

Helga Township
March 8, 2011
Minutes of
2011 Annual Meeting

PRESENT

The following board members were in attendance at the meeting: Chairman Mike Smith, Supervisors Jim Autrey, Jim Lyle, Mike Sherwood, and Dave Christianson, and Treasurer Marilyn Pemble. Absent was Clerk Shannon Skime.

ACTING CLERK

Bruce VonHoldt agreed to take the minutes of the meeting in the absence of the clerk. The meeting was called to meeting to order at 8:15pm.

Pledge of allegiance was recited.

CHOSING OF MODERATOR

Motion made by **Ron Mudge** to nominate **Alan Colliander** to serve as moderator and was seconded by Dave Arndt. VonHoldt asked for any other nominations. Hearing none he called for a vote. **Motion** was **carried**.

AGENDA

Those attending went over the agenda as presented. There were no changes.

MEETING RULES

The meeting rules were distributed to those in attendance. **Motion** made by **Jim Gorham** to accept the rules. Seconded by Dirk Fisher, **motion carried**.

2010 ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

The minutes of Annual Meeting, March 9, 2010 were distributed to those in attendance. **Motion** Made by **Mike Smith**: to approve the minutes of the 2010 Annual Meeting minutes. Seconded by Dave Arndt, **motion carried**.

TREASURER'S REPORT/YEAR END FINANCIALS

Treasurer Marilyn Pemble read the Year End Financial report to those in attendance. **Motion** made by **Dave Christianson**: to approval the treasurer's report as presented. Seconded by Audrey Arndt, **motion carried**.

OFFICIAL POSTING SITES/PUBLICATION

Currently The Pioneer, Fugate's Store, Helga Township Community Center bulletin board, and website helgatownship.com. **Motion** made by **Mike Smith**: to keep the same. Seconded by Ron Mudge, **motion carried**.

OFFICIAL BANKING INSTITUTION

Currently TruStar Federal Credit Union. **Motion** made by **Becky Christianson**: to keep TrueStar Federal Credit Union as the official banking institution. Seconded by Jim Autrey, **motion carried**.

DONATION REQUESTS

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Donations requests were received from Lakes Area Dive Team, Park Rapids Library, Habitat for Humanity, Marine Corp League Det#1109, Headwaters Center for Lifelong Learning, and Headwaters Intervention Center. **Motion** made by **Dirk Fisher**: to donate \$200 to North Country First Responders. Seconded by Mike Sherwood, motion carried. **Motion** made by Chuck Brown not to fund any other requests. Seconded by Dirk Peterson, **motion carried**.

SUPERVISORS' REPORTS/UDATES:

ROAD AND BRIDGE

Jim Autrey reported road issues. Last year we did the usual brushing and mowing. There was no graveling last year. Graveling will be done in 2011. One upcoming project is Hidden Oaks. We had an engineer study done and the township is in the process of following through with it. It will be put up for bids. The Township accepted the road prior to the current Board. The roads are a liability for the Township. The Township is making an attempt to correct it as best they can. Dave Christianson has stepped forward as our new road supervisor. Christianson and Autrey, working with Michalko from Ten Lakes Township, took the 2007 Freeberg and Grund report, which never was finished as to what to do with our roads and they created a process going forward for maintenance of the roads.

ORDINANCE UPDATE

Jim Autrey reported on the ordinance. The commercial rewriting of the ordinance was completed under the timeframe that the moratorium allowed us. The Planning Commission put a lot of time and dedication into completing it. A lot of their time was donated, helping to contribute to the substantial decrease in the overall payroll for the past year. Due to the timeframe they had to work with it didn't allow them to go through the entire ordinance, causing several inconsistencies in the overall ordinance that need to be addressed. The Planning Commission has opened the ordinance back up and they are currently addressing the residential agricultural portion of it. They have agreed to meet 2 meetings per month to help expedite this.

HELGA TOWNSHIP WEBSITE

Jim Autrey reported on the website. It seems to be serving it purpose well. We have received a lot of compliments regarding it. Unfortunately some of what we had planned to do with it took a second seat to the greater issues of the township. Things such as a community page and lost and found page hopefully will be able to address this coming year. The minutes are usually up within 48 hours of when they are approved.

RURAL FIRE ASSOCIATION

Mike Smith reported on the Rural Fire Association. Copies of the Annual Report were distributed for those in attendance. Helga Township had 10 fire calls this last year with estimated loss of \$95,250. The majority of which was one large house fire. The Rural Fire Association and the City of Bemidji are evaluating the merits of putting it all into a fire district, similar to what they've done in the airport district. They've retained a consultant and the work is expected to be done June. Smith had two main concerns governance and allocation of costs. If the costs change much he wasn't real interested in it. The city of Bemidji had 52% of the property within the city limits of Bemidji that is non taxable. We don't expect the townships to bear any of those costs for that portion. The positive side is they feel through the district, they could put a service charge in place for the non-profits for police and fire services. Next year we will be able to give a much more comprehensive report.

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BUILDING/GROUNDS

Mike Smith reported on the building and grounds. The Board would like some direction from the citizens. As far as the Board can tell over 7 years there has been \$105,000 invested in the Town Hall that wasn't budgeted for. As we look there are shingles curling on the roof. The upstairs is not properly insulated. The attic isn't ventilated. The gutters need to be replaced. The siding is an ongoing issue of paint and maintenance, in addition to that the utility costs to heat this place range from \$800 to \$1200 per month. The Board has discussed it and our feelings are we need to get some expertise in here to give us more of a whole picture, if we were to get this building in some order that it would last the township 10 or 20 years, how much money are we talking, before we spend any more money in it. We would like input from the residents' perspective. **Ron Mudge:** Five years ago I came to a monthly meeting and the heating issue was brought up. In 2004 I built a building on County Road 9. Our cost to heat that was a fraction of, a fourth of what it cost to heat this building. And we were in there 15 hours a day and we would keep it 65 to 70 degrees. They were keeping this building 50 degrees. And my question to the Town Board at that time was you see the other townships building smaller town halls, metal buildings, well insulated, slab heating and I asked them why. Their answer was because of the costs. I think it's time we take a look at least get some numbers at maybe building a new town hall. **Smith:** That's what we'd like to do. We'd like to bring back numbers. What is it going to take? Not project by project, this is how it's been attacked in the past. We'd like to look at it more wholistically. And also if the numbers get to high what are the alternatives? **Ron Mudge:** The other thing I thought feasible, some of the townships I've seen basically have one big building, and you can come in and close dividers, breaking it up. On one end you could put a big overhead door in and open it up for community events. It makes things simple and really great for your elections and everything else. It seemed like a practical solution to fit what's needed. **MOTION:** Ron Mudge made a motion to have a study done looking at building a new town hall and what it would cost to bring the current hall in order as well, seconded by Dave Arndt. Discussion followed. **Todd Scofield:** As part of the motion could we be looking at include an energy audit. To look at what we are using and what it would cost to bring it up to better standards, to make it more efficient. On the present facility. Another resident was concerned what the study would cost. **Jim Autrey:** That is kind of the problem. That we are going to have to spend money to find out what the actual costs would be. Honestly we don't know at this point but it would require hiring a firm to come in and actually give us an estimation of what it would cost. To me I'd like to pick a 50 year time frame. What it would cost to bring this building to a 50 year life span. Because if we put up a metal building similar to what Ron is talking about, that would be a comparison of life span. So what a 50 year pole barn type building would be compared to what it would cost to bring this building to a 50 year stand point and energy efficient. From a cost stand point I don't think any of us have a clue. We can put a dollar amount on it. **Mike Sherwood:** Some of that you might be able to get through the utility companies. **Jim Autrey:** The energy audit I think you can have the utilities come and help you with it. But the actual feasibility you'd actually have to have a contractor of some sorts to say it's going to cost this much for the roof, this much for the gutters, this much for insulation. **Ron Mudge:** There's a lot of contractors that will give you free estimates. **Mike Smith:** Maybe we have some one in the township that's willing to help with it. We don't know at this point. The second floor hasn't been talked about. That's sitting open as well. **Jim Autrey:** I guess I wouldn't be against spending money to get the answer. Resident: The question is how much. If we are going to go crazy and spend a ton of money, that doesn't make any sense. Mike

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Smith: I agree I don't see us spending much money on it at all. We can throw out dollar amounts or you can leave it up to the Board too. **Ron Mudge:** If you spend a thousand dollars to do a survey, I think that's reasonable, because you're throwing that away just monthly heating it. **Amendment to Motion, Mike Smith:** amended the motion to add an energy audit and to spend no more than \$1000 to put this analysis together. Motion was seconded by Todd Scofield. Further Discussion. **Resident:** On the second floor is there a problem with just closing that off, and just insulating that? **Jim Autrey:** It is basically already, but it's deteriorating. The stucco is falling off the ceiling. The lathe is starting to collapse. It really has to be looked at as an entire package. **Resident:** What I'm saying is the majority of your heat loss is going to be up through the roof. **Jim Autrey:** I know they did do stuff. It is blocked off. It could be done, more, better I'm sure. But that's where somebody else could tell us that. **Bruce VonHoldt:** Question number one is that all the insulation in the world is not going to make any difference if we don't have a decent roof to protect the insulation that's put there. And what the cost of the roof is going to be is? **Mike Smith:** The roof was replaced 12 years ago and the shingles are curling already. There was an issue with the manufacturer in that time. We've done some research. The roofer who did the job can't come forth with any of the receipts to prove what kind and type of shingles were purchased. We know but just so you know how those warranties work, they'll give you new shingles, but they have nothing to do with putting them up. And that's if you can prove. We can't come through with the proof yet. We've looked at it. It needs to be looked at again. If you look at that south roof, it's in pretty tough shape. Anything else on the building? **Resident:** So in the mean time are you leaving things as is in the kitchen and nothing is going to get touched. **Mike Smith:** That's our game plan. You've noticed we haven't touched anything as it is. We've talked about doing a few of the cabinet fronts and Bob Klienschmidt has talked about it, but we haven't set anything definite. That would all be, if we did it, volunteer effort. **Mike Smith** called for a vote on the motion with the amendments. **Motion Carried**, none opposed.

CEMETERY

Mike Smith reported on the cemetery. A lot of progress was made this year, largely due to the work of Jean Williams. She agreed to do the work for \$15 per hour. The Greenwood Cemetery Board has allowed us to use the program they developed for a fee of \$200. That is not complete at this time, but will be soon. The program will allow us to click on a plot and bring up the history of it. We hope to eventually have it on the website. Williams has also helped clean up our records. Between her and Kelly Skime, they have done a great job of laying out the plots when needed.

The tower needs to be completed. Options include capping the block and sealing it or consider a roof. We need to understand that \$7000 has been spent on it. There has been concern expressed already as to whether we should have spent that much less put much more into it. We do need to at least preserve what we already have into it. We have put temporary blocks in place.

DISCUSSION OF CHANGING CLERK FROM ELECTED POSITION TO APPOINTED

Mike Smith opened the discussion regarding changing the clerk position from elected to appointed. Smith stated that tonight is not a night to make a decision. Tonight is a night to get your input, because if we were to make any change of this type it would have to be done like the question was tonight on the ballot on moving the election. It would have to be put out as a ballot question. The Board is looking for input and direction from the residents. The Board has summarized some of the thoughts

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that we had. This is a pivotal position in the township. The township basically runs itself around the clerk. There is a fair amount of knowledge not only of computers but computer programs, word processing and spreadsheets that comes with the position. It requires extensive training in township accounting system (CTAS) and knowledge of payroll systems and payroll changes. The position is requiring extensive hours averaging 55-65 hours per month over the past 7 months, plus 2 to 4 meetings per month. It requires training and full responsibility of conducting the elections. The danger when you elect someone is that you really don't know what their qualifications are to do that job, and we faced some of that last year. All of the minutes are not done. We as a board are powerless when it is an elected position. An elected position has no accountability to the board. There were 11 meeting minutes not done by prior clerks. When the clerk is elected you are required to elect a resident of the township. When you appoint a person to the position you are not limited to that.

There are reasons to keep it elected too. It puts it in the hands of the residents. They have the power to decide who they want for the position. But until that term comes to an end no matter what the performance is of that clerk, you can not change it. If you changed it to an appointed position the clerk would be an employee.

Lengthy discussion followed. Mike Smith asked if the residents wanted to wait until next year to discuss it further before we go to putting it on the ballot.

Motion made by **Chuck Brown**: I make a motion that you put it on the ballot and let the people decide. Seconded by Ron Mudge, motion carried by majority with 2 opposing votes.

2012 PROPOSED BUDGET/LEVY

GENERAL FUND	\$65,000
ROAD & BRIDGE FUND	\$120,000
FIRE FUND	\$30,000
CEMETERY FUND	<u>\$5,000</u>
TOTAL BUDGET	\$220,000

Mike Smith spoke on the proposed budget. The board put a lot of time into this. Last year the levy was \$209,000. This year we are suggesting \$220,000. The reason is we have over spent what we've been levying for the last 6 years in a row. A couple of other numbers aren't in the Financial Report for last year. The state sent two payments, one in October, and one in December. They went to the prior treasurer's home and were not given to us. We discovered it in January so they aren't in your financials. We worked with the state and checks were cancelled and reissued, but they came in February, about \$19000. So the spending estimate would include that \$19000 plus the additional Gas Tax would get. We are trying to be conservative, but we know we can't keep spending more than we are levying long term. Also as a board we agreed that our minimum reserve that we feel we need to have is \$200,000. Right now we have approximately \$350,000. We need to keep in mind that we have the Hidden Oaks project and we have some issues on 219th Ave North. The reserves look good right now but these big projects will drop that number down. **Motion** made by **Mike Karvako**: to accept the Levy at \$220,000. Seconded by Lois Brown, motion carried by majority with 3 opposing votes.

PRELIMINARY ELECTION RESULTS

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Supervisor Position 1	Mike Smith
Supervisor Position 2	Dave Christianson
Clerk	Shannon Skime
Treasurer	Marilyn Pemble

Town Question 1: WHETHER TO MOVE THE TOWN ELECTION TO NOVEMBER
Shall the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November be designated as the date of the Helga Township general election?

Yes 184 NO 26

The election will be moved to November starting 2012.

2012 ANNUAL MEETING

Motion made by **Todd Scofield**: to have the 2012 Annual Meeting on the second Tuesday of March at 7:00 pm. Seconded by Dave Christianson, **motion carried**.

2012 TOWNSHIP ELECTION

The next township election will be the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November 2012. The hours are set by state statute.

OTHER BUSINESS

Jim Gore questioned the increase in legal expenses. The board explained that the ordinance rewrite was a large part of that. Also we had a Planning & Zoning Board that was an elected board. The township had never sought approval from the state legislature for that. The only way you can add elected positions is if the legislature approves it. Undoing that added to the legal costs as well. We also had a lawsuit over the gravel contract. Knowing we had those increased expenses the Supervisors agreed to lower our compensation. Many of the supervisors only took some of the meetings per diem and did not request for themselves \$15 per hour. They also changed the chairman meeting pay rate from the previous \$75 per meeting to the \$50 per meeting that the other supervisors receive.

ADJOURN OR RECESS MEETING

Motion made by **Jim Autrey**: to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Chuck Brown, **motion carried**. Meeting adjourned at 9:37 pm.

Alan Colliander, Moderator

Bruce VonHoldt, acting Clerk

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Final draft was prepared by Shannon Skime using the notes of Bruce VonHoldt, acting clerk for the Annual Town Meeting, and by listening to the audio of the meeting.

Shannon Skime, Helga Township Clerk