

MINUTES
P&D Meeting and the Annual Town Road Meeting
Harris Township Board
Wednesday, May 22, 2013 at 7:30pm

The Planning & Development Meeting and the Annual Town Road Meeting were both held on Wednesday, May 22, 2013. The meetings were held at the Harris Town Hall, with the following officers present: Supervisors Gary Rosato, and Larry Key, and Clerk Michele Smith. *Absent:* Supervisor Dennis Kortekaas and Treasurer Becky Adams.

Also in attendance: Glen Hodgson– SEH Road Engineer, Mike & Wendy Gorham – Northwest Gas, and residents Judy Myers, Cyndy Martin, Dan Butterfield, Steve Burgraff, John Howrey, and Barney & Jan Bignall.

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman Rosato at 7:30pm.

1. Pledge to the flag, was followed by the reading of the Harris Township Mission Statement

2. Proposed Northwest Gas expansion review – by Mike Gorham (owner)

Mike Gorham, of Northwest Gas, was invited to tonight’s meeting by the board after they were recently approached for right-of-way utility permits for natural gas installation near Isleview Addition. Gorham had talked to the board at a round table discussion back on December 5, 2012, about bringing natural gas into Harris Township. However, the board had not revisited the idea since then.

History:

Rob Mattei had previously explained to the board that the City of Grand Rapids was planning to enter into a natural gas franchise with Northwest Gas. The agreement would allow for the expansion of natural gas within the City of Grand Rapids – in areas where Minnesota Energy Resources is not located, such as the areas annexed by the city, formerly Grand Rapids Township.

In Tom Pagel’s search to bring natural gas to the recently annexed areas of Grand Rapids, they found that Cohasset Gas comes to the NW corner of Harris Township, but they did not have interest in building outside the city. However, Northwest Gas operates Cohasset’s system, and so Gorham talked to Pagel to see if they were interested in their services.

The first expansion of the gas line was at the intersection of Isleview Road and Golf Course Road, and continued down Isleview to the south end of Par Lane. That phase has been completed, with almost 100% participation. Northwest Gas would now like to expand further south into Harris Township along Isleview / Chippewa / Birch, etc. and is asking for approval from the township to install their natural gas services. Goals would be to go down Mishawaka Road, over Hwy 169 and down Harris Town Road, eventually along Airport Road. And maybe out to Pokegama Lake.

Northwest Gas is a small natural gas distribution company serving 14 communities in Minnesota. There are several owners of smaller companies, which allow those companies with less than 2,000 customers to have representatives on a joint powers board, which sets the rates. This is opposed to one company, one rate, as occurs with a Public Utility Commission (PUC).

Joint Powers agreement:

Gorham said Northwest Gas would prefer that cities/townships near each other have a joint powers agreement to set the rate for all members. Typically, Northwest Gas would submit their proposal of rates needed to pay their expenses, plus a reasonable rate of return, and the joint powers board (with representatives from all member communities) would then either approve the rates, or negotiate.

There are no franchise agreements currently per Gorham. Utility permits are all that is needed for the areas where they put natural gas pipes in the road right of ways. However, Gorham commented that if the board wanted to pursue a franchise agreement or Joint Powers agreement before utility permits are approved, he did not have a problem with that.

Q&A

Q: Has a survey of interest been done?

A: Yes – There was a sign-up meeting at their office, and mail response was probably close to 90% as interested.

Q: What kind/size of pipe is used, and how is it installed?

A: All plastic pipe are used, usually about 3-4" in diameter. Pipe is installed in 3 ways. Most are "pulled in" 300-500' or 1,000' at times. To preserve blacktop at road crossings, pipe is installed by boring – not digging up. And the third installation method used is "open trench", but they don't do much of that due to restoration costs. Northwest Gas contracts with Itasca Utilities to do the pulling and digging, but Northwest Gas does the fusing of pipe themselves.

Q: What would an acceptable rate of return be for Northwest Gas?

A: A target rate is about 12%, but most are less than that – apx 10%. A joint powers board prevents Northwest Gas from using an unreasonable amount like 50%. It was noted that rates fluctuate – based on a margin.

Q: Does Northwest Gas change out the orifices for residents, if they currently have propane?

A: Northwest Gas provides everything up to the outlet of the meter. Homeowners take care of the rest. It's usually \$100-\$600 to change (convert) appliances; however, some are not convertible.

Q: What is a joint powers board responsible for, and who is on it?

A: A joint powers agreement would allow residents to have representation on the joint powers board. The joint powers board is a "rate and policy approval" board; they are not obligated to maintain or regulate any infrastructure. Northwest Gas's books of expenses are open, but the meetings of the joint powers board are not really open – it's an executives meeting. Board members can be any member of the community who's interested; it does not have to be a government official.

Supervisor Rosato did talk to Tom Pagel with the City of Grand Rapids, as they recently drew up a joint powers agreement with Northwest Gas. It'll come before the city council on Monday, and Pagel feels it will be approved. That agreement was shared with the township's attorney, and is currently being reviewed. Rosato understands it would be an extension of the Grand Rapids Franchise agreement – so Harris Township would be an "add on".

Gorham thanked the board for inviting him to tonight's meeting.

3. Consider draft Joint Powers Agreement between the City of Grand Rapids and Harris Township to Regulate Utility Rates for Northwest Natural Gas.

The board concurred that since the Joint Powers Agreement is still in the hands of the township attorney, they will review and reconsider at the June 12th 2013 Regular Meeting. It was noted that the City of Grand Rapids will be reviewing their agreement on Tuesday May 28th.

4. Business from the Floor

None

5. Roads

- Annual Road Review Meeting

Supervisor Rosato explained that each and every township road was inspected in the past week or so by one of the board supervisors. The township is divided into 3 sections, and each supervisor inspects the town roads in their section while filling out an "Evaluation Sheet" for each one. The contents on the

inspection sheets were explained to the audience, including road type, surface condition, drainage concerns, and road volume. (A copy will be attached to the minutes.)

The actual road report sheets and supervisor notes were given to SEH Engineer Glen Hodgson, for compilation and road prioritization. The clerk was asked to just note key issues of roads in the minutes.

- Rosato's roads:
 - Aspen – bituminous road; low priority
 - Hauser – gravel road; low priority
 - Verde – bituminous road; low priority
 - **Sunny Lane** – bituminous road; **medium priority** – as this road should go on list for overlay some time due to cracking
 - Mishawaka Shores – bituminous road; low priority
 - Mishawaka Landing – bituminous road; low priority
 - Mish Road – bituminous road; low priority (was just rebuilt)
 - Winnebago – bituminous road; low priority – is in great shape
 - Apache – bituminous road; low priority – is in great shape
 - Chippewa – bituminous road; low priority – is in great shape
 - Isleview – bituminous; rough section of traverse cracks; high volume road
 - Birch – bituminous; a lot of patching has been done; low priority
 - Pine – bituminous road; low priority
 - **Lakeview Drive** – Still one of the worst roads in the township; it's bad; long and traverse cracking, alligatoring. **HIGH priority.** Drainage issues have been discussed previously with residents; still a big issue.
 - **Harbor Heights** – bituminous; patching was done but didn't hold up very well when plowed. **MEDIUM to HIGH priority;** would like to fix when do Lakeview Drive is done. The audience commented that there are drainage issues too, whenever it rains. There's a puddle that just sits on the road. Felt is as bad as Lakeview – same shape. However, it's longer and people drive faster so it may just seem worse. Patching seems to have been plowed away. Rosato noted that the township still does not have jurisdiction for the turnaround; it's on private property (Ernie Jacobson). Would like to get that secured before working on the road.
 - Woodland Park Road - bituminous road; low priority
 - Melody Lane - bituminous road; low priority
 - Gary Drive – bituminous road; low priority. Audience member agreed the road is fine
 - Crystal Park lot; bituminous road; low priority (it was just paved)
 - Little Crystal – Bituminous; has lots of pot holes (counted 30); need to do a work order. Low priority overall
 - Stony Point – bituminous; will be overlaid in 2013
 - Tolerick – bituminous; low priority. Good road but a bit of a sink hole with gravel shining through
 - Pine Landing – bituminous road; low priority
 - Southwood Road– Will be overlaid this year. Barny Bignall in attendance, with concerns:
 - Overlay will be just a temporary fix, per his son. Lots of pot holes, and areas where water stands on road.
 - Bignall understood that the board needs to get rid of water on the road, but does not like what he's heard is proposed to correct it. A culvert under the road, from the other side to his side, may fix the road but will not fix the issue of water in his front yard. This upsets him as a property owner, and he wanted to express his opinion. Bignall asked that the board (not SEH) advise him of what they decide to do. Supervisor Rosato conveyed that the board understood his concerns, and explained that they did not yet have the design and related cost of the proposed fixes.

- Bignall would like to come to a mutually agreeable solution with the board; he and his wife really do *not* want a culvert. They would like to try a ditch first, as they've haven't had a puddle in their yard with recent rain.
- Supervisor Key noted that he saw this area during the snow melt down, and the runoff over the road is a safety concern. In addition, if the township is putting \$250,000 into fixing the road, they need to protect their investment and keep water from running over the road.
- If a culvert is installed, Bignall requested there be safety grids on each end, in addition to the aprons, to prevent young kids in the area from playing in it (a 15" culvert is being considered.) Supervisor Key agreed he'd like to see them on there as well.
- The board advised Bignall that the township hopes to make a decision at the June 12 meeting, when design of proposed fixes is reviewed.
- Ruff Shores Road – bituminous road; low priority. It's rough but will be resurfaced with Southwood Road project.
- **Sunny Beach Rd** – Bituminous road; **HIGH priority** due to the last segment of road, from 30333 (near Oak Island Estates) to the stop sign at Wendigo Park Road being very rough, lots of cracks and alligating.
- Forest View - gravel road; low priority; was inspected during the rain
- Winston Taylor Road – Bituminous; low priority road
- Kortekaas' Roads
 - Paved roads:
 - Alicia Place – areas are broken up; a lot of cracks – could use rubberized crack fill
 - Alicia Spur – good
 - Aspen Drive – holding up good
 - Birch Hills –good
 - East Harris – good
 - Field Crest – a few spots of alligator cracks; deteriorating
 - Keyview – New bituminous last year
 - Norberg – great road
 - **Underwood – BAD. Worst road in township**; both east and west sections are bad but especially between Wendigo Park Road and Wendigo Road (Co Rd 67) needs attention. Supervisor Key reminded the board that to fix the west end, when bid 2 years ago, was estimated at \$500,000. They talked about doing in 2 phases – a subgrade, leave gravel for 1-2 years, and then blacktop. But on the east side – action is needed soon, and should not be as bad subgrade.
 - Wendigo park Road – good; new overlay last year
 - Westwood Lane/Road – will be overlaid this year
 - Wesleyan – good
 - Gravel roads:
 - Carol – good (dust guard scheduled)
 - Davis – due for gravel
 - Pennela – due for gravel
 - Pine Crest – good
 - River Ridge/River View – due for gravel
 - Root Road - good
 - Sunset Rd/Sunset Lane – good
- Key's roads: Rated: 1=top priority (bad condition) / 3 = good road
 - Romans – 2, cross crack pot holes

- Metzenhuber – 2 (gravel)
 - Bayview Place – 2 (gravel)
 - Schmidt – 2 (gravel)
 - Robinson Road – will be resurfaced, and culvert will be replaced. Resident in attendance (Howrey) – agreed drainage need to be addressed.
 - Robinson *landing* - 2 This is a dirt, steep landing that very few people know about; it's used primarily for fish houses and snowmobiles. The township has put gravel work into in the past. The culvert at the entrance will be looked at.
 - Norway Rd – 2 (gravel)
 - Wendigo Heights Road – excellent 2
 - LaPlant Landing - 3
 - Woodbine Road – 2; off LaPlant rd – should have been included in overlay project – oops!; needs culvert work done; alligator + cracks. Cul-de-sac needs work done
 - Wagon Wheel – 2
 - Bear Creek – 2; high speed chatter marks
 - Jane Lane – 2 (gravel)
 - Romans Rd – 2 - is a driveway
 - Hughes road – 2
 - **Cemetery – 1, getting BAD – lot of dep cracks**
- Glen Hodgson – SEH Road Engineer: Road project updates
 - Gravel Road contracts were presented to the board for signature; he needed signed tonight by the acting chair and clerk. The “notice to proceed” has not yet been given, so Glen didn't know when they'd start. Each road will be tested as is it's done.
 - Other road issues / concerns
 - Wendigo Park Road

Supervisor Key reported that a portion of this road, just fixed last year, is breaking up worse than normal. He wondered if we got a bad mix for blacktop, and suggested looking into ‘warranties’ of roads; Key noted there is a trend to do that now.

Key noted that he did not recommend signing off on the Wendigo Road project yet, and Glen Hodgson from SEH was asked to look at the area. Hodgson noted that Julie Kennedy also had concerns and they planned to walk the road together to review.
 - ATV road designation

The board discussed that there is a drive to establish some county roads as ATV roads. Hill City is having a mud-run at the end of June, and so there will be a lot of tourists riding ATVs in the area. The City of Grand Rapids is looking at designating a route of a few streets through the city as well, for tourism purposes. Township Roads, however, by state law are open to ATVs riding on extreme right – not necessary to be in deep ditch. However, the township may need to watch the sides of the road for erosion, especially of shouldering.
 - Larry Hanson – Dust Be Gone contract

An “Independent Contractor Services Agreement for Application of Mageskum Chloride” was received from Larry Hanson for dust control on gravel roads. As stated in his previous proposal, the contracted rate in the agreement was \$3,193.50 per mile, on roads designated by Harris Township. A certificate of liability insurance was also supplied by Hanson with the agreement.

Supervisor Key made a motion to approve the contract with Dust B Gone for dust control of designated township gravel roads in 2013 at a rate of \$3,193.50 /mile. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Rosato and upon roll call, passed. Opposed: none.

6. Recreation

- Hard surface repair

Supervisor Key met with Mike Hendricks, who gave him the contract to sign from Lee Sports Surfacing for repairing the two tennis courts and one basket ball court at Crystal Park, and two tennis courts at Wendigo Park. A certificate of liability insurance was also supplied. The quote was approved by the board at the May 8th, 2013 Regular Meeting, and had not changed since originally reviewed in September 2012 for budget reasons.

The court work should be done by June 15th, weather permitting.

A recap of the work is as follows, totaling \$25,200, which the board approved to come out of the capital improvement fund (non dedicated) as needed:

- Crystal tennis courts –Courts will be totally resurfaced with numerous hairline cracks being sanded, patched, and treated; this is a normal maintenance process for tennis courts. Currently, water stands on the court and the posts are bad.
 - Cost: \$8,950
 - Crystal basketball court: There is a large crack across the center of the basketball court. Lee Sport will use an Armor Crack Repair System to repair the crack – approximately 45 feet in length- and then resurface the court.
 - Cost: \$5,500
 - Wendigo tennis courts: The tennis courts will be recovered and given another life of 10 years. They will sand the whole court area, repair the low spots, and then resurface both courts. They will also saw-cutting the blacktop adjacent to the courts to improve drainage. .
 - Cost: \$10,750
- Supervisor Key advised the board that Plackner Tree Care completed the cutting 10' around the courts fence at Wendigo Park to take care of trees hanging over the tennis courts which were causing problems– leaves, water, debris, etc. (This work was approved previously at the May 8th Regular Meeting.)

7. Town Hall Report – for April 3 to May 5, 2013

- The town hall report as prepared by the Town Hall Caretaker was reviewed by the board. There were 16 rentals, and no damages or injuries reported.

8. Maintenance Report for April, 2013

- None – due to the busyness of the maintenance crew trying to get the cemetery ready for Memorial Day, given the very late spring and cold/rainy weather.

9. Old Business

- Review revised Town Hall Policy and Brochure

The board reviewed the revised Town Hall Policy and Brochure as prepared by the Clerk regarding reduced fees for rummage sales. The board approved both as presented. Clerk Smith will get updated policies and brochures printed for the caretaker.

- Newsletter update (delayed)

Clerk Smith reported that due to some missing information, and miscommunications, the township newsletter will not be going out prior to Memorial Day as hoped. It will go out sometime in June. Clerk Smith suggested replacing the Memorial Day article with one about Northwest Gas (once a decision is made).

- Consider approval of a check, necessary for the purchase of new township truck
Supervisor Key explained that the new maintenance truck was supposed to be delivered on Monday, but it didn't come in; it's now scheduled to arrive on Friday. He recommended that the board approve a check be written tonight so it's ready by Friday so they could exchange the old truck for the new, rather than wait until the Regular Meeting on June 12th.

A motion was made by Supervisor Rosato to authorize a check for \$26,719.55, payable to Grand Rapids GM, be written in time for Friday's delivery of the new township truck. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Key, and thus passed.

Clerk Smith will relay this action to the Treasurer, and request that the check be put on the June bill list for tracking purposes.

10. New Business

- None

11. Public Input

- None

12. Adjourn

A motion was made by Supervisor Key, seconded by Rosato, to adjourn tonight's meeting at 9:36pm. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Smith, Harris Township Clerk