

**Biwabik Township Monthly Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Township Hall - 6555 Oak Drive, Gilbert, MN**  
**Monday, March 23, 2020**

**Call to Order:** 9:00 AM by Chairman Soderling

Roll Call Attendance: Chairman Lucas Soderling, Supervisor Walter Hautala, Supervisor Jim Paris, Clerk Emily Highland, Foreman Kevin Merritt. (Meeting held via tele-conference)

**Pledge of Allegiance:** Recited

**Special Agenda Requests:**

COVID-19 Concerns – Chairman Soderling thanked the Board for their flexibility during this time and stated the safety for kids and elderly as this time is of utmost importance.

Clerk Highland read Resolution 2020-04 allowing the Board to hold meetings via tele-conference during a pandemic. **Motion** by Supervisor Hautala, seconded by Supervisor Paris to adopt Resolution 2020-04 Motion carried unanimously.

Supervisor Paris questioned if we should declare an emergency so if possible can receive money from FEMA, relax the open meeting law (allow supervisors to text each other), and possibly get some relief from MATIT for unknown things that may get incurred. Chairman Soderling explained the open meeting law will not be relaxed. We fall under the Governor Walz's emergency.

Future Board Meetings – Chairman Soderling can foresee President Trump implementing a shelter in place for about two weeks. Soderling plans to hold the April 13<sup>th</sup> meeting virtually. Clerk Highland asked about the re-organizational meeting that is usually the April Board Meeting. She suggested putting it off until the Board can meet in person. **Motion** by Chairman Soderling, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to hold the April 13, 2020 meeting via tele-conference at its original time of 5:30 P.M. Motion carried upon the following vote:

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Supervisor Hautala | Aye |
| Supervisor Paris   | Aye |
| Chairman Soderling | Aye |

Local Board of Appeal and Equalization (LBAE) Meeting – Chairman Soderling reported the LBAE must be adjourned by May 31, 2020. There is no change in the law on this yet. He doesn't feel there will be many appeals, but thinks it is an important meeting to hold in person. The county has given all entities the option to postpone the meeting, hold it in person with social distancing, or hold it virtually. Supervisor Hautala would like to see it get postponed. Supervisor Paris is concerned that if the situation gets worse, there won't be a chance to hold it in person. Clerk Highland reminded the Board that the township was re-assessed a few years ago, so there shouldn't be many appeals. There was only one appeal last year and they basically just came to visit. If every entity postpones that may make scheduling a headache for the county. Paris added most appeals go through the assessor before the meeting and Board usually follows the county recommendations. **Motion** by Chairman Soderling, seconded by Supervisor Paris to hold the LBAE via-teleconference on April 9, 2020 at 11:00 A.M. by written appeals only. Motion carried upon the following vote:

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Supervisor Hautala | Aye |
| Supervisor Paris   | Aye |
| Chairman Soderling | Aye |

Clerk Highland will contact the county and publish/post to let the residents know about the change.

Future Events (Rentals) – **Motion** by Chairman Soderling, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to cancel all hall rentals and events until the peacetime emergency is lifted by Governor Walz.

*Discussion* – Supervisor Paris mentioned potluck has already been canceled and he would like to see the ones who already paid for their rentals have the option of a refund or hold for another date. Clerk Highland will contact all rentals through April. The May rentals will be discussed during the April Monthly Board Meeting. Motion carried upon the following vote:

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Supervisor Hautala | Aye |
| Supervisor Paris   | Aye |
| Chairman Soderling | Aye |

Hall Closure – Chairman Soderling asked the Board for input on closing the hall. Supervisor Paris read the following from the MAT website: **Closure of Some Township Amenities**- Pursuant the Governor’s Executive Orders in place right now, township recreational facilities, senior and youth centers, performance centers, fitness centers, or other recreational facilities are to be closed to the public. The Township Hall or administrative offices may be open to the public to maintain services provided by the township, but MDH’s guidelines should be observed as township’s continue to serve the community. Clerk Highland explained to the Board this is a slower time of year and she has already chosen to close the office to the public.

Chairman Soderling would like to see the office open only to the Clerk and Treasurer for the time being.

**Motion** by Chairman Soderling, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to close the Township Hall to all public, until Governor Walz lifts the peacetime state of emergency. Any and all communications can be done via mail, email, and phone.

*Discussion* – Public employees can still work, office is closed to the public, but the township is not closed down. Supervisor Hautala read the statement that Town of White has posted and suggested posting one of the same to notify our residents. Motion carried upon the following vote:

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Supervisor Hautala | Aye |
| Supervisor Paris   | Aye |
| Chairman Soderling | Aye |

Employee Schedules, Pay, and Sick Time – Chairman Soderling would like to give Foreman Merritt the authorization to set alternate hours with Jonathan during the pandemic. Currently Merritt has them working separately i.e. one on the roads and one in the shop. Merritt likes the idea of split shifts. He has also shut down the office in the garage because it is too small quarters. Supervisor Paris requested to run this by B.A. Dan Manick of the Local 49 to make sure we are in compliance with the contract. He called Manick and a split schedule is ok and there will not be a shift differential and this is in the best interest of the employees. Paris requested to keep the union in the loop through all of this. **Motion** by Chairman Soderling, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to give discretion and authority to Foreman Merritt to set hours as needed while still following guidelines in the contract. Motion carried upon the following

vote:

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Supervisor Hautala | Aye |
| Supervisor Paris   | Aye |
| Chairman Soderling | Aye |

Soderling would like to see current sick time used up and extend it if need be for quarantine purposes. Paris explained that isn’t quite fair because Jonathan is still on probation so he doesn’t have any accrued. Soderling just doesn’t want people coming to work when they are sick. He offered the idea of using up banked overtime hours for Covid – 19 illness and quarantines and the township will cover above and beyond hours. This is fair to both employees as they are about even with their banked hours. Clerk Highland suggested making a new policy just for this instance. Supervisor Paris mentioned this is where MATIT should be contacted to see if they could potentially help by paying for idle time due to illness. Soderling doesn’t feel we would be losing more money than we would normally pay out. **Motion**

by Chairman Soderling, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to use up banked overtime then the township will cover other days lost due to doctor's order requiring quarantine because of Covid – 19. Motion carried upon the following vote:

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Supervisor Hautala | Aye |
| Supervisor Paris   | Aye |
| Chairman Soderling | Aye |

Delegate Duties and Authorities –

- 1.) Supervisor Paris only wants to see bare essentials purchased during this time to keep the township running.
- 2.) Liaisons will be in charge of their departments for the time being.
- 3.) The policy on expenditures adopted recently will be upheld.
- 4.) Clerk Highland will work on what she can at home. However, there are too many resources within the office to move her entire work station home. Office personnel will work one at a time in the building. Paperwork and checks will be signed on supervisor's own volition, but in a prompt manner.
- 5.) Extended leave accommodations were set earlier in the meeting. If you are sick or have symptoms please impose a self-quarantine.
- 6.) Deputies and temporary employees maybe called in as backup.


**Motion** by Chairman Soderling, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to give Supervisor Paris the authority to delegate/designate personnel if Foreman Merritt becomes unavailable. Motion carried upon the following vote:

|                    |         |
|--------------------|---------|
| Supervisor Hautala | Aye     |
| Supervisor Paris   | Abstain |
| Chairman Soderling | Aye     |

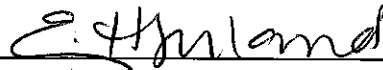
**Motion** by Chairman Soderling, seconded by Supervisor Hautala due to Governor Walz's peacetime emergency any supervisor that has to step in for employment vacated because of Covid – 19 in their department will get paid \$25.00 per hour, all hours are subject to Board approval. Motion carried upon the following vote:

|                    |         |
|--------------------|---------|
| Supervisor Hautala | Aye     |
| Supervisor Paris   | Abstain |
| Chairman Soderling | Aye     |

**Adjourn:** Chairman Soderling adjourned the meeting at 10:25 A.M.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson:

4-15-20  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Attest by Clerk:

