

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR TOWN BOARD MEETING
November 5th, 2020, 6:00 PM at the Balkan Community Center

In attendance: Chairman – Brad Strgar
 Supervisor – Jennifer Tarnowski
 Supervisor – Dirk VerSteege
 Clerk – Misty Hendrickson
 Treasurer – Kent Fredeen
 Visitors – 3 guests

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 6:02 pm.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: After review of the minutes from the October 20th, 2020 meeting, a motion was made by Supervisor VerSteege, supported by Supervisor Tarnowski to approve the October 20th, 2020 meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

FINANCIAL REPORT: Kent Fredeen

Receipts: \$24,474.27			
Revenues:		First National Bank – Interest	
City of Chisholm – Canister site expansion	\$22,000.00	FNB-C October 2020 Interest – MET	\$15.73
City of Chisholm – Recycle agreement	\$1,104.17	FNB-C October 2020 interest – Community Center	\$4.61
Dump coupons	\$750.00	FNB-C October 2020 Interest – Building Projects	\$0.57
METlife insurance reimbursements	\$12.27	FNB-C October 2020 Interest – COVID-19	\$2.39
MN Revenue (MMB) market value credit – Ag portion	\$334.98		
Community Center Rent	\$250.00		

First National Bank - Account Balances	
Checking Account	\$139,991.28
MET (Mining Effects Tax) Account	\$136,755.84
Community Center Account	\$40,295.34
Building Project Account	\$4,956.27
COVID -19 account (restricted)	\$20,732.75
Total	\$342,737.92
Balkan Funds available	\$322,005.17
Funds after returning the excess COVID-19 funds	\$327,105.12

Debit Card usage: election supplies from Walmart - \$29.11

Voided checks: #61912 to Radko dated 11/5/20 for \$235.87

Voided checks continued: #61911 for L&M Supply dated 11/5/20 for \$345.67

#61921 for St Louis County Auditor dated 11/5/20 for \$15,632.80

A motion by Supervisor Tarnowski and seconded by Supervisor VerSteege to approve the treasurer’s report as read. Motion carried unanimously.

Transfer completed: none

Recommended transfers: Transfer \$290.00 from checking to community center account for October 2020 community center rent. Transfer \$15,632.80 from the COVID-19 account to the checking for the return of unused funds to the St. Louis County Auditor.

A motion by Supervisor Tarnowski, supported by Supervisor VerSteege, to approve the bills for payment on November 5th, 2020, and ordered paid in the amount of \$24,199.72. Motion carried unanimously.

A motion by Supervisor Tarnowski, supported by Supervisor VerSteeg, to accept the payroll for November 5th, 2020 (payroll period 10/18- 10/31/20), in the amount of \$5,604.34. Motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS:

1. Clerks Report:

- a. The clerk attended a CARES act reporting Zoom meeting on October 23rd. The October report is due by Nov. 10th. The final November report is due Nov. 24th with no money left over. Balkan intends to send the left-over money to the St Louis County auditors by November 15th. Balkan will be sending back \$10,632.80 to St Louis County to be used as they see fit.
- b. The General Election report: The number of registered voters at 7 a.m. on November 3rd, 2020 was 580 voters. St Louis County handles all of our absentee votes and reported there was *about* 175 absentee votes accepted. Balkan also had 36 newly registered voters on election day. 580 registered voters -175 absentee voters +36 newly registered voters = 441 possible voters in Balkan. Out of the 441 possible voters in Balkan, 422 people voted. 422 voted divided by 441 possible voters equals 96% voter turnout. We had a great turnout for our precinct! We did have a problem with the DS200 jamming twice. The clerk called St Louis County elections department to ask if they could help us with the jam. They were very helpful walking through the process to get the jammed ballot out of the tabulator. A piece of a ballot must be left in the tabulator which caused the ballot tabulator not to accept any more ballots. We had to hand-count the 33 subsequent ballots after the jammed ballot made the machine unusable. The count came out well. Linda Sutton was the head judge and handled everything and everyone professionally and courteously.

2. Shop & Road Report:

- a. Roadside brush cutting on Baich, Briski, Salonen, Latick and Pozar roads were done October 19th.
- b. Grading was done on Long Lake, Baich, and Cooper road.
- c. Plowing equipment was readied for winter, lawn mowers were stored and their batteries pulled. The packer was removed from the grader for winter.
- d. The east route of Balkan was graded on October 23rd.
- e. The sander was put on the T-22 along with hoses October 26th.
- f. The storage building in back of the garage was cleaned and organized to fit the excavator for winter storage.
- g. A beaver dam was removed from Franti Road on October 29th.
- h. All trucks and equipment were cleaned inside and outside on October 30th.
- i. Steve Johnson and Supervisor VerSteeg graded 10 roads in one day on Nov. 4th. Supervisor VerSteeg gave Steve an atta-boy for his hard work.
- j. The part-time truck drivers list needs to be reviewed. Former employee, Dan Olds is interested in nights and weekends plowing for the winter. **Supervisor Strgar motioned to put Dan Olds on the part-time truck plowing list. This was supported by Supervisor VerSteeg and passed unanimously.**

3. Community Center Report

- a. Ann Palmquist noticed the American flag at the community center was looking a little ragged. She suggested we replace it. Balkan was given an American flag by Joleen Hendrickson as a donation in June 2020. Replacing the flag has been put on the work priority sheet for the coming next two weeks.
- b. Supervisors Strgar and VerSteeg put up the plexiglass for the election at the community center, the Sunday before the election. They took down the plexiglass, the Wednesday after the election (November 4th).
- c. The propane tank at the community center is currently at 70% full.

4. Canister Site Report

- a. Dave Pajunen talked to the truck drivers who remove garbage from the canister site. He asked about replacing the 5-hole canister. The truck drivers said our supervisors will have to request a different canister from St Louis county.
- b. Ron Hindsley, alternate canister site attendant, will work at the canister site on Saturday, November 7th, as a second attendant.
- c. Starting November 11th, 2020, the canister site will open at 7:30 am.
- d. A new sign showing the new times the canister site will be open is needed. The clerk will call Bark Design for options and advice.
- e. The canister site attendants will monitor the early arrivals at the site until the end of the year and report to the supervisors periodically, if people are using the new time.

5. Other Reports

- a. A one-year review for an employee was discussed by supervisors. The supervisors decided this review can be scheduled for the last part of December.

CONCERNS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

- a. Laurel Fredeen talked with St Louis County public works in Duluth regarding traffic control off of Highway 73. They said it would be less expensive to widen the shoulder of Highway 73 and use that as a left-hand turning lane.
- b. Laurel Fredeen suggested Balkan organize some community activities for winter. She said that in the past, Balkan has flooded the area behind the community center for an ice-skating rink and pushed snow to make a “sliding” hill for kids in the parking lot. She also suggested Balkan buy a basketball hoop for kids to play in the parking lot.
- c. On Halloween, residents Garth and Sandy Wilson sent out flyers to folks in their area asking if anyone was interested in a Halloween hay ride. They took 9 kids around on their hay trailer to houses in the area. They drove the kids up to Emily Baraga’s farm to see the animals. What a wonderful community activity. Thanks Sandy and Garth!
- d. Supervisor Tarnowski suggested some community ideas such as: music by local artists at the community center (outside, due to COVID) and a build-a-snowman-contest (per family). The supervisors think the best way to organize these activities would be to gather a committee to set up, think up, and organize a COVID-friendly activity.

CORRESPONDENCE:

1. 10/16/20 – Edwards oil fuel prices versus ICO fuel prices. Scott Skalko, from Lucky Seven, contacted the clerk in an effort to get Balkan’s business. He said he did some research on ICO’s pricing. He claimed ICO was charging us \$0.15 per gallon extra over the \$0.20 per gallon delivery charge. He was correct. Jon White called ICO to ask that they reduce our price by \$0.15/gallon, or we would be looking for another vendor. They complied immediately.
2. 10/27/20 – Balkan received a conditional use permit application from St. Louis County planning department for the property at 11402 Cooper Road, Chisholm, MN. The supervisors discussed this and had no issues with the warehouse and office space that is planned for the property through John Bougalis.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Township investment of excess funds was discussed. According to MN State statute Chapter 118A, townships may only invest taxpayer money in secure investments such as U.S. securities, State and Local Securities, commercial paper, time deposits, high-risk mortgage-backed securities, temporary general obligation bonds, and debt service funds with a broker who is “aware of government entity investment requirements”. This information was given to Kent Fredeen via MAT attorney, Karl-Christian Johannessen. Supervisor Tarnowski asked Treasurer Fredeen when the township’s lean time was. An option the supervisors discussed was to set aside money (for example: if the roof at the community center needs replacing, or parking lot needs repair) to fund projects.
2. Supervisor VerSteege asked the clerk to call local companies to find who has the best price for propane. Ferrellgas out of Virginia gave a bid for \$1.11/gallon, but if purchased now he could provide propane for \$1.03/gallon. The \$1.11/gallon price will last until 5/31/21.
3. A special meeting was called on November 29th at 6:04pm. This special meeting was held to discuss an employee’s performance review. It was attended by Jon White, Barb White, Linda Salo, Steve Johnson, Dan Manick, 49ers representative, all three supervisors and the clerk. The supervisors presented a full sheet of complaints regarding the work output, excessive use of sick time, argumentative attitude and disregard of instructions by the supervisors, of one employee. Dan Manick, 49ers representative, pushed to have the supervisors retract the complaints. He didn’t want to go any further with the discussion in order to save relationships. Mr. Manick thought a labor management committee should be enacted in the future, if the situation deteriorates more. The supervisors were advised by Dan Manick to document the warnings given to the employee. Also, advised was that Supervisor VerSteege not work on the roads because it causes problems. The special meeting lasted until 8:56 p.m.
4. Supervisor VerSteege inspected all driveways of residents who turned in snow plowing agreements. Only one property will be denied service. The clerk will send the denial and refund via mail to this resident. The checks for plowing service can be cashed and put into the Road and Bridge fund.
5. The light by the pavilion at the community center was fixed by North American Electric. Just in time for the election.
6. Mary Bovitz from Maturi Road paid for snow plow service through Balkan. Two other residents purchased snow plowing service from St Louis County and sent the receipt to Balkan to be reimbursed for the difference between St Louis County’s fee and Balkan’s \$300.00 fee. The supervisors suggested not cashing her check yet. Supervisor Strgar will contact Mrs. Bovitz to discuss her snow plowing agreement.
7. The plan for the water/oil separator for the garage was discussed. Supervisor VerSteege will talk to Chisholm public works to see what they do with their water/oil waste. Treasurer Fredeen suggested this issue can be paid for with MET money, since it would relate to infrastructure.

8. Balkan was instructed to return any unused COVID-19 money to our home county of St Louis by November 15th, 2020. **In order to keep some of the money local, the supervisors decided to give a one-time donation of \$5000.00 of COVID-19 money to the Chisholm Food shelf.** The Chisholm Food Shelf will be able to help Balkan residents by putting this money to use buying fresh vegetables and fruits for those in need. **Supervisor Strgar motioned to donate \$5000.00 to the Chisholm Food Shelf. This was supported by Supervisor VerSteeg and passed unanimously.**
9. It was suggested at the previous meeting that a small, self-propelled snow blower would be useful at the canister site. Supervisor VerSteeg will look around for snow blowers and price them. **Supervisor Strgar motioned to approve a purchase of a snow blower for the canister site. Supervisor VerSteeg supported this motion.** Supervisor VerSteeg will research prices of snow blowers, Supervisor Strgar will look for a discount from the Virginia L&M Supply. This will be discussed at the next meeting on November 17th.
10. The third quarter quarterly withholding for MN Revenue was not filed or paid by Balkan's accountant. There will be fees to be paid for being late reporting withholding tax. This is one of Tax Tyme's duties listed in the contract. The board suggested holding Tax Tyme's check until he finishes reporting to MN Revenue. Tax Tyme will be asked to finish out the year end reporting. A letter will be formed to address these issues. The clerk will make a list of year end duties Tax Tyme needs to finish.
11. Jeff, from North American Electric, checked to see if the lights in the garage that are out now, were still warrantied. They are not. There are three lights that need to be replaced in the garage.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. The work priority sheet has been updated.
2. Can we use the CARES Act funds for hotspots for distance learning? The clerk talked with Katie at the Chisholm Library about their use of hotspots. She said they have had issues with this since the beginning. The supervisors declined spending CARES Act money on hotspots but will maybe consider this in the future if there is more money sent to us to help with COVID-19 expenses.
3. Regarding closing of the COVID-19 money market account, the treasurer suggested we keep the money Balkan earned as reimbursement for COVID-19 expenses in the money market account. If we receive more money for future COVID-19 expenses, we will have this account to put it in. Plus, there shouldn't be any fees due to maintaining a required minimum balance in the account.
4. Compensatory time in the labor contract was vague, the clerk asked for more information on how the employees will use this. Days off need to be approved by the supervisors before the employee can take time off in lieu of overtime wages. The overtime hours earned can be "banked" and used for time off at the rate of 1.5 times the hours. They must use the vacation request form to request time off.
5. A new alternate for the canister site attendant position will start training after deer hunting season. His name is Ward Smilanich. Welcome Ward!

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS:

1. Darlene Hodge is hosting a karate/exercise class presentation on Nov. 9th at 10 a.m.

NEWSLETTERS & MEETING MINUTES:

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Supervisor Tarnowski, supported by Supervisor VerSteeg, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:18 PM. The next board meeting will be held at 6:00 PM at the Balkan Community Center on November 17th, 2020.

Respectfully Submitted,

Misty Hendrickson, Clerk

(Clerk) Misty Hendrickson

(Board Chair) Brad Strgar