

Annual Town Meeting  
March 11, 2024, 8:15 p.m.

The Clerk called the meeting to order at 8:15 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Election of Moderator: Liz Strohmyer nominated Ken Peterson as moderator of this meeting. Ken Peterson nominated Liz Strohmyer; Liz declined. Liz renominated Ken Peterson, It was seconded by Geoff Nelson. Ken Peterson accepted the nomination with no further nominations the motion passed.

Approval of Minutes from the 2024 Annual Meeting: Sherry Rovig moved to approve the minutes as presented. ArMand Nelson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Election Results:

Seat 2 Candidate:	199-Jim Ward
Write in:	1-Tom Homola
	1-Dennis Stolp
	1-Robert Peldo
	1-Keith Darsow
	1-Geoff Nelson
	6-Marlin Nelson
	2- NO NAME
Over/Under Votes:	18-Under vote
Total:	230 Votes

Write in without a bubbled filled in:	1-Andrew Aho
	1-Sean Brown
	1-JD Vance

Seat 4 Candidate:	127-Stacia Grayson
	102-Geoff Nelson
Write in:	1- No Name
Total:	230 Votes

Call for Bank of Deposit: Bob Engelson made a motion to continue using The Lake Bank “Park State Bank” as our bank of deposit. Sherry Rovig seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Call for Newspaper of Publication: Liz moved to change the Newspaper of Publication to the North Shore Journal. Rachel Perlingers seconded. Discussion: Liz stated that she spoke with the North Shore Journal to find out the coverage area of our Township. It was stated that all but a small area of the Township is covered by their delivery. Liz stated that this is a free publication available to all and that there is also online access so those who do not receive the printed version. Versus the Duluth News Tribune which has a subscription cost. Also, the cost to place an ad in the Duluth News Tribune is much higher versus the North Shore Journal. The motion passed with one opposition.

Call for Official Posting Places: Saprina Matheny moved to keep the same, the Town Hall, Fire Hall #1 and North Shore Community School, Bob Engelson seconded. A vote on the motion passed unanimously.

## Presentation of Budgets

Motion to approve the total levy of \$544,446.00: Geoff Nelson made a motion to accept the levy of \$544,446.00. Rachel Perlinger seconded. The Moderator explained that we would discuss the Department Budgets and then call the question.

Police Department budget of \$71,000.00 was presented by Chief Mark Haselow. Mark reintroduces himself to those that have not met him yet. The Chief reviewed the calls they had in this previous year and provided a brief explanation of his budget. He also explained that the majority of the cost is related to wages and insurance costs.

Fire Department budget of \$99,000.00 was presented by Chief Robert Engelson: Started by discussing the previous year calls. Bob discussed the new trucks they have received and the work that needs to be done to outfit them appropriately. Bob also discussed the trucks that they would like to purchase, one from Two Harbors and one new truck. He stated that they are applying for grants for the brand-new truck but there would be a certain percentage that the Township would have to contribute to the overall cost.

Question: Can you explain what a brush truck is?

Answer: This is a wildland fire truck. It carries a lot of equipment related to fighting wildland fires. It has a skid unit on the back. With the spruce bud worm infestation, we are anticipating a rising need for that type of equipment.

Question: Is the \$25,000.00 included in that budget?

Answer: Yes, sort of. There is not a specific line item. If you apply for a FEMA grant and have a line item budgeted for that, you become disqualified for the grant.

Question: Are there ARPA funds for this?

Answer: Yes, there was money designated for the Fire Departments purchase of new trucks.

Question: Does this add to the fleet or replace the existing equipment?

Answer: Last year a tanker truck blew and needed to be replaced. The insurance paid out the claim for \$26,000.00 which would go towards that total cost of the replacement.

Question: The insurance reimbursement, that was the tanker?

Answer: Yes, that is that payout related to that claim.

Question: Is the Two Harbors Tanker Truck worth it? Will it last?

Answer: Yes, Two Harbors rotates their trucks on a schedule. So, unlike our trucks where we use them for their full life.

Question: What year is the engine in the Alden Hall?

Answer: 1982

General Township budget of \$170,271.00 was presented by Board Chair Rolf Carlson. Rolf started out explaining how the meeting tonight works for the Town and how the levy was decided on. Rolf begins by explaining that the past two years we have budgeted less to use some of the reserves. That has been completed and are asking for a levy closer to what they will spend in that year. Insurance has increased drastically. With the uncertainty of FEMA Grants we would like to keep the higher reserves to allow for an emergency or the ability to purchase a new fire truck.

Question: Can you explain the relief association and the recreation fund.

Answer: The new Recreation Fund, formally known as the North Shore Community Rink fund, will be more of a general recreation fund that is not specifically just for the rink and will provide more recreational opportunities for our Township residents.

Question: and the Relief Association?

Answer: That is the Fire Department members pension fund.

Question: For insurance, do you get a competitive bid, or do you keep the same carrier?

Answer: The insurance is through the Minnesota Association of Townships. Thankfully Township have a lot of protections built in and the overall cost is a lot less than what cities would pay.

Planning and Zoning budget of \$76,675.00 was presented by Director Liz Strohmayer: She began by introducing herself. Liz stated that in the previous years the department had levied less as they had healthy reserves. They have now used most of the reserves. In the last twenty years we averaged 35 Land Use Permits each year. In 2024 there was a 300% increase in permits with 66 land use permits. Liz noted that the department added a new Planning Secretary trainee. We are currently training her to replace Beth when she retires. We have made some substantial progress with the City of Duluth regarding Stoney Point. We are working on MOU with the City. MS4 is a large item on the budget. Liz and ArMand explained what MS4 is and how it pertains to the Town. This year we have hired a consulting firm. She noted that until now we have had community volunteers who graciously donated their time to complete these reports. MS4 is mandated by the State of Minnesota and the MPCA.

Question: What happens if you don't do it?

Answer: They will fine a lot of money.

Question: What if you don't have that money?

Answer: I think it is best to comply with the requirements set forth by the State.

Question: Is the consulting firm cost to be the same each year or is a train the trainer and the Town can move forward on their own and not have that cost?

Answer: We feel that it will be some sort of combination. There are things that the Town needs to do to be compliant with the MS4 requirements including mapping all of the culverts in the Township.

Question: Could we hire someone in the community to take care of that?

Answer: That could be a possibility.

Question: Is this going to be the same amount of money each year? Are you going to have to create a new map each year?

Answer: The overall cost yearly should be less as we will need to utilize the firm less. Some of the information will roll forward as new driveways are added we will add to the map.

Question: With MS4, to clarify, are we responsible for both the Township and County roads?

Answer: We are not responsible for reporting on County Roads.

Question: Does St. Louis County have to report to MS4?

Answer: Yes, the County is also required to report.

Val Brady spoke, she is the Community Volunteer who has been donating her time and expertise to the Township with our MS4 applications. Val stated that Greenwood Road has density and proximity to the City of Duluth that is keeping our MS4 status. MS4 essentially is the Townships report that states that we are doing the appropriate things to protect

our waterways and Lake Superior. Something that we are already doing, as no one is cleaning cement trucks in the ditch or dumping oil onto the ground to dispose of it as had been done in the past, some years ago. The report is us proving to the state that we are doing what we already do, protect our water.

Liz: The ordinance is the tough part of the MS4. We are working with the consulting firm to update our current ordinance to properly reflect the requirements set forth MS4. Liz noted that the legal services increased but the number of ordinance violations has also increased, resulting in higher legal fees.

Question: The wage line, is that the anticipated cost?

Answer: I included Earned Safe and Sick Time to the wages to accommodate that cost along with Minnesota's new Paid Family Leave Law, that is anticipated to start in 2026. Minnesota's Paid Family Leave Law leaves uncertainty for what the state would require employers to contribute. It would be paid into a fund similar to the workers compensation fund.

Rachel Perlinger clarified that it Paid Family Leave is different than Earned Safe and Sick Time. That the percentage rate has not been settled upon in the houses yet and it could push the program roll out to 2027.

Cemetery budget of \$7500.00 was presented by Rolf Carlson. Rolf noted that the 2026 budget was kept the same. Rolf noted that a resident had asked the Board in December to consider installing a columbarium at the cemetery. Rolf explained what a columbarium was and that it is used for cremation remains. This is an agenda item for the regular March Board Meeting.

Emergency Preparedness Budget of \$0 ArMand introduced himself as the head of the Emergency Management Group. He explained that he is not asking for a budget and that the fund has reserves that can be spent if there is an emergency. The group will be planning on hosting a practice event where they will run to a mock emergency with other area agencies.

Road and Bridge budget of \$120,000.00 was presented by Supervisor Jim Ward. Jim discussed the proposed budget. He discussed the general plan of our road maintenance. He noted that Our roads have an increase in traffic which results in increased maintenance to the roadway. We would like to start focusing on one or two roads each year to have extra work like ditching and new gravel. Jim stated that the budget was over as a result of the road washouts we experienced in September of 2023 and claims paid in the beginning of 2024. However, will were authorized for FEMA reimbursement for around \$63,000.00. He increased the budget because as cost of gravel, chloride, and fuels all are continuing to increase.

Question: What was the emergency repairs?

Answer: It was a washout on the Englund Road and West Wildwood. Do worry, we replaced the culvert with a seven-footer. It should not have an issue moving forward.

Discussion:

Question: I did not see any capital improvement levied, how are you funding those types of projects?

Answer: We receive a payment from the taconite fund each year for \$25,000.00 that we place in one of the non-levied funds for capital improvement.

Question: Are there any project spec provided when seeking bids for projects of required materials?

Answer: We do not have time to or staff to do that. We do a careful comparison to make sure we are looking apples to apples.

Statement: I would like to help the Township with that so more accurate bids can be placed.

Question: Is there a point in time where community members could assist with that?

Answer: The projects are discussed at regular Town Board meetings.

Statement: Ray would like to see the general idea of the project. To be better able to provide a quote.

Question: On the line items, are there a percentage to not exceed a certain amount.

Answer: The Electors do not have the ability to dictate each line items just the overall levied amount.

Statement: Sue Lawson, on a positive note, I received my taxes in the mail, all of the line items went up except that of the Townships.

Question: The budget was smaller last year, is that why it went down on the taxes?

Answer: The tax base is increasing with the new builds and upgrades, that also factors in.

Motion to approve the total levy for 2026 **\$544,446.00 Geoff Nelson motioned to approve. Rachael Perlinger seconded. Motion approved. 3 opposed.**

Set time and date of the 2026 Annual Town Meeting: Geoff Nelson made a motion to set the 2026 Annual Meeting date for March 10, 2026, at 8:15 p.m., ArMand Nelson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Concerns from the Audience:

Sherry Rovig spoke about Chipper Days: We have been awarded another Firewise grant but there is some uncertainty with that. We might look to start funding it ourselves if we want to continue offering this program.

Dave Meyer: The new light in the parking lot. It is so bright and in your face.

Answer: The Board is working on getting a shield and having it adjusted.

**Adjournment:** Sherry Rovig moved that this meeting be continued to Thursday August 15, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall, 6092 Homestead Road Duluth, MN 55804, if deemed necessary and convened by the Town Board. If not, this meeting will automatically adjourn on that date and time without any further action. ArMand Nelson seconded it. The motion passed unanimously at 9:25 p.m.