

**TOWN OF NAMAKAGON  
MINUTES FOR ANNUAL MEETING  
TUESDAY April 16, 2024 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 8 others; Carol McGregor, Mary D’Andrea, Joann Schultz, Mike D’Andrea, Dave Haan, Jerome Malmquist, Ray Ebert and Tyler Babcock (Amanda Westlund and Mary Jean Fenske came in later).

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 18, 2023, Annual Town Meeting and approve the minutes as presented. MOTION seconded by Mary D’Andrea and carried.

MOTION made by Carol McGregor to approve the minutes from the Special Elector Meeting held on November 16, 2023. MOTION seconded by Ray Ebert and carried.

**2023 Financial Report** was presented by Treasurer Skultety. Account balances as of January 1, 2023, were \$748,252.09. Total Revenues for 2023 were \$1,251,553.22 and Advance Tax Collections were \$429,576.87. Total Disbursements for 2023 were \$1,098,642.91. Account balances as of December 31, 2023, were \$1,030,823.84.

2023 Highlights on Finances:

Income:

The town received a Bayfield County Forestry Grant for maintenance on Old Grade Road. The road paving was completed on Birch Bend Road, McCann Springs Road and Crystal Lake Road. The Fire Department sold a bumper, and the town sold an older generator.

Disbursements:

The town implemented raises as agreed upon by the board at the October 19, 2023 meeting. The two new generators were installed, and roof repairs were done to the highway building. Ambulance subsidies increased by approximately \$30,000. The pontoon was worked on to prepare for usage. A new well was installed at the transfer site. A couple of pieces of equipment & benches were purchased and will be installed soon.

**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, i.e. the UCC Christmas Sale. The ambulance service would also like to thank those who supported the service through several memorials: Tom & Esther Rondeau, Kelly Nelson, Bob Mueller, & Joe Laberee. We offer our sincere sympathies to all these families.

The ambulance service again pursued a donation drive at the end of 2023 with the help of all the townships. To date we have received \$19,830 from these efforts, plus another \$2,000 is coming from grants. When we sent the donation letter out, we asked for \$20,000 and to date we have made the goal. The ambulance service continues to be overwhelmed by the generosity of this community! Words cannot express the gratitude that we feel from all the support!

These funds have already been used to purchase several IV Infusion Pumps and the Stair Chairs that we requested. The remaining funds will go into our medical equipment fund. If the situation remains the same by the end of the year, we will not need to pursue a donation drive like we have the last two years. Again, thanks to this community for their support; we will continue to provide Emergent 911 Advanced Life Support to our communities.

We received the extra FAP funds (Funding Assistance Program providing extra funding for ambulance services), which totaled a bit over \$12,000. We also received the Bayfield County Grant of \$20,000 and the Flex Grant of a bit over \$61,000. This was put toward our new ambulance that we purchased.

We consolidated our trucks after getting our two new ones, and partnered with WI Surplus who administered the sale of two of our vehicles and tires for income of \$22,700.

Our expenses were down last year. With a decrease in employees, our payroll expenses were less as we cut one crew from the schedule. Fuel costs were not as much as well. We switched insurance carriers last year, and we are seeing huge savings in that area.

I mentioned last year that there is a WI Ground Emergency Medical Transport Program being offered that creates a supplemental reimbursement under Wisconsin Medicaid (MA) to public ambulance service providers. This program is being offered on a fiscal year basis. This year it will begin in January and go through June as a trial year. The program has not opened yet, but we will be participating once it opens.

In 2023, Great Divide Ambulance went on 1,052 Runs, compared to 1,256 Runs in 2022, 1,259 Runs in 2021, and 1,492 runs in 2020. This marks another year for less runs due to lack of staff. The runs were billed out for a total of \$2,396,160.17. The patient income was \$1,407,291.09. This reflects a 42% 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. 2023 was the third year of payments; two more to go. (\$150,000 total loan for 5 years) The service made its first payment on the ambulance vehicle loan; four more to go.

With the excess of income and reduction in expenses, the board was able to set money aside for the repayment of the loans and started a new vehicle fund for the future replacement of vehicles! That is a true blessing, considering that two years ago we were contemplating cutting back our service. The grants that were received from COVID and

other areas truly helped to keep this service active along with all the community support that was given!

The ambulance service lost 11 employees in 2021 and another 3 employees in 2022. In 2023 we lost 2 Paramedics and 4 EMTs. We have been staffing the ambulance with 3 Paramedics and 1 part-time fill-in nurse and 3 EMT's! That's 24-hour around-the-clock service with only 6 full-time employees for 2 ambulances! I want to take this time to thank all our employees for their dedication and service this year. These employees are working many hours to keep this service up and running. We desperately need workers, especially Paramedics to join our team. This year so far, we have hired one EMT.

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 of the ambulance service.

**Fire Department Report** – Report given by Dave Haan, Fire Chief.

There are 13 Members, with 1 in Entry Level to be finished this week to make 14 members. The department had 2 members leave the service and 1 pass away. Three members are currently in the Fire Officer class, as this is required for becoming an officer on the department.

There were 21 calls for Service in the last 12 months (structure, alarm, fire, rescue, help with medical).

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 Classic and Fat Tire.

The Pancake Breakfast will be on Sunday May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Projects:

- Yearly Hose testing was completed in June 2023 and will be done again this year the week of June 10<sup>th</sup>. Last year we had some hose fail, and some tested hose was purchased from a dept. in east central WI to replace the hose and add to the 3 inch supply line cache at less than 50% cost of new. 600 ft. was purchased.
- We have finalized the DNR Grant for foam and 2 battery powered chainsaws. During the next grant cycle we will apply for new AED's.
- Internet service has been installed at the Pioneer Station through a grant from Norvado. This gives us access to Wi-Fi phone use plus lets us see who is responding by using the FireTextResponse app on our phones.

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, plus we will need to start replacing SCBA or have the life extended through a company that does such for the Navy (extends life by 15 yrs). \$375 first 5 year cert. \$100 2<sup>nd</sup> 5 year \$100 3<sup>rd</sup> 5 year for the total of \$575 15 year extension.
- We are looking for funding for the replacement of a crowded and inefficient main station fire hall
- We have remained a member of the Sawyer County Fire Association to gain access to resources from that counties Fire Depts. It was brought to my attention that it might be more feasible to join the Sawyer county MABAS division as it would be a less expensive option and have the same advantages.
- Noted changes in chief duties.
- Certifying shared revenue monies year to year.
- Proposed changes to OSHA recommendations that could change required equipment and personnel

Open House and Fire Extinguisher maintenance will be held on June 8, 2024.

**Airport Commission Report** – Robert Rasmussen reported that they are developing a new hanger site. Currently the hangers are full. They are working on cutting trees within the glide path. Last year the Parod hanger was lost due to the snow. They are working with the bureau to build a new building from grants funds (90% federal, 5% state and 5% local). Last year, a garage was built to store equipment. Thanks went to the town for their support.

**Comprehensive Planning Report** – Submitted by Dave Hanks, Chairman for the Comprehensive Planning Commission.

The Town of Namakagon Comprehensive Planning Commission has been working to implement structure and cohesiveness into our monthly meetings . As we move forward we have begun a review of the 2019 Comprehensive Plan looking at the goals, objectives and timelines for implementation. As the commission role is better understood, we plan on addressing key elements of the original 2019 Namakagon Comprehensive Plan. A lot of time and effort was put into development of the 2019 plan. We will take that valuable insight and formulate a plan for implementation.

As always, we will continue to address land use issues as they arise and continue to be a resource for the Town Board as needed. We look forward to a productive and challenging new year.

**Law Enforcement Report** – Jack McGregor reported that the board changed the title of this position from Law Enforcement Officer to Community Services Officer. This was

due to the consideration that the job description was more a community resource employee rather than law enforcement. Since the end of October, there has been no time spent in the Town of Namakagon.

**Road Report** - 2023 found us completing our paving projects from 2022 with the final layer on the parking lot as well as paving Birch Bend Rd.

A one-inch overlay was applied to Crystal Lake Rd. and we completed shouldering of Crystal and Birch Bend. The road crew then painted the helipad and parking lines as well as the pickle ball courts in the parking lot.

Two high traffic areas for snowmobile activity were addressed, one on Chicago Ave. and the other on Junek's point, where the carbides of the machines prematurely wear the pavement. The road crew applied seal coat to these areas in hopes that it will slow the progression of pavement deterioration.

Routine maintenance of gravel roads was completed with gravel application and grading. Crack sealing of Chicago Ave, Garden Lake Rd, and Namakagon Sunset was done with the cooperation of the Town of Cable road crew. In turn the road crew of Namakagon helped Cable with Lake Owen Dr. and Telemark Rd.

The road department is looking for equipment purchase in the near future.

**Lake Association Report** – Mike D'Andrea reported in 2023 there were 6,300 fish restocked. The year was mediocre at best from ponds and Red Cliff (both had the same lack of productivity). The association appreciates the support from the town. There were over 1,000 fin clippers. This project helps with population studies comparing minnow raised or pellet raised stocked fish. Due to the lack of ice on the lakes, fish sticks could not be put in the lakes. They will be converting from making fish sticks to tree drops (which produces good habitat). Last year there was discussion about buying a winch, which will be done this year. Today they were on the lake collecting fish eggs with Red Cliff hatchery. It was a great year catching up to 24" Walleye. They caught 2 full liters plus of eggs, about 3,000 to 4,000 eggs. It looks like it will be a good year.

Submitted by Terry Cramer, President of the Namakagon Lake Association.

### **Invasive Species**

Unchecked, Hybrid Watermilfoil (HWM) growth in lakes can make the lake unusable for recreational water activities, forming dense mats of vegetation that choke out beneficial native water plants and reduce property values around the lake. In spring of 2022, the NLA funded its largest effort yet to treat and control the invasive Hybrid Watermilfoil.

Last August, the NLA had an extensive follow-up survey performed. Except for two small areas, the 2022 treatment has held up very well. The other 29 treatment beds and surrounding areas continue to be almost completely free of HWM.

Unfortunately, the survey also showed expansion of HWM in some areas that weren't treated in 2022. NLA has applied for a permit from the DNR to treat 5 beds of HWM in 2024. The beds are in Mumm's Bay, Sugar Bay (the back bay behind Anderson Island),

behind Governor's Island, along the shore to the southwest of Payne's Island, and a small bed in Lakewoods' Bay. NLA has money available from a grant we received in 2022 that will pay 75% of the costs of the treatment. The remaining 25% will be covered by NLA funds. The value of volunteer lake inspections will be used to offset NLA's share of the cost.

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.

In addition to monitoring and treating, the NLA promotes prevention to keep our waters free from invasive species via the boat landing inspection program. The project is funded by the state 80/20 and is managed by the Town of Namakagon. Laura Bjork deserves special thanks for all her work scheduling, documenting, and paying wages for the lake monitors.

### **Membership**

Last year, we began the year with just under 400 members from about 250 households. By rough estimates, we assume there are 500, or so, homes around the lake. We formed a membership committee to devise ways to attract more members. Through their efforts, our Association now has 533 members from 283 households. Our committee would like to thank Bob Rassmussen for great input on how to reach more of the local population. Also, thanks again to Laura Bjork for her assistance in collecting information concerning local constituents.

It is the NLA's goal to preserve and protect Lake Namakagon as an environmentally healthy watershed. We truly appreciate all the time, energy, and funds the town puts forth in support of our efforts.

**Library Report** – Given by Amanda Westlund, Director for Forest Lodge Library. This is the report on all the happenings and activities from the Forest Lodge Library from the last year – the year 2023. In January of 2024 Kristine Lendved retired as director of the library, completing a tenure and leaving a wonderful legacy of over 15 years of dedicated service.

It has been a very busy three months of learning for me as the new director at the library, but I just need to say that I am so grateful to former director Kristine Lendved for her mentorship. She has been a continued source of knowledge and support when needed and called upon.

I moved to the area 30 years ago to attend Northland College, where I obtained my Elementary Education degree. I have been teaching elementary education in area schools for the past 24 years when I noticed the position for director of the Forest Lodge Library and felt that it would be a wonderful opportunity for me to make a change while still continue to pursue the work of education and learning. I saw the library director position

as an opportunity to work with more than just a classroom of children, it is an opportunity to work with the entire community in the areas of education, learning and connection.

While it has been a big task to come into this role at this time of year, needing to complete the annual report for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and to present to the town boards, I have found it to be a most beneficial learning experience – not only in learning the process of completing these reports, but also reflecting on the past history of the library and being able to see how those past activities, happenings and data points can help me to guide the library into the future.

*As reported in the 2023 WI DPI Annual Report, the Forest Lodge Library had:*

908 total registered borrowers	650 resident borrowers	258 nonresident borrowers
--------------------------------	------------------------	---------------------------

In our collection:

9,428 book titles	376 audio titles	2,055 video titles	19 periodical subscriptions
-------------------	------------------	--------------------	-----------------------------

Our patrons also had access to:

167,978 e-books	72,448 e-audiobooks	369 video titles
-----------------	---------------------	------------------

*There were 10,484 physical items checked out in 2023.*

Our patrons also checked out:

2,174 e-books	1,624 e-audiobooks	369 e-video titles	Total e-checkouts: 4,167
---------------	--------------------	--------------------	-----------------------------

Public use of computers totaled 416. Wireless internet usage totaled 4,753. There were 8,808 visits to our website.

There was a total of 20 programs offered in 2023, ranging from in-person to virtual offerings. There was a total of 280 in attendance of these programs.

- **In January**, the library offered two virtual writing workshops with Milwaukee writer Rachel Werner. One, entitled "Reading and Writing Kid's Lit and Young Adult" explored and helped the participants learn how to better incorporate authentic voices into their works. The other was a "Mini Book Writing Boot Camp", designed to help anyone proceed with crafting and marketing a book manuscript.
- **February** was Love Your Library Month! Several fun challenges enabled participants to be entered into a drawing for a prize of Chamber bucks.
- **In April**, Director Lendved interviewed candidates for the Town of Cable Board of Supervisors via Zoom. Interviews were posted on the Town of Cable website and the Forest Lodge Library website.
- **April** is National Library Month! It is also National Poetry Month. In addition to offering an annual Poetry Challenge, our Northern Waters Library Network

kicked off a PASSPORT Program, which will be offered again this year. Stop into our library, pick up a passport and, over the course of the summer months, visit 9 other Northern Waters libraries and get your passport stamped and you'll become eligible to win some pretty great prizes!

- **In June**, Nature's Niche LLC came to visit! This is an exotic animal rescue that was established in 1999 in central Wisconsin. Think of snakes and lizards and turtles. Some kids were even brave enough to handle them.
- **In July** we offered up a Reading Carnival! There were crafts and games for kids, such as making a mask or going on a scavenger hunt. We welcomed special guest – Dalton Hessel, AKA – 'The Northern Nerd'. The Hayward elementary teacher with a podcast who came and interviewed people who came to the reading carnival. This was also the launch of the Summer Reading Challenge.

Other programming events throughout the year included a MAKERSPACE: Audition with Rosie Reynolds, an opportunity to learn from a theater pro what is necessary to audition as a pro. MAKERSPACE: Smart Moves with Sarah Boles was an opportunity for her to introduce this adaptive movement program, designed for those with mobility challenges, to the community.

Programming we are currently doing in the new year includes activities such as Adult Makerspace crafts – we've made gnomes and did bottle painting with acrylics. We have a program for walking and listening to our library app called Libby, which allows you to use your library card to access e-books and audio books – this is a new program called 'Laps for Libby'.

We have also done some children's programs monthly – having some 'Make and Take' activities each month that kids can make at the library or take with them to make at home and Storytime and S.T.E.A.M. time – STEAM being Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math. I read a story that relates to the particular STEAM activity focus of that afternoon. Themes have included mazes, birds, space, and Earth Day. I have also been involved with assisting the Senior Meals program and providing some self-guided trivia and activities for attendees to do before or after the meal. It has been a good way to start conversations at tables.

There's a lot going on at the library. We also hope you know about the many resources that are available to all library cardholders THROUGH the library. There's KANOPY, a digital streaming service offering hundreds of movies and documentaries, kid's content and access to The Great Courses. Transparent Languages is an opportunity to learn over 120 languages on your own time and at your own pace. Creative Bug offers up a wealth of crafting content. Please check them out on our website, [forestlodgelibrary.org](http://forestlodgelibrary.org).

The search for a new Library Director began in August. The first round of the search did not produce a new director. The Board Search Committee re-launched the search and interviewed a second group of candidates in December, which resulted in...SUCCESS!

- **September** was National Library Card Sign-Up Month. It was a chance to win a \$50 gift card by signing up for a library card. If you already had a card, you could



tell us why you love your library for a chance to win as well. New steps were installed in the month of September.

- **December** was an important month as the Boards of the Forest Lodge Library and the Katie Flowers Endowment launched an end-of-year fundraising effort to raise awareness of and money for the proposed library expansion. The goal was to get halfway by New Year's Eve. Thanks to the hard work of many...by January, the goal had been met. As we said on our website: "Regardless of age, interest, income, or abilities, the library has something for everyone. And everyone came together to support their library and their community. Your generosity is appreciated..." Planning and fundraising for the library expansion are ongoing. We will offer updates in our monthly library reports to our Towns. We encourage you to learn more about the expansion project by visiting our website.

I began my tenure as director in **January** and Kristine and I worked hard together to accomplish a smooth transition. I have appreciated her support and I also very much appreciate the community's support as well. It is a wonderful place to be.

In **January**, we also held a wonderful Welcome/Farewell event at the Lakewoods Resort. Many thanks to Lakewoods for all of the work they did to make the event wonderful – the food, the venue – it was great! Many thanks go to Claire Parker as well, as she made the cakes. It was wonderful to see many people attend this event to wish Kristine well in her retirement and support me as I began my new venture as director.

To commemorate Kristine's retirement, a generous, anonymous donor offered \$5000 in matching funds. These funds were used to launch the Kristine Lendved Library Sustainability Fund which will offer support to the library for collection development and programming. These funds will be held by the Katie Flowers Endowment and be available to the library as needed. While the match has ended, anyone may still donate to the fund.

As we close out this year, we do have some library staff changes and Board of Trustee changes to note. Vikki Erba did also retire at the end of March. I was only able to work with her for a very short month but, it was a very fulfilling month and I have appreciated all of her support and guidance during my first month. We welcomed new staff member, Deb Roedel. Deb has worked at the library in both Loyal and Hayward, so we welcome Deb with her library experience to join our team.

From our Board of Trustees, we have two trustees who have ended their terms. We offer our sincere thanks to Laurie St. Aubin-Whelinhan and Jackie Kruse. Laurie served 2 terms on the board, and Jackie served 1 term. We welcomed Janet Zeigler and Tara VonThoma to our Board of Trustees. They both began their terms at the beginning of April.

I want to thank the towns of Cable and Namakagon for your 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](mailto:awestlund@cable.wislib.org). Thank you for the opportunity to report on all that has happened in the past year at the library!

Report on expansion: The book house is up for sale and bids are due by the end of the week. Book sales will be going on to try and get all the books out. We are working on finalizing design/concepts; however we need to find another firm to work with. Melissa Rabska is searching and applying for grants. A \$30,000 pledge from someone in the community has recently been received. There will also be fundraisers going on and other events around the capital campaign. Currently we are about 2/3rds of the way through the campaign. Thanks to the Town of Namakagon for publishing information on the expansion on their website.

**Town update** – Several grants have been applied for this year including the Bayfield County Wellness Grant for outdoor bathroom facilities at the Town Hall, the Bayfield County Forestry Grant for maintenance on Old Grade Road, and LRIP for repairs to Garmisch Road. The final report for ARPA funds will be completed this month. Two generators have been installed, one at the Town Hall and another one at the Fire Dept. Station. The internet was updated at the Town Hall improving internet access to the Town Hall, outside area, Fire Dept and groomer barn. Arlene Skultety thanked the town for providing this service on behalf of the snowmobile club. A new state program is being implemented which mandates inventory of all culverts within the township. This will be through grant funds at no expense to the town. An ARIP program is available which would allow upgrading Class B Roads to have no restrictions on forestry or agricultural access roads. However, this is extremely costly. A new well will be installed at the Transfer Site. The wells around the landfill area are to monitor run-off from the site. Inspections are regularly done on the wells. The Transfer Site is only allowed for Namakagon property owners or from Town of Namakagon property, which will be enforced.

**Old Business** – None.

**New Business** – None.

**Public Comment** – Joann Schultz thanked the road crew for filling the pot holes on Dam Road.

Date set for next Annual Meeting: Tuesday April 15, 2025.

MOTION made by Ray Ebert to adjourn the Annual Town Board meeting at 8:17pm.  
MOTION seconded by Carol McGregor and carried.

Respectfully Submitted by

Laura Bjork, Town of Namakagon Clerk