

Royalton Township Regular Board Meeting Minutes
6052 Royalton Road, Braham, MN 55006
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25 June 2024
Approved

7:32 p.m., 25 June 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, Road Superintendent Dan Saumer, and Secondary Road Operator Steve Belland also attended, along with members of the planning commission and members of the public. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Chair Schlaeger moved, Supervisor Graham seconded, to approve the agenda as presented, with the addition of conditional use permit compilation and Minnesota Association of Township Insurance and Bond Trust (MATIT). The motion carried unanimously.

Supervisor Graham moved, Supervisor Belland seconded, to approve the minutes of the regular board meeting of 28 May 2024 as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer Saumer read her report, noting that as of 1 May 2024, the township had a beginning balance of \$364,368.38 in the treasury. Deposits were \$13,011.90; disbursements were \$37,884.13, leaving an ending balance on 31 May of \$349,864.85. Outstanding checks were \$10,368.70, leaving a spendable balance of \$339,496.15. Supervisor Graham moved, Chair Schlaeger seconded, to approve the report. The motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer Saumer noted that paperwork for updating the signatories at the bank and for the investing in a certificate of deposit had been completed. Clerk Swanson noted that the transfers of monies from the general fund to the fire and the road and bridge funds had been completed and that they would appear on the June financial statements.

Chair Schlaeger called for discussion of checks #11179-11210 in the amount of \$77,629.74. 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."

Planning Commission recommendations:

Planning Commission Chair Les Orvis reported on the Pine County-sponsored informational meeting on cannabis held on 18 June. Planning Commission members, Supervisor Belland, and several Royalton residents attended the meeting in person; Supervisor Graham monitored the meeting remotely. A wide range of cannabis-related issues was discussed, including the authority (or lack thereof) of local Pine County jurisdictions to regulate aspects of this industry. Commission Chair Orvis then reported on the Planning Commission's deliberations on the issue. The commission recommended the following, all passed on recorded votes with three "Ayes" and one "Nay:" that Royalton Township not pursue any moratorium relating to cannabis; that cannabis is an agricultural product, not an industrial one; and that erba and its owners have been helpful in studying the issue and communicating with the township on their intentions.

Commission Chair Orvis further opined that the commission had done all it could on the cannabis issue, that it needed to move on with other pressing issues, and that any further cannabis discussions be handled by the board. He further recommended that any future discussions be between opposing legal counsels. He recommended that the commission meetings for the remainder of the summer not be "postable" and would be closed to the public.

The commission had no recommendations on ordinance updates.

Chair Schlaeger opened the meeting to general discussion about the cannabis issue. Mr. Joe Zappa, representing erba, noted that currently hemp is being grown on the land leased by his firm while licensing formalities are awaiting action by the state, that the current methods of production are exactly the same as have been used on the property for many years only with increased security, including a vault for the storage of any finished product, and that every individual plant is tracked from planting to destruction. Peter McGovern explained a software tracking system that is used to track growth and usage of plants; he noted that odor issues from the growing of cannabis is more of an issue in

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densely populated urban areas as opposed to rural areas and that the recycling apparatus currently used in erba's leased greenhouses is the same as has been used in the past with wastewater being directed out to fields. Numerous members of the public made comments on this issue.

Clerk Swanson then noted that board members had received in their packets a "Statement of Town Officers and Freeholders Calling for a Special Town Meeting" to consider an interim ordinance authorizing a study and imposing a moratorium on the operation of cannabis businesses in Royalton Township to be held on 8 July 2024 at 7:30 p.m. in the Royalton Town Hall. This statement follows the procedures outlined in Minnesota Statutes for the calling of a special town meeting; it contains the signatures of two supervisors and twelve freeholders and was filed in the clerk's office at 2:10 p.m., 25 June 2024. Clerk Swanson verified that the signatories were freeholders in the township. This statement shall be part of the minutes of this meeting. He also noted that members' packets contained the resolutions approving moratoria from Pokegama Township and the City of Rock Creek. Chair Schlaeger suggested that Planning Commission Member Gary Valvoda lead an informal, nonpaid, group to study this issue. Mr. Zappa offered his assistance to this group.

Supervisor Belland noted that issues remain about what regulations can be imposed by local jurisdictions, especially related to the use of cannabis products in public places and to selling of the products. Chair Schlaeger moved, Supervisor Belland seconded, to receive the statement calling for a special town meeting and to authorize the clerk to post the required notice. A member of the audience called for a show of hands on the moratorium issue, with a clear majority of the audience indicating their opposition to a moratorium. The motion carried unanimously.

Old Business:

Septic issues: Clerk Swanson reported that a letter regarding the lack of remediation of the septic issues at PID 290124003 (10343 Wildflower Road) had been sent, with a response date of 28 June 2024. No response had been received at the town office or by the septic administrator. Chair Schlaeger moved, Supervisor Graham seconded, that this issue be referred to legal counsel for consideration. 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). Clerk Swanson reported that a letter regarding zoning violations at PID 295231000 (1995 Royal Heights Lane) had been sent to the resident and the financial institution that owns the property with a response date of 25 June 2024. No responses have been received at the office. Chair Schlaeger moved, Supervisor Graham seconded, to send a second letter, per town policy. The motion carried unanimously.

Road issues: Road Superintendent Saumer reported that graveling has been completed for Hummingbird Road, Bluebell Road, Hazelnut Road, Royalton Road north, and Majestic Road. Clover Lane is scheduled to be completed on 27 June. Road Supervisor Belland is waiting on quotes from contractors regarding the ditching recommendations approved by the board. This will include additional culvert replacement/ditching on Royal Heights Lane to correct a malfunctioning culvert that only recently came to the town's attention.

Road Superintendent Saumer is awaiting delivery of the new shipment of culverts approved at the last meeting.

Clerk Swanson reported that payment for the fifth element of the FEMA grant, administrative costs (approximately \$1,100), had been received and that the FEMA project was now closed.

No updates of Road T-13 were available.

Regarding building issues: The new wireless key system for Wi-Fi has already been used by one group, with positive results. Dan Saumer has fixed the soap dispenser in the women's restroom, at least temporarily. The board thanked Gary Valvoda who volunteered to install a wooden flap on the exterior lockbox to keep bees and birds out of it. Chair Schlaeger reported that he has received quotes from two firms for a 20' x 30' picnic shelter adjacent to the playground. Supervisor Graham reported that Knife River may be willing to donate the concrete work. Chair Schlaeger moved, Supervisor Belland seconded, to approve these items at a cost not to exceed \$7,000. The motion carried unanimously.

Septic Administrator Amy Thompson reported that the two manhole tanks of the township septic system are leaking, causing excessive water to be pumped into the mound. Supervisor Graham recommended that the tanks be dug up and

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permanently resealed on the outside at an approximate cost of \$1,500. By consensus, the board approved including additional drain tiling in the playground complex as part of the resealing project.

After discussion, Supervisor Graham moved, Chair Schlaeger seconded, to approve the proposed amendment no. 1 with the Pine City Fire Department. The average annual payment for 2024 to 2032 would be \$21,561.89. The motion carried unanimously.

New Business:

Chair Schlaeger moved, Supervisor Belland seconded, to approve Resolution 2024-5 appointing election judges for the 13 August 2024 primary election. The motion carried unanimously. A copy of said resolution shall be part of these minutes.

The board noted the lack of clarity in jurisdictional boundaries between the Braham and Rush City fire service areas. Supervisor Graham will investigate and report to the board.

Clerk Swanson noted that the State Demographer reported Royalton's estimated population, as of 1 April 2023, as 1083 (down four from the previous year) in 446 households (up six from the previous year).

The board considered applications for the vacant position on the planning commission. Three written and one verbal application were received. Denise Weis, Gordon Nordby, Jessica Johnson, and Roger Teich gave presentations on their qualifications and concerns. Supervisor Graham moved, Chair Schlaeger seconded, to appoint Jessica Johnson to the Royalton Township planning commission. The motion carried unanimously.

Clerk Swanson noted his report on conditional and interim use permits in members' packets. This had been requested by the chair of the planning commission. No action was requested.

Clerk Swanson noted the MATIT coverage declarations in members' packets. The proposed 2024 premium is \$7,508.00. He requested the board study the various declarations for discussion at the July meeting.

Clerk Swanson requested approval of two invoices that were received after the checks were printed. Supervisor Graham moved, Supervisor Belland seconded, to pay the \$85.00 bill of Designs for Learning for Travis Kemen's time to upgrade the Wi-Fi system and Timmer Implement, Inc.'s bill of \$452.98 for parts for the disc mower. The motion carried unanimously with Chair Schlaeger, Supervisor Graham, and Supervisor Belland voting "Aye."

Planning Commission Member Percy Schneider noted that ECE will be collecting on the pledges promised by jurisdictions for its broadband grant. Clerk Swanson reported that the town had not yet received that information. The town, by resolution, had approved contributing \$1,000 to the grant request.

Supervisor Belland reported that Kyle Bowman had questioned why Cabin Drive in front of his property had been graded when he received permission to apply chloride. The portion of road was not marked by the landowner and Road Superintendent Saumer did not realize that chloride had already been applied. By consensus, the board agreed to pay one-half of the cost upon submission of a receipt by Mr. Bowman. Had the road been marked, the board would have had responsibility for the complete cost.

Public Forum was offered. No one spoke.

Correspondence:

Chair Schlaeger noted the thank you letter to Pamela Wiener for the donation of a filing cabinet and the receipt of Minnesota Association of Townships membership cards.

FYI:

Chair Schlaeger reported that the May report of building permits issued for new residences had been sent to the U.S. census bureau and that reimbursement from the Minnesota Secretary of State for costs related to the 2024 presidential nomination primary (\$1,457.92) had been received.

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

At 9:05 p.m., Supervisor Graham moved, Supervisor Belland 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