

**MINUTES from the P&D Meeting
Harris Township Board
Wednesday, February 27, 2013 at 7:30pm**

The regularly scheduled P&D Meeting of the Harris Town Board was held on Wednesday, February 27, 2013. The meeting was called to order at 7:30pm by Chairman Key, at the Harris Town Hall, with the following officers present: Supervisors Gary Rosato, Dennis Kortekaas, Larry Key, and Treasurer Becky Adams and Clerk Michele Smith. *Absent: none.*

Also in attendance: Julie Kennedy – SEH Road Engineer, three ICC interns - Allie Jurvelin, Holly Busker, & Claire Schumacher, and Mike Hendricks – Recreational Advisor for the township. Dan Butterfield, Judy Myers, Leann Stoll and Cindy Martin – township residents - were also in attendance.

1. Pledge to the flag

2. Business from the Floor

- None

3. Trail project introduction - by ICC Interns Allie Jurvelin, Holly Busker, and Claire Schumacher

The ICC interns had met with Supervisor Kortekaas last week regarding the trails, and discussed with him that which would be presented at tonight’s meeting.

The interns shared 3 maps with the board, showing 3 different trail placement options to connect the Pokegama Lake causeway trail to the City of Grand Rapids trail along Isleview Road, which connects to the Mesabi trail.

The maps showed who owns the properties where the proposed trails would go, thus those affected. The interns noted that the trail would be within the township’s ROW near Mishawaka Road. They also noted that the part of the trail along Mishawka that is in *blue* on the maps, is owned by Grand Rapids and not the township, so that connection portion would need to be done by the city.

Also included for the board’s review was a “trail feasibility chart”, which will be filled out by the interns as the project goes along, noting pros/cons in 6 different areas such as cost, grant eligibility, impact to residents, etc.

The interns commented that they are open to input from the board on what they would like them to look into based on what’s important to them.

The discussion was then opened up to the floor for comments from audience members. There were questions/comments voiced about justifying the cost of a trail system, the feasibility of putting a trail through the rocky, hilly & swampy area of the township’s ROW near Mishawaka Road, the need/want for a trail system, and who would decide on moving forward with a trail system – just the board or residents, and what about motorized trails for snowmobiles or multiuse?

The board responded that trails are a part of the comprehensive plan, so it’s important for the township to at least look into its options. They reminded the audience that this trail project is a feasibility study only – nothing has been decided – but this would provide a plan for the future, should a trail system be desired. And that before anything would be decided on, the board stated they would hold a public input session, and bring it up at the annual meeting.

Overall, the board agreed to have the interns continue with the trail feasibility project to determine costs and pros/cons of the three proposed options. The board commented that the interns were a great resource for this research project.

4. Roads

- Julie Kennedy – SEH Road Engineer / road or project updates

- *Gravel Road Project*

The gravel road project is ready for April bidding; Julie noted that the gravel work will need to be timed with road inspections.

- *Pavement project –*

Julie reminded the board that LaPlant Road will be resurfaced by the county this summer and that Southwood Road has been proposed as a detour. A portion of LaPlant Road – from Hwy 169 to where it meets Southwood Road - would be closed apx June 1st – August 1st, 2013 for a total regrade project; Southwood Road would be the detour during this time. The remainder of LaPlant Road will be just a paving project, with work done August 1st– October 31st, 2013. Each project will be bid separately.

A map showing the location of the county projects on LaPlant Road as well as Crystal Springs Loop was given to the board for review. Also noted on the map was the location of the proposed 2013 township pavement projects on Southwood Road, Robinson Road and Stony Point Road. Julie pointed out that these township roads connect to county roads that would also be repaved this summer. As a result, it was suggested that the board may want to consider bidding county and township projects together, for savings on bulk pricing and reduced mobilization costs. While there was some concern that the county doesn't do the level of service the township does – like neighborhood meetings, mailers to warn of construction, etc. – Julie thought the township may be able to maintain the level of service they desire.

During the review of the map, Wesleyan was also shown as a road for the pavement project, as was discussed at the February 6th road budget meeting. However, the board clarified that the road they intended for repair was **Westwood Road** – *not Wesleyan*. Julie confirmed that this clarification made sense, as Westwood had been on the board's road list for a while as needing improvement.

Julie explained to the board that she will need to know by end of March how much money they will authorize to spend on a road pavement project in 2013; she agreed to start putting together figures to help the board decide what roads to do. Julie also asked to have the board's thoughts on bidding the township and county projects together by the end of March, as bidding will take place in May.

The board discussed that they will talk to the County Road Engineer regarding compensation for the County using Southwood Road as a detour given the damage it will likely cause from additional traffic and trucks hauling.

Another item that needs to be discussed with the County Road Engineer is resurfacing Stony Point Road, as part of it is outside Harris Township and in an unorganized township, and thus under the jurisdiction of the County.

- Other road issues/concerns

Supervisor Rosato received a request for assistance on how to find where the ROW was, for a resident on Southwood Road. In looking at the GIS map on the County website, the ROW wasn't easy to determine. Julie commented that the easement may be prescriptive only – from the edge of the road, to the edge of the road. To determine this, the deed would need to be pulled and reviewed for any specific easement(s) noted, such as for drainage. The county surveyor may be able to help, but Julie recommended having the County Recorder pull the deed - which is public record.

5. Recreation

- Mike Hendricks - Consider contract for professional services with Creative Services Associates.

Mike presented the board with his Creative Services contract for the upcoming year, where he serves as a Recreational Advisor to the board on park and recreation projects and maintenance. Mike recapped that this year's contract is identical to his contract for the last 6 years, including the scope of services and his hourly fee of \$50/hour.

A motion was made by Supervisor Rosato, seconded by Supervisor Kortekaas, to approve the renewal of a contract with Creative Services (Mike Hendricks) for the upcoming year as submitted at an hourly rate of \$50/hour; Rosato added that he has been very pleased with Hedrick's work and expertise in parks and recreation, and felt he's been a real asset to the township. Rosato appreciated how Hendricks recommends and coordinates construction management of the parks, and solicits proposals quotes and bids for board to review. With no other discussion, roll call was taken and the motion carried by unanimous vote.

Two copies of the contract were signed – one for Mike, and one for township files. *(A copy will be attached to hard copy of these minutes.)*

- Skating Rinks

Supervisor Key shared that both rinks are officially closed as of today, due to poor ice conditions. He noted that this closing date is actually later than most years.

6. Town Hall Report: January 8 – February 6, 2013

The board reviewed the Town Hall Report as prepared and submitted by the Town Hall Caretaker. There were 12 rentals, and no injuries or damages reported.

The board commented that they appreciated the caretaker's comments regarding a floor resurfacing contractor that had been recommended and tried in the past, but with very poor results and service.

7. Maintenance Report: January 2013

The board reviewed the Maintenance Report as prepared and submitted by the Maintenance Crew, but did not have any questions or concerns.

8. Old Business

- Notice of Board of Appeal & Equalization received: Wednesday, May 8th at 9:00am
The clerk noted that the town hall is already reserved, as this is the same day as the May Regular Meeting. The board noted that Supervisor Rosato's certification for the Board of Appeal training is current, but that the status of Key and Kortekaas' certification would need to be verified.
- MN Association of Townships – only available to assist township officers?
In follow up to a question/comment by residents at a previous meeting, regarding the MN Association of Townships (MAT) refusing to assist them, Supervisor Rosato checked with a district representative from the MN Association of Townships about this issue. Reno Wells then publically addressed this concern during his comments at the February 25th Township Association Meeting. It was taped by ICTV and is available to view on their website – which Rosato recommended. Overall, Reno Wells confirmed that MAT is there to support officers of Minnesota townships, though they have chosen to leave their website and library of information open to the public, rather than password protect. Residents should go to their town board for answers to questions – rather than to MAT. And, if necessary, the board will then go to the MAT on behalf of the resident to get answers.

9. New Business

- Certified petition for a five member board in Harris Township received (Question to be put on the March 2014 Township ballot)

The Clerk noted that according to information from MAT, no action was needed by the board on the petition, but to note that it will go on the township 2014 ballot as a question – worded as noted in the MAT information included in the agenda packet for the board’s review.

- Annual grading, snowplowing, and dust control contract received from Itasca County; review MN State Statute 164.03 Subd. 2 and 4 as referenced, regarding a road report for the annual meeting. (Signed contract not due until April 10, 2013)

After reviewing the statute and discussing at length, it was approved that Clerk Smith will prepare a road report to the best of her ability for the annual meeting as outlined in Minn. Statue 164.03 Subdivision 4. Julie Kennedy offered to provide road project details for those done in 2012, and projects being considered for 2013 with estimated costs.

- Physical Disparity

Supervisor Key received some information from Reno Wells - MAT District Representative - which explained the “Physical Disparity” program. Key had inquired about it, as the Iron Range program applies to property in the taconite tax relief area – including Itasca County. Key commented that Minnesota is one of the only states that have it, and he feels it’s an unfair tax. He would like to see it repealed, and recommended adopting a resolution to support the county’s efforts to do away with it. The other board members stated they would need more information about the program and tax before supporting a resolution.

An audience member commented that Itasca Working Families Alliance would be holding a discussion on Physical Disparity on April 8th in the old Blandin union hall, to better explain it; it is open to the public and the board was invited to attend.

10. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn tonight’s meeting was made at 9:06pm by Supervisor Rosato, and seconded by Supervisor Kortekaas. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Smith – Harris Township Clerk