

BIWABIK TOWNSHIP ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES

Township Hall - 6555 Oak Drive, Gilbert, MN

Tuesday, March 12, 2024 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, Erik Erie, Kit Wagner, Walt Hautala, Gordy Imberg, Julie Bluhm, Chuck & Nita Larson.

Pledge of Allegiance - Recited

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

Walt Hautala nominated Gordy Imberg, supported by Chuck Larson.

Jim Paris nominated Luke Soderling, supported by Richard Freeburg.

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

By show of hands she asked those in favor of Gordy, 5 votes.

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

Motion to accept Luke Soderling as Moderator carried. Clerk Highland gave Oath of Moderator to Luke Soderling.

2023 Annual Town Meeting Minutes

Motion by Todd Hall, seconded by Nita Larson to waive the reading of the 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes. No Discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Todd Hall, seconded by Kirstie Hall to approve the 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes. No discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

2023 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 Erik Erie to approve the 2023 Financial and Audit Report. No discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

Proposed 2025 Levy

Julie Bluhm read the levy proposal of \$400,000.00. There is not recommended change in the Levy from 2024 to 2025. There was discussion on the 2025 budget. Erik Erie was wondering if the township will receive enough income to cover the budget that is set. In 2023 the amount receipted was not enough to cover the budget. It was explained that 2024 Levy increase will take two years to finally receive. Erie feels that having \$644,000.00 (checking and savings) on hand is over the Levy request amount and that we are being overtaxed in the township. Over 100% fund balance doesn't match what county, cities, and school districts keep on hand. This money should be used for operating, not sitting in the bank. Erie suggests not raising the Levy until the fund balance is down to 50%.

Moderator Soderling reminded Erie there is a 0% Levy increase on the table. Luke Soderling added that when he was on the Board MAT continually recommended a 100% fund balance. The township only receives money in January, June, and December. There needs to be enough money to cover in between payments. A general poll by show of hands was taken to see who was in favor of setting a 50% fund balance. There were only three residents interested. Soderling feels the Board should have a financial liability risk assessment taken to show what the fund balance should be. Setting a fund balance needs to be discussed at the Board Meeting level.

Motion by Kirstie Hall, seconded by Walt Hautala to set the 2025 levy at \$400,000.00. Motion carried unanimously.

2023 Department Reports

Supervisor Paris: Submitted a written report attached to these minutes. Luke Soderling would like to see the cost of a long range road plan. It will help raise the Levy in the future. Walt Hautala complimented the Road and Bridge crew on taking over the maintenance on equipment.

EMR Director Nita Larson: Reported there was an average of four calls a month in 2023. We have been answering mutual aid call as it is hard to get people to respond during the day. Nita is working on recruitment.

Chairman Hautala: Hautala reported the township installed new picnic shelters and made the parking lot safer in 2023. In 2024 he would like to move forward with upgrading the tennis courts to a pickle ball court and tennis court. This will cost about \$64,500.00. We have been awarded \$15,000.00 from IRRRB so far. Walt is continuing to ask for monies from corporate businesses. He hopes a 501C3 would be willing to accept a grant on our behalf i.e. a camp that uses our recreation facilities. There was a suggestion of adding a new township sign for posting purposes. Walt agrees that would be a good addition to the township. We are still in the process of receiving a \$920,000.00 grant for an addition to the fire hall. If there are remaining funds, they will get put towards recreation projects (that have previously been approved). The holiday parties went well and are well attended.

Supervisor Hall: Explained that the grant Walt referred to for the fire hall is a federal grant that we are receiving. The amount is so high because when it was originally awarded to us it was combined with the City of Biwabik's portion. We fought for the full amount that was originally awarded to us. We had to wait for another grant cycle for it to get approved. A training officer and new Assistant Chief have been hired. All air tanks have been replaced. It was discovered that they were all (20) due at the same time. This caused for the Fire Department to go over budget. The future plan is to start a Fire Savings account with any leftover budgeted money at the end of the year. This account will be available for the expensive unexpected purchases. We have expanded our coverage area and have now acquired coverage of McKinley for fire and EMR services. There is no cemetery report. Todd Hall also explained the township is in need of more Election Judges.

Motion by Kirstie Hall, seconded by Chuck Larson to accept the 2023 reports as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Appropriation of funds for 4th of July and Halloween Celebrations and any other donations

Emily Highland reviewed the party financial reports. The current Celebration Fund is at \$183.12. If parties are to be held in 2024 not only will funds need to be transferred, but volunteers are needed. Richard Freeburg feels that if the residents want the parties, they should be the ones to run them. It should not fall on the responsibility of the Board.

Motion by Gordy Imberg, seconded by Todd Hall to transfer \$1,800.00 from the General Fund to the Community Celebration Fund, setting the fund to \$1,983.12.

Discussion – Erik Erie feels township election information is more important than community events and should be published in the East Range Times as that is more readily available in the area. He would also like to see newsletters sent out to all township households. Emily Highland responded the reason Election information is published in Home Town Focus is because it is our legal newspaper. We only publish community events in the East Range Times because we want to try and keep our parties available to locals. Richard Freeburg explained that currently a third party mailer would need to be used for bulk mailings. Luke Soderling agreed more engagement from the community is needed. **Motion** carried by majority vote, 2 Nays.

Emily Highland 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. The County Fair always sends a solicitation, but we have never sent a donation.

Motion by Erik Erie, seconded by Kirstie Hall to support two students from Youth in Action. Motion carried unanimously.

Old Business

Broadband – Todd Hall reported conduit is getting placed throughout the township by Mediacom. They have run out of their original \$2,000,000.00 funding and were not able to lay conduit through the whole township. Mediacom recently was awarded about \$850,000.00 to finish laying conduit in the township. There is no time frame on a completion date. Mediacom does plan on having a community planning meeting when it gets closer to the actual build date. Notice of this meeting will be the responsibility of Mediacom. Even though Mediacom is the company that is laying the conduit in the township Todd has also been working with Northspan and CTC, two other broadband companies in the area.

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.

Erik Erie – Requested the Board to be more proactive on getting information out to the public.

Report of 2024 Township Election

Head Judge Kit Wagner read the Election results of the 35 total votes casted (attached to these minutes).

Supervisor for a Term of 3 years:	Todd Hall	33
	Write-In	1
	Blank Vote	1
Clerk for a Term of 2 years:	Kirstie Hall	32
	Write-In	3

The results will be canvassed after the annual meeting.

Comments

Erik Erie thanked Emily for her years of service.

Emily Highland read a letter thanking the residents for allowing her to serve for the last 10.5 years.

Luke Soderling asked those in attendance for round of applause for Emily.

Set Reconvened Meeting – No reconvened meeting needed.

Set date, time and place for the 2025 Election and Annual Meeting

Election tentatively set for Tuesday, March 11, 2025 Polls open from 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM


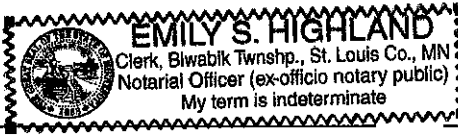
Annual Meeting Tuesday, March 11, 2025 at 8:30 P.M.

Motion by Todd Hall, seconded by Kirstie Hall to set the Township Election and Annual Meeting during the afore mentioned date/times.

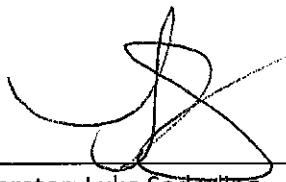
Adjourn

Motion by Todd Hall, seconded by Kirstie Hall to adjourn the annual meeting at 10:43 PM. Motion carried unanimously.

*All attachments are located in the minute book.

  3/14/2024

Attest by Clerk: _____ Date: _____



Moderator: Luke Soderling

At 10:43 PM the Board of Canvass was called to order.

Clerk Highland issued the Oath of Canvass to the Supervisors.

Motion by Supervisor Paris, seconded by Supervisor Hautala to accept the election results, declaring Todd Hall as Supervisor for three years and Kirstie Hall as Clerk for two years. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Supervisor Paris to Adjourn he Board of Canvass at 10:45 PM. Canvass Adjourned.