

MINUTES from the P&D Meeting
Harris Township Board
Wednesday, October 26, 2011 at 7:30pm

The regularly scheduled P&D Meeting of the Harris Town Board was held on Wednesday, October 26, 2011. The meeting was called to order at 7:30pm by Chairman Rosato, at the Harris Town Hall, with the following officers present: Supervisors Gary Rosato and Larry Key, Clerk Michele Smith, and Treasurer Becky Adams. **Absent: Dennis Kortekaas**

Also in attendance: Julie Kennedy - SEH Road Engineer, Phil McDonald and Jacque Edwards - IICC interns, Mike Hendricks – Township Recreational Advisor, and approximately 6 residents.

1. Pledge to the flag

2. ICC Interns: Phil McDonald and Jacque Edwards

For the past couple years, the township has teamed up with two or three ICC Engineering interns– particularly those in civil engineering – and reviewed the “Service Center” property, and its proposed usages and needs. This year, the interns will be concentrating on mapping and organizing the paved and gravel roads in Harris Township, which will help with the valuation report needed for the annual audit by Eikill & Schilling. The mapping will also be useful in preparing an update to the township’s comprehensive plan.

The interns showed the board (via an LCD image) a color-coded gravel road map, noting that colors represented the year that the roads had some maintenance done. The maintenance was new gravel added during the annual “gravel road project”. This project has the township’s gravel roads on a 5 year rotation, which allows every road in the township to get new gravel every 5 years, for maintenance purposes.

While the interns were working on the gravel road map, they discovered some issues, such as township roads marked as private with the county’s GIS info, which causes jurisdictional discrepancies. The interns will advise the county with any corrections they find.

Once the maps are done for both gravel and paved roads, the next step will be to create a spreadsheet for township road valuation. For this, the interns will go out into the field and collect data. Ultimately, when it comes back to SEH, they will put the information on a map and add such details such as road width, length, type of road (gravel or paved), ditches, visible culverts, year of reconstruction, etc. This will help determine the inventory and valuation of all roads in the township, as needed for the audit. This spreadsheet will be flexible, so amounts can be changed in the years to come.

Other options discussed were color coding where the township has ROW – platted vs. prescriptive, and possibly adding GIS mapping of road sign location.

At the November 16th P&D meeting, the interns will bring the board printouts of a draft valuation spreadsheet and maps.

In December, there is no P&D meeting scheduled, but the board thought they could incorporate the interns and their information into a comprehensive planning meeting so that we have it in time for the audit.

3. Tom Chandler, Steve Chandler and Joe Akre – Horseshoe Lake Road residents

Tom Chandler, Steve Chandler and Joe Akre, residents of Horseshoe Lake Road (in Grand Rapids city limits) approached the board, stating they were annexed into the City of Grand Rapids in 2008. Since then, they found out there was a way to fight the annexation – but they just discovered it now. According to MN State Statute #414.06 “Detachment of Property from a Municipality”, residents can file a petition for detachment from the city. If the area to detach is less than 40 acres, 100% of all property owners must have signed the petition; if more than 40 acres in size, then 75% of property owners must sign. (Copies of the MN state statute and a sample petition were shared with the board and a copy will be attached to these minutes.)

The frustrations expressed by the residents of Horseshoe Lake road were:

- The area where they live is rural in nature (5 or more acres) and they moved there for the freedoms that went along with being rural.
- Now that they are within city limits, there are many prohibitive restrictions on what they can do with their properties, due to city ordinances.
- Since being annexed, taxes have gone up - but no other services have been provided by the city except law enforcement. (The residents noted that this is not significant, as they were very satisfied with law enforcement provided by the county sheriff's department services prior to annexation by the city.)

Because of these frustrations, the residents requested that a portion of what was annexed by the City of Grand Rapids be absorbed into Harris Township. Chandler noted that some of the areas annexed *are* receiving city services, so they would have to remain in the city. And some areas are zoned commercial, so they too would need to stay a part of the city. However, it's the *other* areas which have no city services – other than police - that would like to join Harris Township.

The Horseshoe Lake Road residents commented that they did talk to an attorney, and he said it is possible for an area of a city to detach and become part of a neighboring township. In fact, they said there were 3 cases in last 5 years where this has been possible.

Overall, the residents asked the town board if this is something they were willing to consider. The total area they would like annexed is quite large – 300 + properties. It was stated that this request has not yet been discussed with all the residents, as the Chandlers/Akre wanted to first determine if it was even something the town board would consider before pursuing with the other residents in the area.

In response, Chairman Rosato stated that the board would need time to gather information on this statute and the 'detachment from a municipality' process, as it was something totally new for them. In addition, the township attorney would need to be consulted prior to responding to their request.

Some concerns/questions of the board were:

- Since the roads in the proposed 'detachment' area (including Horseshoe Lake Road) have recently been improved by the city, it was assumed that they (the city) would not want them to leave. Therefore, by trying to annex the area, it could jeopardize the township's relationship with the City of Grand Rapids staff.
- How would Harris Township benefit from annexing this area? (Why would the township want to do this?)
- What liabilities would the township take on, regarding roads/infrastructures? (Who would pay the legal fees?)
- What if Grand Rapids turns around and annexes a large chunk of Harris Twp?

Julie Kennedy noted that discussing the northern border of the township would be a natural topic for a proposed comprehensive plan discussion, including the pros and cons of annexing this area of the city.

Next step: The town board agreed to do some checking on this matter, and talk to the MN Association of Township attorney, as well as the township's local attorney if needed. The board also agreed to contact one of the residents (Chandler or Akre) about attending an upcoming comprehensive plan meeting when the township's northern boundary is discussed.

Chairman Rosato thanked the residents for coming to tonight's meeting.

4. Business from the Floor

- Dan Butterfield:

Dan Butterfield was in attendance, and commented on a County update to their zoning ordinances, in response to some changes that the state had made. Overall, he thought that the county's revisions would take "a bite" out of the current setbacks restrictions, as the term "personal hardship" was being replaced with "practical difficulty" – for which there is no definition. Overall, Butterfield felt the change was detrimental to the County ordinances.

Butterfield also commented that the “After the fact variance” regarding the Hammerlund gravel pit setback violation was tabled at request of contractor’s attorney, possibly until April, 2012.

5. Roads

- Updates by Julie Kennedy – SEH

- Apache Drive – patch needed at the end

Julie explained that we are starting to lose some of the shoulder at the end of Apache Drive, where it’s washing out and undercutting the bituminous due to drainage issues. A little bit of pavement is needed on the shoulder to help correct the drainage. However, Hawkinson is shutting down for the season this Friday, so suggested that perhaps the maintenance guys could use fix it by using cold patch. The size of the patch would need to be apx 2 ft by 30 ft long, so about 1 yard of material. There is a need to do this repair immediately, as spring is when the most runoff occurs and will cause even more damage.

The board requested that a contractor do the work, rather than the maintenance crew, as their supply of cold patch is limited, and it doesn’t hold as well as the professional material. Julie suggested that she could check with the driveway contractor for Hawkinson, to see if he might be available to place the patch.

Supervisor Rosato made a motion to authorize Julie Kennedy to contract with Hawkinson if available, to place a bituminous patch at the end of Apache Drive, approximately 2 feet by 30 feet in size. Supervisor Key seconded the motion, and upon roll call, motion passed.

- Mishawaka Road – project update

The last portion of Mishawaka road has been striped, namely the sub cut section that had been missed. One mail box was fixed, but one still needs some work.

A call was received from a resident, suggesting that a recommended speed be added to the signage for the speed humps. That way, he (and others) would know exactly how slow they should be going, when proceeding over them. Julie recommended against doing this, due to the liability involved, but instead suggested that “Speed humps ahead’ signs be posted in both directions, placed appropriately. This would warn people *ahead of time* to slow down, especially important on a connector road like Mishawaka. Since the road project contract is still open, Julie can still order the signs. The board agreed this would be a good idea.

Julie explained that there will be a pay request for November, but that it will not be the final payment, as they like to wait for one freeze/thaw cycle before totally closing out a project. This allows them time to evaluate how the material and work held up over the winter/spring. The retainage left to payout will then be down to 2.5%.

Supervisor Key noted that the dead trees at the Mishawaka landing have been taken down.

- Underwood:

All work for the Underwood Road project has been completed, and the final pay request will be submitted in November.

- Bear Creek:

The bids for a culvert at the east end of Bear Creek will be presented to the board at the Regular November 9th meeting. The work would then be done by the end of November.

- Wendigo Park Road

Supervisor Key received a request from Wendigo Park Road resident P. Jobe, to take down some dead trees that are an issue. Key said they will wait to do this until the spring.

6. Recreation - Mike Hendricks:

Mike reviewed the 2011 projects that had been completed:

- The fertilizer & herbicide application was completed on Oct 13, 2011, on all township properties.
- All fencing projects have been completed, including replacing the back stop at Crystal, adding a walk through at Crystal, and fixing the damaged fences at Wendigo.
- The trail from the parking lot to the picnic pavilion was completed at Crystal. Mike suggested adding a posting box at this new walkway entrance, particularly for reservation notices. Clerk Smith agreed, as did the board.

Budget item for 2012:

Mike had some suggestions for items to budget for in 2013, and/or projects to do in 2012:

- The dugouts were removed at Wendigo, but now benches are needed as well as fencing in front of them. Mike would like to see this done such that they are available for use next spring.
- Benches are also still needed for the tennis courts at Wendigo. These were approved for 2011, but they just didn't get around to finding the right benches. Mike suggested purchasing these benches at the same time as the player's benches.
- The hard surface at Wendigo is not getting any better, and so Mike again suggested – as he has for the past 2 years – tearing it out and replacing with a half court. He encouraged the board to look at this suggestion again for 2012. Mike estimated that the cost for the slab would be around \$2,500.00
- The Tennis courts at Wendigo are in need of replacement.
- A tree wind-break at cemetery is still needed. There are two more years on the lease agreement to Johnsons for hay stumpage, but Mike would like to see this project put in the budget.

7. Town Hall Report – for September 13 – October 8, 2011

The town board reviewed the Town Hall report, as submitted by the caretaker. There were 12 rentals and no damages or injuries reported.

8. Maintenance Report – for August 2011

The board reviewed the Maintenance Report, as submitted by the maintenance crew, without comment. There were no injuries damages reported.

9. Old Business

- Comprehensive Plan update (Julie Kennedy)

Julie met with John Powers to discuss updating the comprehensive plan, as previously approved by the board. Julie gave the board a "Proposal of Professional Services to Update the Harris Township Comprehensive Plan", from Powers (aka 'Applied Insights – North') for review, and suggested that the board take action on the proposal at the November 9th regular meeting. (A copy will be attached to these minutes).

Julie hi-lighted certain areas of the proposal, including page 2 "Understanding of the Project", noting that the township's first comprehensive plan was done in 2006, and that the township now seeks to update its plan primarily to address three major topics, as listed:

- General review of all basic information, understanding the current and likely future dynamics, and the community goals and policies
- Prepare a master plan for the proposed new community center complex
- Devise, in cooperation with the City of Grand Rapids and Itasca County, a more detailed plan for the Highway 169 corridor

Julie also pointed out that the planning committee for the comprehensive plan update would just the town board, rather than the board plus community members. However, when the draft document is completed, it would be shared with the whole community and comments would be requested. There

would be input meetings during the process, where certain groups would be invited in – especially the businesses along Hwy 169.

Other items noted by Julie were:

- The proposed project timeline is 6-7 months, with completion being May or June 2012, with 7 meetings total (apx 1/month).
- The ICC student interns would be utilized for the mapping. The maps would support the comprehensive plan.
- **The proposed cost for the update was \$11,950, plus cost of putting the maps together** – which would be the cost for the interns and the cost for SEH to do the technical work.

The town board agreed to review the information and take action on the proposal during the Regular Meeting on November 9th.

- Review of the 2011 Budget to Actual report (Treasurer Adams)

Treasurer Adams shared a “budget to actual” financial report with the board, which listed, by fund, each line item expense, the amount spent to date per line item, and the 2011 adopted budget amount by line item. There was also a column for the variance % of the budget spent, and for the variance dollar amount, noting if the amount spent to date was over or under budget.

The report covered expenses paid through September 30, 2011, or the first 3 quarters of the year. Thus, a variance of 75% or less was considered to be *under* budget. Adams was pleased to note that all of the funds were under budget, with the exception of Buildings & Grounds, which was at 82%; all the other funds were under 75%.

The board found this report extremely valuable, especially when considering upcoming project proposals, and thanked Adams for sharing it with them. Adams stated she will try and share this report with them at the end of each quarter.

- Consider moving forward with G.I.S. system for Harris Cemetery, with City of Grand Rapids (as tabled from Sep 28th P&D Mtg)

The board again reviewed the proposal received from Mike LeClaire, for a GIS system for Harris Cemetery. Mike previously held a demonstration of the system for the board, to show them the many uses it has currently for the City of Grand Rapids and how it could be used for Harris Township – primarily the cemetery to start.

The proposal showed that the description of GIS work would include design of the program, the digitized cemetery layout, a link for headstone photos, digitize cremations (after data entry is complete, and location of cremations is provided), and a scan & link of obituaries and documents (after data entry is complete). The proposal also included the design and customization of the stand alone database program.

After reviewing the ‘budget to actual’ report for the cemetery, noting the 43% variance (i.e. significantly below budget), Supervisor Key made a motion to move forward with the GIS work and stand alone database for \$4,272.00 as shown in the proposal. The data entry needed for the project, however, would be done by an ICC intern(s), and not city staff, as shown as an optional ‘add on’ in the proposal. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Rosato, and upon roll call, duly carried.

Julie agreed to work with Mike LeClaire, regarding use of the interns and their maps.

10. New Business

- Credit card needed for parts purchase:

Supervisor Key explained that the maintenance crew found a part that they need for their pressure washer but that it’s only available online, and requires a credit card to purchase it. The maintenance crew does not have a credit card, and so was asking for Key’s help. The total amount for the part is approximately \$26.00.

Because the board has chosen *not* to provide a credit card for use by the maintenance crew, Treasurer Adams suggested that a limited amount 'debit card' or a preloaded credit-type card from our main bank, Wells Fargo, could work for situations such as these. She will check into this option. For the current situation, however, Supervisor Rosato agreed to make the purchase on his personal credit card, and then request reimbursement.

11. Adjourn

Supervisor Key made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:13pm; Rosato seconded. Motion carried

Respectfully submitted,

Michele R. Smith – Harris Township Clerk