

**Biwabik Township Monthly Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Biwabik Township Hall - 6555 Oak Drive, Gilbert, MN**  
**Monday, May 8, 2023**

**Call to Order:** 5:35 PM by Chairman Hautala

Present: Supervisors Hall, Hautala, and Paris, Clerk Highland, and Treasurer Bluhm  
5 Guests; Kirstie Hall, Tony Nygaard, Jaymes Cuff, Erik Erie, and Gordy Imberg

**Pledge of Allegiance:** Recited

**Special Agenda Request:**

Erik Erie – Thanked all the Board members and employees of Biwabik Township. He came to address the levy increase that was passed during the annual meeting. The money on hand looks like there is no need for an increase. He also explained that valuations are going up, while homestead credits are going down. The concern for a levy increase due to a \$20,000.00 deficit doesn't seem fit with a balance of \$678,684.80 (checking account + investments from December 2022). If there is all this money, you aren't letting the money work for you. Surrounding areas (Mesabi East & City of Biwabik) have fund balance policies, only letting you keep a certain percentage on hand. The need to raise doesn't seem plausible at this time. The Board members, past and present, have informed me (Erie) that the township should keep a year's worth of operating money on hand. Erie feels that the township should move money on hand. He also feels that there should be more notice given about potential increases via mailings. Chairman Hall explained the levy is always discussed at the annual meeting and it is published in the Hometown Focus and posted at the town hall and Lakeland Store. However, he does understand there could be a need for more posting. The overall issue we are having, in general, there has been a decrease in public service. People aren't coming to the polls to vote locally and equally are not attending meetings. Erie would help sponsor a mailing to all residents in the township as an extra reminder about the annual meeting/levy increase. He also suggested adding the annual meeting date to the county's proposed tax statement. Supervisor Paris said the Board will ask the assessor during the Local Board of Appeal and Equalization meeting if it is possible to add our annual meeting information to the tax notices. Overall, Erie feels the taxes he pays are well spent and thankful for responses he receives from the Board. The Township offers great services.

Jim Paris – Wanted to address the nasty emails and phone calls that have been received from a non-resident due to a culvert replacement project on Evergreen. He continued with explaining he has gotten emails complaining about damage done from snowplowing. Paris is concerned about continuing to offer snowplowing services due to complaints and the unknown insurance coverage. Clerk Highland has a call to MATIT for clarification on what exactly will and will not be covered moving forward. Basically, making sure equipment is covered if damage is incurred to it while on private property. Supervisor Hautala explained it is our own liability to enter properties. He would like to check with the attorney on our current contract wording. MATIT says its good we have a contract, but is unable to help with wording.

**Motion** by Chairman Hall, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to contact Couri and Ruppe, have them review our current contract and update as necessary. Motion carried unanimously.

Hautala feels more comfortable making a decision based off of the lawyers input.

**Minutes: Motion** by Supervisor Paris, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to approve the April 10, 2023 Monthly Board Meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

**Financial Report:** Treasurer Bluhm went over the February Financial Report with the Board.

Opening Balance 04/01/2023	\$ 436,482.21
Receipts	\$ 1,849.02
Disbursements	\$ 39,314.93
Ending Balance 04/30/2023	\$ 399,016.30
Deposits in Transit	\$ - 100.00
Outstanding Checks	\$ 2,389.47
Petty Cash	\$ - 100.00
<b>Total Checking Acct.</b>	<b>\$ 401,105.77</b>
<b>Total Investments</b>	<b>\$ 197,257.13</b>

**Motion** by Supervisor Paris, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to approve the financial report for April 2023 and file it for audit. Motion carried unanimously.

**Claims:** Clerk Highland reviewed the claims with the Board. **Motion** by Supervisor Paris, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to approve claims as presented for \$22,434.91. Motion carried unanimously.

**Reports:**

**Road & Equipment-** Supervisor Paris reported Pettit Road is open. A 15 inch culvert is getting placed on Elm along with a new culvert placed on Evergreen. Gravel patching and grading is occurring as able. We have received warranty parts for the Walk & Roll packer. The complaint (giant pot hole) on Lerch Lane is getting addressed. Supervisor Hautala reported Highway 20, Hutter Road, and Highway 97 will be resurfaced starting at the end of May. The county is also changing Redwood so it joins Highway 20 at a 90 degree angle.

Clerk Highland distributed a road plan rough draft. This is by the request of Luke Soderling during the Annual Meeting. It lists all the township roads and marks when brushing, ditching, culverts, and class 5 lift have been completed. Ideally the goal is to get 1-2 roads done a year and keep them on a rotating schedule. This is all weather pending and other roads still need general maintenance. **Motion** by Supervisor Hautala, seconded by Chairman Hall to do complete overhauls of Elm Drive and Jackpine Lane in 2023. Motion carried unanimously. Foreman Merritt has informed Paris he would like to address Cypress Lane in 2023. **Motion** by Supervisor Paris, seconded by Chairman Hall to overhaul Cypress Lane as the third road, if time allows, in 2023. Motion carried unanimously.

The grader needs new cutting edges. A quote from H&L was submitted for steel blades, flame harden blades, and carbide bits. Merritt recommends the flame hardened blades, however they are on backorder. If blades are needed before the hardened blades are available he suggested the steel blades because he can put them back on for the winter.

**Motion** by Supervisor Paris, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to order flame harden blades for \$600.00 and steel blades for \$434.00, a total of \$1,044.00. Motion carried unanimously.

Supervisor Paris noted the Culvert policy needs to be updated. Currently it states that a driveway culvert needs to be 20', but it has been discovered that that's too short. The old mine pipes that are in many driveways are 33'. Merritt can make 32' work by adjoining two smaller culverts. **Tabled.**

**Fire-** One call for April. SCBA training completed. New wildland gear is needed. It was never purchased last year. **Motion** by Supervisor Paris, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to purchase five sets of wildland gear for \$6,000.00 including shipping. Motion carried unanimously.

The background check for Jasmin McDaniel came in. **Motion** by Chairman Hall, seconded by Supervisor Paris to hire McDaniel pending physical. Motion carried unanimously.

Paris reminded Nygaard the by-laws need updating.

City of McKinley is ready to move forward with the collaboration. Attorney process will be reviewed at the end of the meeting\*.

**First Responders-** No report.

**Recreation-** Supervisor Hautala would like to see fill around the new picnic shelters. Supervisor Paris would like to see black dirt and grass seed/sod planted up to the slabs. Hautala would like to move forward with the portable volleyball net project. Clerk Highland reported one of the beams was mangled after getting pulled out of the ground. Supervisor Paris suggested the beam could be fabricated.

**Cemetery-** Memorial Day Service prep has begun. Clerk Highland handed out cemetery maps with all the veterans marked. Chairman Hall will contact the VFW. Gordy Imberg will be responsible for all flags. Clerk Highland and Treasurer Bluhm will cook the sloppy joes. **Motion** by Chairman Hall, seconded by Supervisor Paris to allot \$200.00 for the Memorial Day Service written to Walter Hautala – Recreation. Motion carried unanimously. Supervisor Hautala noted people appreciate the memorial service. He would like to see the cemetery cleaned up and mowed before the service. There is a dead tree along the east side of the cemetery that should be removed.

**Motion** by Supervisor Paris, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to approve the reports as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

**Old Business:**

Lakeland Trailer Park – Joe Nygaard submitted a letter asking if there is building official for the township. The county regulates all the township planning and zoning. Nygaard will need to contact them for a building permit.

Broadband Info – Chairman Hall has been volentold (not from the Township) to create a broadband group. He doesn't want to run it, he just wants to see what providers and services are available to the underserved. MediaCom is slated to finish their project within the township by August 2024. Hall still hopes to get another provider in the area as MediaCom will not cover the entire township.

Parking Lot – Supervisor Hautala will make contact with Mesabi Bituminous.

Boiler Issues – Waiting on Hometown Electric to connect the boiler. Holding half of the Approve Plumbing payment to confirm the system is in working order.

Cemetery Tree Removal Quote – No update.

Dumpster – Supervisor Paris called to order a dumpster after the last meeting and was met with multiple options including a delivery fee of \$300.00. **Motion** by Chairman Hall, seconded by Supervisor Paris to order a brown dumpster with locking metal lids. Motion carried unanimously. Paris will still pick up the dumpster. Mileage is cheaper than \$300.00.

Senator Money Update – Clerk Highland explained and requested the following actions regarding receiving the Senator Grant Money.

**Motion** by Chairman Hall, seconded by Supervisor Paris to allow Dick Grabko from CRD to contact DSGW Architecture and Benchmark Engineers as needed for information. Motion carried unanimously. Supervisor Paris would like time frame updates.

**Motion** by Supervisor Paris, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to adopt the conflict of interest policy, stating that no Board members or committee members will derive any personal gains. Motion carried unanimously.

**Motion** by Chairman Hall, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to acknowledge the Certification and Disclosure stating there are no conflicts of interest either personal or organizational anticipated for the project. Motion carried unanimously.

**Motion** by Chairman Hall, seconded by Supervisor Paris to adopt the Certification for Contracts, Grants and Loans Exhibit A-1. Motion carried unanimously.

**Motion** by Supervisor Paris, seconded by Chairman Hall to accept the assurances as filled in by Dick Grabko. Motion carried unanimously.

All paperwork, contracts, policies were signed and Clerk Highland will submit accordingly.

Residential Snowplowing – Discussed earlier. Resident Imberg requested residents get informed if there is a change in our snowplowing policy.

**New Business:**

Other Concerns –

Supervisor Paris would like a sign department contacted. It was discovered this spring that we do not have enough signs if there is a road closure. Clerk Highland suggested calling Mesabi Sign. Chairman Hall would like to see what Tri-Mark has to offer for signs.

Supervisor Paris addressed resident Erik Erie and explained there is still a possibility to drop the approved levy in the fall after the proposed tax statements are received. This would be done by the Board if the increase overshoots too much.

\*Continued Fire Collaboration Discussion – Chairman Hall has received the four page contract for \$5,500.00; explaining that the Township will charge McKinley \$7,500.00 for fire services and the township would lease McKinley's equipment for \$2,000.00. Supervisor Paris asked who covers the building costs. Hall replied the city owns and pays for utilities on the building. Chief Nygaard wants to make sure the contract states the city will cover all building utilities. We will need a separate lease agreement for the building. Paris wants to make sure the building coverage by the city is listed on the

building lease. Major equipment repairs would be split between both municipalities. McKinley would also receive first responder coverage from the Township. The fire agreement would be reviewed after the first and fifth year, with renewal after 10 years. The general contract seemed fair and can be sent to City of McKinley for review. Hall will contact Ruppe about creating separate equipment and building leases. **Motion** by Chairman Hall, seconded by Supervisor Paris to send the preliminary contract to McKinley for review. Motion carried unanimously.

**Correspondence:** The correspondence was reviewed by the Board. No action.

- RAMS – Misc Emails
- PERA – Fire retirement emails
- MAT – Misc Emails
- SLCAT – Annual Meeting registration
- MN Revenue – Annual Mineral Hearing Notice
- St. Louis County
  - LBAE emails
  - MA webinar notice

**Hall Rentals:**

- Donna Peterson – Saturday, June 10, 2023
- Lyle Matteson – Saturday, June 24, 2023
- William Auto – Saturday, July 1, 2023

**Motion** by Supervisor Paris, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to approve hall rentals. Motion carried unanimously.

**Comments from the Audience:**

Kirstie Hall – There are still people driving fast down her road. She asked the Board if the blind child area sign has ever been found. She requested if the Board would continue to look into it. There was discussion about why the township cannot post speed limit signs. Supervisor Paris asked if the Board should follow through with getting a Sheriff to attend meetings. This would be a good reason to have one present.

**Adjourn: Motion** by Supervisor Paris to adjourn the meeting. Chairman Hall adjourned the meeting at 8:53 PM.



Chairperson:



Date:



Attest by Clerk: