

**TOWN OF NAMAKAGON
MINUTES FOR ANNUAL MEETING
TUESDAY April 18, 2023 AT 7:00 P.M.**

Chairman Rasmussen called the annual meeting to order at 7:00pm. Present were Chairman Rasmussen, Supervisors Jack McGregor and Jim Krueger, Treasurer Arlene Skultety, Clerk Laura Bjork and 11 others; Corrine Rasmussen, Carol McGregor, Mary D'Andrea, Judy Krueger, JoAnn Schultz, Phillip Rasmussen, Mike D'Andrea, Ted Piechel, Kevin Johnson, Kristine Lendved and Rob Puls.

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

MOTION made by Joann Schultz to dispense the reading of the minutes from the April 19, 2022, Annual Town Meeting and approve the minutes as presented. MOTION seconded by Phil Rasmussen and carried.

MOTION made by Mary D'Andrea to approve the minutes from the Special Elector Meeting held on November 17, 2022. MOTION seconded by Mike D'Andrea and carried.

2022 Financial Report was presented by Treasurer Skultety. Account balances as of January 1, 2022, were \$1,011,664.48. Total Revenues for 2022 were \$1,191,623.53 and Advance Tax Collections were \$299,915.43. Total Disbursements for 2022 were \$1,223,094.70. Account balances as of December 31, 2022, were \$748,252.09.

2022 Highlights on Finances:

Income:

We received the second installment of the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funds of \$12,978.90, which is going towards the purchase and installation of generator backup systems for the town buildings. The Fire Department received a grant for Dry Hydrants, which were placed at Garmisch and two at Lakewoods. An Election Subgrant of \$600 was received for the purchase of a new laptop computer. A Bayfield County Infrastructure Grant of \$5,000 was received for the start of the Town of Namakagon Community Park to purchase and install fitness equipment. The Town Board agreed to start collecting Annual Short-Term Rental fees, which are reflected in the financial report. The town sold Plow Blades to the Town of Drummond.

Disbursements:

The town purchased two generators with the money from the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. The Fire Department invested in a new truck and an Ultra High-Pressure Unit. Ambulance subsidies increased by \$53,840. The Road Crew worked on Birch Bend Road applying Geo Grid and Sheet Piling and the town parking lot prepping for paving. The first layer of pavement went on, and the second will be done this spring. The town was able to purchase a new 2022 Mack for the Road Crew with a trade in on the 2007 Sterling. The Road Crew installed eight fitness stations on the fitness path. The signs will be installed this spring as well as the improvements on the path. The final payment on the town loan for the highway/road construction was done this year.

Law Enforcement Report was presented by Kevin Johnson.

Two months ago, the board had a title change for the Law Enforcement Officer to Community Services Officer. There are other area townships that have that title as well. Kevin Johnson is a reserve deputy for Bayfield County, doing ride-alongs. He has worked in Grand View since 1984. At that time, he held the title Constable. Since then, times have changed. He was a certified first responder for Great Divide in 1984. After re-certifying in 2014, he let that certification expire. He cares about the residents in the township, and he enjoys his job helping people. He purchases Ashland County canine stuffed animals which he gives away to children who are having a hard time. He also gives Kwik Trip coupons out to kids. He hands out maps quite often (snowmobile and ATV maps). He helps people to keep the rules and regulations by communicating the information rather than writing tickets to enforce those rules and regulations. This allows people to have fun and stay within the rules. He thanked the board for the opportunity to work for the township. He hands in reports itemizing his time on the job. Some of his duties are as follows: responds to fire and ambulance calls, responds with the Sheriff's Department and Conservation Warden, has ATV/UTV and snowmobile contacts, responds to motor vehicle, ATV and snowmobile accidents, assists with motorists, does property checks, assists with the Deputy, Conservation Warden, Fire Department and EMS contacts, assists with contacting the coroner and funeral home, assists with towing vehicles, assists with Special Events, patrols and monitors boat landings, works with Special Events in town, patrols boat landings and parks, responds to animal complaints, assists the Town Crew, ATV Club and Snowmobile Club as needed and has public contacts. These are just a summary of what is covered in the town for the year. In 2022 he worked 221.5 hours and drove 2,907 miles. Chairman Rasmussen thanked Kevin for all work that he has done for the township. Phil Rasmussen thanked Kevin Johnson for his presence at all the events.

Fire Department Report was presented by Jack McGregor and submitted by Dave Haan, Fire Chief.

There are 15 active members. The service went on 23 calls in the last 12 months. All NFRS state reports are up to date for 2% dues. In the last year we were involved with the normal events, Birkie, Wienie Roast Races, Northend Classic and Fat Tire. There has been discussion on the Pancake Breakfast and no decision has been made.

This year projects are as follows:

The yearly hose and ladder testing was not completed due to staffing shortage of FireCatt which does the testing. In conversation with them this year they have guaranteed to test. Scheduled for the week of June 4.

We are in the process of finalizing the DNR Grant for Wildland Turnout gear, cell phone boosters, foam, and misc. small equipment.

Last year, we applied for an AFG Grant for Battery powered extrication equipment of \$31,000 but was turned down due to lack of federal money.

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

The replacement of the 2001 Pumper or move to a reserve status.

The replacement of the 1998 Chev. Mini pumper with a Pumper Rescue combination.

This option would reduce the fleet of apparatus by one.

Increase the Pioneer Station Budget to include either Cell Phone Service or internet. They are working to join with the Sawyer County Emergency Association for Mutual Aid coverage to include, but not limited to, access to an Aerial pumper, Search and rescue team and dive team. The cost to the dept. is 10% of our 2% dues, roughly \$680 & \$100 each for association dues and air boat maintenance, a total of \$880.

We continue to replace turnout gear that was acquired by an AFG grant over 10 years ago, plus we will need to start replacing SCBA bottles from the same grant as they near the stated life of use.

There should be some conversation started for a high flow well for filling tenders and looking for funding for a replacement of a crowded and inefficient main station fire hall. Chairman Rasmussen thanked all the fire department members for all their work in the township.

Lake Association Report was presented by Mike D'Andrea.

Mike D'Andrea thanked Ted Piechel and Phil Rasmussen for all their help with the lake projects. They will be working on hatcheries, taking eggs from the lake. They get to use Lakewoods Marina, and it is very helpful! It's been 5 years since the Walleye project. In 2002 there were 5 walleyes per acre, and it had decreased to 2.3 per acre. There are 4.3 walleyes per acre currently. This project was started this with Lake Association. A lot of work has been done in cooperation with other entities, such as Red Cliff, the Forest Service and the DNR. Since the project has started, three grants were received. Weather has done a lot to hinder the progression of work. The town also has supported the efforts of these projects. There are 38 projects, but the weather must cooperate to get them all done. Tree drops might be the secret to our success. We have increased the population. We re-populated the lakes, but we are not seeing the fish grow, which could be due to various reasons. The walleyes in our lakes grow slower, about a year behind every other lake. The walleye is maturing faster in our lake. It is due to the lake being cool and dark. Pan fish are in high demand among fishermen. They are over-fished. Muskies are the next fish in demand, and the lake builds good muskies. The expectation of Walleye is approximately 11.6% of the population. They have stocked 34,000 fish. A survey has been carried out that will help with a management plan for the lake and possibly create some regulation changes. This spring fyke nets are going out. They will be purchasing a winch to pull trees around so there will not be a need for skid steers. Ted Piechel added that there are recreation and fishing opportunities because of the lake, and we need to keep it that way.

Supervisor Krueger stated that the Namakagon Lake Association treated 32 acres of hybrid water milfoil. The treatment was 100% effective. There is a little milfoil in Blue Gill Bay, but it is an area that does not have outflow and the milfoil is located in a shallow part of the water, so the DNR wishes to leave these spots for this year. This year the project is to watch the treated areas and monitor if any hybrid milfoil comes back and if anything natural was damaged. There was some effect on northern milfoil, but overall, no other damage to the natural areas. It cost \$100,000 to treat those areas, of which 75% was funded by a grant, and 25% was funded by the Lake Association.

There has been work done to update the lake plan which must be done every 5 years. The lake plan gives direction to the lake association on what to do and how to accomplish it.

Thanks to Laura Bjork for helping with the scheduling, documenting, and paying wages for Lake Monitors. That project is funded by the state 80/20 and donated time by the Town of Namakagon.

Buoys will be placed when ice is out, and water levels are down.

There are 246 households that are members currently in the lake association. In the past there was a high of over 400 total members.

There is a group that will be working on membership.

The lake association thanked the Town of Namakagon for its help in making the lake a special place to enjoy.

Library Report was presented by Kristine Lendved.

In 2022 the Forest Lodge Library checked out over 9,000 physical items to patrons and another 5,000 digital items, including e-books, e-audio books, and streaming video. Nearly 7,000 people visited the library in 2022, and we recorded 12,558 uses of our wireless internet, which is on 24/7.

We work hard to retain a fresh and vital collection of book, film, and magazine titles, but it is also true that digital is the direction that so many services are taking. We have some exciting, entertaining, educational, and very useful digital services that we want you to be aware of and take advantage of! All you need to access any of these services is a library card! More information on all these services is available on our website: forestlodgelibrary.org.

Last year we introduced the video streaming service, KANOPY. Early in 2023 the Northern Waters Library Service decided to subscribe to this service for all libraries in our system. So, you no longer need to be a Cable/Namakagon patron to connect to 5 credits per month of quality movies, TV series, documentaries, and The Great Courses. There are thousands of titles available, and you are guaranteed to find something of interest.

New this year is a language learning tool called Transparent Languages offering instruction in 120+ languages. This robust resource will school you at a pace and difficulty level that is comfortable for you.

CREATIVE BUG is another new offering, a collection of thousands of how-to videos on everything from crocheting to cooking to calligraphy. There are fun projects to educate and entertain kids and longer sessions that will function as an in-house boot camp to get your creative juices going.

Read the New York Times! If you're at the library and using our IP address, you can create an account. If you're at home, you can follow a link that will provide you with 24-hour access to the NYT. Once 24 hours have passed you can do it again.

An ongoing digital service is Libby, which provides access to e-books, e-audio books, and digital magazines. You may have once used the Overdrive resource, which is no more. Overdrive owns Libby and considers it to be the more user-friendly platform.

While all of us who grew up with books will probably always prefer them to reading on our phones or other devices, Libby is mighty convenient when you're on the road or simply find yourself somewhere without a book or magazine.

Again, more information about all these resources is available on our website. If you're having any difficulty accessing or using any of these resources, please come on in or give

us a call and we'll be happy to help. We even have Wi-Fi-hotspots to loan if you lack service at home.

The work on our library expansion project is still ongoing. I'm certain you are all aware that building costs have skyrocketed in conjunction with supply-chain issues and other post-pandemic problems. In recent months a sub-committee has worked to develop a plan with a smaller and more affordable footprint. The Library Board, as a whole, has considered what will be most essential for the library that can best serve our current and future community. Yes, we'll always have books, but services like study rooms in which to conduct small meetings, Zoom business or education sessions or telehealth appointments are growing more central to the 21st Century library. We will next be reworking our marketing materials and will be keeping our Towns posted on next steps.

We also continue to pursue various grant and other funding opportunities.

One popular new addition to library grounds is the "critter pole" carved from a large white pine that needed to be removed from the front of the Book House property.

Completed in early October, the carving was accomplished by Grizz Works out of Maple, WI. Justin Howland is the carver and his wife, Tara, ably assists with the coloration and protective coats. We encountered some early vandalism perpetrated by a neighborhood pileated woodpecker. Happy to say that a facsimile woodpecker mounted on the pole seems to have discouraged the actual bird.

In the last year we also hosted a couple of author events in partnership with Redbery Books. We offered several digital writing workshops which were well received. We offered an all-ages Summer Reading Program that utilized a bingo format. In April of last year and again this year, we offer a Poetry Challenge in honor of National Library Month. We welcomed Golden Girl Getty, the reading therapy dog to our grounds several times over the summer months. In August we offered our annual (except for 2020) Novel Affair, a social event and showcase of library services. Several area book clubs hold their meetings at the Forest Lodge Library.

Fairly new to the library is Jill Reiche. A retired educator, she is yet another friendly, efficient, and helpful addition to our staff. Jayme Morey resigned as our cleaner and we welcome Mark Wehrheim who loves to clean and enjoys spending time at the library. In other personnel news, I have told the Library Board that I wish to wrap up my tenure at the end of this, my 15th year as your Library Director. I did turn 70 last December and it feels like time to pass the torch. The Library Board will launch a director search sometime during summer months. Until then, I am always available to answer your questions about anything library!

I really hope that anyone who has not yet...WILL check out all the amazing services your library has to offer and that, if you do not already have one, you'll be inspired to get a library card, which, you can get by stopping into the library as Rep Chanz Green recently did...or, this is something else that you can do online.

We thank our Towns for their continued support of the Forest Lodge Library. THANKS! Chairman Rasmussen stated that the town will support the library plans to remove the old building.

Ambulance Report given by Rob Puls.

Rob Puls is the current Paramedic Coordinator for Great Divide Ambulance Service and has been for the last 25 years. He thanked the board of Namakagon for supporting the

service. He thanked the community for the donations received from the fundraising drive that was pursued, collecting over \$32,000! Thank you! He also thanked the community for baked goods that are dropped off at the station, and many encouraging words. He thanked the Fire Department for doing what they do; they are an asset to the community. A breakdown of the runs was presented. Last year, Great Divide Ambulance went on 1,256 Runs, of which 960 were interfacility transfers. In 2021 the service went on 1,259. The runs were billed out for a total of \$3,012,016, however only approximately \$1,500,000 was collected. We collect approximately \$300 from a Hayward run plus mileage when using Medicaid billing. This doesn't leave much room for profit. Governor Evers has recognized this problem this year. He is supplementing Medicaid runs with a Medicaid Reimbursement Program.

There were several grants applied for this year that were approved.

The summer months were very slow last year, which had the service worried about the future financially for the service. However, the fall months were busier than the summer months, which is very unusual. That allowed the service to end last year financially on a good note.

In 2022, we were relieved to prepare to receive two new ambulances as our ambulances that we were using had over 300,000 miles on them!

This July marks 20th year for Paramedic Level of Care. This is a landmark for the service. The service is just finishing two years in the new station building with three years left of payments on the loan. The service recently paid off the loan for three cardiac monitors. One of the ambulances is being loaned out with a five-year loan. This is the 10th ambulance that the service has purchased, and this is the first one that needed a loan.

There are challenges that the service is dealing with. Although the first quarter financials look strong, it a bit deceiving, as there is a lag in billing. The biggest obstacle is staffing. There is so much competition. In the past we have focused on patient care and people were willing to put the time into the service because of that. The ambulance service lost 11 employees in 2021. We have lost another 3 employees in 2022 and an additional 2 so far in 2023. And there is no one to replace them. Classes to train employees aren't being held because there aren't enough people signed up for them. Twenty-two months ago, there were four crews on staff. Today we have only two crews. And in a couple months we will have only three days with two crews. We knew this was going to happen years ago, and we have tried to give incentives to keep the employees. We have added PTO, state retirement, a QSEHRA and raised salaries. I keep hearing from town boards that we are unsustainable. The whole county is unsustainable! We are fortunate to have the care here that we do. Many other services are not responding to calls because of the lack of workers. The service will be going down to one crew in four weeks. If called out, that crew may be out for two hours. During the time the ambulance is gone, we will be relying on mutual aid with Glidden and/or Barnes and/or Sawyer County, which is limited help.

Chairman Rasmussen stated that wages for EMTs are currently at \$14/hr. and Paramedics \$19/hr. It was noted that there are few employees from the community, which is a huge

change in past employment. Community members get to go home while on call, unlike out-of-town employees that cannot.

Laura Bjork noted that there are window clings on the building window facing Highway 63 with the names of donors on the clings to show all the support that has been given. Chairman Rasmussen thanked all the workers for serving the township.

Airport Commission Report was submitted by Doug Rowe. Read by Chairman Rasmussen.

In 2022 and into 2023 the Cable Union Airport continues its progress toward measured growth, safe operations, as well as fiscally and socially responsible management.

Some highlights:

We continue to work closely with the Wisconsin Bureau of Aeronautics (BOA) as well as Cooper Engineering on the Environmental Assessment (EA). This is a long-term project balancing environmental impact and the removal of obstructions that hamper the safe operation of aircraft to and from the airport. We expect some actionable information from the EA in the coming months. These will include recommendations for runway threshold locations and their effects on the obstructions surrounding the airport.

As I write this report the construction of two new hangars is being completed. This brings the number of new hangars to seven and completes phase one of our hangar development. We are now working with the BOA and Cooper Engineering on phase two of our hangar development project. This will expand the area for hangars along the east side of the asphalt runway 17/35. We expect to break ground on this project sometime in 2023.

Some sad news regarding hangars. We lost Libby's proud 73-year-old hangar to heavy snow this winter. The site has been cleaned up and we are in the planning stage of how to best use that lot. The consensus to this point is the construction of a building that meets the aesthetic criterion of the new hangars. It will be used to store the equipment we require to maintain the airport grounds.

We have a very good relationship with the Birkie Foundation and the Fat Tire race. We continue to assist with parking for these two events that are so important to our community.

We communicate frequently with the Cable Rod and Gun Club. Our relationship is very positive. We sold land to the Cable Rod and Gun Club; previously it was leased to them. We are committed to the continued safe and cooperative coexistence with the CRGC that has existed for more than 40 years.

We have several other projects on our radar to enhance safety and user experience. Our priority is to help the Cable Union Airport reach its potential to contribute to the economic development of the area. All the while, blend those needs with the beauty and the nature of Northern Wisconsin. Which, after all, is why we all choose this as our home.

As always, please feel free to contact me with any airport related questions.

Comprehensive Planning Report was presented by James Krueger. There were only two meetings this year, and not much to report. Currently there is a need for another member on the Plan Commission.

Road Report was presented by Chairman Rasmussen.

The Road Crew prepared for the blacktop of Birch Bend Road and the parking lot. One layer was put on last year, and another one will be done this spring. We applied for a grant for Garmisch Road but have not heard if it was accepted as of yet. A lot of snowplowing was done this year. A lot of culverts were done as well as chip sealing. Phil Rasmussen thanked the road crew for their punctuality.

Town update – Chairman Rasmussen stated that the kitchen and roof on the town hall was completed. We added pickleball courts to the parking lot and blacktop to the parking lot. We also have a basketball hoop to put up as well. Phil Rasmussen asked about what is happening with the Room Tax Commission. Jim Krueger sits on the board as a commissioner from the town. The Chamber gives updates with where the money is being used at the meetings. The commission is still active. The majority of Chamber room tax funds go to promoting the area. The Town of Namakagon is the major contributor to the Chamber.

Old Business – None.

New Business – None.

Public Comment – Arlene Skultety thanked the board for appointing her as the Treasurer. She thanked Laura Bjork for her work. Supervisor Krueger thanked everyone for their votes of support in the last election.

Date set for next Annual Meeting: Tuesday April 18, 2023.

MOTION made by Phil Rasmussen to adjourn the Annual Town Board meeting at 8:36pm. MOTION seconded by Judy Krueger and carried.

Respectfully Submitted by

Laura Bjork, Town of Namakagon Clerk