Special Meeting, April 22nd, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am. Supervisors Peterson, Bilek, Ommen, clerk Wallace and 7 to 12 residents were in attendance. The meeting was a virtual meeting on Zoom due to the Governor’s stay at home order.

Chairman Peterson opened the meeting by going through the meetings rules, procedures and agenda. The agenda consisted of township organization/office duties, outsourcing payroll update, garage/service door painting project, electronic sign project, maintenance and townhall/roof repairs and transfer station operations.

Township Organization/Office Duties
Peterson stated the township is still doing virtual meetings during the Covid-19 pandemic, and that the clerk is in the office from 10:00am to 3:00pm Monday thru Friday.

Outsourcing Payroll Update
Paper-Plan-it is the company that is handling payroll now. The first payroll that they are doing will be on April 30th.

Garage/Service Door Painting Project
Supervisor Ommen said that Ganske will be doing the painting of the OHDs and service doors at the townhall, they can get it done by August 12th. Ganske will contact the clerk on organizing that with them.

Electronic Sign Project
Peterson started the electronic sign discussion by stating how the idea started and grew. The sign discussion started in the fall of 2019 at a FD meeting, talking about ways to recruit new firemen and advertising for the beef feed. Over time that evolved into other ideas for the sign. Some of them are using the sign to announce community events and information such as the beef feed, craft fairs, WAPOA meetings, volunteer activities, office hours, ICSO scholarships, the Uppgaard and Veterans trail. Promote public safety for example burning bans, emergency announcements, and buckle up.

Sign details are that the cost is $70,000 and will be placed on the east side of the townhall. The size of it is 8.5’ by 13’ facing down the road right of way, it has a photo sensing dimming function, it will be shut off 6 to 8 hours a night. It is a permitted activity within Crow Wing County, meets all county ordinances, and it will be placed withing the commercial zone of Ideal Corners. Cost was an obstacle; we didn’t feel we
could do that just for those functions. The board discussed on how to bring that down. The sign would have two sides. We can manage the sign anyway we would like to, for example 10, six second blocks of time, each side for a total of 20 segments. The township would keep half of the segments, sell the other half. Based on possible rates for this sign’s location and road traffic volume the payback is anywhere from 3-6 years if all slots are sold. We already have some interest for that.

The sign would provide another communication tool. It would promote a sense of community, would pay for itself over time, provide a revenue stream that would defer the need for tax increases, promote citizenship and a sense of belonging, and fulfill some of the needs/desires identified in the township’s comprehensive plan.

Peterson then opened the floor to the residents in attendance. Resident Mike asked what would the advertising fees be? Peterson suggested anywhere from $175 to $200 a month for each six second slot. Advertisers would be restaurants, and other businesses east and west of the township. Resident Mike also asked what would the repairs and maintenance be for the sign? Pat Lawrence from the electronic sign company RGB Outdoors mentioned that the township is in a good location to advertise for businesses from Crosslake, Ideal, and Pequot Lakes. There is a lot of different ways to place ads. The warranty is five years on all parts and one year on labor. On average LED signs last a minimum of 10 to 12 years without hardly any repair.

Resident Mike was wondering who would be selling the ads? Peterson stated the township office would be. Resident John Plein asked what did you find out about the public use of this money for a sign? Peterson stated that he contacted the township attorney and he did not find a conflict or problem with it.

Taren and Robbie Saccoman are concerned about the lights of the sign and the amount of time that the clerk would have to spend on sign issues. Pat Lawrence brought up that it is not a flashing sign, LED signs are designed to be lit in its place, not express itself out towards anybody. The sign would have an auto-dimming function. Taren felt it would still be too bright. Lawrence believes that residents would warm up to it after a while and that you are starting to see these signs in a lot of places. One resident brought up that we have a lot of local newspapers that we should use for advertising of community events and information.

Resident Niki asked what the necessity of the sign is? She has no problem finding out what is going on in the township through other means. Niki also stated that Lawrence said that you see these signs everywhere. That is why we do not want one, this is a small northwoods community.

Residents Jon and Dixie are opposed to the ads from other businesses in nearby communities. He understands the need to have information on a sign about the local events. Jon asked what is the size and is it all electronic? Peterson said that it is 8.5’ by
13’ and does meet the Crow Wing County ordinances. Lawrence stated that the top part of the sign would be the Ideal logo back lit by LEDs, below that would be the electronic board. They are installing an electronic message board sign in Breezy Point in a couple of weeks. You could go look at that if you would like.

Resident John Plein feels that this is a distraction from the original purpose to recruit fire fighters. There is not anything on the township website about recruiting fire fighters. He also stated that the fire fighters are only getting $20 per call, you could increase that to $40 and ask them to be ambassadors to help recruit from within. John felt the sign would have a low response rate for recruiting. Peterson questioned that proposal stating that it would cost the township $20,000 to $25,000 recurring per year.

Resident Mike asked who is responsible for recruiting fire fighters and have you voted to approve this sign? Peterson answered that fire fighters are township employees. The township board does have conditional approval for the sign. No contract has been signed, but the 3 board supervisors have voted to approve the sign project at a prior board meeting.

Resident Linda feels that it would be fair to talk to the broader community in an open meeting to see how they feel about the electronic sign and the expense.

Resident Kevin was wondering what percent of the annual budget this is. Peterson answered that this year the total budget is just a little over a million dollars, the capital budget is $190,000. Kevin thought that the sign would be a distraction for driving, especially with this sign going up on a corner.

Resident Mary Plein said that she works for the Northland Press and in her experience, it is hard to sell ads, manage ads, and collect the money for the ads. Pat Lawrence responded by saying they would help in the management of the ads and will work with the companies on their ads.

Maintenance and Townhall/Roof Repairs

Supervisor Ommen had an update on the roof repairs, Herzog was going to come out and look over the roof damage at the townhall. It should be covered under warranty. Denny will do the repairs to the maintenance building.

Transfer Station Operations

Supervisor Bilek had an update on Transfer Station Operations. There is a meeting at Crow Wing County on May 19th regarding selecting Ideal Township as the 2nd drop off site for recycling in the County. The transfer station is clean, locked, staffed and the recycling is sorted out. We are also following social distancing guidelines due to COVID-19.

Mike, Ideal Township resident was wondering why they are charging for leaves this year since the transfer station made a profit of $83,000 last year. Bilek answered that they
started doing that last year, first load of leaves goes with your permit, any loads after that are $3. There is a cost in moving the leaves and brush. The transfer station did not make any money last year, it is a service for the community. It was about a $7,000 loss.

Some residents had some concerns about the increase in traffic and nearby residents just throwing recycling away. Ommen stated that this is a county decision, they are trying to get less contamination of their recycling. We do benefit from non-residents using the transfer station. Bilek said this is a strong attempt to continue with the County’s recycling program with low contamination. If this doesn’t work, it will go in the landfill.

There is a special board meeting at the Transfer Station at 1:30pm on Friday May 1st with Crow Wing County representatives for them to have a final overview of the Transfer Station.

Peterson suggested to have another virtual special meeting regarding the electronic sign on Wed. April 29th at 10:00am.

There being no further business to conduct, the meeting adjourned at 11:07 a.m.

J. Craig Wallace
Ideal Township Clerk-Treasurer
April 29th, 2020

IDEAL TOWNSHIP

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David Peterson, Chairman

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J. Craig Wallace, Clerk-Treasurer