

## UNAPPROVED MINUTES

### Oxford Township Annual Meeting

March 14, 2023 6:30 pm; Hybrid meeting

#### Meeting Agenda

Linnea Lentz, Oxford Clerk, called the meeting to order. Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance then Linnea made a motion to elect Pat Davis as moderator and Bob Kollmer seconded the motion. Linnea read the minutes from the 2022 annual meeting and there were no additions or corrections. Bob Kollmer made a motion to accept the minutes and Lee Setter seconded the motion. Peggy Nelson read the financial report and discussed the budget. Barb Snee made a motion to accept the report and Chilton Hagan seconded that motion. All motions passed.

**Levies (Road and Bridge, Fire, General):** Typically levies for taxes are set by the Oxford township residents, but Donna Setter asked for a recommendation from the board. Mike Miller replied that our Fire budget is good, and explained that the Reserve fund is for extra purchases. Our General fund covers operations of town hall and wages, and Mike's recommendation is to increase that levy because we are losing money in the General fund at this point. Mike also stated that a survey of surrounding townships revealed that our clerk and treasurer are among the lowest paid in Isanti county. He said both the clerk and the treasurer are paid \$4,000 annually for work, and he recommends a \$2,000 increase for their wages. Next Mike talked about the Road and Bridge expenses. He reported that last year Oxford township put down \$300,000 in gravel and some of that money came from the rescue plan. The township has been talking about blacktop, but it is expensive and Mike feels we need grants to help accelerate our paving plan. If we raise our funds by \$100,000 we may be able to do ½ mile of blacktop this next year. Chairperson Jennifer Perkins stated that blacktop might be too expensive this year and we should start saving our money up. Mike also reported that our expenses for plowing are at \$50,000 for this season and that Peggy had to transfer \$100,000 from the rescue fund into our Road and Bridge fund. Jennifer has called the Isanti County Assessor's office and said that we have new houses in the township and we should be getting more tax dollars from those new houses. But she also explained that the valuation went down from last year to this year. We need to look at township as a whole, not just the new houses. Mike said that any new roads that are put in for developments are required by our township to be blacktopped. Donna Setter made a motion to increase the road and bridge fund by \$100,000 to go toward paving township roads. Barb Snee stated that she lives on a dirt road and needs to suppress the dust for her health. She said even though we did not have the best results with the soybean oil, we still need to maintain the gravel roads until we can get asphalt. There was a lively open discussion with a lot of questions raised such as: has anyone put consideration into the upkeep of the blacktop roads? Not everyone wants the asphalt, so how is that going to work? Mike said that the supervisors have talked to our engineers about asphalt road maintenance. He said that every 6 years the township should start with patching and seal coating. We are looking at that, and getting estimates on upkeep on the paved roads that we currently have in the township. Typo Creek Drive was paved 2 years ago and 254<sup>th</sup> Court is the oldest blacktop road we have, but that road doesn't have the traffic burden some of our other roads have. Mike feels that 254<sup>th</sup> Court probably only needs seal coating in 2024. Upper Birch road just got put in this past year so we are fine there. Mike said we have about 26 miles of gravel road so if we are going to blacktop 1-2 miles a year, it will eventually multiply into something that isn't budgeted for. A township resident commented that he feels township roads should

be a maintained gravel road and if residents want tar roads, they should live in the city. Mike said that there are certain roads that should be looked at and because of the traffic burden it would be more cost effective to pave them. One of the residents asked which ones are being considered. Mike said that Baylor is one of them and feels we have a good chance to get our LRIP (local road improvement) grant this year to pay for paving Baylor. He said the other roads that should be under consideration are Pigeon Loft (which is hard to maintain with the traffic). And also, 253<sup>rd</sup> (Peterson's old road) could use blacktop. Aside from that Mike feels that Potomac and Danube could be part of the last group done. Right now, Oxford township's asphalt roads total 1.75 miles. All the rest of our roads are gravel. Jennifer advocated for putting money aside and supplementing our road budget with grants. Bob Kollmer made a comment that the specifications that township has for new blacktop roads follows the state regulations and that Oxford does not follow the county standards for blacktop. Bob brought up the County Rd 20 example, which he said was failing 6 months after Isanti county put it down. With the specs we follow, it could be more expensive than what Isanti County does. Mike said that the estimates we have are from our MSA engineer, and Oxford specs are online on our website. Steve Kingsbury asked if the board has found anything for dust suppression. Chairperson Jennifer requested formation of a citizen's group to look into it and give a recommendation back to the board. Vicki Nielson asked how much the board increased the Road & Bridge levy last year. Oxford increased Road and Bridge by 3% at last year's annual meeting. Next there was discussion on what a \$100,000 increase for Road & Bridge would mean for the residents' taxes. Oxford has a bunch of new houses, so the tax increase won't be as bad as in 2019. Moderator Pat Davis asked for a show of hands regarding Donna Setter's motion to increase the Road and Bridge levy by \$100,000. 12 residents supported the motion. Seven residents voted no. Pat Davis ruled that the motion passes. Bob Kollmer made a motion for 0 increase to the Fire levy. Lee Setter seconded the motion and the motion passed. Bob Kollmer made a motion that the Reserve fund stay the same. Barb Snee seconded the motion, and the motion passed. Mike reiterated that Oxford's engineering, legal fees, electricity, internet, propane, and wages all comes out of general and the fund is getting low. Mike made a motion to raise the general fund to \$45,000. Bob Kollmer seconded the motion and the motion passed.

**Contract for Services:** Oxford township gives money to charities and nonprofits that directly provide services to Oxford township and the contract for service money has been limited to 1% of Oxford's total budget for a number of years. Bob Kollmer made a motion to keep at 1%. Barb Snee seconded the motion and the motion passed. The spending cap remains at 1% of Oxford's total annual budget.

**Authorize the board to contract for recreational services or health service from a non profit organization:**

In the past Oxford has contributed to a number of organizations. Chairperson Jennifer Perkins recommended that we take requests from members of the various groups. She would like to make it more formal- for example, a written request and documentation that the organization has benefitted the township. Chairperson Jennifer suggested that we put a formal request online and have a specific deadline for submission and notice when the request will be approved or not. She feels we can discuss at a regular meeting and this will help us focus. Peggy read off dollar amounts and the organizations the residents voted to receive monies from Oxford at the 2022 annual meeting. We will need to send out

the new process for groups that have applied in the past. Bart Perkins made a motion to authorize the board to formalize this process and work with the service and charity groups to determine who gets what money.

Next, a representative for **Cambridge Surplus food** described the program to the Oxford residents. This organization serves a lot of families, almost 3,000 families last year including 1500 kids. They serve Isanti County only and it costs about \$2500/month to buy food. This organization gets their money from churches and donations. Donna didn't have a breakdown for the townships served, but food total that she bought for last year was 188,000 pounds of food for 11 months. She is looking for volunteers again this year and left brochures at our town hall for those that are interested.

Donna Setter was at the meeting to talk about **Viking Vittles**. This is a North Branch school district food program for the weekend that includes a backpack program. Mrs Setter talked about what they have supplied in the last year, and she also had brochures to pass around.

**Fire District update:** Ray Nash attended and passed out an annual report that is specific to Oxford township. The report includes total calls, run types, service area (Oxford), and estimated population and valuation for Oxford township. Ray said that financials for the Fire District are also in the report. This includes the overall budget and how the money was spent as well as capital assets. There were no questions from the residents, but a general thank you was extended to Ray.

**Town board wages:** Steve Kingsbury made a motion to increase the clerk and treasurer wages by \$2,000 per year each. Jack Sawatzky seconded the motion and the motion passed. Oxford residents asked for a recommendation from the board for wages for the supervisors. Currently supervisors get \$95.55/meeting for each individual. Steve Kingsbury made a motion to raise the wage to \$125/meeting for each supervisor. Bob Kollmer seconded the motion. Mike Miller said that with that wage change, the general fund would have to increase by about \$10,000. Mike Miller countered with \$100/meeting so we don't have to raise the general budget more. Steve Kingsbury amended his motion to approve \$100/meeting for each supervisor. Bob Kollmer seconded that motion and that motion passed.

**Oxford township meeting times:** Oxford regular meeting is currently the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6:30. Bob Kollmer made a motion to keep this the same. Lee Setter seconded the motion and the motion passed.

**Annual meeting time:** Oxford's annual meeting is currently the 2nd Tuesday of March at 6:30 pm. Bob Kollmer made a motion to keep the annual meeting time the same and Barb Snee seconded the motion. The motion passed.

#### **Authorize action needed in the township**

- Donna Setter made a motion to leave the Gopher bounty at \$2.00/gopher. Jack Sawatzky seconded the motion and the motion passed.

#### **Township resident concerns:**

Mike Miller said that Tiffany Determann from the Isanti County Soil and Water Conservation District sent Mike an estimate for studying why West Twin lake is so impaired and why the phosphorus levels are so high. The estimate for the study is \$30,000 with a 60% township contribution, and she is trying to get a grant to help out with costs. Mike stated that this is not in our budget, but we should

keep an open mind about looking for a grant on this. If the residents agree, Mike recommended that we tell Tiffany that we are interested but will only move forward with grant support. Oxford is still partnering with the Soil and Water Conservation District to perform water monitoring for 3 more years. Tiffany will be here next month to go over the water monitoring results from last year, so anyone interested should attend the April regular meeting.

Steve Kingsbury made a motion to form a task force to investigate dust suppression and options that hold the roads together. Kathy Matsson seconded the motion and the motion passed. People that volunteered to be on the task force include: Mike Miller, Kathy Matsson, Barb Snee, and Steve Kingsbury. Anyone else who is interested in being on the task force should reach out to Mike Miller.

Wally Nielson made a motion to adjourn and Barb Snee seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Linnea Lentz

Oxford Clerk

March 14, 2023