

Princeton Township Regular Monthly Board Meeting
Tuesday, January 21, 2020
Minutes

January meeting of the Princeton Township Board called to order by Chairman Gene Stoeckel at 7:30 p.m.
Supervisors present: Gene Stoeckel, Bill Whitcomb, Dave Persing, Thomas Duden.
Supervisor absent: Greg Anderson
Also present: Zoning Administrator Scott Richards, Clerk-Treasurer Doug Dahl

The Pledge of Allegiance was given.

Items added to agenda:

- New Business:
 - Presentation by Mille Lacs County Soil & Water Board—Dillon Hayes, Susan Shaw
 - Location of Township Annual Meeting
- Old Business:
 - Chair's report
 - Road report
 - AWAIR report

Approve Minutes

Dave Persing moved to approve the minutes of the December 17 regular board meeting. Seconded by Bill Whitcomb. Motion Carried.

Susan Shaw and Dillon Hayes reviewed highlights of the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act. They distributed a fact sheet to help guide the township, and avoid violating the law as it carries out its road-management responsibilities. The critical issue is the law's requirement to replace any wetlands that are reduced due to road maintenance or expansion according to the particular county's replacement ratio. The Mille Lacs County ratio is 1:1, which is lower than many other jurisdictions. They presented and explained the Landowner Statement and Contractor Responsibility form, which they recommended for use in conjunction with building permit applications that might encroach on protected wetlands.

Old Business

Review and approve Fire Protection Contract: Bill Whitcomb reported that the contract is not ready for action. Mr. Whitcomb moved to table the contract until the February meeting. Seconded by Dave Persing. Motion carried.

Additional Election Judges: Head Election Judge Jeanette Oakes has requested three additional election judges for the year. Thomas Duden moved to approve Shirley Miller, Jackie Minks, and Joel Minks as election judges. Dave Persing seconded. Motion carried.

Sheriff's Report: No report.

Road Report: Bill Whitcomb reported that he confirmed with Mille Lacs County that the Township is responsible for 165 signs, rather than the 295 noted on the sign map. The map has been corrected and stored in a binder.

Mr. Whitcomb reported that the Township Engineer has advertised for bids on the project at 33rd Street and 82nd Avenue.

Mr. Whitcomb delivered a video presentation on the road budget. He noted how disbursements have been allocated in the past, and questioned if those allocations were accurate or detailed enough to help with future budgeting. The goal of his research is to improve budgeting and accounting by providing more specific detail in expense allocations.

Mr. Whitcomb emphasized that the Minnesota law governing Truth in Taxation requires greater accuracy and transparency than appears in the current expense allocation practices. The goal of the legislation is to enhance the

opportunity for taxpayers to understand and participate in how property taxes are levied and spent, to have input into future budgeting, and to understand what has been done in order to determine what needs to be done from now on. What he found to this point were troubling substantial discrepancies in the two key sub-accounts he has focused on by researching detailed information based on actual invoices. Those discrepancies included serious misrepresentations of gravel expenditures that were significantly higher than recorded in the budgets over the past five years, and which have been reported to the public by the previous board. In addition, those over-expenditures were reallocated into the sub-account for road repair, a category meant for paved roads. He is hoping to find additional information to help clarify these apparent discrepancies.

Furthermore, Mr. Whitcomb reported that greater than 90% of the Townships paved roads have not been maintained with chip-sealing in the past 10 years. The amount budgeted for paved roads was \$550,000 in the past 5 years. However, he was able to confirm that less than \$45,000 was actually spent for road repair during those years. The remainder of money spent was misrepresented as gravel, and/or as under-spending of the budget. Maintaining accurate financial records is one of the key responsibilities of the Township treasurer. The residents present were very concerned and dissatisfied upon learning this information.

AWAIR Report: Chairman Stoeckel reported on the AWAIR meeting with the Clerk Doug Dahl and the building maintenance supervisor, Ken Hennen, as directed by the board at the December meeting. He reported that the group developed a list of 17 items that require attention to bring the township hall into compliance with AWAIR requirements.

Zoning Administrator's Report: Zoning Administrator Scott Richards reported that the Planning Commission is continuing to discuss and make progress on proposed amendments to the Event Venues/Agritourism and Solar Energy ordinances.

New Business

Silver Lake Oaks Sketch Plan: Scott Richards reported on the Planning Commission discussion of the Silver Lake Oaks sketch plan. Planning Commission concerns centered around the size of the buildable areas in the lots, the potential impact on ground water and adjacent ponds, and safety issues related to access to Alpine Road. Mr. Richards is continuing to review the plan with Township Engineer Todd McLouth. Mr. Richards reported that the lot sizes are in general compliance with township requirements.

Mr. Duden asked about the plan for a park in the development, given that each property is required to pay a park-development fee. Mr. Persing noted that the township may be subject to legal action if it is collecting park-development fees without a clear plan for investing those funds in park lands. Mr. Richards recommended that the township take no park land from this development, but retain the funds for larger, more easily maintainable park lands than small developments would likely accommodate.

Proposed stipend for Andrea Gerrard: Members noted that Andrea Gerrard has been recording video of the last several town board meetings for live feed over the Internet, and for posting on YouTube. She has been recording the meetings on a voluntary basis, receiving no compensation. All members, as well as residents in general, have expressed appreciation for the videos. Thomas Duden recommended that she be paid for her services at the rate consistent with payment for members of the board. Mr. Whitcomb cautioned that we may be opening ourselves up to problems since we don't control the content or publication. One option brought up was to create a contract. Members acknowledged that taking that path would probably entail the normal hiring process. All agreed to set the matter aside, and discuss it further at the February meeting.

Richard Reiman escrow account: Mr. Whitcomb moved to table the discussion and move it to the February meeting. Seconded by Dave Persing. Motion carried.

Appoint Absentee Ballot Board: Motion to pass Resolution 2020-01 Authorizing a Township Absentee Ballot Board. Moved by Thomas Duden. Seconded by Bill Whitcomb. Motion carried.

Date for Board of Canvass: Gene Stoeckel moved to approve the establishment of the Board of Canvass to meet after the Annual Meeting (March 10). Seconded by Bill Whitcomb. Motion carried.

Date for Board of Review: Bill Whitcomb moved to set the date for the Board of Review for April 22 with a back-up date of April 29. Seconded by Dave Persing. Motion carried.

Township Clean-up Day: Date of April 25 moved by Bill Whitcomb. Seconded by Dave Persing. Motion carried.

Township Road Tour: Date of April 25 moved by Dave Persing. Seconded by Gene Stoeckel. Motion carried.

Township Annual Newsletter: Newsletter to go out before clean-up day, and possibly before the election.

Employee performance review: Ken Henchen is scheduled for an annual review. He expressed his preference for a private review. The Board will conduct the review after tonight's meeting.

Annual Meeting location: Bill Whitcomb moved to change the location for the annual meeting at the Princeton Intermediate School. Seconded by Dave Persing. Motion carried.

Open Forum

Joel Minks commented that the reduction in the number of road signs the township is responsible brings the side effect of reducing the township's liability for accidents related to signage.

Marcia Anderson commended the board for working for constructive change, particularly for being open and responsive to township citizens. She contrasted that with what she characterized as the hostility and intimidation she felt from previous boards. She thanked Andrea Gerrard for her work to bring greater transparency to township government, and thanked Mr. Whitcomb for his work to bring transparency to the road budgeting and expense process. She issued a strong appeal to the citizens to get more involved in township government.

Kevin Walz appeared to speak for the Princeton School District's Community Committee. He reported that the committee, at this time, is recommending that no substantial work be done by the middle school in the area of 33rd Street and 82nd Avenue. He noted that the committee will continue to offer nearby residents the opportunity to review any plans and comment on them.

Terri Persing expressed appreciation for Mr. Whitcomb's work on the road budget.

Supervisors' Reports

Gene Stoeckel: Reported on meetings with the Princeton Airport Board.

Mentioned that we will need an expense allocation to purchase items needed for AWAIR compliance. Dave Persing moved to allocate \$750 for purchases related to AWAIR compliance. Seconded by Gene Stoeckel. Motion carried.

Thomas Duden: Commended Brian Dahlheimer for his work on snow and ice removal. Reported that he had no calls about plowing all last week. Noted that their efforts to pre-notify residents of plowing plans have been received well. Also noted that we need to review the list of authorized users of charge accounts.

Dave Persing: Suggested the board needs to review the building ordinance and comprehensive plan to help developers and the Planning Commission cooperate better.

Carney Forensics: Have a narrative report from Carney on the condition of the computer at the transition from the former clerk. Main report is encrypted. Would like to provide the report on jump drives for members of the board. Motion: Approval to allow up to \$100 to buy five jump drives to provide copies of the Carney reports to each board member. Moved by Gene Stoeckel. Seconded by Bill Whitcomb. Motion carried.

Bill Whitcome: Reported on the Princeton Fire Departments work and budgets. Included a \$1 per hour raise for fire fighters.

Clerk's Report

Correction to the Annual Meeting Location: The annual meeting location arranged with Princeton Community Education is Princeton Middle School, not Princeton Intermediate School.

Motion: To amend the location of the annual meeting from Princeton Intermediate to Princeton Middle School. Moved by Bill Whitcomb. Seconded by Dave Persing. Motion carried.

The scheduled date for the September Planning Commission meeting falls on Labor Day. Must be moved. Gene Stoeckel moved to change the date for the September Planning Commission meeting to Tuesday, September 8. Seconded by Bill Whitcomb. Motion carried.

Asked for help responding to the MPCA's questionnaire on Sub-surface Sewage Treatment Systems (SSTS).

Noted two disbursements that had not been recorded in CTAS: Check #12534 for \$46.00 to the Mille Lacs County Recorder on July 16, 2019; debit card charge for \$55.00 to USPS on August 28, 2019. Consulted the MAT trainer about how to proceed. She recommended entering the charges as disbursements without a claim, then take to the board for approval. Requested a motion to approve from the board.

Mr. Dahl reported that he has been unable to reconcile the Bremer Bank accounts with CTAS. He continues to work on the issue, and will take it up with the MAT trainers, and with support offered by the Minnesota State Auditor.

Approve Payment of the Bills: Doug Dahl delivered the payroll register for December and the claims list through January 20. Claims for invoices and individual expenses totaled \$46,906.03. Payroll totaled \$3,052.45. All supervisors present signed the claims approval list.

Meeting closed to conduct the employee review with Kenneth Henchen.

Meeting re-opened and adjourned: Moved by Thomas Duden. Seconded by Bill Whitcomb. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Doug Dahl
Clerk/Treasurer

Attendees: Craig Wensmann, Carol Whitcomb, Kathy Stoeckel, Nicholas Taylor, Andrea Gerrard, Terri Persing, Steve Hass, Ken Henchen, Jerry Sands, Deputy A. Wolf, Dan Hiller, Nancy Moan, Steven Moan, Marcia Anderson, Joel Minks, Joss Jondahl, Jason Betzler, Katie Brabant, Valerie Hunn, Dillon Hayes, Kevin Walz, [Unreadable name].