Royalton Township Regular Board Meeting Minutes

6052 Royalton Road, Braham, MN 55006

Email: royalton@royaltontownship.com -- Website: www.royaltontownship.com

25 April 2023

Approved

7:30 p.m., 25 April 2023, Chair Marshall Pearson called the Royalton Township regular board meeting to order with Supervisor Jeff Schlaeger, Supervisor John Graham, Treasurer Jenessa Saumer, and Clerk Duane Swanson present. Septic Administrator Amy Thompson, Road Superintendent Dan Saumer, Deputy Clerk Andrea Anderson, Zoning Administrator John Kemen, and Secondary Road Operator Alex Anderson also attended, along with members of the planning commission and members of the public. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Supervisor Schlaeger moved, Chair Pearson seconded, to approve the agenda as presented, with two additional items (culverts and tax-forfeited property). The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Pearson moved, Supervisor Graham seconded, to approve the minutes of the reorganizational meeting of 28 March 2023. The motion carried unanimously.

Supervisor Schlaeger moved, Chair Pearson seconded, to approve the minutes of the regular board meeting of 28 March 2023 as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Pearson moved, Supervisor Graham seconded, to approve the minutes of the 24 April 2023 local board of appeal and equalization as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Supervisor Schlaeger moved, Chair Pearson seconded, to approve the minutes of the 24 April 2023 annual road inspection as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer Saumer read her report noting that as of 31 March 2023 the township had a balance of $592,909.40 in the treasury. The report noted that $104,229.84 of that balance is ARPA/COVID-19 aid that is restricted to certain uses, leaving a spendable balance of $462,412.56. Supervisor Graham moved, Supervisor Schlaeger seconded, to approve the report. The motion carried unanimously. Clerk Swanson noted that Treasurer Saumer has placed a wire basket on her desk in which all employees should place their time sheets.

Supervisor Graham moved, Chair Pearson seconded, to approve payment of checks #10754-10787 in the amount of $12,301.99 with check 10784 being void. The motion carried unanimously with Chair Pearson, Supervisor Graham, and Supervisor Schlaeger voting "Aye". Clerk Swanson presented two additional bills for approval: $2,784.21 to McCoy Construction & Forestry for service on the John Deere grader and $11,722.56 to Knife River for aggregate, rock, and rip rap for use in repairing Bluebell Road after the washout during the flood. Supervisor Schlaeger moved, Chair Pearson seconded, to approve the bills. The motion carried with Supervisor Schlaeger and Chair Pearson voting in the affirmative and Supervisor Graham abstaining because of his association with Knife River. [Subsequent to the motion, Treasurer Saumer and Deputy Clerk Anderson prepared checks 10788 and 10789 for these bills.]

Public Forum was offered. Planning Commission Chair Leslie Orvis requested that the township investigate the permit status for the dwelling of Roger Doenz that had been moved into the township. He also expressed thanks to Supervisor John Graham for his speedy and thorough work in making Bluebell Road passable after the flooding. The audience applauded. Roxanne Orvis then noted that tobacco use in the hall during rentals was prohibited and questioned whether the township had a policy regarding tobacco use in the offices. No one knew of such a written policy. Chair Pearson stated that was the intent when the rental policy was created. He directed the planning commission to work on this.

Planning Commission recommendations:

The planning commission recommended approval of the new site permit application dated 25 April 2023. Supervisor Schlaeger moved, Supervisor Graham seconded, to approve the site permit application. The motion carried unanimously.

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The non-permanent structures discussion is continuing.

Old Business:

There were no new septic issues.

Zoning Administrator Kemen noted that he had not been contacted for a fencing permit from the owners of 7876 Bluebell (PID 295103000) as had been promised at the last meeting. Supervisor Schlaeger moved, Chair Pearson seconded, to refer this issue to counsel for recommendation and action. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Pearson requested that a meeting be set up with Caleb Anderson to discuss the situation at 5214 Royal Woods Road (PID 295137000).

Road Superintendent Saumer and Supervisor Graham updated the board on the current road situation, noting that Bluebell Road had a substantial washout during the snow melt and that residents were stranded without access or egress. The road was closed with barrier signs, but one individual went around the signs and became stranded on a culvert in the washed-out part of the road. Supervisor Graham arranged with Pine County sheriff’s office and Braham fire department to rescue the individual. Using his emergency powers, he arranged for the recovery of the vehicle so that the breach in the road could be filled with rock and rip rap. It was made passable to higher vehicles within 24 hours. On the 25th, it was temporarily covered with a layer of gravel so that it was passable for most vehicles. Further repairs have been arranged for and will be implemented after the flood waters have receded and the roadbed has dried out. Superintendent Saumer noted that several other roads in the township were closed but most are currently passable. Frost boils have emerged as a major problem and are being addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Road Superintendent Saumer reported that he has the new mailbox for Carol Gaard and has made arrangements to get a swing-away post. He will install the box in the near future.

Supervisor Schlaeger reported that the Fire District Committee continues to meet and has been discussing the possibility of a grant to conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of a fire district. The grant would pay about 90% of the approximately $30,000 cost. Pine City has indicated that it would be interested in participating. Supervisor Schlaeger moved, Chair Pearson seconded, to endorse Royalton’s participation in the grant and to appoint Supervisor Schlaeger as Royalton’s representative. The motion carried unanimously.

Anthony Macke, representing McCoy Construction & Forestry made a presentation on a John Deere 770 grader, noting that he has separate proposals for a joystick model and for an antlered model. He responded to the board’s questions as well as questions from the audience. If a commitment were made this evening, delivery would be in September or October. There was substantial discussion on whether to include the existing grader as a trade-in part of the sale. V.J. Polkus, representing Zeigler Cat, was also present and participated in the discussions. Supervisor Schlaeger moved to purchase a John Deere 770. There was no second. Additional discussion revealed that both firms would be willing to arrange for Road Superintendent Saumer and Secondary Road Operator Anderson to test drive machines from both firms. Supervisor Schlaeger withdrew his motion. Chair Pearson thanked Mr. Macke for his presentation.

New Business:

Ross Benzen, Braham fire chief, and Ryan Davis were present to explain services of Braham Fire and Rescue, including service area, equipment, personnel, training, and community involvement. He stressed that Braham Fire does not charge for individual calls; they are included in the annual fee paid by the township. Chair Pearson thanked the firefighters for their presentation and noted how helpful they were in the recent Bluebell Road incident, including going in the water to assist in removal of the stranded motorist and vehicle.

Chair Pearson read two emails from John Kenmir requesting that the township take over the end of Bluebell Road as well as the circle including Royal River Road, Royal Way, and Royal Woods Road. Mr. Kenmir explained that the residents were willing to work with the township to bring the roads into compliance with township specifications, including clearing of rights-of-way, with costs assessed to the parcels’ taxes. Chair Pearson noted that, at present, the

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township road ends at the stop sign and, therefore, the township cannot proceed further. Michael Lucht noted that this is the third time that Bluebell has been lost to floods and questioned whether additional culverts would solve the problem. Brett McDonough and Linda Cobb expressed concern about the encroachment of rights-of-way onto their yards and landscaping. Chair Pearson recommended that discussion among the residents continue and, when agreement is reached, that the proposals be brought back to the board. He then thanked the residents for their willingness to meet and discuss.

Supervisor Graham and Clerk Swanson reported on their attendance at the Minnesota Association of Townships spring short course in Duluth. Supervisor Graham attended the new supervisors track and found it most informative. Clerk Swanson attended the Clerk/Treasurer track that included sessions on record keeping, common mistakes, social media, and broadband.

Supervisor Schlaeger asked whether the township had enough culverts on hand to cover the current needs. Road Superintendent Saumer replied that the policy has been to try to keep at least one extra of each of the sizes on hand, but that the current need will exceed supply. By consensus, Road Superintendent Saumer was authorized to purchase additional culverts in accordance with the decisions on the road inspection and with the understanding that at least one extra of each size would be on hand for emergency purposes.

Supervisor Graham noted that he had reviewed the property at 1386 Sherwood that is tax-forfeit. He found that someone had cleaned most of the debris and that the issue of blight was less than it had been. Unless the township objects, the county is likely to put the property up for sale. Discussion continued whether the township should be in the business of purchasing blighted properties and then reselling them. Chair Pearson moved, Supervisor Schlaeger seconded, to let the county proceed with the sale. The motion carried with Chair Pearson and Supervisor Schlaeger voting “Aye” and Supervisor Graham voting “Nay.”

Chair Pearson then noted that he had received an email from a township resident expressing concern over the accuracy of the township financial records. He replied that the board had instituted additional controls by requesting cash control statements from the clerk and treasurer each month. This process will be reviewed later in the year to determine if additional controls are needed.

Correspondence:

The board acknowledged the receipt of the 2023 Manual on Town Government, issued by the Minnesota Association of Townships.

FYI:

Chair Pearson reported that the statement of town officers had been submitted to Pine County Auditor and to the Minnesota Association of Townships and that the authorized signature report had been submitted to PERA.

The next regular meeting of the town board will be at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, 30 May 2023.

At 8:55 p.m., Supervisor Schlaeger moved, Chair Pearson seconded, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Duane P. Swanson, Clerk

Marshall Pearson, Chair/Supervisor

Jeff Schlaeger, Vice Chair/Supervisor

John Graham, Supervisor

Jenessa M. Saumer, Treasurer