

**MINUTES from the P&D Meeting  
Harris Township Board  
Wednesday, January 28, 2009 at 7:30pm**

The P&D Meeting of the Harris Town Board was held on January 28, 2009. The meeting was called to order at 7:30pm, at the Harris Town Hall, with the following officers present: Supervisors Gary Rosato, Dennis Kortekaas, and Larry Key, and Clerk Michele Smith. Absent: Treasurer Peggy Bishop.

Guests in attendance at tonight's meeting: Julie Kennedy - SEH Engineer, Keith Hunt and Gary Johnson – Representatives from Paul Bunyan Telephone / TV, and Dick Gunderson – Underwood Road resident

**1. Pledge to the flag**

**2. Gary Johnson – Paul Bunyan Representative**

- Update the Board on any expansion opportunity into Harris Township

Gary Johnson is the Chief Operating Officer (CEO) for Paul Bunyan, and was invited to tonight's meeting by Supervisor Rosato in hopes of opening up discussions again on Paul Bunyan (PB) coming to Harris Township. With Gary Johnson was Keith Hunt, also from Paul Bunyan, whom the township dealt with in 2006-2007.

The discussion began by Mr. Johnson saying that Paul Bunyan is still interested in servicing Harris Township. They have completed the City of Grand Rapids and are pleased with what's progressed with current business. Supervisor Rosato expressed that the Board continues to get requests from residents to have Paul Bunyan come to Harris Township and that we were pleased they were still interested in our township.

Supervisor Rosato heard that rules may have changed with regards to bringing in a second cable franchise without them having to serve an equal service area. However, the Paul Bunyan representatives said they had not heard of such a change. Rosato clarified that we will need to verify if statutes had changed around this issue, with our legal advisor.

The Board and Paul Bunyan reviewed what happened in 2006-2007, when Paul Bunyan applied to come to Harris Township. The major sticking point was that PB had proposed to service only the northern area of township, but because Mediacom services all the township (north and south of the lake) in areas of sufficient density, the statutes suggest that PB needs to service an equal area of the township. The township attorney warned the Township that Mediacom could sue the township if we did not abide by that statute and allow PB to service only a portion of the township.

PB was asked by the Board if their position on only servicing the northern area of the township had changed. Mr. Johnson explained that it is always their hope serve an entire township in time...even without a mandate...but they still can't guarantee or commit to that.

There is a need in the township (areas of low density) that don't have an option for Mediacom, and that's where PB would prefer to go.

One option that the Township explored previously was to allow PB to only serve the northern portion of the township, but to service *every* resident in that area. However, because we're bound to a franchise agreement with Mediacom, our attorney suggested we would need to add a "hold harmless clause" whereby PB would indemnify the township if sued by Mediacom. That clause was a sticking point with PB and not accepted.

The Board asked if PB knew of other townships they served that also had a franchise agreement with Mediacom or other cable providers, yet still allowed PB to come in. Keith Hunt said they did in Bemidji and that Attorney Bob Vose worked with City of GR on a similar agreement. This is why the township chose to also work with attorney Vose when Paul Bunyan applied to come into the town of Harris. However, he is based out of the twin cities and meeting with him was difficult. PB suggested that it may be beneficial for the township to have a local attorney review the situation. The board agreed that this was a good idea, and discussed asking Attorney Andy Shaw to advise them. PB said they had dealt with Andy before.

One item noted to ask Shaw was if PB's existing application and application fee could still be used. It was not know if there was an expiration date on the app.

**Supervisor Key made a motion to have Supervisor Rosato contact Attorney Shaw & request that he look over the situation and the option to reopen negotiations with Paul Bunyan to service Harris Township while honoring the township's current franchise agreement with Mediacom. The motion was seconded by supervisor Kortekaas and upon roll call, duly passed.**

Gary will contact Andy Shaw, and Clerk Smith will send some back up documentation from 2006-2007 to Shaw as well.

### 3. Business from the floor

- **Dick Gunderson:**

1. Mr. Gunderson asked the Board if they'd heard anything about the "green acres" policy that Itasca county is proposing. He explained that it will charge higher taxes for timber land vs. open green space (pasture/farm) that you currently can claim as "agriculture". It would prevent people from getting a tax break if they had 5 acres and a horse and were claiming it as agriculture. Julie Kennedy stated she'd seen something, and had people ask her about it, but wasn't clear on exactly what it was. Gunderson said he stopped by to talk to the county assessor's office, but that they too seemed unsure on how this policy would affect people and their taxes. Supervisor Rosato offered to suggest that the Itasca County Twp Association bring someone in to talk about the "green acres" policy at an upcoming meeting.
2. The second item Mr. Gunderson wanted to bring to the Board's attention was that the grader has gone beyond the new turnaround on Root Road, near his house. In fact, the snow has been plowed two grader lengths past the end of maintenance sign. In the spring, this will cause ruts and rock in his field. Supervisor Key was surprised by this, as there were brightly colored posts where the grader should go, in addition to the end of maintenance sign. Key was confident that the turnaround was big enough, as it was built to the country's specifications. Key will talk to the County about rectifying this situation.
3. And, finally, Mr. Gunderson wanted to alert the Board to the intersection of Harris Town Road and Wendigo Park Road. When you come over the hill on Wendigo Park Road, and get to the 4 way stop at Harris Town Road, the intersection is very slippery and dangerous. The Board noted that they need to keep requesting salt/sand for the intersection, as it is one they drive on every day. The Board discussed that perhaps our service guys could even sand/salt the area by hand, or consider putting a sander on the pickup.

### 4. Roads

- Update by Julie Kennedy on any road related items

Julie is finalizing the final pay request on Wendigo Park Road, and it will be submitted for review and approval at the February Regular Meeting on 2/11/09. She will also bring other housekeeping items to that meeting.

- Extending the 40mph speed limit on River Road near Mornes Road

Supervisor Key discussed that where the 40mph ends on River Road, before Mornes Road is dangerous. The speed limit changes from 40mph to 55mph just before a corner. People are passing here, making it very dangerous. Adding to the danger are deer in the area, as there are people who feed them near this dangerous corner. Supervisor Key wondered if the speed limit of 40mph be pushed further south, past the corner a quarter mile, to Pennela Road. Julie Kennedy advised the Board that they would need to start this request with the County.

**Supervisor Key made a motion to request support of the Board to request that the 40 mph speed limit extend further east on River Road, around corner and to Pennela road. Upon a second by Supervisor Kortekaas, roll call was taken and the motion passed unanimously.**

Key will bring the request to the County.

- Underwood Road

Julie reported that Attorney Shaw is writing a legal description for the area of Underwood Road that the Board had approved for vacation. He may have something for the Board to act on by the Feb. 11, 2009 Regular Meeting.

At the request of the board, for budging purposes, Julie agreed to run some numbers for a cost estimate for turn-around on Underwood Road.

## 5. Recreation

There were no items to discuss for recreation.

## 6. Town Hall Report

A town hall report was not received.

## 7. Maintenance Report for December 2008

The report for December was reviewed. Supervisor Key added that the computer at the service center crashed recently. It was free computer given to the Township from the MN Association of Townships, and it's pretty old. Supervisor Rosato offered to check with Blandin Foundation on obtaining a donation of a computer they are no longer using, since the township is non profit.

## 8. Old Business

- Review boundary map for the Census and sign off on

The map was reviewed and one boundary was corrected near Isleview Road. However, it was unknown if roads on the map need to be corrected. Clerk Smith agreed to try and find that out.

***Since the map could not yet be sent back, and was due until March, Supervisor Key made a motion to table the completion of the map until the February 25, 2009 P&D Meeting. Upon a second by Supervisor Kortekaas, the motion was duly passed.***

- Review homelessness services for the Census and sign off on

There were no known homeless services in Harris Township, per the Board. The letter was signed and will be mailed back this week (due 1/31/09)

- Set new Tues. meeting date for Roundtable Discussion with Grand Rapids Staff

The previous meeting date with the City of Grand Rapids Staff (January 20, 2009) was cancelled. The Board discussed setting up another meeting date, and ***March 31, 2009, at 7:15pm at the Blandin Foundation*** was chosen. Smith will post the meeting and Rosato will contact the City of GR staff.

- Discuss process for hiring summer intern

Supervisor Key spoke with Alex Safe regarding our summer intern program with the Maintenance Crew. Alex is currently working for the township as a rink attendant and doing a great job. He is very interested working for the township this summer. He attends ICC, and may transfer to Mankato next fall. Supervisor Rosato and Clerk Smith will work together to develop an application for the summer intern program, including a place for a driver's license number for insurance purposes. Upon approval, Clerk Smith will send an application to Alex for the 2008 summer season.

- Feb. 3, 2009 Centennial Meeting – cancel & reschedule?

The Board discussed the centennial meeting scheduled for next week, February 3, 2009. Treasurer Peggy had advised the board that she probably would *not* be able to attend, and had only received a handful of pictures for the book that were due Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009. This due date was the reason that the meeting date was chosen for Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>, and it was the main topic for the meeting. Without Peggy there, it would be difficult have this discussion.

In addition, Clerk Smith suggested rescheduling the meeting due to the busyness of the season for her and the Treasurer with the budget, the audit, the election, and the annual report /town

meeting. The Board agreed. **A rescheduled date was NOT chosen** but will be put on the agenda to for the February 25<sup>th</sup> P&D meeting and will probably not occur until after the Annual meeting on March 10, 2009.

**9. New Business**

- Newsletter is due out in February – determine “who will write about what” by deadline of Feb 11
  - Gary – Township election and the importance of the annual meeting (Township Day)
  - Larry – Wendigo Picnic Area
  - Dennis – Noxious weeds and the job of the township weed inspector
  - Michele – Paul Bunyan
  - Julie – TBD
  - Peggy – Centennial
  
- Discuss seminar attended today by the Board: *10 Symptoms of a Dysfunctional Board*

The Board was impressed with the seminar, and everyone got something out of it. Gary, Larry, Dennis, Michele and Julie all attended. Michele shared that she felt job descriptions would be a good idea for board, the clerk and treasurer, and even for Julie and Andy with regards to what duties are expected, and when to “report, then tell”, when to “tell, then report”, and when to “do, and no need to report”. Michele also suggested creating a “Board handbook” – similar to the employee handbook, but for officers of the board. This would include the job descriptions, rates of pay, and “jurisdiction” guidelines. The Board all enjoyed learning about their different leadership styles.
  
- Set next budget meeting date (to be approved by Peggy)

The date for the next budget meeting was set **for Feb 10<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday – at 7:30pm at the town hall**, if available. Clerk Smith will check on this and post it accordingly.

**10. Adjourn.**

**Supervisor Key made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Kortekaas to adjourn 9:25pm.  
Meeting adjourned.**

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**Upcoming Meetings:**

February 9, 2009 - Association Meeting  
February 11, 2009 – Regular Meeting (NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE TO MICHELE !!!!!)