

Star Lake Township Annual Newsletter

Volume 2, February 2014

Welcome to the second edition of the Star Lake Township Annual Newsletter. Last year's newsletter generated a lot of positive feedback, and it is the hope of the Town Board that you will find this one informative and helpful as well.

As a general rule the Board of Supervisors meets at the town hall at 6:30 PM every 2nd Wednesday. These meetings are open to the public, and all township residents & property owners are welcome to attend. Special meetings may also be scheduled, and public notice of these will be posted five days in advance. Township postings are made in the Perham Focus & Contact Newspapers, and posted at the town hall and the Galaxy Resort.

If you have questions or something you want to share with your town board, please come to a monthly meeting, or contact any of the Supervisors directly, (contact information provided later in this newsletter). Your Town Board very much wants to hear from you.

Star Lake Township now has a website! www.starlaketownship.org

In an effort to make it easier for all township taxpayers to contact the township board, a township website has been established. The website will contain pertinent township information including copies of past board meeting agendas & minutes, township policies, and special meeting postings.

We encourage township residents to register their email addresses on the site to permit direct communications thereby allowing for more timely communication, and reduced mailing costs. For example, it is our hope to move to email distribution of future newsletters and notices. Standard USPS mailed delivery will continue to be an option for those without email access.

The email information collected will not be shared/sold with any other party. The website also provides a quick and easy way for citizens to communicate with their board outside of scheduled meetings. Go to www.starlaketownship.org and check it out for yourself. Send us a message and give us your thoughts, or ask a question.

Who are the people that comprise the Star Lake Township Board/Staff?

The Board of Supervisors is comprised of three Supervisors, each serving a three year term. The Chairman position rotates each year based on seniority of terms. Additionally, the Board has a Clerk and a Treasurer, both of which serve a two year term. The Clerk and the Treasurer are non-voting members of the Board. See back page of newsletter for specific contact information.

The current township staff is as follows:

Ray Harthun – General Maintenance & Brushing Operations.

Ron Peterson – Ditch mowing operations.

Mike Sundblad – Motor Grader Operator.

John Richards – Snow Plow Operator.

The Township Supervisors would like to take this opportunity to publically thank each of our staff for their excellent work and support during 2013. We think we have made some good progress on improving township road conditions and that would not have been possible without the fine work of these individuals.

What Are The Responsibilities of the Township Anyway?

The Township Form of government is one of the oldest in our country dating back to the Northwest Ordinance enacted by the U.S. Congress in 1787. Over time the responsibilities of townships have changed, often due to local circumstance; so that today these responsibilities may not be the same across all townships. As it exists today, Star Lake

Township has three primary responsibilities:

1. To provide for and insure a safe, fair, and secure polling place for the proper conduct of public elections,
2. To manage & maintain the township roadways to provide for safe and efficient transportation for residents, commerce, and the public at large,
3. To manage the control of noxious weeds.

By far, the maintenance of our 32 miles of township roads consumes the bulk of the townships time, money, and energy (approx. 70%+ each year). For more specific information on the condition of township roads see the Township Road Analysis posted under the Road Services tab on the website.



While roads take up the majority of our resources, insuring the sanctity of the voting process is arguably the most important of the township responsibilities. The new township website provides a tab for election information and also a link to the MN Secretary State Office to allow residents to register to vote there, as well as access pertinent voter information.

Noxious and invasive weed inspections were completed by the township in the spring and fall of 2013, and a report of such was submitted to the East Otter Tail Soil and Water District as required by law. Two citizen notifications were made requesting control measures for noxious weeds. The Board thanks all township landowners for their cooperation and efforts to control noxious weeds.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW - Tuesday, March 11, 2014 is Township Day in Minnesota.

Star Lake Township, will hold an election for a Supervisor for a three year term, and a Clerk for a two year term on Tuesday, March 11th, 2014. Equally important that day is the annual meeting.

Township eligible voters that attend the annual meeting, among other things, will vote to approve the amount of tax to be levied in the 2015 fiscal year. For Star Lake Township the polling place, and the annual meeting location, is the Town Hall, 31030 380th Street, Dent, MN. The polling place will be open from 5:00PM to 8:00PM, and the Annual Meeting will begin at 8:15 PM.

2013 Election News.

On March 12, 2013 an election was conducted which included a levy for the Pelican Rapids School District (#548), as well as an election for the positions of Town Supervisor, and Town Treasurer.

Mr. Ron Peterson was elected to a three year term as Supervisor, and Ms. Carol Peterson was elected to a two year term as Treasurer. The school district levy was defeated in this March election, but was eventually passed in a separate November vote.

The total cost of the March township election was \$1,046.25. The Pelican Rapids School District reimbursed the township \$730.00 to cover costs associated with the extended polling hours. Consequently, the net cost to the township for the 2013 election was \$316.25.

The November school district vote was held in Pelican Rapids at no cost to the township. Our thanks to the following individuals who served as township election judges in 2013: Doris Champlin, Ron Gilbertson, Karen Herman, Carol Nodsle, Mary Pfeffer, Alma Ronningen, and Kathy Torkildson.

Township Aid Program.

Perhaps the biggest success for MN townships, during the 2013 MN legislative session was the restoration of a Township Aid Program under the provisions of the 2013 Omnibus Tax Bill. The MN legislature has authorized an appropriation of \$10 million annually for 2014 and 2015. Star Lake Township's share of this for 2014 is \$4,445, and it is expected that 2015 will be a similar amount.

Inter-Township Road Maintenance Agreements.

As detailed in our last newsletter, Star Lake Township has road maintenance agreements with four neighboring townships. This results in some Star Lake Township roads being maintained by other townships, and vice-a-versa. Additional information on this matter is available at www.starlaketownship.org (road services tab).

The following details the Star Lake Township roads maintained by other townships:

1. Maplewood TS. – maintains the following:
 - a. 280th Ave. from Hwy 24 north .5 miles,
 - b. 280th Ave. from Hwy 24 south .3 miles to “Minimum Maintenance” barricade,
 - c. Skyhawk Drive. From Hwy 24 east .5 miles,
2. Maine TS. – maintains the entire length of Brightwood Shores Drive,
3. Dead Lake TS. – maintains Beaver Dam Road north from Hyde Lane to the pavement,
4. Dora TS. – maintains the entire length of West Rosewood Drive.

Star Lake Township residents that have questions/concerns regarding roads that are assigned to neighboring townships for maintenance should contact that township directly with road concerns. They are welcome to contact any Star Lake Township Supervisor as well, but a direct call to the responsible township will likely expedite the matter. Township contacts are; Maplewood – Craig Ripley 218-842-5237, Maine – Gerald Kusinierke 218-495-3286, Dora – Gregory Meyer 218-758-2181, and Dead Lake – Cheryl Harris 218-371-0882.

Road Right of Way Issues.

The Township Board continues to ask for citizen help in keeping our road right of ways (ROW) clear of all obstructions. This is for the benefit & safety of township employees, and of the travelling public (resident & non-resident). The ROW for all township roads is 66 feet (33 feet either side of the center of the roadway), 120 feet for all cul-de-sacs, and 33 feet for the very few cartways we have in the township. The Town Board is often reminded in official communications or training sessions about the legal ramifications that may exist in the event of an accident caused by a Right of Way obstruction. The individual property owner of adjacent property to such a Right of Way obstruction may also be held legally liable as well.

For these reasons the Town Board will continue to be proactive on Right of Way issues in 2014, and we respectfully ask for your cooperation.

Specifically, the following are the biggest areas of concerns:

1. Trees & vegetation encroaching on the ROW and road bed,
2. Abandoned vehicles, trailers of any sort, dumpsters, ice houses, and water related equipment (boats lifts, docks, etc.),
3. Over-hanging branches/limbs that may impact school buses or other high profile vehicles,

If you have any of these conditions on the road right of way adjacent to your property, please take corrective action. Property owner cooperation on these matters will help to eliminate/reduce township maintenance dollars, which in turn saves tax dollars for all of us.

The Town Board would like to thank those individuals who regularly trim their trees and remove fallen branches along township roads. The Supervisors regularly inspect the roads, especially after significant weather events, and often notice where residents have done this clean-up work. Your efforts in this manner are greatly appreciated.



PUBLIC NOTICE

Township residents are reminded that the placing of snow from sidewalks, driveways, approaches and streets onto a TOWNSHIP ROAD is against the law. Any person doing so is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to fine under MN Statute 169.42.

Other than the obvious reason that we don't want snow placed back in the roadway, there is a safety concern at issue here as well. A large pile of snow on the edge of the roadway creates a significant hazard for the snow plow operator, who in periods of limited visibility may strike the pile with the plow wing and consequently lose control, or cause damage to the equipment.

Please, help us out with this by insuring any snow that is placed in the ROW, is well off the roadway.

The Winter of 2012-2013.

The winter of 2012-13 was brutal in Star Lake Township with a significant ice event in December, and an even more significant snow event in February. Total expenditures for sanding and snow removal operations exceeded \$15,000! This does not include repairs of nearly \$9,500. For perspective, the average amount for sanding and snow removal operations during the past four years has been \$4,450. For the first time in recent memory we had to contract for additional equipment to keep the roads open.



The good news is we had the financial resources to get through it, and the Board thinks we have a pretty solid number to plan for into the future. Unfortunately, the winter of 2014 has gotten off to a rough start as well. Heavy drifting off the lakes and severe cold has put a stress on equipment and personnel.

On the subject of winter operations, the Board would like to remind residents of the following:

1. **PLEASE DO NOT PARK VEHICLES ON THE ROADWAY** in advance of an anticipated snow event! This creates a significant safety hazard for the plow operator and the travelling public.
2. The township will generally begin snowplowing operations at the conclusion of a snowfall or storm, or when 4" or more of snow has accumulated and visibility permits for safe operation
3. If the County snowplows are NOT operating, the township plow probably will NOT be either.
4. The township has 32 miles of road which equates to 64 miles of plowing. The snowplow operating after a moderate snowfall with good visibility is likely going to take a minimum of five hours to complete the snow route. Heavier snowfall, poor visibility, drifting snow, ice conditions, mechanical failures, etc., will all add to the amount of time needed. So please be patient.
5. Township roads will generally be plowed in a specific order as designated in the "Township Snow-Plowing Priorities/Routes document". A copy of this routing is posted on the township website.
6. The Township plow will not operate on private property/roads unless so directed by law enforcement or the Town Board,



7. The Township plow operator will not offer physical assistance or utilize any township equipment to extract private vehicles or equipment that may be stuck in the snow, unless directed to do so by law enforcement or the Town Board, (the operator may offer assistance by placing a phone call for the stranded traveler).

8. The Township has no responsibility for damage to any or all items left in the Road Right of Way, including but not limited to lawn sprinklers, outdoor lighting, sod, landscaping, vehicles, trailers, etc.,

The entire Snow Removal Policy can be obtained from the township website, www.starlake township.org

Fire Protection.

Star Lake Township contracts for fire protection with the Dent Volunteer Fire Department. A significant change was made this year in the process the Dent Fire Department uses to determine township fees. The change resulted in a welcome reduction of \$3,985 for Star Lake Township in 2013.

Residents should know that there are individual expenses associated with a fire department service call. Property owners will be billed for \$500 for the first hour of a call, and \$250/hour thereafter.

On behalf of our residents, the Star Lake Township Board extends our thanks to all the members of the Dent Volunteer Fire Department for their valuable service.

Dust Control Policy.

The Town Board approved a Dust Control Policy for the township at the December 12, 2012 monthly meeting. Residents may obtain a copy of the Dust Control Policy by contacting the Town Clerk, or any Supervisor. Briefly, the policy states that the township will coordinate & contract for Dust Control Applications to those areas where the residents have requested it be done, and have agreed to pay for it in advance.

The township coordination will include:

1. Insuring the road bed is properly prepared (graded & graveled if needed),
2. The selection of the Dust Control contractor to be used,
3. The negotiated price and payment for the application.

The residents requesting the dust control are solely responsible for the payment for this service. An application form is available from the Town Clerk or the Town website www.starlaketownship.org. An application form must be received by the Town Clerk by April 1st, and payment in full must be received by the Town Clerk by May 1st of each year. No Dust Control Application will be initiated by the township without receipt of prior payment.

There are cost savings to be gained for the township in that dust control agents will reduce the need for grading, and are proven to reduce the amount of gravel used on the roadway over the long term. There are cost savings for the affected residents as well, in that the application cost will likely be lower due to volume discounting, and the township service will not be subject to state sales tax. This policy also gives the Township a level of assurance that environmental concerns are being adhered to regarding the rate of application, and the type of dust control agents being used on township roads.

Additionally, the Township Board will also require the following:

1. To the greatest extent possible, dust control areas will be continuous, thereby minimizing the need for the grader operator to pick up & put down the blade,
2. To the greatest extent possible, entire road sections will be done, i.e. all of Downy Drive vs. just a portion,
3. The minimum distance for application will be 500 feet and this only with Board approval,

Residents seeking additional information on this policy should contact the Town Clerk, or any Supervisor.

Proposed Star Lake Improvement District.

The Star Lake Property Owners Association (SLPOA) has initiated a proposal to establish a Lake Improvement District (LID) encompassing the lake shore properties immediately adjacent to the shoreline of Star Lake.

The SLPOA is a volunteer organization funded by membership dues and donations, and is in no way associated with Star Lake Township. The boundary of the proposed LID does include properties from Star Lake Township, as well as properties from Dead Lake, and Dora Townships.

The issue has received considerable attention in the local press, and will likely receive even more with the return of the 2014 lake season. The Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners has scheduled a Referendum on the matter for July 5, 2014. This special election will be conducted by, and funded by, Otter Tail County. The polling place has yet to be announced, but will likely be the Star Lake Township Hall.

The Star Lake Township Board of Supervisors views this as a Star Lake property owner issue, and has taken a neutral position on the matter.

For more information on the subject visit the Star Lake Property Owners Association website, www.starlakeassociation.com, or review MN Statute 103B.501-581.

Have an Interest in Serving on the Township Board/Staff?

Please give this question some thought. This is your community, and like any other it is always in need of good people to serve. The changing demographics of our community seems to be making it harder and harder to find people to serve. Supervisor positions are three year terms, while the Clerk and Treasurer are two year terms. These are elected positions that are paid and part-time. Township employees are part-time hourly employees as well. Contact the Clerk or any Supervisor if you have an interest in any of these positions.

Significant Township Actions in 2013.

1. The acceptance for township maintenance of Bambi Trail,
2. The completion of a road reshaping project on Beaver Dam Point,
3. The completion of work on Sky Hawk Drive to facilitate the turn over for routine maintenance to Maplewood Township,
4. The implementation of Dust Control application on selected roads in participating locales,
5. The completion of a widening project on 390th Street to restore a minimum 18' driving surface to a portion of road lost to high water actions in 2010.
6. The continuation of gravelling upgrades to high volume township roads.
7. The establishment of a Star Lake Township website, starlaketownship.org.

STAR LAKE TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL LEVY, RECEIPTS, & DISBURSEMENT INFORMATION

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<i>Levy Amount*</i>	\$88,200	\$88,200	\$88,200	\$113,200	\$123,200	\$143,200
Total Income**	\$147,232	\$100,142	\$129,698	\$143,754	\$151,887	
Beg. Balance***	\$64,645	\$118,015	\$44,058	\$36,178	\$58,048	\$57,649
Working Balance+	\$211,877	\$218,157	\$173,756	\$179,932	\$211,008	
Total Expenses++	\$93,862	\$174,100	\$137,577	\$121,884	\$153,359	
Balance Forward	\$118,015	\$44,057	\$36,179	\$58,048	\$57,649	\$0
Savings Account	\$37,904	\$38,258	\$18,521	\$18,849	\$19,183	

*Included in Total Income. **Levy + Misc. Receipts, e.g. gas tax, delinquent taxes, FEMA, etc.

***Balance carried forward from previous year. +Sum of beg.balance & total income. ++Total Expenses

Red font-total expenses exceeded total income.

Star Lake Township Proposed Budget for 2014 Levy to be Adopted by The Electors at the Annual Meeting, March 12, 2013

Category	2014 Budget*	2013 Actual Expenses
General Fund	\$47,400	\$35,149
Roads & Bridges	\$95,800	\$118,210
TOTAL	\$143,200	\$153,359

*Based on 2014 Levy approved at 2013 annual meeting.

Star Lake Township Board:

Chairman	Keith Aune	2011-2014	218-388-9779
Vice-Chmn	Lee Mindemann	2012-2015	218-298-2010
Supervisor	Ron Peterson	2013-2016	218-758-2455
Clerk	Kathy Torkildson	2012-2014	218-758-3117
Treasurer	Carol Peterson	2013-2015	218-758-2455

Star Lake Township's Annual Meeting Agenda for March 11, 2014, 8:15 PM is as follows:

Pledge of Allegiance
 Election of Moderator
 Minutes of Last Meeting
 Treasurers Report
 Hospital District Report
 Annual Budget & Levy
 Other Business
 Setting time & place for next Annual Meeting



Star Lake Township
31317 395th St
Dent, MN 56528

PRESORTED STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 25
PERHAM, MN 56573

VOTING HOURS: 5PM – 8PM

**STAR LAKE TOWN HALL
37980 310th Ave., Dent, MN**

**BE SURE TO VOTE
TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 2014**

