

**Minutes from the Work Session  
Harris Town Board  
Wednesday, January 6, 2016  
7:00 p.m.**

A work session of the Harris Town Board was held on Wednesday, January 6, 2016 at Harris Town Hall, 21998 Airport Road Grand Rapids, MN. The work session was called to order at 7:05pm by Chairman Rosato. This work session was open to the public, but was not televised nor recorded by ICTV.

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

Also in attendance were Matt Wegwerth and Sara – SEH Road Engineers, Glen Hodgson – retired S E H township engineer, and residents Francis Haubrich, Cyndy Martin, Ed & Sue Casper, and Judy Myers

**Purposes of this work session, as posted:**

Review and discuss the petition received to place Harris Township Resolution #2015-001 – *Resolution approving Street Reconstruction Bonds* on the next township election ballot. The board will also review the five-year road plan, discuss financing options, and consider next steps in the bonding and budgeting process.

Discuss the vacant Town Hall Caretaker position, including but not limited to current job responsibilities and status of a replacement.

**1. Pledge to the flag**, followed by the reading of the Harris Township mission statement

**2. Town Hall Caretaker position update**

- A Town Hall Caretaker had been hired through Personnel Dynamics as of Monday, January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016. After a 90 days, the board can bring her on as a township employee if they wish. Her name is Amber Hartl and she lives in Grand Rapids. She has computer skills and experience with Word and Excel and plans to do the town hall caretaker report each month. She is also willing to create a calendar that the public and board could see online. Amber will be in attendance at the next town meeting on January 13, 2016, so she can meet the board.
- A township cell phone for the caretaker has been ordered and shipped, per Treasurer Adams; it will come with an initial phone number but the township can have it changed at no cost. Adams will inquire about changing the cell number to that of the previous town all reservation line, 218-327-0435 as it is no longer in use by Bonnie Key.
- Supervisor Rosato agreed to get a copy of the contract with Personnel Dynamics, indicating the wage being paid to the caretaker (\$12/hour) and the rate being paid to Personnel Dynamics.
- Treasurer Adams will ask if Personnel Dynamics if they have liability insurance for their employees (i.e. Amber), as the MN Association of Townships told her: *“Since you are paying the Staffing Agency, the township would not be responsible to insure her. It would be similar to a ‘sub-contractor’...you pay the contractor, they pay their employee and insure them. If this person is injured while working or on your property and the township is negligent (didn’t fix a step, etc...) then the township may have to pay ‘liability’ damages. However, for this person’s service...they should be covered by ‘whomever’ is paying them...in this case, the staffing agency. Once she is hired on ‘with the township’ after her 90 days, then you would be responsible for her Workers’ Compensation and Liability. As for protecting her in case she is in an accident while traveling to work; no. Traveling to a job is not the responsibility of the employer.”*
- Adams also noted per a discussion with a tax expert at the Blandin Foundation, mileage cannot be paid for the caretaker from her home to the town hall (i.e. her place of employment). However, it was up to the board’s discretion if they wanted to offer her mileage for work related travel within the township.

### **3. Review petition received to place Resolution #2015-011 – Resolution approving Street Reconstruction Bonds on the next township election ballot.**

Supervisor Rosato explained to the board that he notified Clerk Smith on December 13<sup>th</sup> that a petition had been received & certified by Itasca County, in response to the board passing Resolution #2015-011. The petition requested that the option to issue bonds for road improvements be put on the next township election ballot, in March 2016.

Rosato, Smith, and Adams then had a conference call with Paul Donna and Attorney Stefanie Galey on Wednesday, December 16<sup>th</sup> to discuss the petition and next steps.

A full copy of the petition was shared with the board and audience. *(A copy will also be attached to these minutes.)* It was noted that while only 6 signatures were needed to meet the 5% of total ballots cast in the last town election, there were approximately 60 resident signatures on the petition; half lived on township roads and half lived on county roads.

#### **Next steps:**

- The board has the option to accept the petition, or *not* accept the petition thereby stopping any further bonding consideration for 365 days. The board will consider accepting the petition via resolution at the upcoming January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016 Regular Meeting. Action to accept petition does *not* need to be unanimous; it will be determined by a majority vote only.
- Chairman Rosato indicated that if bonding is not approved, he felt strongly that the board should have a “Plan B” for how to get the five-year road plan accomplished.
- Glen Hodgson was in attendance tonight as an interested party only, as he has since retired from S E H. He offered to provide historical perspective if interested, as he put the 5 year plan together.
- Some items that were clarified in regards to the five-year road plan and bonding:
  - The five-year road plan does not include gravel roads. There is currently an independent 5-year gravel road rotation plan. The township’s gravel roads are currently in good shape; no gravel roads were improved in 2015, as they were all in good shape. Gravel roads will be reviewed again in 2016 to determine which roads will need additional gravel.
  - The cost of the proposed improvements to Sunny Beach Road, Birch Street, and Islevew is \$3.1 million
  - Raising the levy to cover the entire bond payback amount was assumed by Hodgson, for the 5-year road plan to work beyond 2016. If bonding isn’t approved, and levy isn’t raised, he felt it may take 10 years to save enough money to improve Sunny Beach Road.
  - Option discussed: Raise the levy to cover *half* the payback amount, and take the other half out of the existing overall levy (not just from the Road & Bridge fund). Hodgson commented that apx \$350,000 is needed in the major road improvement line item, each year, of the Road & Bridge Fund for his five year plan to work in years 2017 and beyond.
- **Treasurer Adams recapped money that will be available for a bituminous road projects based on the current 2015 budget and adopted budget and levy for 2016:**
  - 2015 Road & Bridge Fund: Apx \$140,000 will be left over in 2015, and will carry forward to 2016
  - 2015 Capital Improvement Road Dedicated Fund: The \$100,000 levied for roads will be left over from 2015 as none of this money was needed for road projects done in 2015; it will carry over.
  - 2016 Road & Bridge Fund: \$300,000 was budgeted for major road reconstruction in 2016
  - 2016 Capital Improvement Road Dedicated Levy: \$110,000 was levied for road projects in 2016
  - Capital Improvement Road Dedicated Fund Balance: The current balance in the road dedicated fund, not counting the levied amounts shown above, is apx \$242,000.

**Total of apx \$892,000 would be available for major road projects in 2016**

This means:

- If bonding passes, this amount would be enough to pay the bond payback amount of \$244,976 with the current 2016 budget, plus have money left over to improve other roads in 2016.
- If bonding *doesn't* pass, this \$892,000 would also be enough money to repair the worst part of Sunny Beach Road in 2016, from Adair to Wendigo Road, for apx \$700,000 if bonding doesn't pass. And Birch Street may have to get by for a while with some major crack repair.

○ **“Plan B” considerations discussed – if bonding does *not* pass:**

- Could raise levy over the next few years to repair roads.
- Can reconsider bonding again in 180 days, if vote to bond doesn't pass...perhaps for a lower dollar amount.
- The board can adjust the levy each year before certifying to the County in September.
- The board may be able to call a special town meeting to adjust the 2017 levy if needed, in 2016
- With regards to bidding the proposed 2016 road project, Matt from S E H commented that they could still move forward with bidding the entire project in February 2016– creating a plan A (all) and a plan B (part at a time) – and so could then award only a portion based on if bonding passes or not. He noted there may be different prices for A and B, as larger projects would be bid lower due to less mobilization. Matt agreed to prepare a proposal of what the bidding options would look like to the Regular Meeting on January 13, 2016 for the boards review and consideration.

#### 4. Adjourn

***A motion to adjourn the work session was made by Supervisor Kortekaas 8:54pm. Upon a second by Supervisor Haubrich, the meeting was adjourned.***

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Smith, Harris Township Clerk