



2024 FOREST TOWNSHIP ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

Date and Time of Meeting: March 12 th , 2024, 6:30 p.m.		
Present: Tim Holzkamm, Lynn Lindow, Barb Christiansen; Supervisors, Donna Waliczek; Treasurer, Lisa Jackson; Clerk		
Absent:		
Visitors: Don Tschudi, Helen Holmer, Monette Lundquist, Lonnie Holmer, Dan and Ruth Wattenhofer, Scott and Linda Bentson, John and Karen Lafond, Ray Vlasak, Carol Peterson, Bill Jackson, Rolf Christiansen, Steve Lindow, Alan and Karen Hefner, Paul Lundquist		
Agenda Item	Discussion Points/Notes	Actions/Follow-up Needed
Pledge of Allegiance Visitor Sign in	Meeting start time: 6:40pm	
<p>AGENDA:</p> <p>NOMINATION OF MODERATOR</p> <p>MEETING AGENDA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and approval of March 14th, 2023, Annual Meeting Minutes • Audit Report • Treasurer Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcement of 45th Anniversary of Forest Township. Don Tschudi spoke on the history of the township. Don and Helen brought cake in celebration of the event. "Thank you!" to those who did the groundwork for our township and to those who have served it since. • Clerk call for nominations for Moderator. Carol Peterson nominated John Lafond, No other nominations heard; clerk called for vote. • Review of 2023 Forest Township Annual Meeting Minutes. • The Forest Township Board conducted an audit of Treasurer's and Clerk's 2023 books at the January 2024 meeting. It was determined that the financial data was accurate for the year 2023. The Board unanimously agreed and signed both sets of books. The 2023 Financial Report was submitted to MN State Auditor and was successfully received. • Financials given on comparisons for years 2022 and 2023, on all accounts with change of banks from Citizen's to Bell Bank and increased interest revenue received. "Thank you!" to our Treasurer, Donna, for all her hard work in transfer of accounts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Lafond was elected moderator unanimously. • Motion by Bill Jackson to approve minutes. Second by Carol Peterson. Motion carried unanimously.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Comment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal from BMLA – Monette: for township to increase amount in budget for payment of AIS inspections or pay half of expenditures. 2023 total bill from Becker County to BMLA for AIS was \$6,285.00 for 419 hours at \$15.00 an hour. The township budget was \$2,500.00 for 2023 paid in 2024 for AIS. Bill received from Becker County to Forest Township for 2023 AIS was \$2,000.00. Forest Township 2024 budget for AIS to be paid in 2025 is \$2,500.00. Discussion was 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motion by Monette recommending increase of AIS expenditures for 2024 to be paid in 2025 by \$700 to \$3,200.00. Second by Carol P. Motion carried: 22 Yes, 1 No

held on budgets, increased expenditures, notifications to BMLA members and cutting of AIS hours. **Paul:** questioned excess money in the township budget. Discussion held on continuation of services at public access. **Carol:** what is Becker County's commitment to AIS? **Lynn:** check what amount Becker County covers. **Steve:** 500 hours. **Tim:** revision of motion of budgeted amount for 2024 would need to be presented at supervisor monthly meeting. Looking ahead to budget/levy for 2025 is what will be addressed tonight by group here. **John:** bring up increase at Levy discussion. **Monette:** consider increased wages going forward for AIS. **Steve:** what contact has been made with Karl Koenig (AIS County Coordinator) as to any additional hours, increases or county money available? Discussion on benefit of coverage last year, cost of same coverage this year and open access if coverage is not there. **Monette:** BMLA is looking to go with the same coverage at the public access as last year if personnel can be found to work. **Lisa:** what are the stipulations in what accesses get coverage and township paying for those AIS services. **Tim:** township paid in past for other public access on area lakes however county stated that there was not sufficient traffic during inspection hours to maintain personnel and to impact those lakes compared with traffic on Bad Medicine. Clarification: inspectors are hired by Becker County and stationed according to Becker County. Township in past has paid part of cost but is not involved in organization or with AIS inspectors. Supervisors looking for suggestions on advisement from group here tonight about expenditure on budget for this year to be brought up at supervisors meeting in April. Tonight, this meeting and the group's responsibility is to set the 2025 budget and levy. **Paul:** what about savings in budget due to the unusual year and less snow removal. **Tim:** that will be addressed in Barb's road report and upcoming expenditures for 2024. **John:** any excess savings affect the following year's budget and levy. In the past when excess has gone up the levy has been reduced. An increase in the levy covers additional expenditures in the future such as AIS. Tonight, would entertain motion to recommend increasing amount expended for 2024 in 2025 and to be reviewed at the next supervisors meeting with advisement of amount to township board. **Ray:** let's go back three or four years and see what the county and township are spending on us. **John:** someone will need to contact county and talk with Karl. **Tim:** history of township expenditure given. **John:** suggest getting a report of what the township, Lake Association and Becker County have spent. **John:** reiterate entertainment of motion on increasing amount spent this year. **Monette:** propose township review information and pay

	<p>half of AIS cost. Tim: it would be helpful to have an estimated number of what that percentage was as supervisors must set actual numbers. Monette: currently it is \$3,200.00. Tim: this would increase the amount by \$700. John: restating the motion- that the board spend up to \$700 more this year for AIS. Paul: The amount mentioned is just an estimate. Monette: will submit past information on hours/cost for County, Lake Association and Township. Lynn: also ask the county what the projected hours/cost are for this year. Steve: in the last five or six years, the money the township has allotted for AIS inspection, some or all did not get used. That was due to not being able to find personnel to hire. When we had the two students here in the resort it was always covered. So, looking at the past is not a good indicator of what the future should be for the average. Look at last year, it was good coverage, company was there and there was a cost. Generally, somebody with the Association should be assigned to the AIS project and to take care of that. Evidently that didn't happen. Monette: need clarification on what was supposed to be taken care of. Steve: Just to get information from Karl. Monette: We have information from Karl, it was not brought tonight. John: So, if that could be put together for next supervisor's meeting and presented to them. When we get to the levy portion tonight, if there is a number already in there, we can certainly change that as well. So, there is a motion on the floor. Tim: is there a second? Carol: to clarify, the vote on the floor is to pay for this summer? John: Yes, 2024 to be paid in 2025. Tim: it is confusing as we do not receive the bill for 2023 until 2024 and therefore it will be included in our actual expenditures for 2024. We are figuring out two years ahead. John: there is a motion on the floor. Do I hear a second? Carol: I second. John: Any further discussion? Paul: clarification on motion? John: gave clarification of motion and that information/motion will be brought to next supervisors meeting. Don W.: I am still upset by this. This is a Lake Association thing. Monette: for the area residents. John: It's ok to have an opinion. Other people may or may not have that same opinion. Do not want anyone to be afraid or swayed and vote one way or another here, same when it comes to the levy. Let's be honest about it. Any other comments, if not, we will move on to board reports.</p>	
<p>Board Member Reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Hall • Trash/Recycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New faucet installed in sink. • Continue cleanup of Asian beetles and flies. • Adjustment of town hall door needing to be done for access/locking. • Dumpster locks – “Thank you” to Rolf for design and installation of locks on dumpsters. “Thank you” to everyone for keeping the dumpsters locked properly. Over the last year the bears were not able to get in and scatter garbage everywhere. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tim to follow up with adjustment of door.

The only times there were problems is when some garbage would be accessible from full dumpster with lid pressed down and some garbage sticking out past lock or someone leaving garbage on top of dumpster. Cleanup was a lot less than in past years. Many "Thanks" to those who in previous years have cleaned up the garbage that was scattered everywhere. Please continue to use locks and look for more open space as dumpsters fill, especially in summer months.

- Cameras/Security – cameras/security system is used for monitoring dumpsters and unauthorized usage. (Hazardous materials are not allowed. Large/heavy items not allowed as it does damage to dumpsters. Household garbage only accepted.) Process for violations: identify individual or license plate of vehicle by security system, supervisor draft letter to individual with estimated fines and charges for removal of items, give the individual until the next supervisor meeting to respond and discuss, if no response send out a final letter, if no response/payment supervisors can pass resolution, send resolution to county and have fines added to individuals taxes as a special assessment. The current fine amount is \$250 with the ability to increase the fine for repeated infractions. (Last year there were no fines. The previous year before, there were fines over \$500.) Residents are utilizing Amnesty Days for some of those questionable items. The current security system is not working properly, is slow and labor intensive. Due to the age of camera/security system, supervisors' recommendation is for a new one. Supervisors ask for input on what system and amount should be considered for upgrades. Expenditure for the camera/security system would be approximately between \$1,000 and \$5,000 depending on grade level. If supervisors can get an upgrade to the current system, it would keep costs down as the power source is in place (approximately \$1,000). Currently there is no internet/no remote access. It would be a larger cost to run the internet: fiber access, line trenching, router equipment, monitors, installation, and monthly internet bill (cost dependent on classification of private or commercial), approximately \$5,000. At a higher expense you get better resolutions but may not get extended life span of equipment. Discussion held on cell tower usage, game cameras (short range) and connectivity/reception in area, percentage of violations not addressed due to current resolution with security system. Discussion as to continued violations/fines possibly covering cost of upgrades or no cost coverage if no future violations/fines. Recommendation from attendees at meeting to supervisors to upgrade system with easier usage and better resolution. No dollar amount recommended at this time.

- Supervisors to move forward with upgrade to camera/security system.

- Roads

- Handout: 2023 Road Costs. Approval of summer (2023) application of Durablend (Cost of \$12,000

- Motion by Helen H. to apply dust control from county

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Commission • Weed Report • Website 	<p>and supposedly better for the environment) was to be applied from county road 129 to Sunset Drive on East Bad Medicine Road for dust control. After many calls, this could not be applied until sometime in August, so was cancelled by supervisors as it would not be of benefit during heavy summer traffic. Last fall supervisors approved \$10,000 more gravel work to be done instead but due to staffing issues for contractor it was not completed. Supervisors asking for input/recommendations on same area for dust control due to heavy traffic for dump and resorts. Becker County bids due end of March and they currently use calcium chloride. Until information is received, will not know if Becker County is changing their product used for dust control. Also, last fall open bids (which are done every three years) were placed in paper for gravel, grading, and plowing. No bids were received. Renewal contracts with Thelen signed 10/19/23. Last month Thelen stated they will need to charge extra during winter (November through April a straight fee plus plowing) due to fixed costs (like keeping workers). Discussion was held on road and weather conditions to product performance on dust control.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion was held on GPS systems not working in this area and placement of signs for direction to resorts. Cell tower may help in future. • Planning Commission Members: John LaFond – term ending in 2025. Patti Morgan – term ending in 2026. Carol Peterson – term ending in 2025. Rolf Christiansen (Voted Chairman) – term ending in 2026. <p>Variance Committee includes: Township Supervisors Chairman of Planning Commission – Rolf C. Person at Large Approved – Bill J.</p> <p>Projects: Becker County approval of cell tower at end of EBM Lake Road. According to township ordinance must apply for a variance to be approved due to location/distance to road. No paperwork was received at this time. Information given on location and height of tower. Reminder given on permit process and zoning ordinance on township website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting dates listed on website. 	<p>road 129 to Sunset Drive. Second by Carol P. Motion carried unanimously.</p>
<p>Old Business</p>		

New Business

- **2025 Budget and Levy**

Budget proposal:	
General Fund	\$40,000.00
AIS	2,500.00
Roads	39,000.00
Fire	18,000.00

Total proposed budget: \$99,500.00

Levy Proposal for 2025 \$70,000.00

Budget: Summary of 2023 Revenue, Expenses and Balance handout given with explanation of township objective in maintaining an annual balance of 150% of budget. Projected balances given for 2024 and 2025.

John - call for discussion/changes to proposed amounts in budget.

General: Discussion held on increased costs in garbage and solid waste. Reminder to recycle.

AIS: Discussion on appropriate hours of coverage, protection of lake, recommendations from attendees at meeting to BMLA on communication with county, increased funds and information presented to township. Discussion on increasing budget amount in 2025 for payment in 2026.

John - call for further discussion/ motion.

Levy:

John - call for discussion/changes to proposed levy noting the increase from 2024 of \$60,000.00 to \$70,000.00 for 2025. No further discussion/changes received.

John - call for motion.

- **Set Amnesty Dates for 2024** – Proposed dates: May 25th, 2024, and August 24th, 2024
John – call for motion.

- **Set Annual Meeting Dates for 2025** – Proposed dates: March 11th, 2025, Alternative in case of weather-March 18th, 2025.
John – call for motion.

- **Motion by Monette L. to Forest Township to increase AIS budget in 2025 from \$2,500 to \$4,000. Second by Paul L. Motion does not pass.**
- **Motion by Carol P. to Forest Township to increase AIS budget in 2025 from \$2,500 to \$3,500. Second by Ray V. Motion passed increasing 2025 Proposed Budget from \$99,500.00 to \$100,500.00.**
- **Motion by Scott Bentson to set the 2025 Budget at \$100,500.00 and the 2025 Levy at \$70,000.00. Second by Rolf Christiansen. Motion carried unanimously; 23 yes, 0 no**
- **Motion by Don Wattenhofer to set May 25th and August 24th as 2024 Amnesty Days. Second by Bill Jackson. Motion carried unanimously.**
- **Motion by Barb Christiansen to set the 2025 Forest Township Annual meeting date for March 11th, 2025, with March 18th, 2025, as alternative date. Regular Forest Township March Meeting to be held on**

Monday, March 10th, 2025.
Second by Carol
Peterson. Motion carried
unanimously.

- **AIS**

John – call for further discussion. No further discussion received.

- **White Earth State Forest - Land Transfer Legislation:** handout received on Legislative Bills with Committee Members names and contact information. Handout received with talking points. Talking Points are presented to provide an initial basis for discussion at this annual meeting of the township. They are not to be taken as an official statement of position by Forest Township or its Board of Supervisors and the points considered are not to be regarded as legal opinion. See handouts attached.

John – open floor for Tim to give a summary as private citizen not as Township Board member.

Google: MN HF3783 & MN HF4304 in House "Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee". Also, MN SF3480 & MN SF3557 in Senate "Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee".

Discussion held on talking points (handout) on some of the issues yet to be addressed/answered in current bills, getting accurate facts/information and committee contact information to other residents in township.

Tim - Forest Township will be involved/affected by bills if passed as is and speaking as a personal representative have included a recommended position for Forest Township. I am asking for authority from township residents for township board to address and give voice to township position by contacting the legislative committees. Position of Forest Township to be considered: *"That the four bills under consideration by the state legislature be tabled until the issues above are fully resolved and that any land transfers of MN State Land or sales of tax-forfeit land to the White Earth Tribe require permanent legal access for affected property owners (and for emergency responders) prior to transfer or sale. Further, that any such transfers or sales would include permanent access for recreational use by non-tribal members."*

John – for clarification, looking for recommendation from those here tonight that the township board send letter with recommendation of points such as this to our representatives such as Federal, State, and local Representatives, Governor, Lt. Governor, Committees, etc...

Tim – another thing to do is to use township draft letter and each individual amend and send on your own behalf or write your own letter as private citizens to Representatives, Committees and others identified.

John – Tim just put this together to get information out there, if there are other issues you would like to include in this or another approach you would like to do,... the township has a voice to use.

Paul: needing clarification on transfer of land and taxes. **Tim:** what happens is that legislation specifically transfers the land to the White Earth Tribe, the tribe is actually a corporation under the Indian Reorganization Act. So, land transferred to the tribe is land they own that is not covered by federal tax-free status necessarily. Federal tax-free status comes only when land belongs to the tribe and accepted by congress as "trust status" land. That entails obligations and it's not a given that congress would in fact agree to do so. **John:** the only thing congress is involved with at this point would be if the tribe wants to have it granted as "trust status". **Tim:** that would free it from tax obligations and other things. The principal again being that local governments, states, counties, townships cannot tax the federal government.

Paul: is it true what I heard on the radio that the representatives were trying to hide these proposed bills. **Tim:** the reasons to do so would help to push it through without protest. As identified in earlier points this is very poorly grafted legislation, does not deal with problems and will simply create a whole bunch of issues. Would prefer that the legislature put in the time and effort, table it now, if they decide to go ahead in future bring it to future sessions and deal with it fully and completely so that as citizens, we know what they are getting us into and that they have done the work to protect the average persons in this area. You can never guarantee anything 100% but at least they can investigate such items as permanent easement title in the land before they transfer it. That way there are no arguments. Tribe has land but non-tribal landowners have access to theirs.

Continued discussion on WELSA legislation, current land in township under federal trust for tribe, bill already tabled, upcoming committee meeting scheduled on companion bill, other bills not yet scheduled, deadlines for this year and possible re-introduction next year for bills, county resolution/representation at committee meetings.

Tim/John - Clarification given on previous request: that township residents give permission to township board to write letter with points discussed and conclusion statement at bottom and send out on behalf of township to representatives. Additional

	<p>request for permission to send it out as email to speed up the process to get it out and posting letter on website for individuals use.</p> <p>John – propose motion, we move, that we authorize the township board to write a letter representing the township to our various state representatives, state government officials and major newspapers indicating these concerns that we have with these bills and our recommendation that the bills be tabled for now until it can be resolved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motion by Scott Bentson that we authorize the township board to write a letter representing the township to our various state representatives, state government officials and major newspapers in indicating these concerns that we have with these bills and our recommendation that the bills be tabled for now until it can be resolved. Second by Alan Hefner. Motion passed unanimously.
Adjourn		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motion by Bill Jackson to adjourn the meeting. Second by Monette Lundquist. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting end time: 8:57pm


 John LaFond/ Moderator

3/19/24
 Date


 Lisa Jackson/ Clerk

3/19/24
 Date

2023 Annual Road Maintenance Costs

2018	\$47,057
2019	\$18,247
2020	\$38,784
2021	\$44,657
2022	\$31,046
2023	\$26,304.50

Plowing/Grading/Road Repairs - \$20,487.50

Class 5 - \$5817

Mowing – Spraying and mowing included in the road repair costs.

In 2023 there was 338 yards of Class 5 gravel put on the roads.

E. Bad Medicine	238 yds
Sunset Drive	10 yds
Red Top	90 yds

The board approved an additional \$10,000 of Class 5 to be applied to our township roads but the contractor was not able to get it applied before freeze up due to staffing issues.

Upcoming projects: Dust Control? Last year the board approved application for a new dust control product (Durablend) and contracted for it to be applied to the south end of East Bad Medicine Road. After several calls and with the dates changing, the contract was canceled because it was not going to be applied until August. The bid for this product last year was approximately \$12,000 for the 2 mile stretch.

At this time, the town board does not have a 2024 cost for this product.

Thank you to everyone who has helped keep our roads clear of trees. If you see a tree down across a township road or have issues with snow drifts across the roads, **call Barb a call at 218-573-3931.**

2024 Proposed Maintenance Costs

Gravel (1)	Where needed	\$12,000
All Roads (2)	Brushing	\$1,000
All Roads	Mowing/Spraying	\$2,000
All Roads	Normal Maintenance/Repair/Plowing	\$24,000
	Total	\$39,000

YEAR	ROAD	TOTAL CLASS 5	OTHER	
2016	Sunset Drive	?	Curve area only	
2017	Sunset Drive	?	Wildwood to Resort only	
	Sunrise Lane	?	Cul-de-sac	
2018	Basswood Lk	70 yds		
	Black Bear Beach	50 yds		
	E Bad Medicine Lk	1929 yds	Dust control on south end	
	Horseshoe	70 yds		
	Red Top	70 yds		
	Sunset Drive	70 yds		
2019	Horseshoe		Brushed	
2020	Black Bear	Spot		
2021	Basswood	204 yds		
	Basswood Lk	306 yds		
	Black Bear	40 yds		
	E Bad Medicine	527 yds		
	Horseshoe	230 yds		
	Red Top	442 yds		
	Sunset Drive	492 yds		
	Town Hall	51 yds		
Total		2292 yds		
2022	Black Bear	40 yds	Beginning of road	\$710
	E Bad Medicine Lk	214 yds	Dust Control on south end	\$3,210
	Horseshoe	20 yds	Residents want hill improved	\$300
	Sunset Drive	255 yds		\$3,825
	Basswood Road	51 yds		\$765
Total		580 yds	Total	\$8,810
2023	E Bad Medicine Lk	238 yds		\$4,167
	Sunset Drive	10 yds		\$165
	Red Top Rd	90 yds		\$1,485
Total		338 yds	Total	\$5,817

WHITE EARTH STATE FOREST LAND TRANSFER

Forest Township Annual Meeting - 12 March 2024

TALKING POINTS*

- The proposed legislation is before the MN state legislature. We are not discussing Federal legislation.
- The bills being considered are in the House “Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee” - HF3783 & HF4304 **AND** in the Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee - SF3480 & SF3557 (not yet referred).
- HF3783 & SF3557 address the sale of tax-forfeited land. Sale of tax-forfeited land in MN requires special procedures under MN Statutes. The proposed legislation requires that the White Earth Band be given the option of purchasing any potential sales within the White Earth State Forest before it could be sold to another party.
- HF4304 & SF3480 address the transfer of all MN state lands within the White Earth State Forest to the White Earth Band by 2029. The lands affected would seem to include lands administered by the MN DNR for forestry, Aquatic Management Areas [AMA], and other land.
- At issue are:
 - Access to private property through any tax-forfeit land that may be sold or through MN State Lands which would be transferred to the tribe. Most access roads cross those lands at some point and there may be an issue with easements.
 - AMAs on Bad Medicine Lake which were acquired by the Bad Medicine Lake Area Foundation through contributions by property owners, other concerned parties, and grants.
 - Access to affected lands for recreational purposes [hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, ATV use, hiking etc] by the public which have been enjoyed by many families for generations. The North Country National Scenic would be one potential example.
 - Loss of PILT [Payment in Lieu of Taxes] money which comes from the MN State Lands and tax-forfeit lands from the state instead of taxes. PILT payments amounted to more than 18% of Forest Township’s levy in 2023.
 - Other impacts:
 - Transfer or sale of land to the White Earth Tribe likely will likely have implications for the tax status of the land and other factors. Tribal land held in trust by the Federal govt can not be taxed by counties or townships. Trust status for land generally involves action by US Congress. Until the transferred or sold land is accepted by Congress as “trust-status,” it may be subject to taxes by Becker County or Forest Twp levy. There may also be legal questions regarding the impact of Becker County and Forest Townships zoning ordinances for the tribe.
 - Concurrent with the proposed land transfer legislation, the White Earth Tribe is asserting management control over resources within the reservation boundaries. Currently those management issues appear to be focused on agricultural activities (irrigation and pesticide uses), but may extend to other resources in the future.
 - Currently there is a dispute between MN and the tribe regarding White Earth Reservation boundaries. Following allotment legislation for White Earth under late 19th century the four NE townships above Forest Township were ceded by the tribe for sale of land and timber as the Federal govt deemed those lands were surplus to allotment needs. Unfortunately the original govt survey of the reservation was in error and there was not enough land to fully cover allotment needs. MN state maps exclude the four townships from the reservation, Federal maps include them. Jurisdictional issues are affected.
- Position of Forest Twp that could be considered: *“That the four bills under consideration by the state legislature be tabled until the issues above are fully resolved and that any land transfers of MN State Land or sales of tax-forfeit land to the White Earth Tribe require permanent legal access for affected property owners (and for emergency responders) prior to transfer or sale. Further, that any such transfers or sales would include permanent access for recreational use by non-tribal members.”*

*These talking points are presented to provide an initial basis for discussion at the annual meeting of the township. They are not to be taken as an official statement of position by Forest Township or its Board of Supervisors and the points considered are not to be regarded as legal opinion.