Special Meeting, April 29th, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 am. Supervisors Peterson, Bilek, Ommen, clerk Wallace, Chief 1 and 25 to 30 residents were in attendance. The meeting was a virtual meeting on Zoom due to the Governor’s stay at home order. The only agenda item was the electronic sign project.

Chairmen Peterson opened the meeting by stating the board would like to discuss communication problems we have in the township and that Chief Birkeland has some comments he would like to make. Then the board would make a motion to proceed or not to proceed with the electronic sign project.

Peterson wished we had this much participation at our monthly meetings. We have a communication problem between the town board and the public. The board would like more input from township residents at meetings. Since last meeting, the board has had multiple phone calls and emails about the sign. Peterson talked to Taren Saccoman about her petition opposed to the sign. Supervisor Ommen thinks the township needs to do a faster job of getting the minutes on the website and look at different ways to take minutes. Supervisor Bilek echoed what the other board members were saying and thanked Chief Birkeland for the extra time and service during this pandemic. Peterson said the agendas could be more specific and maybe change the format.

Peterson asked if any residents had any ideas to communicate better?

Resident Jon Grothe stated you could try to go more paperless, make the meeting packet available on the website. It would be nice to find things out ahead of time. It is up to the residents to go to meetings. Peterson answered that the meeting packet is available on the website currently.

Resident Taren Saccoman said that they are getting a group together to go to meetings and whoever from the group went could report back to the group about the meeting. Peterson suggested a township email newsletter or a way to have residents sign up on the website to receive informational messages from the township. Resident John Plein said the township tried mailing a newsletter, but that did not get much response, for the cost of postage and time that it took to put together it was not worth it. Linda, township resident really liked the idea of the township email. Resident Gail likes the Zoom meetings, maybe there could be a way to do this all the time and put a link on the website for this. Peterson said there is some difficulty in doing that but will look into how to do that on the website. Resident Mike Eastwood brought up a program called,
go to meeting, its free, could be used also. He said that a button on the home page of
the website that could take you directly to meeting minutes would be nice. Resident
Mary stated while all these comments are good ones the board needs to realize that this
will add more time to the clerk working on media, and that it will require more
communication between the clerk and the board. Ommen appreciated the suggestions
and said we will try to communicate better. Bilek stated all points are well taken and we
will look into the comments.

Transfer Station issues came up. Residents were asking why Crosslake’s recycling was
shutting down and do non-residents need to buy a permit for recycling? Bilek stated the
reasons why Crosslake and Nisswa recycling programs were shutting down is because of
the County making the decision to go with Ideal’s transfer station as the 2nd and only
drop off site for recycling in the county. There is a meeting at Crow Wing County on
May 19th about doing this. The other sites are not attended, Ideal’s site is, we have less
contamination in our recycling than the other cities do. It is a service to our community;
it is open, and we are following social distancing guidelines. Non-residents do need to
buy a permit to recycle at the transfer station. Crow Wing County will help the
township with the additional cost associated with the increase in volume. Our last
amount of SCORE funding we received from the county was about $35,000, five years
ago they were offering $12,000.

Chief Birkeland wanted to outline the involvement he had with the sign. Birkeland
stated he is required to go to one meeting a month and at one of those meetings the sign
was discussed. He shared a name and number of a gentleman who sells the signs and
that is all the involvement he has had with the sign. Everyone has the right to their
opinion, which is fine, but they also have the obligation to tell the truth. The letter to
the editor in the paper that ties the fire department to the sign is not accurate. This is a
township sign. Citizens are stopping my firemen asking why the fire department is
spending $75,000 on a sign? I have had personal attacks asking why I am benefiting
financial from being fire chief and that the extra money that will be going into the relief
association to make up for past debts went directly to fire department members. This
misinformation takes energy away from helping people. I have volunteered on this
department for 23 years. The issue with recruiting firemen is not a sign, it is the culture
of the township and the fire department. Birkeland trusts the town board and thanks
them for the time.

Supervisor Ommen apologized to Chief Birkeland for the way the fire department was
dragged into this and the difficulty this has caused him. Birkeland stated he still loves
this township and he needs to move on from this issue.
Motion by Peterson, second by Bilek to cancel the electronic sign project. Any discussion. Ommen said he has talked to several people that are not in favor of the sign. Most have brought up that it is just too much money to spend on a sign. Peterson asked Taren Saccoman is that what we agreed to and would you be willing to drop the petition. Taren agreed. Carried unanimously.

There being no further business to conduct, the meeting adjourned at 10:37 a.m.

J. Craig Wallace
Ideal Township Clerk-Treasurer
May 2nd, 2020

IDEAL TOWNSHIP

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David Peterson, Chairman

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J. Craig Wallace, Clerk-Treasurer