

TOWN OF GRAND VIEW
Four Towns Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 27, 2021
Grand View Town Hall

Chairman Jack Iverson called the meeting to order at 7pm. In attendance were Town of Grand View: Chairman Jack Iverson; Town of Namakagon: Chairman Robert Rasmussen, Supervisors Jim Krueger and Jack McGregor, Treasurer Arlene Skultety and Clerk Laura Bjork; Town of Cable: Chairman Malcolm Haag, Supervisors David Popelka, Tony Merrill and Kyle Weber, Treasurer Bobbi McCauley and Clerk Kelly Rauch; Town of Drummond: Chairman Roy Bloom AND 5 others.

MOTION made by Robert Rasmussen to dispense the reading of the minutes from July 13, 2020 and approve them as presented. MOTION seconded by Roy Bloom and carried.

Introductions were given,

Chairman Jack Iverson added Room Tax, Airport and ARPA to the agenda.

PRESENTATION OF HOUSING SURVEY BY KELLIE PETERSON:

Kellie Peterson explained the evolution of process and where we are in it. Three and a half years ago there was a need communicated for housing from municipalities. This was for various reasons, including not having enough workers, schools losing people, etc. This was a county wide issue. There was a crisis in 2008 and it has been hard to keep up with the housing issues. The State of Wisconsin is struggling more-so than other state, and rural is struggling more than urban. There is a general disadvantage around rural housing.

In 2018 the county started meeting with regional elected officials. In 2019 the Chequamegon Bay Regional Housing Coalition was formed. This was to bring understanding of the regional housing issues. This was the start of a collaborative approach to address systemic issues. In late 2019 attention was brought to the state level. In February of 2020 fourteen municipalities contributed matching funds to offset a CDBG grant to do a housing study. This was to gather information to make a compelling case for development. In the Fall of 2020, the Coalition was selected as a "Pilot Community" for the WHEDA Rural Affordable Workforce Housing Initiative. In Spring 2021 the regional housing survey was complete. In January 2022 the WHEDA RAWHI process will begin. In Jan 2023 the solution implementation will begin.

The Housing Survey discussed ways to facilitate housing development, determine market demand and housing type, price point, identify land, set designs, identify incentives, etc. The survey was to gain support and compile into a concise marketing piece. There was discussion on what housing developers are seeking; proof there is a demand, community that knows what it needs vs desires, reduced or no land cost, etc. The following are findings from the survey. Bayfield County is growing in population. Bayfield County is an elderly population. Bayfield County has 43% seasonal housing. People in Bayfield County prefer to own their own house. Median income is \$60,000. Housing cost should be about 30% of gross income. About 25% are over that percentage with a mortgage. Almost 16% of people owning their own houses are out of that normal range. The median sale price is \$240,000 for a home. The median income of renters is \$30,733, which is mostly identified with older and younger folks. Rentals are hard to come by in Bayfield County. There is a rising cost of land and development. Development must have

affordability. There was discussion on how governments can partner to tackle the housing issue. Senior Rental Housing has been looked into to help with housing. There was a 35% response rate from the surveys. There was discussion on specific town survey results.

We need to get a shape of the housing issues, and we are seeing that with survey results. WHEDA will help dig through this data and give as some solutions.

DISCUSSION OF SHORT-TERM RENTALS:

James Krueger stated that the Town of Namakagon had discussion on ordinances and rules regarding short-term rentals. The four towns should consider a common ordinance for short-term rentals as some lakes are shared. Perhaps a formation of a committee might help to develop such an ordinance. David Popelka stated that the City of Duluth has capped rentals at 63. Just last month the city contemplated adding 10 more short-term rentals and have a percentage of them as long-term rentals. We need a unified agreement for short-term rentals in the area. Jim Krueger added that the state put a limit on who the town can allow to rent and who they can't allow to rent. Kellie Peterson stated that a town can regulate off street parking, not using recreational vehicles and have capacity regulations. Kyle Weber stated that there is a concern in the Town of Cable. There is a need to limit short-term rentals. In the Village of Cable people are buying homes, and they are turning them into short-term rentals. In the village five homes have been lost to short-term rentals. If we don't figure it out now, there will be an issue. As a result of losing residential houses, the town loses workers for area businesses, children enrolled in school, etc. If we can come up with a common ordinance, maybe we can get ahead of the game. Jim Krueger stated that the only deterrent is cost. However, the towns should be consistent. Some people have rented and then backed out because of the regulations. Bobbi McCauley stated that room tax is at 4% currently, and the Town of Cable has talked about raising the rate to 8%. Jim Krueger added this is work that goes above and beyond regular job duties. The fees need to be offset by the costs for processing. The City of Bayfield charges \$750 for a permit which is offset for the costs for personnel and is an annual permit. Kyle Weber noted that there is revenue coming in from short-term rentals. Namakagon charges a one-time fee of \$100. Cable charges a one-time fee of \$25. Malcolm Haag agreed that the only way to deter these types of rentals is by increasing fees. However, with self-reporting regulations, perhaps there will be less reporting. Towns need to check websites to keep people accountable. Kellie Peterson stated that the Town of Lincoln had a lawyer draft the most rigid ordinance to see what it would look like. This is available to look at and consider. Kyle Weber recommended raising the room tax percent from 4% to 8% and raise the permit to \$750. It was noted that towns are allowed to keep 30%; 70% needs to be turned over to tourism (Cable Chamber of Commerce). The Bayfield Department of Health has a list of places that are used for short-term rentals. Each Town Board will take the information to their board meeting, both short-term rentals and room tax.

DISCUSSION OF GREAT DIVIDE AMBULANCE:

Rob Puls thanked Kellie Peterson for her presentation. We are seeing people leaving the community for health reasons above and beyond the 30% discussed in the presentation. Aging people, health concerns and not getting care they deserve is definitely increasing in the area. In 2003, the ambulance service was the first service to get a hybrid license requiring 2 paramedics to be in the ambulance. There were no additional costs to the townships for that. It was a challenge to update that license to a paramedic license to allow one paramedic and one EMT to run on the ambulance. The service pursued a paramedic

license because of the need for paramedic level care and the distance in the rural community from hospitals. The workers came not for the money, but because they believed in what we were doing. We are very proud of that. Over the years, the number of runs have gone up. By taking interfacility transfers, the ambulance service was made affordable to the towns. The first year we did 42 transfers. Last year we did 1400 transfers! Everything has grown, including costs and staffing issues. Two years ago, the service went through a lawsuit that cost about \$300,000. The service never asked the towns for any funds for that. The service bought eight ambulances throughout the years without asking the towns for any additional funding. The service also purchased ventilators and equipment without asking any additional funding. Last year, we purchased a new building. We hired a firm in Ashland to do a feasibility study, and it met the needs for the ambulance. The towns sponsored a \$150,000 loan for renovations. The cost of the building was \$250,000, and again, the service never asked the town for any additional funding for this. The renovations went over the expected expenditure and was covered by our finances. We need new ambulances. We have 2 ordered, but because of shortages, we will not get them until 2023. We still struggle to find workers. Starbucks is raising their employee rates to \$15 to \$23/hr. We pay \$14/hr. for EMTs and \$19/hr. for paramedics. Costs continue to increase. That's why we are where we are. Last year we billed out 3.5 million dollars and only collected 1.7 million. We had a problem with a billing company and switched billing companies, which has been a lot of work. We are proud of where we've come. We need to look at where we are going. There is going to be a continued need in the community. The county formed an ad hoc committee because of issues within the county for ambulance service. Our numbers right now are not strong in the fourth quarter. Transfers can't go anywhere. We are currently transporting to LaCrosse, Rochester and into Iowa. MMC is looking transporting to Marquette MI. It's not all COVID, but it is affecting the industry. Some of the problem is that there are not enough workers in the hospitals. It is affecting our service because people need to go, but there is nowhere to go. We are trying to retain our workers and draw workers into the service. To do this, we offer Retirement to employees, a QSEHRA and PTO. Laura Bjork added that in 2105 the service cut town subsidies in half because of the added income from transfers. To keep the subsidies at that rate, the service has pulled from their reserve funds. All reserved funds have been depleted by the lawsuit and overtime, employee benefits and the new building. We had no choice at budget time to increase the fee for subsidies. Rob Puls stated that he is not confident we have a sustainable service at this time, however, after the building is paid, it might be. Laura Bjork added that during budget time, we did look at going to just 911 care, and it was more expensive to do that then to continue with what we are doing now in taking transfers and multiple crews. Rob Puls discussed the average health payments for the ambulance service. Laura Bjork stated that there is representation for each township on the ambulance board to allow each town to be informed of updates. This should be on the agenda for townships quarterly to keep up to date on the ambulance service. Kyle Weber stated that he understands the importance of the ambulance but is looking at the increase critically. If each town accepts the increase in subsidies to the ambulance, will there still be a deficit in the following years? If this is something we do now, will we get back to lowering subsidies? If the increase is approved this year, will that be the last time there will be an increase? There was discussion on the sustainability of the ambulance subsidies for the future. There was discussion on how to present budget to residents for informing of increases and the reasons for increases. Roy Bloom stated that this is not a business that is sustainable. We cannot count on the amount of calls that we receive, or if we will get paid for that cost of service. Jack McGregor added that there is an economic factor for having Great Divide in our communities. We have full time paramedic service for our community. What we are paying is pennies on the dollar for life

saving service. No paramedic service will fit in this area, and there is no forecast for our future. Our healthcare is under stress. Ambulance service needs to be provided to our communities by State Statute. Jack Iverson stated that the ambulance gave back to the community in 2015 when subsidies were cut in half. Many people blamed us for leaving Ashland County, but that was not the case! That is the furthest thing from the truth. Things could be worse. No one has worked harder and sweat more than the ambulance board. The cost is worth it. Kyle Weber agreed that the service is worth it but wanted to know if this raise in subsidies was a permanent change. Laura Bjork responded that the towns should consider this a permanent change, and if there happens to be a change, then it will be a bonus. Rob Puls stated that he would love to have stability in the budget, but things have changed so much, it is not stable. For the last 16 years, we made sure it didn't cost more, but right now, it is not feasible. The times are unpredictable. Rob Puls noted that the service is requested to be on standby for some events that support the community and is paid for those events when requested. However, the Town of Cable allows many events that do not pay the service to be there, and it is an added duty for the service. He suggested that the Town of Cable add the requirement of ambulance service for events or at least notification in their permit process.

Other agenda items will be forwarded to the next four town's meeting.

Chairman Jack Iverson adjourned at 9:11pm.