

**Princeton Township
Mille Lacs County, Minnesota**

Township Board Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Minutes

The January monthly meeting of the Princeton Township Board was called to order by Chairman Gene Stoeckel at 7:30 p.m. Due to COVID restrictions the meeting was held by teleconference.

Supervisors attending: Thomas Duden, Dan Hiller, Gene Stoeckel, Bill Whitcomb, John Wilhelm
Also attending: Zoning Administrator Scott Richards, Township Engineer Todd McLouth,
Township Attorney Jason Hill, Clerk-Treasurer Doug Dahl

All attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Open Forum

Residents discussed the challenges of conducting township business under COVID19 restrictions. Full discussion is available on the meeting video.

Video link to January meeting:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9zvMZPFthI&list=PLQx8yJBV8ZWw1EV1cmDLJdoOTkW3F_coK&index=3

Approve Minutes

December 15 regular meeting:

Bill Whitcomb moved to amend the minutes by striking paragraphs two, three, and four from the Open Forum summary. Seconded by Thomas Duden. Mr. Whitcomb noted that the memo credited to Mark Riverblood was not signed by him or any other residents of the township. As an anonymous document it should not have been read at the meeting.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Mr. Whitcomb asked to consider amending the minutes under Status Update on Silver Lake Oaks to add the dollar amount cited in the meeting to the statement, "Township Attorney Jason Hill noted that the township is required to retain no less than 25% of the letter of credit amount **(\$137,175.35)** from the developer's agreement until the project is completed." Mr. Duden made the motion. Seconded by Mr. Whitcomb.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Mr. Whitcomb moved to approve the minutes as amended. Seconded by Mr. Duden.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

January 5 special meeting:

Mr. Whitcomb moved to approve the minutes of the January 5 special meeting. Seconded by Mr. Duden.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Abstain (not present at meeting); Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Clerk-Treasurer Report

Cash control statement:

Beginning balance for December: \$299,574.43
Receipts \$201,204.42
Disbursements \$53,608.54
Ending balance \$447,170.31

Mr. Whitcomb moved to approve the December cash control statement. Seconded by Mr. Duden.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Payroll: Net pay distribution—December net payroll: \$3,535.70

Mr. Whitcomb moved to approve the December payroll. Seconded by Mr. Hiller.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Claims for approval: Total claims \$54,244.49

Mr. Dahl called for a separate vote on the TMK Properties claim of \$29,109.50 as a reimbursement of 75% of the cash letter of credit (LOC) for the Woods Push Development. He cited the letter from Township Engineer Todd McLouth indicating that the developer had met the requirements for the reduction in the LOC.

Mr. Duden moved to approve the LOC reimbursement. Seconded by Mr. Hiller.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—(inaudible). Motion carried.

Mr. Stoeckel moved to approve the claims list. Seconded by Mr. Whitcomb.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Progress report: 2020 audit by Schlenner Wenner & Co.:

Mr. Dahl reported that he had received the document request from the auditor and had begun working to fulfill the requirements. The audit is tentatively set for February 18-19.

Board of Equalization and Appeal schedule:

The township received a letter from Mille Lacs County Assessor Daryl Moller setting the date for the Local Board of Appeal and Equalization (LBAE) of Thursday, April 22, 6:00 p.m.

Northern Natural Gas access request:

Northern Natural Gas has submitted an access request to run a pipeline from 82nd Street to its adjacent property. Mr. Hiller raised a concern about potential damage to the new blacktop on the street: will the requester be required to repair any damage. He requested a comment from Township Attorney Jason Hill.

Mr. Hill cautioned that the agreement, prepared by the requester, is vague and does not offer the protection for the township he would want to see. He indicated he could not recommend approval of the language in the proposed agreement.

Mr. Hiller moved to table the agreement until the February meeting in order to allow time for Mr. Hill to work out a more acceptable agreement with Northern Natural Gas. Seconded by Mr. Whitcomb.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Zoning Administrator's Report: Scott Richards

Zoning Amendments – Cul-de-sacs and Lot Width Requirements – Ordinance First Reading:

Mr. Richards proposed two amendments to the township zoning ordinance: cul-de-sacs in the River Conservation District and lot-width requirements at the high-water mark. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the amendments at its November 9, 2020 meeting. The Commission continued the hearing to its December meeting to allow further consultation with the Minnesota DNR.

Mr. Richards held numerous conversations with DNR staff, and they provided direction as to how to proceed with the amendments. DNR staff indicated that they did not have any objection to eliminating the provision that prohibits cul-de-sacs in the RC—River Conservation District. They also suggested that the Township add language to the zoning district provisions indicating required conformance with the shoreland regulations of Mille Lacs County and the floodplain regulations of Section 300:400 of the Township Zoning Ordinance. The Planning Commission, at their January 4, 2021 meeting, recommended approval of the draft amendments.

The two provisions of the amendment are:

1. Strike the language: "*Cul-de-sacs are not permitted in the River Conservation District.*"
2. Strike the language: "*For lots that front public bodies of water, the lot width as measured at the high-water mark shall not be less than one hundred fifty (150) feet.*"
Replace with: "*For lots that front public bodies of water, all shoreland requirements of the Mille Lacs County Development Ordinance and the floodplain requirements of Section 300:400 of this Ordinance shall be complied with.*"

Mr. Whitcomb moved that the Town Board waive first reading, and hold second reading at the February 16, 2021 meeting of Ordinance 2021-2, amending the Zoning Ordinance to add a definition of building setback line, clarifying lot-width requirements at the ordinary high-water mark in the Zoning Districts, and amending the allowance for cul-de-sacs in the River Conservation District. Seconded by Mr. Hiller.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Great Northern Trail/Future Land Use – Ordinance Second Reading:

Mr. Richards summarized previous Planning Commission and Town Board discussions of the Great Northern Trail beginning in October 2020. He noted that the Princeton Township Comprehensive Plan includes a brief section on parks and trails and mentions the Great Northern Trail corridor. He recommended that this section be updated in that Mille Lacs County has included the Great Northern Trail connection through Princeton Township to Milaca in its 2017 Master Parks and Trail Plan, and that Sherburne and Mille Lacs County are working on a joint planning process for development of the trail.

Mr. Richards also reported that in reviewing the files related to the Comprehensive Plan, he did not locate a Future Land-Use Map, although the 2009 Plan references one. The Plan indicates that the future land use and the zoning classifications must be consistent. Accordingly, the Township Engineer created the Comprehensive Plan Future Land-Use Map from the Zoning Map. The Planning Commission reviewed the map and recommended approval.

Mr. Richards pointed out that the proposed ordinance also includes language permitting the township to allocate park-dedication funds to assist Mille Lacs County in the future development of the Great Northern Trail.

Mr. Whitcomb moved that the Town Board waive second reading, and adopt Ordinance 2021-1, amending the Princeton Township Comprehensive Plan related to the Great Northern Trail and to adopt the Future Land-Use Map. Seconded by Mr. Wilhelm.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried. Ordinance 2021-1 is adopted. It will be filed at Township Hall and posted on the Township website: www.princetontownshipmn.us.

Mr. Whitcomb moved to adopt Resolution 2021-1 approving publication of summary language for Ordinance 2021-1. Seconded by Mr. Hiller.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried. Resolution 2021-1 is adopted. It will be filed at Township Hall and posted on the Township website: www.princetontownshipmn.us.

Sterling Seventy Farm CUP request for extension:

Terri Persing of Sterling Seventy Farm has requested an extension for the Conditional-Use Permit approval for the event venue at 8605 70th Street due to COVID19. She has had to discontinue any improvements under the uncertainty caused by COVID19 restrictions. She expects to resume the project once the Governor and Department of Health provide a clearer plan.

Mr. Hiller moved that the Town Board grant a three-year extension to May 19, 2023 of the Conditional Use Permit (Resolution 2020-08) for the Sterling Seventy Farm event venue at 8605 70th Street located at the corner of County Road 135/70th Street and County Road 4/85th Avenue, PID #16-004-0700. Seconded by Mr. Whitcomb.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Fee Schedule 2021:

Mr. Hiller moved to adopt the 2021 Fee Schedule. Seconded by Mr. Duden.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Section 27/34 Land Use and Zoning Study Update:

The Planning Commission continued its discussion of the zoning changes requested by Scott Moller at its January meeting. Most Commission members oppose those changes. Due to the present circumstances under COVID, and the need to understand better the history of developments in the township, the Commission postponed further discussion until the April meeting.

The Commission established a subcommittee to study the history of developments in the township with particular interest in how lots smaller than 1.5 acres were able to be developed. The subcommittee met on January 19 to begin its research. The subcommittee hopes to wrap up its research before the next Commission meeting February 1.

No action was taken on the issue.

Old Business**Review Fire Contract:**

Members noted that the township has not received a new fire contract from the city for 2021.

Mr. Stoeckel moved to table discussion of the fire contract until the township receives the new contract from the Princeton Fire Department. Seconded by Mr. Hiller.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Status update of Woods Push Development:

Road improvement has been approved. The letter of credit has been reduced to 25% of the original amount.

Status update of Silver Lake Oaks Development:

Silver Lake Oaks has provided the required letter of credit. All financial requirements have now been met.

Mark Riverblood memo to the Town Board:

Memo was discussed during Open Forum. Mr. Whitcomb emphasized that the memo was not signed by anyone, but only indicated it was from unspecified “previous supervisors, planning commissioners, and residents.”

Resolution for interested officer—Alphyn Machinery

Thomas Duden of Alphyn Machinery has equipment that could be utilized by the township for its brush-cutting operations. He is offering to rent it to the township according to the requirements of open bidding. Resolution 2021-3 Authorizing a Contract with an Interested Officer will allow Mr. Duden to participate in the open-bidding process.

Mr. Hiller moved to adopt Resolution 2021-3. Seconded by Mr. Whitcomb.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Abstain; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried. Resolution 2021-3 is adopted. It will be filed at Township Hall and posted on the Township website: www.princetontownshipmn.us.

Supervisors' Reports

Road report—Township Engineer Todd McLouth reported on projects for which he is creating bid specifications. He expects to have those available for the February 16 meeting.

Mr. Whitcomb reported that he and Mr. McLouth will work with Mille Lacs County and Wyanette Township to complete the application for Local Road Improvement Project (LRIP) funds.

Fire Board Liaison Report—Mr. Whitcomb summarized the Fire Department calls for Princeton Township and all calls for December.

Airport Commission Liaison Report—Nothing significant happening due to the resignation of the City Administrator.

City Planning Commission Liaison Report—Meeting moved to January 25 due to the Martin Luther King holiday.

Township Planning Commission Liaison Report—All significant matters were covered in the zoning report.

Snowplowing Report—Mr. Duden reported that there are rumors around that the snowplows are prioritizing paved roads. That is not the case. The most recent snowfall was too heavy and wet to plow from gravel roads. Doing so would have caused damage.

Mr. Duden said that the practice of notifying residents of snowplowing plans via the Internet is working well, and is very well appreciated by residents.

New Business

Establish Board of Canvass and set date:

Mr. Whitcomb moved to set the date of the Board of Canvass on March 9. Seconded by Mr. Duden.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Annual meeting date and location—options if COVID restrictions remain in place:

The township annual meeting is set for the second Tuesday in March by Minnesota statute. The 2021 date is March 9. There is a significant risk that the Governor's COVID restrictions will remain in place at least through March. Given that likelihood, the township must make plans either to conduct the meeting in person under COVID guidelines for face coverings and social distancing, or to conduct the meeting by teleconference. In either case, notice of the meeting and the attendant requirements must be published no later than February 28. The Minnesota Association of Townships (MAT) has suggested establishing a contingency plan to convene the meeting, then immediately continue it to a time when the COVID restrictions will have been removed.

Mr. Whitcomb moved to table setting the annual meeting details to the February 16 meeting. Seconded by Mr. Wilhelm.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Annual Newsletter:

Mr. Whitcomb moved to deliver the 2021 Annual Newsletter to residents by March 2 to provide key information prior to the election. Seconded by Mr. Hiller.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Township Clean-Up Day:

Mr. Duden moved to schedule Township Clean-Up Day and Road Tour for Saturday, April 24. Seconded by Mr. Hiller

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Resolution adopting 2021 pay schedule:

Mr. Duden moved to adopt Resolution 2021-2, Township Pay Schedule. Seconded by Mr. Whitcomb.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried. Resolution 2021-2 is adopted. It will be filed at Township Hall and posted on the Township website: www.princetontownshipmn.us.

Review of proposed tree cutting in the Township road rights-of-way:

Township Attorney Jason Hill urged the Township to proceed carefully when considering cutting down trees in the right-of-way. Trees in the right-of-way belong to the property owner. The law prescribes the procedure for getting the owner's permission to cut the tree, or to get authorization to cut the tree if the owner will not grant permission. The process is covered by a consent form to provide to the property owner as the first step in acquiring authorization.

Mr. Whitcomb identified two trees on the outside of the curve on Fairlawn Road that are interfering with snowplowing. They are growing close to the road with branches overhanging the roadway. The snowplow operator has to move to the inside of the curve to avoid damage to the plow truck, thus leaving part of the roadway unplowed. Also, continued growth of the roots threatens to damage the roadway.

Mr. Duden moved to authorize Mr. Whitcomb to start the process to obtain permission to remove trees from the right-of-way on Fairlawn Road, identified in the RTIS map. Seconded by Mr. Stoeckel.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Other Business

Mr. Stoeckel mentioned two notices:

1. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Environmental Analysis and Outcomes Division is proposing amendments to rules governing water-quality standards. Amendments will be discussed in a Zoom meeting at 2 p.m., February 4. Details on the MPCA website.
2. City of Princeton Public Utilities Commission is considering a well-head protection plan amendment. Meeting to consider the amendment is scheduled for 1 p.m., January 27, at the Minnesota Historical Society, 101 10th Avenue South, Princeton.

Mr. Hiller raised two concerns:

1. How to respond to false information being circulated by way of newspaper ads and other means that prompt residents to call supervisors with outlandish accusations. Members agreed that a refutation in the same paper would be in order.
2. Costs associated with conditional-use permits and interim-use permits that are not covered by CUP and IUP fees. Mr. Richards responded that he is working on ways to bring the costs down, including providing an administrative process for simpler permit applications.

Mr. Whitcomb requested permission to publish notices requesting bids for road maintenance (grading and graveling), and for general road repair. He hopes to get all bids in by February 12 so they can be considered at the February 16 meeting.

Mr. Whitcomb moved to approve requesting bids for grading and graveling, and general road repair to close by February 12. Seconded by Mr. Duden.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Adjourn

Dan Hiller moved to adjourn. Seconded by Bill Whitcomb.

Mr. Stoeckel called the roll: Mr. Duden—Aye; Mr. Hiller—Aye; Mr. Stoeckel—Aye; Mr. Whitcomb—Aye; Mr. Wilhelm—Aye. Motion carried.

Adjourned 10:50 p.m.

Attendees

Marcia Anderson, Andrea Gerrard, Nancy Moan, Bonnie Nelson, David Persing, Barry Ramage, Jr., Mark Riverblood, Nicholas Taylor, Maria Thiel, plus unidentified callers

Respectfully submitted,
Doug Dahl, Clerk-Treasurer