

**Birchdale Township
Annual Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 14, 2023 - 8:15 p.m.**

1. Call to Order /Pledge of Allegiance

- a. Clerk Bauer called to order the Annual Meeting of the Birchdale Township Board at 8:15 p.m. on Tuesday, March 14, 2023 at the Birchdale Town Hall. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The following were present: Supervisors Jim Carstens, Dale Ahrens, Arnold Berscheid, Larry Bebus and Joe Ostendorf, Clerk Jackie Bauer and Treasurer Marlene VanHavermaet. Also in attendance were Residents Eric Peterson, Shelly Primus, John Voit, Darwin McGrane, Robert Pallow, David Theisen, Riley Laine, Paul Theisen, Nan Brewer, Sandy McCarthy, Troy McCarthy, Patsy Ahrens, Chad Niezgocki, Betty Schwanke, David Schwanke, John Hinman, Gary Fuechtmann and Calvin Miller.

2. Election of a Moderator

- a. Clerk Bauer announced that the electors would need to nominate a moderator for the meeting. A motion was made by Supervisor Larry Bebus, seconded by Treasurer Marlene VanHavermaet and unanimously carried that Supervisor Jim Carstens serve as the moderator.

3. Announce Agenda for Rest of Meeting

- a. Moderator Carstens announced the agenda for the meeting.

4. Approval of Agenda

- a. A motion was made by Supervisor Dale Ahrens, seconded by Supervisor Arnie Berscheid, and unanimously carried to approve the agenda as amended.

5. Reading of Minutes

- a. Clerk Bauer then read the March 8, 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes. A motion was made by Treasurer Marlene VanHavermaet, seconded by Supervisor Berscheid and unanimously carried to approve the meeting minutes as amended.

6. Reading of Board of Audit Report as Posted Prior to Meeting

- a. Treasurer VanHavermaet then presented and reviewed the Audit Report for the year ending December 31, 2022. Supervisor Ostendorf asked whether the gas tax that the township receives is for all township roads including the minimum maintenance roads. Clerk Bauer responded that yes, the mileage for the three minimum maintenance roads that are

located in the township is included in the amount of gas tax that the township receives. There were no other questions. A motion was made by Supervisor Ostendorf, seconded by Supervisor Bebus and unanimously carried to approve the Board of Audit Report for the year ending December 31, 2022.

7. Road Report By Road Subcommittee

- a. Supervisor Ostendorf gave an update on maintenance work that has been done in the township in the past year. Tree trimming and brushing has been done along the majority of the roads in the township and this is evident as there is more sunlight hitting the roads. Supervisor Ostendorf stated trimming still needs to be completed along Bluegill, Bluebird and Angler Drive.
- b. Supervisor Ostendorf also reported that he has recently spoken with the plow drivers in the township and requested that they try to get out and get more of the slush off of the roads. Supervisor Ostendorf asked residents who were in attendance that live along Bluegill whether the plowing has improved for the left side of the road and whether more sand has been applied. Residents didn't feel that it had improved, and Supervisor Ostendorf will share this information with the snowplow operators. A resident asked how many plow drives typically cover Birchdale Township and Supervisor Berscheid stated that there were two drivers assigned to the township.
- c. Supervisor Berscheid gave an update on dust control. He stated that last year, it was difficult to get train cars of magnesium chloride due to supply problems. A resident asked whether dust control was applied to Angler Trail and Supervisor Berscheid that it was.
- d. Treasurer VanHavermaet asked about Alcott Drive and whether areas on the road could be repaired and then re-tarring done on the road. Supervisor Berscheid stated that Astech, a tarring contractor, does a process called microsealing that might be an option for Alcott and he will contact them and get an estimate on what the cost might be. Todd County Engineer Loren Fellbaum has provided cost estimates for the complete milling and overlay for Alcott Drive and the cost is just under \$1 million dollars for the entire project, but microsealing would be less costly and might be an option so that the road can be repaired within the next year rather than the township waiting to levy for the funds to do a complete mill and overlay. A resident asked how long ago Alcott was tarred and Supervisor Ostendorf stated that it has been over 20 years ago. Supervisor Ostendorf and Supervisor Berscheid along with County Engineer Loren Fellbaum examined Alcott Drive and found that the road bed is good and it has a good foundation. The areas where repairs are needed are where frost boils developed and are soft spots in the road.

Clerk Bauer reported that the township is looking into possibly applying for a state of Minnesota grant called the Local Road Improvement

Project Grant or LRIP Grant to do the complete mill and overlay of Alcott Drive. The LRIP grant has an application deadline in the fall and award of the grants are announced at the end of March. A resident stated that when the road that he lives along, Almond Drive, was initially tarred, the residents who lived along the road were assessed for the cost of the project through their taxes. But once the road was tarred, any new repairs or overlay were done by the township.

- e. Supervisor Ostendorf asked the residents in attendance, about their use and feedback for the three minimum maintenance roads in the township. A resident asked whether the roads are graded and Supervisor Ostendorf stated that basic grading has been done but that there is a lot of wash-out and overgrown trees and brush along the roads so they are difficult to use. Because two of the roads lead to State of Minnesota lands, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has informed Supervisor Ostendorf that they do have grant funds that they are willing to match with the township to repair the roads. They have approximately \$15,000.00 that they would be willing to spend on gravel, grading and to create a parking area so that people can walk into the state land. One of the two roads that lead to state land, 241st Avenue, is in fair condition. But the other road, 130th Avenue does need repair and this is the road that the DNR would like to add a parking area. Supervisor Ahrens, stated that due to the wildlife on the state land, they would prefer that the road not be used heavily. Supervisors Ostendorf and Supervisor Berscheid have not received many complaints about the minimum maintenance roads so it not get much traffic. A resident who was in attendance and is a member of a local fire department, stated that the roads do need to be accessible by fire departments for safety reasons. Supervisor Ostendorf stated that he will continue discussions with the DNR regarding the grant funds so that 130th Avenue can be repaired.
- f. Supervisor Ostendorf updated the residents in attendance that Arvig Communications is planning on laying fiber optic cable in some areas of the township for broadband internet as a result of a federal grant that they have received. Residents in attendance asked where Arvig was laying the cable and the supervisors provided a map that Arvig has given the township showing the locations of where the cable is planned to be laid. But they are also asking residents to contact Arvig and request whether cable can be laid along their road so that Arvig can determine if they are able to lay cable in additional areas at no cost because of the grant. Resident Patsy Ahrens asked whether the Board felt it would be good to request to have cable laid even if a resident wasn't planning to connect at this time. Supervisor Ostendorf stated that yes, even if a resident isn't sure whether they want to connect to internet, they should request Arvig to lay cable near their home because it is at no cost now but in the future, there would be a charge. Arvig has provided a contact name and phone number for residents but Clerk Bauer is also inviting Arvig to attend the March Board meeting to present on their summer project of laying fiber optic cable for internet broadband. Residents are

encouraged to attend the March Board meeting to hear more about this or to contact the representative from Arvig.

Supervisor Ostendorf also stated that there is a group that has been formed in Todd County called the Broadband Initiative and they are working to bring broadband internet to the entire county. They would be another organization that residents could reach out to with questions.

8. Approve Budget, General Levy, and any Depreciated Levies

- a. Treasurer VanHavermaet presented the budget numbers for Birchdale Township including the expenses for road maintenance in the township for the past year which totaled approximately \$50,000.00. Last year, residents did agree to increase the township levy by \$100,000.00. The levy in the township had not been increased in at least ten years, but with road maintenance expenses and the current levy, there are not enough funds to do larger projects such as milling and overlay for Alcott Drive. So, the levy was increased last year with the idea that it would be increased incrementally each year so that funds could be built up to a level where funds were available for larger, more expensive road projects. Alcott Drive is a priority but other roads will also need repair in the future so increasing the levy to set aside funds will insure that the township has the funds to do the necessary township road repairs. A resident asked how long Alcott Drive is and the supervisors reported that it is just under five miles approximately. The traffic along the road changes by at least 20% seasonally and Alcott Drive needs to be repaired sooner rather than later. Currently, there is \$358,000.00 total monies in the township but the levy increase will affect funds coming in for 2024.

A motion was made by Supervisor Ostendorf, seconded by Supervisor Ahrents and unanimously approved to increase the levy by \$100,000.00 for the 2024 tax year. These funds would then be made available to the township in 2025 which would continue to build up enough funds to repair Alcott Road.

If Birchdale Township is awarded the LRIP grant funds in March of 2024, the road could then be immediately milled, and overlay done. But if not, then the Board will proceed with doing microsealing of the road for now.

9. Approve Time and Location for the next Annual Meeting and Township Election

- a. A motion was made by Supervisor Berscheid, seconded by Supervisor Bebus and unanimously carried to set the next Annual Meeting and Township Election for Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at the Birchdale Township Hall with election hours to be from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. and the Annual Meeting to begin at 8:15 p.m. Notice of the election and meeting

to be published in the Sauk Centre Herald and the Long Prairie Leader and posted on the Township's website and Town Hall bulletin board.

10. Adjournment

With no further business, a motion was made by Supervisor Ahrens, seconded by Supervisor Ostendorf, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 p.m.

Supervisor Ahrens thanked all the residents for attending the annual meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jackie Bauer
Birchdale Township Clerk