

**5-TOWNS MEETING
BARNES, CABLE, DRUMMOND, GRAND VIEW, NAMAKAGON
NOVEMBER 1, 2024 - 6:00 P.M.
CABLE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

1. Call to Order

Cable Town Chairman Holly called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Approval of Minutes - June 26, 2024

Motion by Cable Supervisor Larson, seconded by Namakagon Supervisor MacGregor to approve the June 26, 2024 minutes as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. Comments from Bayfield County Administrator, Mark Abeles-Allison

- Thanked the towns for the strong leadership provided to the Bayfield County Board. Sue Rosa is a great representative for this area.
- A new county garage is in Cable, and staff based in Cable has doubled.
- Bayfield County Health Department started a Wellness on Wheels (WOW) program, a mobile trailer shared for programs with schools, vaccinations.
- A public hearing was held on the budget for EMS services. A consultant has been hired to work with EMS directors. There is support for hiring a countywide EMS Coordinator to help agencies with what they need. The county is considering \$20,000 a year to each agency.
- There is great dedication from volunteers, but EMS staffing is difficult. Consideration is being given to hiring six paramedics who would cover the county. Another option would be to train deputies to provide medical aid.
- Concerns were expressed about \$600,000 in the budget for a countywide system so that money was pulled out of the budget to wait for consensus on which direction to take.
- The mill rate will drop 4% in 2025, but property valuation has increased 14% overall in the county.

5. Discussion with Sherriff Tony Williams to Increase Law Enforcement Presence in South Bayfield County

- A Community Services Officer does not have credentials for law enforcement. Safety needs to be assured for all bike and ski races. Namakagon is willing to look at redirecting funds for law enforcement.
- Sheriff Williams stated there are three people on days and three on nights. With vacation, sick leave and comp time, there are often only two on duty. By May the department will have 4 open positions, but it is difficult to find applicants. The goal is to have 16 deputies, or 4 per shift. Then it would be easier to assign each to a zone. Deputies also go to Ashland, Douglas and Sawyer Counties to help. Staffing is the biggest issue for the department.
- The department is using reserve officers for events, but they have no law enforcement authority.
- Abeles-Allison noted that once deputies are hired, they tend to stay. The department, like towns, has to work under state levy limits that have been in effect for years. If the towns are interested in supplementing dollars, the department would be interested.
- Overall, sheriff office good staff with seniority - once hired they tend to stay. A main station for South Bayfield County has been discussed for Grand View.
- It is possible to purchase deputy hours. Officers can be available for special events. Two or three are contracted for each shift during Apple Fest. One deputy is contracted for Blueberry Fest. The same is done for Birkie, which pays for the service.
- Currently, about 10 days a year are contracted for events. If the Sheriff's Department is notified of an event, efforts will be made for a deputy to drive through the area. If there are events every weekend with over 1000 people, the event will be posted, but there is the problem of weekends off for deputies.
- It is estimated that approximately \$100,000 a year supports one deputy. Deputies are hired at \$30/hour; time and a half at \$45/hour. Car equipment is approximately \$60,000 and \$15,000 added for cameras, radar, radio, etc.
- Towns cannot do much to request regular patrol unless the department can hire more deputies. If notified, efforts will be made to cover the time or event requested.
- Two deputies would be needed to regularly cover 4 or 5 southern Bayfield County townships, but then there is the issue if backup is needed. Also, the deputies may have to provide backup in another area. Staffing and funding are the two main issues for the department.

- Nobody wants to turn the state patrol into local police. Local funding would roll into state police. State troopers get \$47/hour with 7 years' experience. This is a nationwide issue, as well as in Wisconsin.
- Towns expressed their desire to collaborate with the county for solid law enforcement coverage by deputies with credentials that can respond in a timely manner. Another option would be for the towns to create their own police agency, but the preference is to work with the county. Abeles-Allison agreed to put together a proposal with estimates for budgeting.

6. Discussion on Zoning

- Abeles-Allison reported a tumultuous past three years with the loss of senior staff in zoning. A new administrator has been hired, but it takes time to learn and understand the code. Loss of staff is partly due to workload, COVID, a new administrator. It takes time to bring new people up to speed because of the complexity of the code. A full staff is anticipated by the end of the month. A priority is being given to training. The county is committed to providing a high level of service.
- Bayfield County codes were adopted 50 years ago; and there have been 100 ordinance amendments over the past 50 years. The zoning ordinance in its entirety is not streamlined and is contradictory. Efforts are being made to expedite the process. Everyone is encouraged to complete the online survey open to the public.
- Bayfield County announced a comprehensive review of the zoning code.
- Two years after county notification of a zoning review, towns are allowed the opportunity to create their own local zoning administration. If local zoning administration is not created, towns must accept the new zoning code by the county. Two areas in which towns must be in compliance with state statutes are shoreland zoning and mining (gravel pits). In order for towns to opt out of the county zoning code, they must adopt a zoning code approved by the county.
- Because of several years of difficulties with county zoning, the 4 Towns wrote a letter to Bayfield County to possibly opt out. There has been no response from the county, but permits are being expedited to towns. The communication at this meeting is helpful.
- There is an issue with fees. Bayfield County has a high fee with a building permit at \$5,000. This will be changed to be based on square footage.
- Delays in communication is initiating complaints. Zoning needs to assist applicants through the process. Many do not receive help and face a short construction season with scheduled contractors. Zoning is a service, but people feel policed. They just want help to find out up front what is needed.

One example is a property owner was told the permit for the house was not properly issued 20 years ago which is holding up building a garage today. By the time the permit for the garage was approved, it cost the homeowner several thousand dollars and a year of time. History with noncompliance and different ownership is not practical to fix.

- Board members recognized the recent effort to send permits to clerks that are then forwarded to the board. This is very helpful.
- Abeles-Allison offered to come to future meetings and hear feedback.

7. Innovation Planning Grant Application - Funding to Hire a Consultant to Analyze Best Practices for Collaboration

- Application for the Planning Grant is not yet available. The Innovation Grant consists of two grants—one for planning and one for implementation for collaboration of or combined services.
- A separate grant application is needed for each area being considered for collaboration.
- The Planning Grant (maximum of \$100,000) would allow hiring a consultant to analyze possibilities and make recommendations for combined services. A total of \$3 million has been set aside for Planning Grants for towns with populations under 5,000. The towns are not under any obligation to implement the recommendations. A total of \$300 million has been set aside for the Innovation Implementation Grant to pay for cost of services.
- A priority is emergency services. A Countywide EMS would qualify for both a Planning Grant and an Innovation Grant. Letters of support from other towns would go a long way to being awarded a Planning Grant.
- The first deadline to apply for a Planning Grant is February 2025. There is a deadline each quarter to apply for a Planning Grant. There needs to be agreement among the towns on what services can be combined.

8. Adjournment

Chair Holly declared the meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.