

**MINUTES
UTILITY COMMISSION MEETING
FEBRUARY 13, 2020**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Bernstein, DeLoach, Fredericks, Groschen, Pehrson; Advisor: Christopherson; Commissioner: McCune; Public Works Director: Reed; Town Planner: Riedesel

Absent: Hesse with notice, Pehrson, without notice.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA (Additions/Deletions): DeLoach moved to approve the agenda as submitted with the addition of Bellaire Beach after Republic Services. Fredericks seconded. Ayes all.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 12, 2019: Bernstein moved the approval of the December 12, 2019 minutes. DeLoach seconded. Ayes all. There was some discussion of Ditch 11.

CONSENT AGENDA: DeLoach moved to approve of the Consent Agenda as follows: 4A) Receive Monthly Sewer & Water Report; 4B) Quarterly Utility Billing Payment Analysis; 4C) Receive Republic Services Monthly Service Report; 4D) Solid Waste Abatement Reports; 4E) Receive Solid Waste Abatement Report. Bernstein seconded. Ayes all. There was some discussion on the water consumption being lower than the water sold. It was explained that the numbers will even out more with the new meters that have been installed. It was noted that the consumption is based on the daily average per home, not per person.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT: Commissioner McCune was present to report on **street improvement projects**. The neighborhood meeting in February went well. The majority of residents assessed for the 2020 street improvements are excited to get started. There will be more conversation of future estimations with assessments, to be sure, as some want the assessment to be dropped if the contracting rate is lower than expected. The Township does pick up a fair amount of the cost, as residents are not assessed at 100%. There will be more discussion with residents as the projects get closer. Staff is fine tuning the process. **Ramsey County street improvements** will be underway in spring of 2020. County Road H2 from Centerville to Bald Eagle, Bald Eagle Avenue to Buffalo, and Buffalo to Highway 61 will be done in May or June. The Town would like to

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see narrower striping and wider walking paths like the county did in 2019, but the County has only discussed “preserving” what is already done on Bald Eagle Avenue.

The Town Board has also been discussing **nuisance properties**. Though the Town only has a couple, the Board understands that it is only fair to the rest of the Township and its residents to move these properties along in the process. If the owners cannot improve the house, it should either be sold, rehabilitated, or torn down as a worst case scenario.

The Town is working on streamlining **Township Cleanup Day**, and figuring out what party is responsible for **broken curb stops** that have been noted after the water meter installations. It was the consensus that this should be an agenda item at the March Utility meeting for full discussion and a recommendation.

REPUBLIC SERVICES REPRESENTATIVE – BEV MATHIASEN: Mathiasen was present to report on the current state of recycling and where the Township stands. She first noted a few things about Township Cleanup Day: it is on June 20, 2020. Staff are looking over the site, and it is planned to have 2 different staged areas for drop offs: one for tires and refuge, one for shredding and specialty items; both on opposite ends of one another. Mathiasen views last year’s record as it being nice and everyone wanting to clean up. Staff are hoping for another great year and hoping that the new structure and staging improves the cleanup day for residents.

There was discussion of the plunging commodity prices in plastic, steel, aluminum scrap, cardboard, and mixed paper. There was discussion of what these changes mean in the recycling industry and contemplation over what the future may look like. As shown in the handout, a list of cities around the country have canceled recycling programs, changed services or material lists, raised rates, dropped glass, and started burning or dumping recyclables. Only one city in Minnesota – Red Wing – is changing services. It was noted that Republic is striving to get education and materials out to consumers so they know what they can recycle. This can help prices stay low, as the cost of labor for sorting could be lessened. An interesting fact of recycling is that recycling plants have to have the materials have less than a 15% contamination rate (grease/food stains/unrecyclable materials) or it is considered trash and is therefore taxed.

Mathiasen handed out a Recycling Commodity Update that included the value of each product over the last 3 years. From this graph, the Commission discussed the changes, increases and decreases, of each product. It was noted that due to changes in international markets, the US is looking internally for buyers of the recycled materials. The Commission discussed education tips for the general public. There is information, articles for publications and the Township website.

BELLAIRE BEACH UNDERGROUND STORM SYSTEM: The Town Planner was present to report on this added agenda item. The Park Board is working on upgrades to Bellaire Beach. Last year the beach house was repainted. The Saputo shelter is in the works. It was noted how the change in seasons and natural flow affect park projects: for

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example a couple years ago the lake was down and there were less projects along the beach, but last year with the overflow of water, staff are working with the county and Rice Creek Watershed District to manage the shoreline.

Riedesel presented some ideas the Park Board is working on, planning on rearranging the structure of the park. The Park Board would like to expand the playground. It was noted that 15 to 20 trees are Ash trees and will be removed over time. The parking lot is set to be redone in 2020, and the island will come out.

The current pond is on the Utility Commission's list to have cleaned, which will cost \$20,000. The Park Board wants to propose a subterranean stormwater pond to conserve space. It will cost \$250,000. There was discussion of Ramsey County's input, since the park is owned by the county. There has been none at this point. There was discussion of grants and there was consensus from the Commission that if this project is going to be done, the majority should be grants, since the county owns it and many people outside of the Township community benefit. There was discussion of whether or not the Park Board should just try another method, rather than discuss this agenda item with the Utility Commission, but it was the consensus that there should be more information brought to the Commission to discuss fully.

Fredericks motioned to recommend the Park Board explore grants and other funding sources, for the Utility Commission to look into this agenda item, and for the engineering of the pond to try and improve the overall pond. DeLoach seconded. Ayes: Fredericks, DeLoach, Groschen. Nay: Bernstein. Abstention: Pehrson and Hesse, as they are absent.

There will be more discussion at future meetings.

UTILITY RATE STRUCTURE: The Public Works Director introduced this agenda item as something staff would like the Utility Commission to discuss based on the email received. St Paul water utility to refund customers who were overcharged based on the $\frac{3}{4}$ -1-inch line that runs to the meter. The discussion is whether the residents who have been charged as if they have the 1-inch line, though they have the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch line should receive compensation for being in a different price bracket. There was discussion over the meter reading the water consumption and that the size of the line, typically in residential homes at least, doesn't change the consumption. There was discussion of the mechanics of the meter and the water line. There was discussion of any potential lawsuits that may come. It was noted that the new meters that were placed in 2019, will have more accurate reads than the old meters. It was the consensus that this should be added to the annual rate conversation.

Bernstein motioned that this agenda item will be discussed in more detail, and since it has been received it will be changed going forward. DeLoach seconded. Ayes all.

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STORMWATER PROJECTS – UPDATE: The Public Works Director was present to report on the 2 projects that came up last year. One was a pipe about 550 feet off of highway 61 on Leibel Street. The ditch on the south side of 61 isn't draining, so staff will be looking into getting this done. Staff's plan is to come up with a design that has a shorter run for future maintenance. The second project was one that a Rice Creek Watershed District employee emailed about near Division. Water is elevating in ponds around the drains from White Bear Lake. The ponding is near the MCES intercept. The flow is impacted from overgrowth and the trees will be required to be removed on the MCES easement. Problems like these happen after large rain years. It was noted that neither of these projects have a dollar figure yet. There was some discussion on the outfalls at Saint Anthony and Park. It was noted that the County will be helping with these projects with redoing East and West Bald Eagle Boulevards. It was noted that Reed will bring a list with these projects and costs outlined for the next meeting.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR REPORT: The Public Works Director was present to report on the Public Works Department Activity for January 2020. There was some discussion on the **Water Meter Replacement** and how the new subcontractor is doing. There was some discussion on the folks who have been billed the \$300 for the first quarter of not having the meters in. The Town Board approved the **Water System Improvement** first steps. Well 1's SCADA system will be improved. Well 4's pump and casing will be increased so there is higher capacity. Well 5 will increase as well as have a SCADA system improvement. There was some discussion on the 2 different systems: north and south each have their own appropriation permits. These improvements that have been approved are the most economical.

ADDED AGENDA ITEMS: The next meeting date is scheduled to be March 12, 2020. Fredericks moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:53 p.m. Bernstein seconded. Ayes all.

Respectfully Submitted,

Megan R. Cavanaugh
Recording Secretary