

Annual Town Meeting
March 14, 2023, 8:15 p.m.

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

Election of Moderator: Liz Strohmeyer Nominated Tim Strom for moderator of this meeting. It was seconded by Sherry Rovig. Tim Strom accepted the nomination with no further nominations the motion passed.

Approval of Minutes from the 2022 Annual Meeting: Sherry Rovig made a motion to approve the minutes as presented Jody Anderson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Election Results:

Candidate 1: ArMand Nelson- 52

Write in: Rolf Carlson -1
Robert Engelson- 1

Candidate 2: None

Write in: Rolf Carlson -6
Mark Herman – 3
Dave Edblom -1
Sherry Rovig-1
Dave Mount-1
Carolyn Marino- 1
Daniel Edblom-1
Rachel Perlinger-1
Larry Nesgoda-1
Cindy Hale-1

Call for Bank of Deposit: George Sundstrom 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: Ken Peterson made a motion to continue using the Duluth News Tribune as our newspaper of publication. Robert Engelson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Call for Official Posting Places: George Sundstrom 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 \$406,444.00: Dale Sohlstrom made a motion to accept the levy of \$406,444.00 Sherry seconded.

Police Department budget of \$68,462.99 was presented by Chief Mark Haselow. Mark introduced himself as the new Police Chief for Duluth Township. Chief Haselow explained that this is his first time in his career that he has worked on a budget. He informed the residents that his department came in under budget by approximately \$2,000.00 for 2022. He will work at keeping the department efficient and running smoothly. It was noted that our Police Officers and the Town operate under a Steelworkers contract. So for an example, the 2023 year the officers are making \$21.00/hour, which is far less than they could be making somewhere else.

Fire Department budget of \$70,670.00 was presented by Chief Robert Engelson: There are currently 24 members, working from 3 fire halls with 7 trucks. In 2022 they had 125 total runs with 119 of the calls being emergency medical call. Chief Engelson explained that the department went over budget for last year. The areas that caused the overage was spent on heat/light, fuel, supply new members with new radios. The Department is in the process of purchasing a used fire truck. There was a picture of the rig shared in the annual meeting packet. This is a larger truck for the department and will still fit in the 10-foot door. This will replace the 2003 gold cross ambulance in the fleet. The Fire Department is looking to replacing the current brush truck. Bob noted that the Fire Department would like to seek some of the ARPA funds to purchase the replacement brush truck.

Question: George Sundstrom sought clarification for the cost of the truck and noted that the department was out of budget and wondering where the funds would be coming from?

Answer: The Clerk informed the audience that the Fire Department has an escrow with \$140,000.00 which will be used for the purchase of the fire truck.

Question: Does the Fire Department service Alden? If so, is Alden contributing to the fund.

Answer: Alden pays Duluth Township 13% of the Fire Department budget each year for the services.

Tim made a note regarding the ARPA funds Chief Engelson mentioned. He included the history of how the ARPA fund came to be and the various deadlines.

General Township budget of \$120,565.00 was presented by Board Chair Rolf Carlson. Rolf noted that the levy for this item is less than the last couple of years. Tim mentioned the surplus from previous years.

Planning and Zoning budget of \$44,746.01 was presented by Director Liz Strohmyer: Liz introduced herself and noted that Sue retired this year, and she is now the new Planning Director. At this time last year, the Planning Commission was completing the new Ordinance 6. There is less work on the ordinance to be done compared to previous years as the new ordinance went into effect on April 20, 2022. Liz went on to discuss the increase in the amounts of permits that were issued. Two years ago, there were approximately forty permits issued. In this past year there were in the ballpark of ninety permits to process. She discussed the increase in the amount of work the Department has seen this past year. Liz explained that our Planning Secretary is looking to retire. The Planning Department is seeking a replacement Secretary. However, Liz explained, the development of a new position would replace the existing secretary position and the Planning Assistant with a new hybrid position of Secretary/Assistant. Liz noted that the Planning Commission has some seats opening at the end of March. Anyone interested in joining the Commission to reach out to her or the Clerk's office.

Cemetery budget of \$7500.00 was presented by Rolf Carlson. Rolf noted that the 2023 budget was kept the same however, last year we did not levy the amount and utilized the surplus in the account. In 2024 we will return to the standard levy request of \$7,500.00. Rolf explained that this summer Molly will have Northern Bedrock assist with some much overdue projects in the Cemetery. The group that will be completing the various project works with youth to train them on historical preservations. A thank you to Molly on all the hard work she has done and will continue to do for the cemetery.

Emergency Preparedness Budget of \$0 was presented by Sherry Rovig: Sherry and Ann Cox lead the Emergency Preparedness group. They are working at updating our emergency plan, continuing to work on the 911 signs project. Sherry noted that during the annual calendar deliveries, they completed a survey on the fire numbers. They looked to see if the properties fire number was a new sign, old sign, or no sign to compare with existing list. They are looking into hosting two "Chipper Days" events this coming year. Sherry discussed that each year we received a Fire Wise grant that funds the "Chipper Days" event however, there are new regulations on who can apply for the those grants and more

stringent guidelines to qualify. The Emergency Preparedness will investigate if our Township can become a Firewise community, in order to qualify for the grant.

Question: How do we pick up the signs,

Answer: Visit the Clerk's office during regular office hours.

Road and Bridge budget of \$94,500.00 was presented by Supervisor Tim Strom as Jim Ward was absent. Tim informed the audience that we will discuss other roads first then we will discuss the Torgeson Road issue. The Town Board is suggesting that we levy \$94,500.00 for the road and bridge budget. Tim noted that MAT suggests carrying reserves of approximately 50-100% of the annual Budget. As of February 9, 2023, the Town had a reserve in the road and bridge of \$107,000.00, but Nicole pointed out that approximately \$35,00.00 of that is escrowed for emergencies—so the effective road and bridge reserve in 2023 is around \$60,000.00-\$70,000.00 and the road and bridge levy amount for 2023 is \$90,000.00. That means the Town will have approximately \$150,000.00 available in its road and bridge account for 2023. Tim shared his understanding as a supervisor that ditching on the Torgeson will be needed, and a new turnaround might be. He suggested, as moderator, that we discuss any concerns about other roads or about the roads in general before returning to a more particular discussion of the Torgeson Road

Question: Is there any kind of timeline on which Rodda works under to complete road projects.

Answer: In the spring the Road Supervisors tours the Township roads and creates a work list of projects to be completed in the upcoming roads season.

Question: Can we have someone other than Rodda perform the work?

Answer: The roads contract is up for renewal and the Board will review the bids for the Roads Package at the April Town Board meeting.

Question: Is there something we can do with the Homestead Road? All of the culverts are sunken, and the condition of the Road is declining.

Answer: The Homestead is a county road. Reach out to St. Louis County Public Works department with the concerns about the Homestead.

Dan Billman stated that with the rising cost of fuel and the amount of snow we received this winter I would think that raising the budget to \$100,000.00 would be a better option.

Question: The actual grading expenditure for 2022 was \$78,842.71, why is the proposed budget for 2024 only \$65,000.00?

Answer: There were many roads that were worked on this past summer to build up the road base. Most of the roads received multiple loads of class five from the Townships gravel stockpile.

Liz shared her understanding that the ARPA funds cannot be used for infrastructure (for roads). It could possibly be used for infrastructure if it is storm water related. Example: using ARPA funds to ditch the Torgeson road could be possible, but building a turnaround would not be an authorized use of the funds in her opinion.

Torgeson Road: Nathan Nesgoda spoke on behalf of the Torgeson Road residents. Nathan explained that it is about a mile long with seventeen properties along the road. There are homes at the end of the road. They have been dealing with issues in the five hundred feet of the road which is an easement to private property. Nathan discussed that the ditches are shallow and there is a need for a larger culvert. There is no legal turnaround and stated that there are people turning around in a neighbor's driveway which is private property. Nathan informed the audience that the County is no longer sanding or plowing that end of the road and the USPS driver, UPS, and the garbage service has not been delivering. Nathan has taken it upon himself to sand that portion of the road. He explained the history of his dealings with the Township and various Road Supervisors. The Torgeson Road residents want the road ditched, brought to

County standard, and have a turnaround built at the end of the road. He has a support document signed by 19 neighbors. Nathan and the Torgeson road residents are seeking support from the community in getting this project completed. Kathy from the Torgeson Road said that when we have large weather events it washes out the road and the road will need repairs. This can become costly. She noted that this relates to public safety. The neighbors want to have the support of the residents in attendance of this meeting.

Question/Statement: Wayne Dahlberg stated that he understands that in the past the Township does not want to add any more Town Roads. Since this is an easement, why would the Town want to complete work on a private easement?
Answer: Typically, towns do not want to add to their roads, but if this is a private easement there are procedures by which residents could raise the issue and ask the Board to consider making it a town road.

Moderator: Keep in mind that the question is in 2024, do we want to include additional funds to the budget for the work that is being requested on the Torgeson Road.

Question: Are they correct in their statement that there are only three roads that do not have a proper turn around?
Answer: Tim explained that in the past few years the County increased the plow truck size. Mace and Englund Roads are two of the roads that needed larger turnarounds, but they were overly difficult to establish, so the Town has hired a private operator instead of the county to do the plowing.

Question: Electors, can we raise the budget \$20,000.00 to complete the work on the Torgeson Road?

Point of clarification: Resident Robert Engelson informed the audience that, we as the electors can change the budget but cannot dictate how the money is spent.

Comment: Ken Peterson with the Fire Department stated that keep in mind the size of the firetrucks. Even if they were able to get down there, they would still have to get down the driveway since they only have so many feet of hoses. However, he feels that the Town, moving forward, should address all the roads with little to no turnarounds.

Question: Why hasn't this been addressed before now.

Answer: The previous Boards have started to address this issue and it has not yet reached a resolution.

ARPA: The decision on how to spend the funds received from the American Rescue Plan Act will be made by the Board but the Board has some recommendations that have been received though this past year. They have held a few meetings regarding the ARPA funds. Rolf discussed the different meetings the Town has held. At the last meeting there were 22 ideas presented the Board. At that meeting they gathered opinions on where they, the residents, would like to see the money spent. Rolf discussed some of the top choices including a new fire truck, Sucker River public lands/ community park, Stoney Point land ownership issues, new windows, new bathrooms, and finish phase three of the long-range facilities plan.

Question: Where is the Sucker River Park proposed?

Answer: On the Old North Shore Road, between the Bergquist and Homestead Roads.

Question: Can a Township use its funds to start an assisted living home within the community to take care of our aging community members?

Answer: We would have to reach out to the lawyer to find out if that is something the Town can spend the money on.

The Moderator noted that the primary question appeared to be whether additional amounts should be added to the proposed \$406,444.00 budget for 2024 to reflect costs that might be incurred this year for the Torgeson Road, and suggested we call the question unless anyone had further comments or questions.

Question: George Sundstrom sought clarification if the ARPA funds are included in the funds listed in the latest newsletter.

Answer: Yes, the ARPA funds are included in the grand total reported.

Motion to approve the total levy for 2024 **\$406,444.00. The motion failed to pass.**

Motion: Nathan Nesgoda moved that the Town budget and levy should be set at \$426,444.00 for 2024. Kathleen seconded.

Discussion: George: Is this even a Township Road? Kathleen: It has been maintained by the Township so by default it becomes a road. Wayne: That is the point I asked. If it is a Township Road, then I'm in favor of it. Liz: From my understanding we are unable to make this decision tonight. But to table it and to put this on the table for future discussions. This would be increasing the 2024 budget. Ken: we need to note that there three total roads that need a turn around.

**Motion: the Town budget and levy should be set at \$426,444.00 for 2024. No further discussion
The motion passed for a levy amount of \$426,444.00.**

Motion approved unanimously.

Set time and date of the 2024 Annual Town Meeting: George Sundstrom made a motion to set the 2024 Annual Meeting date for March 12, 2024, at 8:15 p.m., Sherry Rovig seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Concerns from the Audience: Sherry: Where did the 60,000 come from for the skating rink? That came from capital improvement fund which is funded from the IRRB.

The Clerk congratulated and thanked Sue Lawson for everything she has done while in service to our community. She acknowledged all the hard work Sue, and the Planning Commission did in completing and updating the ordinance. She also thanked the whole Planning Commission.

The Clerk also thanked departing Supervisors Strom and Carlson for their continued dedication to Duluth Township.

George Sundstrom wanted to thank Tim Strom for being tonight's moderator.

Adjournment: Tim moved that this meeting be continued to Thursday August 17, 2023, 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 at that date and time without any further action. Sherry Rovig seconded it. The motion passed unanimously at 10:12 p.m.