

**New Hartford Township
MINUTES
for the Monthly Meeting
March 14, 2024, 7:00 pm
New Hartford Town Hall**

Attendance

Supervisors: Larry Moldenhauer, Richard Johnson, Joe Baumgartner

Clerk: Andrea Erdmann

Dep. clerk: Caroline van Schaik

Treasurer: Michael Moor

Maintenance: Willie Erdmann

Fire Chief: Cody Gehrke

Guests: (in order of sign in) Vicki Baumgartner, Joe Nickelotti, Ben Ransom, Colin O'Neil, Nick Baumgartner, Keith Olson, Jerry Zenke, Lisa Radtke, Ivan Kubista

Meeting called to order by Chairman Joe Baumgartner at 7:01 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of minutes for the regular meeting of Feb. 8, 2024 and the annual Board of Audit meeting of Feb. 22, 2024 - Motion by Joe Baumgartner, second by Larry Moldenhauer for both sets of minutes; all approved.

Review of minutes for the Annual Meeting of Mar. 12, 2024 - No action tonight; motion to approve the minutes will be on the agenda of next year's Annual Meeting.

Township Acknowledgement Form – presentation of DakotaSun solar project by Colin O'Neil and Ben Ransom. The community solar project in collaboration with Excel Energy is proposed on 3 ½ acres owned by Richard Brown. Residents asked about an Environmental Impact Statement, sand hill cranes, native prairie plantings, and the county solar ordinance. Chairman Joe Baumgartner tabled a decision until the next regular meeting (Ap. 11, 2024) so that township residents can comment.

Public Comment

- a. Ivan Kubista asked what the specific allegation is that the Department of Justice (DOJ) is investigating and the use of the hall in the meantime. Joe Baumgartner said that all the township knows is a reference to an alleged violation of accessibility on election day. The DOJ lawyers and staff were at the town hall on Tuesday, Mar. 12, 2024 from 11:30 a.m. to about 5 p.m. to witness the Township Election; they would not answer questions, citing the ongoing investigation. The township has been advised to pause hall rental until the investigation is complete. There was discussion about contacting elected officials about the investigation.
- b. Joe Nickelotti asked about Forster Road and who will manage right-of-way trees. The item was deferred until the Road Report on the agenda.

Fire Department Report - Chief Cody Gehrke reported that a grant the department had hoped would help replace vehicles is only for Twin Cities Metro departments with greater populations and demand. He also presented a bid from Great Plains Fire for contaminant hoods, hoses, and gloves for \$4,805.59. Joe Baumgartner made a motion to approve the purchase, second by Richard Johnson; all approved.

Road Reports

- a. Forster Hill tree work – Joe Baumgartner said the township will clarify how and when trees are cut but that decisions are on hold because of litigation. He said the road will not be closed. There was discussion about statutes and current practices by Forster Road residents.
- b. Permit to replace culvert on Lanes Valley Rd. update – Joe Baumgartner said the Department of Natural Resources has not yet responded. The township is required to submit a permit because the culvert impacts a trout stream.
- c. Other - none

Old Business

- a. Trespass Rule – Clerks will not pursue the issue at this time.
- b. Department of Justice investigation - see Public Comment above. Clerk Andrea Erdmann said the township always has sufficient judges to help with curbside voting at every election. She also said that the DOJ lawyer had a law student and a trainee with her Tuesday when they arrived to investigate the building and elections processes.
- c. Approve Claims – After discussion, motion by Richard Johnson to pay the bills including the Minnesota Association of Townships Spring Workshop Mar. 18, 2024 to be attended by 3 supervisors and the new clerk, second by Joe Baumgartner; all approved.
- d. Other

New Business

- 1. Private well testing – Deputy Clerk Caroline van Schaik noted a press release from the state Department of Health encouraging well testing. It will be posted on the township website.
- 2. Clerk's Report
 - a. Mar. 14, 2024 Board of Canvass Meeting – The board was sworn in as the Board of Canvass at 6:30 p.m. tonight to certify the Mar. 12, 2024 Township Election results. There is a required 1-week period of contest; assuming no challenge, on Mar. 21, 2024, winners will be issued a Certificate of Election and Oath of Office. Supervisor Larry Moldenhauer will begin his second term. It will be the first day for Kathy Klawiter as clerk and the last day for current clerk Andrea Erdmann and deputy clerk Caroline van Schaik. Treasurer Michael Moor noted the role of a clerk consultant to provide transition help to Kathy.
 - b. Mar. 12, 2024 Annual meeting – 37 people attended and cookies, cupcakes, and coffee were worth repeating next year.
 - c. Mar. 12, 2024 Township Election– The results are unchanged from the Annual Meeting, with 12% turnout (66 of 566 registered voters).Andrea gave public thanks to judges Lisa Radtke and Jon Nicholson.
 - d. Presidential Nominating Primary Election Mar. 5, 2024 – There is a report on the website. Township turnout was 21% of 566 registered voters and we had great judges - Lisa and Jon plus Richard Brown, Letty Hornberg, and Mary Lou Meyers.
 - e. Board of Audit Meeting Feb. 22, 2024 – This annual meeting took place as reviewed at the Annual Meeting.
 - f. Reorganization Meeting Ap. 11, 2024 – Current clerk/deputy clerk cannot attend Ap. 11.
 - g. District 1 bi-monthly meeting –Deputy clerk Caroline van Schaik noted a 2023 land values report given at the Feb. 14, 2024 meeting at Wilson Town Hall, with county

sales as high as almost \$11,000 per acre. She said they were encouraged to apply for the Minnesota Property Tax refund.

- h. MAT Spring training Mar. 18, 2024, Winona – Supervisors and clerks can register in person. Treasurer Michael Moor will write a check tonight for four people to attend.
 - i. Township Day at the Capital – The annual visit to elected officials is set for Ap. 8-9, 2024 or possibly a single day of Ap. 8, 2024. Supervisors should check their email on Feb. 20, 2024 for the bus schedule and related details.
 - j. Other – The ordinance formalizing the annexation by Dakota Township of property owned by Jon Nicholson and Anne Morse is filed.
 - k. A motion was made by Richard Johnson to accept a seal coat bid for \$125,400 from Scott Construction for Lanes Valley Road, second by Larry Moldenhauer; all approved.
3. Treasurer’s Report
- a. Starting balance tonight: \$299,788.80
 - b. Spent tonight: \$16,965.90 (not including the MAT Spring workshop fees)
 - c. Balance tonight: \$282,822.90
 - d. This month last year: Mar. 9, 2023 \$268,957.42
 - e. Other - none
4. Clerk election follow up – After discussion, Joe Baumgartner made a motion to pay Clerk Andrea Erdmann as a clerk consultant at her current rate of pay to provide training for new clerk Kathy Klawiter, second by Richard Johnson; all approved. Kathy and Andrea will work out a schedule; Kathy will decide on a deputy clerk later.
5. Other – Willie Erdmann noted an ongoing problem with the shop toilet that won’t shut off.

Motion to Adjourn - Motion to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:20 p.m. by Joe Baumgartner, second by Richard Johnson; all approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Caroline van Schaik 3/14/2024

Approved by:

Chairman Joe Baumgartner

Date

Witnessed:

Dep. Clerk Caroline van Schaik

Date