

Empire Township Meeting Minutes April 28, 2020

The Town Board meeting was held by video conference and called to order by Chairman Terry Holmes at 8:00 PM.

Present were: Terry Holmes, Jamie Elvestad, Ed Gerten, Charles Seipel, Jeff Hince, Denise Williamson, Brian Hilgardner, Jane Kansier, and Planning Commission Chair Tom Kaldunski.

Agenda: Jamie Elvestad made a motion to approve the agenda. Ed Gerten seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Meeting Minutes: Jamie Elvestad made a motion to approve the minutes of the Town Board Meeting of April 14, 2020. Ed Gerten seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Treasurer Report: The treasurer's report showed a General Fund Account balance of \$34,784.81 plus investments and an Escrow Account balance of \$19,809.65 plus investments. The report also showed the cash balances and a statement of cash flows through March.

Jamie Elvestad made a motion to approve the financial report. Ed Gerten seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Visitors: None.

Bills to be Paid: Jamie Elvestad made a motion to approve the attached list of bills in the amount of \$22,769.04. Ed Gerten seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Committee Reports

Maintenance / Sewer and Water / Road and Bridges

Jeff Hince reported that water meter readings this quarter had less re-reads than in the past as meter discrepancies are being worked out, hydrant flushing has been completed, seal coating and crack filling will begin on the roads soon and will cost about \$29,000 to complete. 210th Street will be re-graveled.

Park & Rec

Denise Williamson reported that rentals for the Public Works Building and Ballfields have been informed that events for May and June might be cancelled. It was recommended that these facilities be closed thru the month of May. The Town Board did not want to take on the liability of exposing staff when cleaning up after these events. There is a possibility that these Township facilities will be closed thru June, but that will depend on guidance from the State regarding large gatherings.

It was recommended that the parking lot at the disc golf be opened to prevent parking on the road. It was also recommended that the Sheriff's Department check the lot after 10:00 PM to make sure people were not loitering in the lot after dark. It was determined that trees should not be planted at the disc golf course due to the constant flooding in that area.

It was reported that a resident that has installed a private dock on a pond behind Cambria Court has been asked to remove the dock. A resident in the neighborhood asked if the Town Board would be interested in installing a public dock at that location. After discussion, it was determined that the Township would not want to take on the liability of installing a dock at that location.

Engineering

Brian Hilgardner reported that bids for the 170th Street Roundabout Project have been open by MN DOT but we don't yet know the results. Brian provided a draft memo of understanding from the Met Council regarding the proposed construction of a future drainage ditch on the west side of the WWTP property. The memo acknowledged the installation of an additional culvert by the Met Council to allow for a future drainage project on the west side. Brian will draft a response for the next Town Board Meeting. Discussion was held on a possible trail connection through the WWTP property. It was determined that the best connection would likely be a trail that could be constructed on a berm on the west side of the property after a new drainage ditch is constructed. It was reported that Pheasants Forever is working with the Met Council for habitat sites in the meadow uplands area of the WWTP property.

Planning

Jane Kansier presented a memo regarding the Site Plan for the Expansion of the Ames Construction Yard. Pat Mason, from Ames Construction, joined the meeting. It was reported that Ames received an IUP for the yard expansion in February of 2020. The plans call for the construction of a shop and office facility in addition to parking lots to the north and south of the shop. Concerns regarding holding pond vegetation, drainage, landscaping and building aesthetics were discussed. Tom Kaldunski recommended that natural vegetation be planted in the pond, something be done to break up the massing of the building's walls, and a scattering of trees be implemented into a landscaping plan. Pat Mason reported that vegetation will be installed in the ponds and they are working with a landscaper on a final landscaping plan. The building will have three colors of concrete finish. It was requested that a landscaping plan be submitted, and a grading plan resubmitted before the certificate of occupancy is issued. It was also recommended that Ames review the fire suppression plans with the Farmington Fire Chief in addition to review by Inspectron as part of the permitting process. Pat Mason reported that fire suppression will be handled by a private well on the property.

Jane Kaniser presented a memo regarding the Site Plan for the Expansion of the Empire WWTP, operated by the Met Council. Chad Napstad, from Rice Lake Construction, joined the meeting. It was reported that plans follow the CUP that was issued in July of 2019 and call for a gas treatment building, a cover over the existing biosolids pad on the northeast side of the site, and a truck bay addition. Jamie Elvestad made a motion to approve the Site Plan for the Expansion of the Empire WWTP. Ed Gerten seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

The status of future Planning Commission Meetings was discussed. There is a need to meet as projects are moving forward as we move into summer. After some discussion, it was recommended that Planning Commission Meetings resume on May 5th and be held at the Public

Works Building. The Public Works Building will provide more space for Commission Members and the public to better spread out as long as is needed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was reported that Glenhaven Events has yet to pay for and pick up their building permit for the electronic sign that was constructed. The permit was issued in March of 2019. It was recommended that a letter be sent to the owner, notifying that failing to get the permit is a violation of the zoning ordinance.

It was reported that cart racing is taking place on a property on Clayton Ave in the Ag District. It is not believed that this is being operated as a business. It was recommended that the ordinances be reviewed to determine if this is an allowed use.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

It was reported that the Town Board will need to set a charging fee for nuisance violations as the Dakota County Sheriff's Department is not currently able to issue citations. Discussion was held on citation fee amounts and if different amounts can be assigned based on the number of violations. Charles Seipel will check into that.

The Town Board reviewed the draft grant application for the Dakota County Solid Waste Grant Program. The grant application includes the purchase of 30 recycling receptacles. This is a major piece in becoming compliant with Dakota County's new ordinance requiring recycling receptacles be placed with each trash receptacle in Township parks and on trails. The grant application also includes recycling dumpsters for the Empire Celebration in August. The grant will require a 25% contribution from the Township. Staff hours can be included in the Townships contribution. When calculated, it is estimated that the Township will need to contribute approximately \$1,700 for grant eligible expenses. Terry Holmes made a motion to approve the draft Dakota County Solid Waste Grant Program application. Jamie Elvestad seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

The Town Board reviewed information on the possibility of providing online payment options so that residents may pay utility bills and other fees by credit card. The option provided is by PayPal and would charge a service fee to residents when making payment by card. This would be at no costs to the Township. It was recommended that more information on information protection and reimbursement procedures be checked into for the next Town Board Meeting.

The Town Board reviewed quotes for upgrading internet speeds at the Empire Town Hall. The Town Board recommended that the Clerk determine what service would work best for Town Hall.

FYI:

The Town Board reviewed information from Charter Communications on cable lineup changes, the Minnesota Association of Townships on permitting in person Town Board Meetings when social distancing guidelines can be followed, and the Met Council on biosolids applications

The Town Board Meeting adjourned at 9:30 P.M.

Terry Holmes Chairman, Town Board

Charles Seipel, Clerk – Treasurer