

Royalton Township Regular Board Meeting Minutes  
6052 Royalton Road, Braham, MN 55006  
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30 April 2024  
Approved

7:30 p.m., 30 April 2024, Chair Jeff Schlaeger called the Royalton Township regular board meeting to order, with Supervisor John Graham, Supervisor Pete Belland, Treasurer Jenessa Saumer, and Clerk Duane Swanson present. Septic Administrator Amy Thompson, Zoning Administrator John Kemen, and Road Superintendent Dan Saumer also attended, along with members of the planning commission and members of the public. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Supervisor Belland moved, Supervisor Graham seconded, to approve the agenda as presented, with the addition of three items: fuel, picnic shelter, and personnel. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Schlaeger moved, Supervisor Belland seconded, to approve the minutes of the reorganizational meeting of 26 March 2024 as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Schlaeger moved, Supervisor Graham seconded, to approve the minutes of the regular board meeting of 26 March 2024 as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Supervisor Graham moved, Chair Schlaeger seconded, to approve the minutes of the board of appeal and equalization meeting of 29 April 2024 as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Clerk Swanson noted that the minutes of the road inspection of 29 April 2024 had not been finalized and that they would be ready for consideration at the May meeting.

Treasurer Saumer read her report, noting that as of 31 March 2024, the township had a balance of \$299,807.02 in the treasury. Deposits were \$46,233.83; disbursements were \$20,434.54, leaving an ending balance of \$331,288.00. Outstanding checks were \$5,681.69, leaving a spendable balance was \$325,606.31. Supervisor Graham moved, Chair Schlaeger seconded, to approve the report. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Schlaeger called for discussion of checks #11123-11148 in the amount of \$11,931.26. Chair Schlaeger moved, Supervisor Belland seconded, to approve payment of the bills. The motion carried unanimously with Chair Schlaeger, Supervisor Graham, and Supervisor Belland voting "Aye." Chair Schlaeger moved, Supervisor Belland seconded, to authorize payment of the spring short course registration fee for Supervisors Belland and Graham and Clerk Swanson in the amount of \$225.00. The motion carried unanimously with Chair Schlaeger, Supervisor Graham, and Supervisor Belland voting "Aye."

Public Forum was offered. Patrice DeGray requested that the assembly maintain a moment of silence for the death of township resident Jacque Nordby, wife of former town board member Gordon Nordby. Mrs. DeGray's request was honored. Dale Becklin of Dale Becklin Trucking was present to provide the township with a price list for his machinery services; Chair Schlaeger thanked Mr. Becklin and noted that the price list would remain on file. Zoning Administrator John Kemen reminded the board that the fire fund and road and bridge fund were in substantial deficit and when those deficits are removed by transfer from the general fund, the township has less than \$200,000, which is less than good accounting practices recommend.

Other individuals speaking at the public forum included: Former treasurer Wendy Tchida noted that a beaver control expense in October 2023 had been miscoded. Roxanne Orvis read a long statement noting her concerns about the actions of elected officials and staff over the last year. Planning commission member Priscilla Schneider noted her embarrassment that residents, inside and outside the township, were asking questions about what was going on in the township and that this reflected negatively on the township. Planning commission chair Les Orvis stated his extreme disagreement with the actions of past and current board members. Dale Heidelberg repeated his concerns about the behavior and actions of the current building inspector. Troy Downing emphasized the negativity that seems to be pervading the township. The public forum lasted approximately 25 minutes. The board took no formal action on the

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issues raised. Supervisor Belland responded specifically to Leslie Orvis that the continuing accusations against elected officials, past and present, must cease.

Planning Commission recommendations:

Noting the commission's positive recommendation on the draft administrative citations ordinance, Supervisor Graham moved, Chair Schlaeger seconded, to forward the draft to legal counsel for review. The motion carried unanimously.

Old Business:

Septic issues: There was no additional information on the expired septic permit for 11227 Homer Road. Clerk Swanson noted that deadline for remediation of the septic issues at PID 290124003 (10343 Wildflower Road) had passed on 19 April 2024 with no further communication or activity. Chair Schlaeger moved, Supervisor Graham seconded, that a letter to "resident" be drafted noting the lack of remediation and sent certified and regular mail. The motion carried unanimously.

Zoning issues: There is still no response from Pine County about the zoning concerns at 5214 Royal Woods Road (PID 295137000). During the road inspection, the board noted the worsening of the junk issues on PID 295231000 (Royal Heights Lane). Chair Schlaeger moved, Supervisor Graham seconded, to draft a letter to be sent certified to the landowner and, if the property is foreclosed, to the institution holding the foreclosure noting the township's concern over blight. The motion carried unanimously.

Road issues: Supervisor Graham moved, Chair Schlaeger seconded, to approve the request of Kyle Bowman to chlorinate a portion of Cabin Drive. The motion carried unanimously. Planning commission member Priscilla Schneider noted that no chlorinating on Maple Shores would be done this year; that the road appeared in good condition with the minimal grading that occurred last year. Dan Downing was present to note that access to part of his land from about 1899 to 1942 was from Clover Lane. He requested that the northern extension of Clover Lane remain a declared town road; Troy Downing noted that nothing had been done to that extension of Clover Lane in 60 years and questioned if it is still a road. Supervisor Graham moved, Chair Schlaeger seconded, to gather the information provided by Dan Downing, Road Superintendent Saumer, and Clerk Swanson and forward that information for legal counsel review. The motion carried unanimously.

Clerk Swanson reported that the four major payments of the FEMA grant, totaling \$70,665.21, had been received and initial paperwork for the administrative cost aspect (approximately \$1,100) had been submitted.

During the road inspection, the board met with Kevin McFerran and Gary Folkestad at Road T-13 to review its status. Supervisor Graham moved, Chair Schlaeger seconded, to meet with legal counsel to determine the easiest way to effect its transfer from township authority to private ownership while maintaining access to the back parcels. The motion carried unanimously.

Supervisor Graham moved, Chair Schlaeger seconded, to authorize payment of dues to the Pine County Township Officers' Association, totaling \$113.67. The motion carried unanimously with Supervisor Graham, Supervisor Belland, and Chair Schlaeger voting "Aye."

Supervisors Graham and Belland and Clerk Swanson reported on their attendance at the 5 April 2024 Minnesota Association of Townships spring short course in Duluth. All found the meeting useful and informative.

Clerk Swanson reported that representatives from the proposed fire district committee had met with the scoring committee on 3 April; the scoring committee recommended that the grant request be approved by the Fire Safety Account Committee that meets in June.

New Business:

Clerk Swanson noted the annual activity report from the Rush City Fire Department in board members' packets.

Clerk Swanson noted the proposed fire protection contract amendment (#1, dated 17 April 2024) with the city of Pine City in board members' packets. By consensus, the board decided to study further the amendment.

Clerk Swanson referred to the wireless key proposal in board members' packets. Travis Kemen has recommended

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that the township switch to a two-key wireless system, with one key that is easier to access for guests, and a second, more secure key for the office computers and the television computer. The hardware for such an upgrade is in place; the approximate cost to activate this system would be less than \$100. Chair Schlaeger moved, Supervisor Graham seconded, to approve the installation of the two-key wireless system. The motion carried unanimously with Supervisor Graham, Supervisor Belland, and Chair Schlaeger voting “Aye.”

Supervisor Belland announced that because his brother, Steve Belland, is employed as the secondary road operator, he will abstain from all votes that concern Road Operator Belland’s employment and wages.

Chair Schlaeger reported that the Rock Creek Lions have offered to pay for and install a picnic shelter as part of the town’s playground complex. Supervisor Graham moved, Supervisor Belland seconded, to approve this offer and to thank the Lions organization for its support. The motion carried unanimously.

Supervisor Belland reported that the township currently uses both “green” undyed and “red” dyed fuel in its machinery. In his survey of surrounding townships, it appears that Royalton is the only one continuing to use “green” fuel, which is more expensive. By consensus, the board decided to transition to only “red” fuel. Road Superintendent Saumer will facilitate this transition.

Denise Weis requested that the board consider and pass a resolution declaring a moratorium on industrial cultivation of adult cannabis, its processing, and its dispensaries in order for the township to study the effects of such activities on the health, welfare, and safety of its citizens. She noted that the legislature and the office of cannabis management has yet to finalize statutes and rules regarding this issue and that the Pine County board of commissioners does not have complete zoning authority over the townships. She distributed copies of the proposed resolution. Joe Zappa, CEO of Erba, noted that he has a purchase agreement for a property in the township contingent upon his firm receiving a license from the state and that existing law does not allow local jurisdictions to prohibit the growth of cannabis after a license has been received. Several members of the audience expressed their views, positive and negative, on the issue of a moratorium. Joe Reed, who could not attend, had submitted a statement in support of the moratorium that was shared with board members. After discussion, Supervisor Graham moved, Chair Schlaeger seconded, to forward the issue of a moratorium to the planning commission for further study and to table the issue until the May meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Patrice DeGray then addressed the board requesting that she replace Leslie Orvis on the planning commission. She distributed a statement enunciating her short- and long- term goals as a member of the planning commission. Chair Schlaeger thanked Mrs. DeGray for her interest and noted that the board will review this issue at a future time.

Clerk Swanson addressed the board on the absence of Deputy Clerk Andrea Anderson from recent meetings. He noted that Deputy Clerk Anderson had been subjected to substantial public harassment during numerous recent meetings and that she has chosen not to attend board or planning commission meetings. She has indicated her willingness to continue with her regular work until a replacement can be found. Clerk Swanson noted that Deputy Clerk Anderson continues to do her work efficiently. He noted the increasing level of administrative work required in the office. He requested that the board recommend whether the deputy clerk should remain an appointed position by the clerk or if the position should be reconfigured into a position appointed by the board. Chair Schlaeger reported on his survey of surrounding townships’ wages and hours for clerk and deputy clerk. The board took no action on this issue.

Clerk Swanson then announced that he was resigning from the planning commission effective immediately because of the continuing interpersonal conflicts within the commission and staff. The board took no action on this issue.

Correspondence:

There was no correspondence.

FYI:

Chair Schlaeger reported that the list of current town officers had been sent to the Minnesota Association of Townships and to the Pine County auditor; that the new officer update had been sent to the Minnesota Benefit Association; and that the March report of new building permits had been sent to the U.S. census bureau.

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The next regular meeting of the town board will be at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, 28 May 2024.

At 9:40 p.m., Supervisor Graham moved, Chair Schlaeger seconded, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Duane P. Swanson, Clerk

Jeff Schlaeger, Chair/Supervisor

John Graham, Vice Chair/Supervisor

Pete Belland, Supervisor

Jenessa M. Saumer, Treasurer