

**New Hartford Township
MINUTES
for the ANNUAL Meeting
March 14, 2023, 8:15pm
New Hartford Town Hall**

Attendance

Supervisors: Joe Baumgartner, Larry Moldenhauer, Richard Johnson

Clerk: Andrea Erdmann

Dep. Clerk: Caroline van Schaik

Treasurer: Michael Moor

Others present:

(in order of sign in) Vicki Baumgartner, Ed Walsh, Keith Olson, Don Thesing, Ernest Erdmann, Marcia Ward, Ralph Cox, Richard Brown, Justin Woodward

Meeting called to order by Supervisor Chairman Joe Baumgartner at 8:15 pm.

County Commissioner Marcia Ward was elected to serve as meeting moderator; motion by Ed Walsh, second by Vicki Baumgartner. All approved.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Minutes of Mar. 8, 2022, Annual Meeting – Copies were available and reviewed; motion by Vicki Baumgartner, second by Larry Moldenhauer to approve. All approved.

Board of Audit Report – Clerk Andrea Erdmann read the minutes; motion by Ed Walsh, second by Ernest Erdmann to approve as read. All approved.

Fire and Rescue Report – Vicki Baumgartner presented the report, noting 68 medical calls in 2022, 41 fire calls, and 4 calls not answered due to unavailable First Responders. She gave examples of some of those calls, including suicides and a suicide attempt, a boat fire, swimming rescues, and a barn fire. Accidents are being phone-recorded and live-streamed, including emergency responses, she said. Vicki also noted:

- Donations have paid for equipment replacement; most is set aside to cover uniform replacement, at about \$8,000 per person with a state-mandated expiration date.
- Nodine Fire has applied for a grant to begin replacing responder uniforms.
- Two fire fighters will attend State Fire School in late March.
- One former member has recently re-joined.
- Seven members are undergoing EMR recertification (18 hours plus EMT) and one is undergoing EMT recertification (40 hours).

- Gundersen-Lutheran Hospital provides PTSD and related mental health counseling for members.
- They are working on recruitment. There currently are 12 members, the minimum permitted by the state, and hope an Emergency Medical responder (EMR) class this fall helps to draw interest.

Keith Olson asked about members' personal liability. Vicki confirmed that the Good Samaritan Law covers the volunteer work of First Responders.

Marcia Ward noted the unique challenges of putting out a fire in an electric car; Vicki said they have been trained for this situation.

Other Business

1. 2022 Road Report – Joe Baumgartner reviewed the report of completed projects and the road report including seal coat work, culverts, rock, dust spray, and a couple of turn-arounds. He noted that it has been a rough winter for ice and asked homeowners to help with prevention, especially on hills. He noted there is plenty of free sand. Marcia Ward reminded everyone about the free sand pile in Homer.

Ed Walsh noted that Lost Valley Dr. is not on the 2022 Road Report but is in terrible condition. Joe Baumgartner said roads typically are on a 2-year gravel rotation. Ed asked the supervisors to drive the road for themselves. He also complimented the supervisors and clerk for transparent documentation and communication. Vicki Baumgartner agreed. Joe noted more proactive responses than complaints.

There was discussion on tree removal. Ed Walsh noted that the number of grading hours does not reflect his personal time removing trees in a timely manner. Emergency vehicles won't have access because Willie (Erdmann) or a supervisor can't get there in time, he said. He suggested the township contract with a professional tree service. Vicki Baumgartner said the township gets 20-25 calls a year from the county Sheriff's department and that the township usually responds within a couple of hours. Marcia Ward said the county pre-emptively trims trees on a rotation basis. Vicki noted that the township is doing a lot of catch up maintenance, including trees and seal coating. Ed asked who to call about a downed tree. Joe said to call the non-emergency Sheriff number and they will contact a supervisor if they don't send an officer. The Sheriff decides whether to close a road and send a deputy, Vicki said. Joe clarified that if a tree falls from a landowner's property onto the township road, the landowner - not the township - is responsible.

2. Runaway Road Bridge replacement update – Joe Baumgartner said the work likely will take place this June or July.
3. Loan for the plow truck was paid off in full. The township is debt-free - noted.

4. Approve annual recognition dinner for Nodine Fire and Rescue members/ guests (1per member), \$25 per person - Andrea Erdmann clarified the requirement to set a dollar limit. Motion by Ed Walsh, second by Joe Baumgartner. All approved.
5. Introduce deputy clerk Caroline van Schaik – noted. Marcia Ward asked if the goal was to train in as clerk; Caroline said no.
6. Email communications, website progress – Andrea Erdmann asked if people want more or fewer email messages. The conclusion was that it is better to have more than not enough communication. She encouraged people to leave their email addresses with her if they want to hear news that way.
7. MAT scholarship for high school juniors – Andrea Erdmann asked for nominations for this annual Minnesota Association of Townships opportunity for a township high school junior. She confirmed that she will post this announcement on the website.
8. Possible changes to township elections – There was a discussion about changing the township election to November or going to a mail-in process. Andrea Erdmann reported that she is researching the options. *(Note that this is a ballot issue: should the board present such a resolution, voters will decide at an annual township meeting.)*
9. Public comments, items of concern –
Don Thesing asked why the county Board of Supervisors doesn't make township levy decisions instead of the township, given such poor input at the annual meeting. He also recommended increasing the levy every year to at least keep up with inflation.
Marcia Ward asked why the supervisors don't run the annual meeting instead of a moderator. The clerks will investigate.

Proposed Budget for 2024 – 8% increase

Joe Baumgartner reviewed his calculations for seal coat expenses and the board's decision to focus on gravel as ultimately more cost effective. There was much discussion on this and the overall levy proposal:

Joe said that 60% of the township is content with the current methods of road maintenance of mostly gravel roads.

Ed Walsh noted that gravel is laid down and graded inconsistently, making Joe's calculations "inadequate." He said seal coating provides a safety and health benefit.

Don Thesing said that the amount of traffic needed to be considered.

Ernest Erdmann said township roads are holding their condition even compared to county roads.

Don said his road needs seal coating and challenged anyone to drive that quarter mile of Lanes Valley.

Ed said the township doesn't spend enough on gravel and some gravel ends up in the ditch.

Keith Olson asked whether the entire township should be seal coated. Ed said yes, it should be a even if it costs a million dollars.

Richard Johnson said seal coating costs double that of gravel.

Marcia Ward noted that seal coating reduces maintenance costs but it has to be done right, starting with the base.

Don asked if seal coating was planned for this year; Joe said probably not.

Ed asked about seal coating in 2024 on Lanes Valley Road; Joe said it was probable.

Marcia noted experimentation with grinding up plastic bottles for road repair.

Ed acknowledged the time and effort to address seal coat cost and schedule.

Marcia noted that the county is getting less money for roads than in past years. Roads are not mandated, she said.

Joe said that the Capital Expense fund was raised to reflect increased replacement costs for equipment. He said that now that the fire truck is paid off, the fund will be used to set aside for replacements going forward.

Keith asked about the Road and Bridge fund. Joe and Andrea Erdmann explained that expenses included those listed in the Road Report and also, shop maintenance, some staff pay, the \$20,000 paid to the county for the Runaway Bridge, and equipment expenses.

Keith asked why the General fund was increased. Andrea said the fund has been insufficient for at least the past four years.

Keith asked why the Fire and Rescue fund was not increased. Joe said the department did not want an increase.

Motion by Ed to increase the Road and Bridge Fund by \$100,000 specifically for seal coating, second by Don. Motion failed 5 votes to 7 votes.

Motion by Don to accept the budget as proposed with an 8% increase in the levy, second by Ed Walsh. All approved.

Marcia and others expressed concern that even an 8% levy increase will not meet expenses in 2024. Don suggested that the township match its levy increases to that of the county and cited the 5-7 vote as an example of how two people can stop a levy from being increased. Marcia said the county increased its levy by about 10% that included the jail.

There was a motion to reconsider by Vicki Baumgartner, who suggested a \$50,000 increase for seal coating. Andrea advised that there is a 10-minute discussion period following an approved motion. Marcia said she wasn't familiar with this rule but suggested there is time between now and September, when the levy is submitted to the county, to change the levy amount. Caroline van Schaik said the levy must be set by the township at the annual meeting. Marcia suggested that the approved motion be withdrawn but added that she feels the approved motion is set; others agreed. Andrea said that the annual meeting can be adjourned to another date. Keith suggested sending out a request for input. Marcia said the annual meeting is for that purpose. Richard Brown said it is too late to withdraw the motion. Ed agreed and asked if anyone wanted to make a motion to reconsider the approved levy. Keith said it would add about \$70,000 to the levy. Vicki said the township has been conservative in not raising the levy for several years and that the budget should not keep falling behind. Andrea asked if Vicki's proposed \$50,000 should be its own Seal Coat fund. Richard Johnson said he was unclear about the process of reconsidering an approved motion. Vicki reminded everyone that she had made the motion but was told they had to vote on the original motion first. Marcia asked if everyone agreed with the process of reconsidering an approved motion.

Motion to approve the process of reconsidering the approved motion by Vicki Baumgartner, second by Don Thesing. Failed 5 votes to 7 votes.

Gopher Bounty

Motion to keep the gopher bounty at \$3.00 by Joe Baumgartner, second by Richard Johnson. All approved.

Next annual meeting

Next year's Township Election will be Tuesday, Mar. 12, 2024, 4-8 p.m. at the New Hartford Town Hall. The annual meeting will follow at 8:15 p.m. with a weather date of Mar. 19, 2024, at 8:15 p.m. Note that the election date is subject to change if the board moves the March election. Motion to set next year's township election and annual meeting subject to a date change, by Ed Walsh, second by Joe Baumgartner. All approved.

Andrea Erdmann gave unofficial election results of 20 votes for Joe Baumgartner, supervisor, and 20 votes for Michael Moor, treasurer, with no write-ins.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:02 p.m. on a motion by Ernest Erdmann, second by Joe Baumgartner. All approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Caroline van Schaik 3/14/2023

Approved by:

Marcia Ward, moderator

Witnessed:

Dep. Clerk Caroline van Schaik

Date: