

Minutes from the Harris Town Board
Round Table with City of Grand Rapids Staff

Oct 21, 2015 - 5:30pm

Grand Rapids Public Utility Service Center

A work session of the Harris Town Board was held on Monday, October 21, 2015 at the Grand Rapids Public Utility Service Center in Grand Rapids, MN, and began at 5:30 p.m

Attending from Harris Township: Supervisors Gary Rosato, Jim Kelley, Burl Ives, and Ken Haubrich as well as Clerk Michele Smith. Absent: Supervisor Dennis Kortekaas, and Treasurer Becky Adams

Attending from the City of Grand Rapids: Tom Pagel – City Administrator, Julie Kennedy – City Engineer, Rob Mattei – Director of Community Development

The purpose of this round table work session was for the Harris Town Board to meet on a casual basis with the City of Grand Rapids staff, to discuss any items of common interest. No board action is taken at these sessions.

Rosato opened tonight’s round table with introductions and commented that a round table between the city staff and Harris Township hadn’t occurred since Mike Gorham came in to talk to the township about Natural Gas in December 2012. Natural gas is in the city and is currently being installed throughout Harris Township.

Some items discussed by the city and township were as follows:

- The city purchased the Kent property on Airport Road; there are 20 acres zoned industrial – so they plan for future industrial development. However, if nothing develops short term, the city will lease the house out for some income. Because the city can no longer do ‘eminent domain’ to acquire property, they decided to purchase this land as it borders the airport property, has good roads to it, and has city sewer and water.
- The city received a complaint from a resident of Harris Township who lives on Airport Road, regarding Hammerlund truck traffic near his home. However, the city has no restrictions for truck use on Airport Road. The city-owned “haul road” can be used by Hammerlund, but it’s not encouraged as the city believes it will soon become part of the motorized ATV trail.
- The city and township discussed the motorized ATV multi-use trails, the proposed location, and its maintenance.
- The township is considering repairing Islevew and Birch in 2016 and asked the city if they’d consider repairing their portion of Islevew, which is also in poor condition. The city replied that because that road serves very few city residents (apx 12), it wasn’t high on their priority list; as such, city staff did not feel their portion of Islevew would be improved any time soon. The groups also discussed Harris Township taking over the city’s portion of Islevew. Tom Pagel commented that he’d be willing to explore cost sharing or property exchange for this to occur.
- Broadband internet was also discussed. Trout Lake Township now has the “GigaZone” by Paul Bunyan, yet Harris Township - a much larger and more populated township – can only get Paul Bunyan services in few limited areas. Pagel commented that the Mediacom / Paul Bunyan

franchise and joint powers board agreement comes up for renewal in the next year or two, so perhaps it's time for negotiation of service areas. The board stressed that getting broadband internet to *all* of Harris Township is a top priority, and would be very appreciative of any help the city could provide.

- The groups discussed an option of water and sewer between the city and Harris Township. The city explained that this service would only be considered at the request of township – and the township would pay for construction and related costs to connect to the city. Overall the city would provide water to the township, and the township would return the sewer to the city. The city currently has this type of arrangement with Arbo Township and the City of LaPrairie. They also have an arrangement with the City of Bovey, though it may be ending soon.
- The cemetery GIS program was brought up, as the township purchased it from the city a couple years ago but had difficulties in getting it up and running. They are currently not using it. Overall, it did not work well for the maintenance crew or clerk – but the data is still there. Julie Kennedy said she did take over this project from Mike LeClaire, and offered to help the township start it up again. She suggested having the township maintenance crew meet with the city's cemetery crew so the township crew could see how the city uses the program in their day to day work for the cemetery; getting the maintenance crew on board and excited about the GIS program would be key to its success.
- The city shared that the airport 'master plan' is done every 7-10 years, and is due to be updated soon. It's like a comprehensive plan for the airport, and rules build out from it. Aspen Drive is in the "B zone" of the airport, limiting structure height. The proposed 7,000 ft. expansion of a runway is now off the table, per the city.
- The Blandin land issue was discussed but the city has very little land that is affected.
- The town board asked about the expansion of 21st Avenue to Horseshoe Lake Road or Islevue via the road that goes past the Catholic Church. The city responded that unless its developer driven, they are not planning any expansion. They are still bus trying to take care of the residents and properties that were annexed by the city in 2010.
- Boat landings were discussed; the city has several public landings including Forest Lake, Hale, Crystal, Steamboat, and Sylvan bay. Some of the township landings were damaged when the Army Corps of Engineers were raising and dropping the water level, resulting in wave action. The city commented that they hadn't had any problems – probably given the location of their landings to the dams. Overall, they don't deal with the Army Corps of Engineers; they do work a little with the DNR, and have had good results.
- The Collaboration Opportunities Team has representatives from both Harris Township and the City of Grand Rapids. Tom Pagel and Ed Zabinski attend if they can from the city, and Burl Ives and Ken Haubrich attend from the township. Both groups felt that talking and learning what's going on in neighboring communities is a key to the group's success.
- A district wide fire department was discussed. Grand Rapids and Cohasset train together and that works well. The 2016 fire contract rate increase was also discussed. The city staff explained that rates are based on tax capacity and the quantity of calls. The town board had some concern that the township's contract is going up apx \$4,500. However, the city noted that this is still less expensive than the township having to put up a building, buy a truck, and find people to volunteer to be firefighters. No new facility is being considered, per the city; the

airport building is primarily used for maintenance. The Harris Town Board reminded the city that they have wells and 250 gallon/minute pumps at Crystal and Wendigo parks that can fill pumper trucks when needed. This would eliminate the need for pumper trucks to go back & forth to town to get water. Tom Pagel agreed to relay this information to the fire department. Overall, the Township wondered if it was worth them keeping these pumps; they had to replace recently and they are expensive.

- The Wendigo Golf Course and Conference Center property will have been tax delinquent for 5 years come 2016, and because it is zoned industrial/commercial, it changes to “tax forfeit” property. The city encouraged the township to push the county to put it up for sale, otherwise it just sits there and collects no taxes. The amount of taxes owed is over ½ million dollars. It’s currently for sale, asking price of apx 11 million.

The city and township agreed they’d like to continue these round table sessions, and will look at meeting again in March or April, 2016.

The round table work session ended at 7pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Smith, Harris Township Clerk