

**Minutes from the Harris Town Board
Work Session – Variety of Items
Monday, November 16, 2015 at 7:00pm**

A work session of the Harris Town Board was held on Monday, November 16, 2015 at the Harris Town Hall, beginning at 7:00 p.m. This work session was open to the public, but was not televised nor recorded by ICTV.

Officers in attendance were Supervisors Rosato, Kortekaas, Kelley, Haubrich, and Ives, as well as Clerk Smith and Treasurer Adams. *Absent:* none

Also in attendance: Residents Marge Kelley, Dan Butterfield, Judy Myers, Cyndy Martin, and Dan Nelson

The purpose of this work session, as posted, was to discuss the following:

- **Town hall concerns / improvements / suggestions**
- **Optional Township Plan “B” - Appoint Clerk and/or Treasurer**
- **ICTV coverage of one meeting vs. two meetings a month**
- **Work session frequency**
- **Board orientation needs and suggestions**
- **Township policies & procedures – including but not limited to:**
 - **Resolution #2008-004 *Donation or Contribution Request Policy*; how to handle requests prior to the annual meeting**
 - **Employees accountability and transparency**
 - **Safety requirements/needs for board & employees**
 - **Electronic communication for board and employees**
 - **Other existing and needed policies**
- **Financial bonding process**
- **2017 budget considerations**
- **Road repair/resurfacing costs and tracking**
- **An action item list at the end of each meeting, with name assignments and follow up report dates at specified meetings**

The work session was called to order at 7:00pm by Chairman Rosato.

- 1. Pledge to the flag**
- 2. Call the meeting to order**
- 3. Town hall concerns / improvements / suggestions**

Rosato met with the current caretaker and discussed a lot of town hall items. The following were then discussed by the board tonight:

- a. Florescent vs LED lights: The current bulbs in the hall are a variety of different colors. They have ballasts in them, and are energy wasters. An LED light was installed near the town hall kitchen, and it looks great. Rosato found it’s economical to convert the current fixtures we have now for LED, and the maintenance crew could do themselves. Overall, there are 22 fixtures in the hall, and they would cost \$120/light to convert or apx \$2,700 for all 22 . The energy cost savings to convert to LED lighting would be significant, and Rosato would like the board to consider conversion during the upcoming budget session. Supervisor Ives agreed and added that there are some incentive programs out there to convert to LED lighting.
- b. Storage space for tables and chairs: The caretaker noted that a storage area for the town hall tables and chairs is needed as kids are playing on tables, and posing a liability risk to the township.

- c. Small playground set: Renters have requested a small playground for the town hall property. There is currently a swing set, but it's no appropriate for small children. And without a playground, kids tend to play on the hand rails and tables.
- d. Restroom doors: The first set of doors into the men's and women's bathrooms have been removed at the town hall, with no complaints. They still are not quite ADA compliant, but they are getting there.
- e. Dishwasher: Renters frequently request a dishwasher at the town hall - preferably a small commercial one, with a sanitizer.
- f. Garage use by renters for garage sales: Rosato suggested the board consider changing the current town hall policy to no longer allow renters use of the garage during rummage sales. This would allow off season maintenance equipment and supplies be stored in the town hall garage, freeing up space in the Service Center garage for maintenance of seasonal equipment and vehicles. Right now, the town hall policy allows renters to sue the garage for rummage & garage sales. Supervisor Ives and Kelley voiced that they liked this idea, and that the garage for storage of off-season items is more important than the occasional use for garage sales.
- g. Town hall reports: Rosato asked the board what they really wanted on a monthly town hall report. The financial details are turned into the treasurer with her monthly pay claim form, so it seemed like double duty to put the same information on the hall report.

Ives would like to see a list of who rented the hall, on what date, and for how much. And if the board approved a lower rate than our policy states, he'd like that noted. He's interested in the number of residents vs. nonresidents who rent, the number of hours spent cleaning, and the number of showings as well as the number of hours spent showing. Ives would also like to see a bit of detail regarding what is done during the cleaning hours. Kelley and Haubrich agreed he'd like to know how long it takes to clean after each rental, as well as how many showings and rentals occurred during the month.

Adams responded that this is a good time to discuss the town hall report requirements, as a new caretaker will be coming on board soon. Legally, Adams did not think names and associated personal check information of renters could be on a public information report. However, she will check with MAT about sharing the caretaker's detailed claim form prior to deductions as tax information is confidential. This may provide the detail the board is looking for with regards to rental dates, cleaning dates & hours, and showing dates.

Rosato asked if the town hall report was even necessary. The board discussed that it is needed for professional reasons, and as a way to report any safety concerns. And it helped the board justify what is happening at the town hall overall.

- h. Maintenance of the town hall: Ives commented that he'd like to see the Caretaker go through the town supervisor in charge of the maintenance crew for any items or issues that need to be taken care of at the town hall. He'd also like to see all the doors at the town hall and other township buildings rekeyed so there's only 3-4 keys overall for all township buildings and facilities.
- i. Damage deposit: The amount of the damage deposit for using the town hall was discussed. The current process is that renters write out two checks – one for the rent, and one for the \$25 deposit. If garbage is taken, the caretaker returns the \$25 deposit check to the renter. If not, or if the renter requests they garbage be disposed of by the township, the deposit check is kept and deposited. Supervisor Haubrich wondered if a \$25 deposit was adequate if case any damage was done. He also commented that perhaps renters should be responsible for cleaning the hall – rather than the caretaker. Ives noted that overall, he'd like the township to break even on the town hall expenses vs. rental income. Rosato added he'd like to see that too, but wasn't sure how to do it. Residents have paid for the town hall already via their taxes so he'd hates to see

the resident rental rate increased as they are the vast majority of people who rent the hall. There are very few nonresident rentals.

- j. Town Hall capacity and drawing: The board commented that a capacity rating for the town hall is needed. And that they should have schematics of the building and room set up diagram options on the website for potential renters to visualize how many people/tables & chairs fit in the hall, depending on how they're thinking of setting it up.
- k. Electrical issue in kitchen: The board needs to fix the electrical problem in kitchen so people don't have to down into basement to flip the breaker, often caused by too many crock pots or such plugged in during an event. Ives agreed to check into new GFI outlets for kitchen, and the board approved that he bring in an electrician as needed.
- l. Cell phone – for caretaker: The board discussed the option of providing a cell phone to the caretaker, dedicated for town hall business. The board discussed that it's hard to know if the future person will have good cell coverage where they live, but that adding another line usually isn't that expensive and may include a free phone. A caretaker who could have email and a calendar on their phone would be nice. However, some board members expressed they are nervous about illegal activity that could take place on the phone by the employee, or by their friends/family members when the caretaker is not paying attention.

Treasurer Adams agreed to contact Verizon find out the cost for a new phone line, plus data package. Prepaid phones were discussed but they need to be renewed every 30 days which can be bothersome.

- m. Boardroom table and chairs: Rosato commented that it would be nice to have a decent town board table and chairs setup that could be left in place permanently, with the microphones. He'd also like to see the addition of privacy curtains for the tables to cover up all the wires. However, the board discussed that if the board went to permanent 'desks', it would eliminate the option to rent out the hall for birthday parties, funerals, etc.. The township would need to add on to the town hall to accomplish a permanent board set up area.
- n. Moisture problem: The board discussed that there seems to be a moisture issue in the hall as the new front doors constantly frost over, and the windows frost up as well - and the frames are starting to rot. Perhaps better ventilation via air exchanger would help. Also, the current crank out windows may need to be replaced. Supervisor Haubrich agreed to look into options and bring back to the board at a future meeting

4. Optional Township Plan "B" - Appoint Clerk and/or Treasurer

Clerk Smith shared that she is *not* planning to run for reelection in March 2016, and did not know of anyone interested in the clerk position. And because the position had become quite complex over the years, she wanted to provide the board with information on the "Optional Township Plan B", which would allow for the board to appoint (i.e. hire) a township clerk and/or treasurer. This would allow the board to create a job description, assign responsibilities, and require certain skills. With an elected Clerk/ Treasurer, the only requirement is they be a resident of the township for at least 30 days. An appointed Clerk/Treasurer does *not* have to be a resident of the township.

In the agenda packet, Smith provided a variety of information from the MN Association of Townships on the process to move to plan B if interested. She did not expect the board to make a decision on this tonight, but just wanted them to be aware of the option. Per one of the MAT attorneys, "The advantages of appointed positions is that it can make it easier to find someone to take a position because an appointed clerk or treasurer does not have to live in the township. Another advantage is that an appointed position can be terminated if that person is not doing the job well. In addition, the supervisors can then assign jobs to an appointed position. However, some towns like the positions to be elected because it can then limit the authority of the supervisors as an elected position answers to the voters [and state], not the supervisors."

Smith explained that if this is something the board is interested in moving to at the end of her term, it would need to go on the March 2016 township ballot as a question, which the board could initiate via a resolution. That resolution would need to be approved no later than the January 13th 2016 Regular Meeting, as the ballot design will set right after the filing period closes on January 12th.

5. ICTV coverage of one meeting vs. two meetings a month

Chairman Rosato shared that he likes the ICTV coverage of Harris Township meetings, but since the board lost the untelevised P&D meetings, the supervisors no longer have an opportunity to “chew the fat” like they used to. This allowed for valuable discussions and so Rosato wanted to discuss the option to go back to having the P&D meeting UN-televised. The board understood the need for the casual conversations, but that decisions are made at the P&D meetings, and so they should be televised. When meetings are not televised, the public comments they feel the board is trying to hide something. Transparency is a must per Ives. And if there’s any decisions made to spend money, the camera should be there.

Rosato shared that years ago, there was only one business meeting a month. Then, the P&D meetings were added to be like the work session was tonight – where no actions were made – but rather, issues were discussed but all decisions were ratified at the Regular Meeting. Rosato asked if the board wanted to consider going back to that.

The board had previously discussed having a work session before P&D meetings, but logistically that makes for a long evening for the board, and would require set up by the clerk before she’s done with her full time job, and runs into supper time. Therefore, that option was not feasible.

6. Work session frequency

Related to the discussion above, Rosato stressed there is a need for more sessions like tonight, where the board can frame and discuss items for mobilization at a future meeting. But he recognized that being a township officer is a part time job, plus most of the current officers still work full time. There will be a lot of work sessions coming up with regards to budgets, and, after meeting every week Jan – March, the board is tired out by April. Having a predetermined schedule of work sessions would be difficult, as the board may or may not have anything to talk about. And unless work session dates are scheduled and posted accordingly (like the Regular and P&D meetings are), the Clerk reminded the board that they can only talk about the stated purpose that’s required on a posted special meeting notice – or they would be in violation of the open meeting law. Thus, it would probably be best to just continue to call for a work session when needed.

7. Board orientation needs and suggestions

Rosato asked the newer board members (Ives, Kelly, and Haubrich) if there were items they still needed orientation on, or would suggest for future new officers:

- a. Knowing what exactly they get paid for, and what is covered under the monthly salary versus an hourly wage, would be helpful to provide consistency throughout & across the board.
- b. Having an orientation binder or packet for a new supervisor, clerk, and treasurer would be great. New folks don’t have the history that the existing board has. The Minnesota Association of Townships and their website is a great resource – but it would be nice to have local township specific information as well.
- c. A check list for orientation would helpful – to make sure all items are reviewed – such as how to fill out a claim form & when, a tour of township facilities, introduction to employees, keys given out, sharing of contact information, etc.
- d. A USB of township policies and resolutions would be helpful, or have everything on the website. Perhaps develop electronic manuals, which would require the help of a consultant.

- e. A list of equipment and property that the township owns would be useful.

8. Township policies & procedures:

- o Resolution #2008-004 Donation or Contribution Request Policy; how to handle requests prior to the annual meeting

County Commissioner Rusty Eichorn approached Clerk Smith on several occasions regarding the number of donation or contribution requests the township receives for consideration at their annual meeting. Eichorn suggested that because the township has a 'no donation or contribution policy' via resolution #2008-004, that a letter be sent out to each requestor, with a copy of the policy. That way, each request would not have to be reviewed during the annual meeting, where Rusty is often the moderator.

The board questioned if non-profits would still have the right to request a donation, regardless of the policy as the board would have the right to make an exception to the policy.

The board asked that this be moved to the December 9th Regular Meeting, and to ask Rusty to attend. Clerk Smith agreed to invite Eichorn.

- o Maintenance employee accountability and transparency

The following items were suggested by Supervisor Haubrich, and discussed:

- o A weekly maintenance plan from the maintenance crew, and provided to the entire board. This would be a way for the board to know what the guys are planning to work on during the upcoming week. Rosato did share with the board, the maintenance crew's *monthly* plan, outlining tasks they do by month.
- o A daily work report with bullets would be nice; this way, supervisors know what has been completed.
- o Knowing the mileage driven, purchases made, etc. would be informative.
- o Having the work order system re-implemented is needed, especially for road repairs. Right now, only emails are used – which could be stapled to work orders – but having the work orders created and placed in the related road files would be very helpful.
- o Safety training for crew is valuable. Perhaps we could partner with another city or the county. Township safety manuals and documentation is the first thing that will be reviewed if there's an accident.
- o Is there a spending limit or purchasing policy for the maintenance crew? How much can they spend without approval of the board? Same question would apply to the caretaker.

Supervisor Ives added the following:

- o Seasonal workers – what is the policy on who they get their direction from? If they quit, can the board be notified right away, so they don't hear about it on the back end?
- o Dress: What is the policy for maintenance crew apparel? Is it communicated that township employees wear all necessary safety apparel, and represent Harris Township appropriately? Rosato shared the crew is compliant.

Overall, some supervisors get questioned about what the maintenance crew does. And while the maintenance report does provide great highlights of their work over a month, some of the supervisors felt they needed more detail of day to day activities to help justify to the public the need to have two full time maintenance employees. Other supervisors shared that there needs to be a balance between the work done and the amount of documentation detail; it's going to take time to do what's been suggested. Would an hour each day to document to this level of detail be better spent on other

duties? Is this level of detail really necessary? The chart of accounts was reduced significantly as the level of detail was labor intensive and never used.

- Safety requirements/needs for employees

The following was discussed/requested:

- Supervisors should be notified immediately when there there's an injury that requires medical attention.
 - Safety inspection should be done
 - Are there safe job procedures? For example, is there a process for putting docks in / taking them out? These types of procedures should be documented and reviewed as they're not done every day. Or a new person may not be aware of safety issues.
 - Safety rules: Is there a policy on when the maintenance crew is required to wear gloves, hard hat, glasses? Rosato said they do know when it's required and they do wear these items, but that there's no policy currently to address the rules.
 - Safe work environment: Are expectations known? Is there's a policy? Do the employees sign off that they know the rules and agree to abide by them?
 - Personnel files: Are they kept in locked cabinet? Yes – in the town hall office, per Clerk Smith. Smith asked if emergency contact information was kept on file for the employees. Not currently, per Rosato and Adams.
- Electronic communication for board and employees

Supervisor Ives shared that he feels the township should have a policy of what employees can use computers for, and what they cannot use them for. Same for any data device such as a township supplied smart phone. A policy is needed in case the town board ever has to take an action.

9. Financial bonding process

Rosato shared with the board that the motion on the resolution they will again review after the public hearing on November 18th needs to pass by a *unanimous* vote to move forward, not just a majority vote. This is the resolution that basically tells the bonding company to get loan term & rate proposals, find out who's interested in issuing bonds, etc. If the resolution passes, the board then waits 30 days to see if a petition is received asking that the bonding question go on the annual township ballot. If not, then the board comes back together to review interest rates, amounts for payback, loan periods, etc. and another resolution is reviewed to accept the loan terms. That resolution only needs to pass by a majority vote. Rosato noted that the bonding process could still be terminated at that point, if interest rates are too high, or they change their mind about bonding. They are not committed to issuing bonds until the loan terms resolution passes.

The board discussed putting the question on the ballot, if initiated by board. However, the timing would cause a delay in the plan, which could result in higher interest rates, higher bituminous rates, etc.

If bonding goes through, can the public at the annual meeting says they won't increase levy to cover the bond payback? Adams clarified that the bond payback amount is a separate levy – a special assessment of sorts – and cannot be turned down by electorate. The residents could, however, vote to reduce the operating levy. If that happens, the board would need to relook at budget to reallocate the "reduced" amount, and determine what to give up – such as closing the parks.

10. 2017 budget considerations

Due to the lateness of the evening, the board did not discuss any 2017 budget items. However, Clerk Smith suggested that she'd like to share her normal budget setting duties with any of the supervisors as she will not be with the board next year. Supervisor Haubrich said he may be interested.

11. Road repair/resurfacing costs and tracking

SEH likely has road repair and resurfacing cost information for big projects, but not on the smaller roads. Work orders on roads used to be filed in road files in the township office, but this has not been done for some time now. It was asked if we track what is spent on each road. Rosato said the maintenance crew does *not* track that information.

12. An action item list at the end of each meeting, with name assignments and follow up report dates at specified meetings

An action item list was suggested by Haubrich and Ives, so that tasks don't get dropped or missed. Whenever conversation turns to action, the board need to decide who is going to do something, and when will it come back to the board. The board liked that plan.

13. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn tonight's work session was made at 10:24 p.m. by Supervisor Ives, and seconded by Supervisor Ives. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Smith – Harris Township Clerk