments for faster mowing of roadsides as well as mulching of trees and brush to help with work for Wildfire Grants in the future.

Walleye Fish Project Report – Submitted by Mike D'Andrea.

DNR meeting from 5pm to 7pm.

Another good year of progress for the Walleye project in 2024. Again, we have stocked 6,600 Walleyes in the lake, which brings our total up to 46,000 approx., since 2018 .

Walleye populations have grown from a low of 2.3 per acre to @ 4.3 per acre. We are a naturally producing Walleye Lake, that has had poor natural recruitment in the last 20 years but have had good recruitment in years 2018, 2020, 2022, and modest productivity in 2024 (data yet to come). Along with recruitment improvements, and stocking the lake populations have responded. Objective is for >5 Walleyes per acre, a historical average. Reasons for poor recruitment is not fully understood. A warming lake that is more habitat friendly for species such as Large Mouth Bass, and Black crappies, may be part of the issue. Namakagon is a priority Lake for GLIFWC, and a perfect Walleye body that fits into Max Wolters Wisconsin Walleye plan.

In 2024 we spent @ \$3.30 a fish all donated to the Namakagon Lake Association. We appreciate the support of the community, and the Town of Namakagon. Although the price reflects lower productivity than normal, difficult to control as raising fish is a bit like farming. Walleyes, are predators, carnivorous, and sensitive to water temps.

Additionally, otters, mergansers, and herons are always hungry. Tyler Firkus of NADF

shared with my commercial costs for 6" Walleyes and they range from \$4.50-\$5.50 excluding permits, and transportation costs.

Habitat improvement is also a priority of the project. The Town, and the NLA has supported the fish stick project by sharing the 25% cost towards the Healthy Lakes Grants. We have 4 more fish sticks going into Janes Bay, and we will be using a barge with hoists to pull trees from Wayne Spitzers property across Garden Lake Road and place along his shoreline in Janes Bay. It will become a fish attractant for many who fish Janes bay.

The best news is Ted Peichel's hard work has paid off in 2024 with permits from the DNR, and Zoning we were able to drop 43 trees along a mile of shoreline along additional Spitzer property, and we really thank Wayne and Wanda Spitzer, and the incredibly hard work of Ted to accomplish this task. This will change our complete approach to habitat improvements and we will now be able to move forward without heavy equipment. Four members of the DNR cut the trees, and we were assisted by Terry Cramer, and Gary Larson. We appreciate their assistance. (this is not a shoreline owner, DIY project)

Fin Clipping: A Walleye population survey will be done next Spring and determine fin clipped Walleye difference between pellet fed and minnow fed Walleyes.

Lake Association Report – Submitted by Terry Cramer, Namakagon lake Association President.

Invasive Species

2024 - In the spring, the NLA treated five areas for Hybrid Watermilfoil (HWM). Our biologist conducted a survey of the lake in the fall, which demonstrated that the spring treatment was largely successful. However, it also revealed the presence of multiple beds of HWM in Upper Lake and two beds in Lower Lake.

2025 - We are applying for a permit to treat nine beds located in the western portion of Upper Lake next spring, including Mogasheen Bay and Funny's Bay. Additionally, we propose to treat two beds in Lower Lake, covering a total treatment area of 27 acres. Our biologist has also identified numerous small, isolated beds around the lake. However, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) does not permit the treatment of beds smaller than half an acre. Therefore, we will continue to monitor these smaller beds for potential future intervention.

NLA has funds from a 2022 grant, which has been extended to 2025, that will cover 75% of the treatment costs. The remaining 25% will be financed by NLA funds. A portion of this 25% is derived from "volunteer inspections" conducted by our members.

Grants from the Wisconsin DNR have been essential in helping us pay for treating the lake to control the spread of HWM. The 2024 treatment will exhaust our current grant. To continue our monitoring of the lake (and treating when necessary), the NLA will be applying to renew our grant for 2025 and beyond.

Clean Boats, Clean Waters Grant (CBCW) - In addition to monitoring and treating the lake, the NLA emphasizes prevention efforts to protect our waters from invasive species through the boat landing inspection program. This project is funded by the state on an 80/20 basis and is managed by the Town of Namakagon. Special recognition is due to Laura Bjork for her diligent work in scheduling, documenting, and managing wages for the lake monitors.

Membership and Social Events

Membership - At the start of last year, our membership comprised just under 533 members from approximately 283 households. Two years ago, we established a membership committee with the objective of developing strategies to attract more members. As a result of their efforts, including signage, social events, and newsletters, our Association now has 575 members from over 300 households.

Social Events – Last summer, we initiated member socials at local establishments. The objective was to provide members with an opportunity to interact informally, facilitating connections with neighbors and friends. Additionally, this initiative aimed to support the restaurants and bars, which are among our largest contributors, who experienced a challenging winter due to insufficient snowfall. Our initial social event, held at Four Seasons, was attended by 70 participants, which exceeded our expectations and helped us gain a few new members. The second social event at the Loon Saloon attracted 60 attendees. Subsequently, two additional events were held this winter at Plamor and the Roo's, each drawing over 50 participants. Given the success of these events, we are planning more in the future.

Annual Meeting - The Annual Meeting took place in August at the Forest Lodge, with over 80 members in attendance. It was a successful event where we conducted a "Split-the-Pot" for the first time, raising approximately \$800 for the NLA. The catering services were deliciously provided by Lakewoods.

The NLA is committed to preserving and protecting Lake Namakagon as an ecologically healthy watershed. We sincerely appreciate the time, energy, and resources that the town dedicates to supporting our initiatives.

Library Report – Given by Amanda Westlund, Director for Forest Lodge Library.

Patron visits: 8,665

Total Registered Users: 1,019 (Residents: 724, Non-Residents: 295)

Total Materials: 11,842 (Books, subscriptions, audios, videos, and other materials)

Circulation: Physical items total: 8,166; Children's items: 1,575

Inter-Library Loans – outgoing: 2,343 and incoming: 2,089. ILL includes within out system and with WISCAT.

E-Material Circulation: E-books: 2,284; E-audio: 1,766; E-video: 296; Children's E-material: 142

Public Computer Use: 361

Public Wireless Access: 3,324

Programs:

- Child (6-11 years): 9 programs with a total attendance of 34
- Young Adults (12-18 years): 8 programs with a total attendance of 76

- Adults (19+ years): 28 programs with a total attendance of 282

Programs included:

- Story and craft time for children
- Take and make crafts for kids
- Monthly reading challenges
- Dungeons and Dragons for Tweens and Teens
- Adult Makerspace
- Activities for Senior Meals at UCC
 - Smokey Bear and Summer Reading kick off
- Author Events
- Musical Features
- Book Clubs
- Jigsaw puzzle challenge

Upcoming Events:

- June 17th: FLL hosts Business after 5
- June 21st: 10am-2pm Summer Reading Kick Off
 - 2pm-4pm Spoons for the people to celebrate Make Music Day
- July 4th: FLL activities at the Cable Town Park after parade
- July 20th: FLL Centennial Celebration Noon – 4pm

Outgoing FLL Board Members: Janis Pribyl & Mary Jean Fenske. Thank you for your service!

On-coming FLL Board Members: Julia Campbell & Elizabeth Franczyk.

Staff Changes: Joanne Riss was with us for the summer and then returned to her regular school library aide position in the fall. She will be returning in June. Ron Skoglund joined us in the late fall and will be returning to his summer employment at the end of April.

New Building Updates:

- Selected Royal Construction as our building firm
- Selected Westlund Consultancy as our architect
- Survey was put out to community regarding input on new library building, 100 responses were received, results can be viewed on the website
- Formed a Design Committee to work with Royal and Westlund on our building needs
- Had final sales and clean out of Book House and volunteers prepared it for its removal
- Book House was moved to new location by new owner in preparation for new building
- Applied for the Flexible Facilities Grant for the amount of \$1.86 million and received notification of being awarded this in October 2024
- Due to receiving the Flexible Facilities Grant, the FLL Board of Trustees voted to stretch the building footprint to be somewhat bigger, moving from 3,500 sq. ft. to just under 4,600 sq. ft.
- In November 2024, discussion began with the Cable Natural History Museum regarding their ownership of the log cabin and possible future use. As a result of these discussions, which will continue in the fall of 2025, the FLL Board voted to

move to a “stand-alone” structure for the new library building instead of the “expansion”, as was previously planned

- We are excited to be on course to break ground in June 2025

Thank you for the continued support of the Forest Lodge Library! If you have any questions regarding our library operations or library services, please feel free to contact me by phone: 715-798-3189 or email: awestlund@cable.wislib.org. Thank you for the opportunity to report on all that has happened in the past year at the library!

Town update – Chairman Rasmussen reported that the Town Hall will be installing permanent outdoor bathrooms. The town was working with the Forest Service to put a culvert in on Ghost Creek, but with budget cuts the project was cancelled. Verizon will be going onto the Cell Tower and looking at increasing the height. The Transfer Site will be running out of space, and the board has been working with the DNR to find another site. The town presented an award to Dianne and Glenn Grage for volunteering their gardening skills to the Town Hall. Road Clean-up letters have gone out and the fish boil will be at the Town Hall on April 26th, cocktails at 4:30pm and dinner at 6pm.

Old Business – None.

New Business – None.

Public Comment – None.

Date set for next Annual Meeting: Tuesday April 21, 2026.

MOTION made by Ray Ebert to adjourn the Annual Town Board meeting at 8:26pm.
MOTION seconded by Carol McGregor and carried.

Respectfully Submitted by

Laura Bjork, Town of Namakagon Clerk