

## **BIWABIK TOWNSHIP ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES**

**Township Hall - 6555 Oak Drive, Gilbert, MN**

**Tuesday, March 14, 2023 at 8:30 P.M.**

**Call to Order** - Clerk Highland called the meeting to order at 8:30 PM. Present: Emily Highland, Jim Paris, Richard & Doris Freeburg, Kirstie & Todd Hall, Luke Soderling, Floyd & Dorothy Strehlow, John Kuitunen, Ricky Wilson, Walter Hautala, Gordy Imberg, Julie Bluhm, Chuck & Nita Larson.

**Pledge of Allegiance** - Recited

**Nomination for Moderator** - Clerk Highland called for nominations for moderator.

Todd Hall nominated Luke Soderling, supported by Julie Bluhm.

Floyd Strehlow nominated Gordy Imberg, supported by Luke Soderling.

Clerk Highland called for a third and final nomination. No further nominations. \_\_\_\_\_

By show of hands she asked those in favor of Luke, 7 votes.

By show of hands she asked those in favor of Gordy, 8 votes.

Motion to accept Gordy Imberg as Moderator carried. Clerk Highland gave Oath of Moderator to Gordy Imberg.

### **2022 Annual Town Meeting Minutes**

**Motion** by Todd Hall, seconded by Luke Soderling to waive the reading of the 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes. No Discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

**Motion** by Kirstie Hall, seconded by Jim Paris to approve the 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes. No discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

### **2022 Financial & Audit Report**

**Motion** by Todd Hall, seconded by Kirstie Hall to waive the reading of all receipts and disbursements and read only the synopsis. Motion carried unanimously.

Julie Bluhm read the synopsis attached to the minutes. No questions.

**Motion** by Kirstie Hall, seconded by Floyd Strehlow to approve the 2022 Financial and Audit Report. No discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Proposed 2024 Levy**

Todd Hall reported on the projected 2024 budget showing a deficit of near \$20,000.00 in the Road and Bridge department. This is due to wages, insurance, equipment maintenance, tires, and fuel increases. He explained the Board has reached out to the county to get a breakdown of how different increases would affect the residents. Raising the levy from \$342,000.00 to \$365,000.00 would be an approximate increase of 1.8414% resulting in about a \$18.41 raise in taxes on a home with a market value of \$100,000.00. An increase to \$400,000.00 would reflect a 4.6435% increase on taxes or about \$46.43 for a home with a \$100,000.00 market value. These numbers should be a linear raise so if your home has a market value of \$500,000.00 you would multiply the increase by 5. The following discussion ensued.

Soderling – If we vote on this, it goes into effect in 2024? Does it look like there will be a deficit in 2023?

Paris and Highland – Yes.

Highland – Road and Bridge was over budget in 2022.

T. Hall – We have already moved budgeted money around to help cushion 2023. i.e. moved \$10,000.00 in heavy machinery to help cover fuel costs.

Paris – Explained we have obligations for road maintenance so it's hard to cut the budgets for dust control, culverts, gravel, and fuel. The Board had long discussion on trying to figure if this was a viable option.

Soderling – Is worried about running a higher deficit if we don't keep up on purchasing Road and Bridge needs. There was discussion about dropping driveway snowplow contracts, but if that happens then we will also lose that income, showing an even higher deficit in the budget.

Paris – The Board even discussed if it would be worthwhile to sell some equipment and rent it when needed. However, the price of leasing has increased and by the time you have rented a piece of equipment four times, it's near the purchased price.

T. Hall – Once again explained the two options the Board looked into. \$400,000.00 is a large upfront increase that would hopefully hold us off for a while from further increases. This increase is about \$46.00/year for a taxable market value of \$100,000.00. \$365,000.00 covers only the projected deficit and may not cover the full deficit due to the constant inflation issue. This increase would be about \$18.40/year for a taxable market value of \$100,000.00. The linear math was explained to figure out the increase on a home worth more than \$100,000.00.

Soderling – Has contacted the county tax guy and discussed how the township levy is applied to individuals in the township. The township portion is fixed. If you see fluctuations on the township portion of your tax statement, that is because the values of homes change each year. Overall, the township will not receive more than levied monies.

Hautala – Explained the township has prided itself by not increasing the levy for years. We were even able to build a new building without increasing the levy. However, 15 years ago things were cheaper and now we are noticing an increase in fuel, tools, tires. A raise is really needed at this time.

Paris – It is recommended from the Association of Township's that there is a year's worth of operating monies on hand at all times.

Highland - Explained our zero balance should actually be \$500,000.00, which has been our budget amount the last couple years.

T. Hall – We are below that \$500,000.00 by about \$10,000.00. Continuing to borrow from the next year.

Imberg – Attended the budget meeting where there was long discussion on the topic of raising the levy. The last thing you want to do is run to a bank looking for money to operate on. He feels the levy will need to be raised. However, as moderator, he is neutral.

Paris – The new truck should be paid off in about three years. That money would then get absorbed by the budget helping cushion any needs in the future.

T. Hall – Explained there was a third option to raise the levy to \$380,000.00. Resulting in about a 3% increase or \$34.00 per year on \$100,000.00 property value.

Kuitunen – Asked if it's actually \$400,000.00 that the Board would like.

Dorie Freeburg – Suggested to keep meeting on increasing it yearly.

Highland – Explained in the past there used to be a 2% increase yearly.

Wilson – Asked how the township was able to save and run on a \$342,000.00 levy for the last 15 years.

Highland – At one point the township had over \$1,000,000.00 in funds. There have been past Boards that did not want to spend money on new equipment or maintenance, in all areas of the township. So unused budget monies would just roll over year after year.

Soderling – It's been good to see that more road maintenance has been performed lately and would like to see that trend continue.

**Motion** by Luke Soderling, seconded by Kirstie Hall to set the 2024 levy at \$400,000.00. Motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 12

Nay 3

Abstain 1 (Moderator)

## 2022 Department Reports

**EMR Director Nita Larson:** Reported 59 calls for 2022. She explained covid calls are unknown because that information is not relayed back to the department after hospital intake. A couple members have retired and few new responders have been hired. The roster is at seven members. The township purchased new AEDs which were greatly needed.

**Chairman Hautala:** Hautala thanked those in attendance for passing the levy increase. He reported that the Board was working on getting the tennis courts resurfaced and add pickle ball lines to one of the courts. However, due to inflation, the price went up 100%. Picnic shade shelters have been erected. They will be a nice addition to our park area in the summer. We would still like to see handicap paths made from the parking lot to the shelters. Hautala may apply for a CDBG grant to help with this cost. We have secured a 50/50 grant with IRRRB to redo the town hall's parking lot. It will be extended onto the place where the old hall was and will be striped to define parking spots. We have started to work on leveling the ice rink to help with even flooding. New discussion has happened about placing a sand volleyball court within the rink during summer months. Our boiler system in the hall has failed. There is a new boiler on order and will be installed by Approve Plumbing which is a local company within the township. A tiller has

been purchased for the purpose of keeping up with weeds in the playground. The brush dump will open again in the summer with supervision. Hall rentals have continued as well. Hautala explained the current Board works well together and has gotten a lot of things done.

**Supervisor Paris:** Liaison for Road & Bridge reported we have two full time employees, temporary employees, and part-time employees. Currently the Road & Bridge crew are trying to keep up on roads during snow storms. Last summer Balsam Lane was overhauled. Hopefully it will finally hold up this spring. Last spring there were two culvert failures; one on Elm and one on Maple. They have been replaced. General road maintenance of grading, dust control, brushing, and ditching gets done during the summer. Aspen Lane was another road that was completely overhauled last summer. Residents were very happy to see this. They said they haven't seen a complete overhaul in 30 years. When Luke Soderling was on the Board he wanted to implement a road plan similar to this, by focusing on redoing one road a year. Paris thanked all volunteers; John Kuitunen and Tom Carlson work on the ice rink, Patricia Undelund and Ernie Kauppi for cemetery flowers, and everyone that helps with township events.

**Supervisor Hall:** Reported the township is working on getting broadband in the area. Currently Mediacom has been granted a grant for \$865,000.00 and plan to cover part of the township (a map was available for residents to view). The project is slated to start at the end of next summer and completion is set for summer of 2024. He further explained that CTC is a provider in the Cherry area and they are working on getting a \$4,000,000.00 grant to have coverage from Gilbert to Aurora. Hall is hoping they will be able to into our township since Mediacom doesn't cover the whole township. There was a little discussion as to whether or not this will be treated as a utility or if residents will be able to choose a provider. No fire report.

**Motion** by Todd Hall, seconded by Kirstie Hall to accept the 2022 reports as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **Appropriation of funds for 4<sup>th</sup> of July and Halloween Celebrations and any other donations**

Walter Hautala asked the residents to review the financial reports of the parties from 2022. He noted that there is not enough in the Community Celebration Fund and believes another \$1,000.00 should help cover the costs.

**Motion** by Walter Hautala, seconded by Todd Hall to transfer \$1,000.00 from the General Fund to the Community Celebration Fund, setting the fund to \$1,822.70.

Emily Highland read donation request letters the office has received from the County Fair Board and Gilbert Police Department. The general consensus was that these two letters do not really pertain the township. She also reported on Youth in Action and explained in the past the township has supported two students because there are two school districts within our township. That donation letter comes later in the spring.

**Motion** by Walter Hautala, seconded by Richard Freeburg to support two students from Youth in Action.

*Discussion* – Ricky Wilson asked the cost per student. Last year the cost was \$100.00. It is unknown if that price will be the same this year. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **Old Business**

**Broadband** – Discussed earlier.

**Recreation use of Township Property (Shelters)** – Discussed earlier.

#### **New Business –**

Luke Soderling – Requested the Board continue to move forward in budgeting for a road plan and focus on overhauling and keeping up on maintenance of roads. Gordy Imberg mentioned concerns about washouts, those need to take priority. Soderling explained this would only focus on continued maintenance and understands emergencies need to be addressed right away. He is just requesting a plan and to have the Board stay on top it, if possible.

#### **Report of 2023 Township Election**

Head Judge Kirstie Hall read the Election results of the 23 total votes casted (attached to these minutes).

Supervisor for a Term of 3 years:	Jim Paris	22
	Write-In	1
Treasurer for a Term of 2 years:	Julie Bluhm	22
	Blank Vote	1

The results will be canvassed after the annual meeting.

Comments - None

**Set Reconvened Meeting** – No reconvened meeting needed.

**Set date, time and place for the 2024 Election and Annual Meeting**

Election tentatively set for Tuesday, March 12, 2024 Polls open from 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM

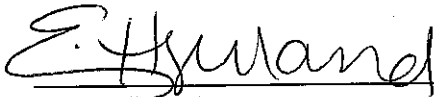
Annual Meeting Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at 8:30 P.M.

There was no contest to the set time and place for the 2024 Township Election and Annual Meeting.

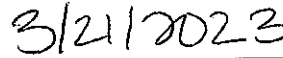
**Adjourn**

**Motion** by Kirstie Hall, seconded by Floyd Strehlow to adjourn the annual meeting at 9:51 PM. Motion carried unanimously.

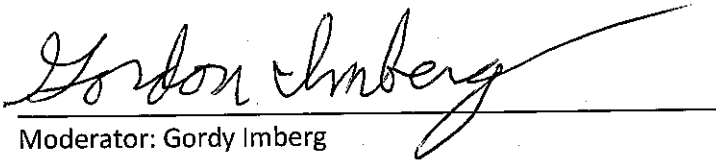
\*All attachments are located in the minute book.



Attest by Clerk:



Date:



Moderator: Gordy Imberg

At 10:00 PM the Board of Canvass was called to order.

Clerk Highland issued the Oath of Canvass to the Supervisors.

**Motion** by Supervisor Hall, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to accept the election results, declaring Jim Paris as Supervisor for three years and Julie Bluhm as Treasurer for two years. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board of Canvass adjourned at 10:01 PM.