



2021 Newsletter

Volume 9

February 21, 2021

SLT Township Board

- * Keith Aune
Chairman
- * Tammy Ziegler
Vice Chairman
- * Open Position
Supervisor
- * Jeff Michaelson
Clerk
- * Ronola Richards
Treasurer

Website:
starlaketownship.org

Inside this issue:

Township Meetings	p2
Election / Ann Mtg	p3
CARES Act	p3
Road Right of Way	p4
Noxious Weeds	p5
Road Services	p6
Chairman Comments	p8
SLT Board / Staff	p10

STAR LAKE TOWNSHIP ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Written / compiled by Lee Mindemann

MMXX – Two Thousand Twenty – 2020 – The year that should have been remembered primarily as the year of a U.S. Presidential Election and the completion of the U.S. Census. Instead, we have the year of the Pandemic! A year of troubling political and civil unrest! The year some misguided individual decided it was a good idea to burn down the Hwy 41 bridge. What a mess!

Despite the travails of 2020, the Star Lake Township (SLT) Board of Supervisors is most pleased to report a successful conclusion of 2020 township operations (no riots here...); and extends a sincere thank you to our residents and taxpayers for your continued support and cooperation. We are especially pleased to report no accidents or injuries or significant equipment failures; and are appreciative of the dedication and hard work of our staff.

This year’s edition of the SLT Newsletter has been delivered exclusively by email to those taxpayers/residents who have registered for electronic SLT Communications. A post card notice has been delivered by USPS to all registered voters of SLT. Additionally, the newsletter has been posted on the SLT website (starlaketownship.org), and hard copies will be available at the Annual Town Meeting on March 9th, or upon request via the Town Clerk.

The SLT Board urges property owners and voters to register for electronic delivery of SLT communications via the website. *Your email contact information will NEVER be shared or sold to others.*

MARCH 9, 2021

SLT ELECTION & ANNUAL MEETING

VOTING 5 PM to 8 PM - MEETING AT 8:15 PM

Town Hall: 31030 380th Street

TOWNSHIP MEETINGS

MONTHLY SLT BOARD MEETINGS

Due to Health Pandemic and the resulting MN Executive Order 20-20 SLT Board Meetings sadly were closed to public in-person attendance in December 2020. While closed to the public for in-person attendance SLT Board Meetings remained open for “viewing/listening” via electronic means such as conference calls & videoconferencing (Zoom).

Importantly, citizens wishing to bring a matter before the board may do so by contacting the Town Clerk or any Supervisor. The specifics of how to connect to these meetings has been & continues to be communicated via public posting at the Town Bulletin Board (located at the entrance to the Town Hall), and on the Township website. Monthly board meetings have continued according to schedule.

NOW TO THE NEW NEWS: Recently, townships have been advised they have the option of choosing what format they want to use for their meetings, either in-person or via remote electronic means. The SLT Board has decided to move back to the in-person meeting with full COVID-19 protocols in place, i.e., social distancing and masks required.

Monthly board meetings are held at 6:30 P.M. on the SECOND TUESDAY of each month, unless otherwise noted. (An exception being the next meeting - which will be 3/16/2021).

SLT ANNUAL ELECTION

In the election this year township voters will cast their ballots for ONE three-year Supervisor position which is currently held by Lee Mindemann. Lee is retiring after nine years of service.

The election polls will be open from **5PM to 8PM on March 9, 2021** at the Star Lake Town Hall, 31030 380th Street. Please come out to vote and show your support for your elected Town Supervisors.



SLT ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

In accordance with state law, the Annual Town Meeting and Election are held on the second Tuesday in March each year. In the event of bad weather, the meeting may be postponed until the following Tuesday. This meeting WILL BE OPEN to in-person attendance with COVID-19 protocols in place.

Accordingly, this year’s meeting will begin promptly at **8:15 P.M. on March 9, 2021** at the Town Hall, 31030 380th Street. Attendees will hear a brief recap of SLT operations for the last year and will be asked to approve the annual SLT tax levy for **2022**.

Please mark this important date on your calendar now, and plan to vote and attend.

March 9, 2021—Star Lake Township Election & Annual Meeting

ELECTIONS 2021

As mentioned, the township election this year is for ONE Supervisor position with a 3-year term. We have two individuals who have expressed an interest in serving our community in this way.

- **Ms. Rhonda Bell**, owner & operator of Bell's Resort filed her candidacy for this position during the filing period so her name will be printed on the ballot. Rhonda recently moved to Star Lake when she purchased the old Galaxy resort. Rhonda and her school-aged son live on the premises of the resort.
- **Ms. Emily Riley** (Richards) is a third-generation property owner in Star Lake Township and a 1999 graduate of Fergus Falls High School. Emily and husband Tyler Riley live on the West Arm of Star Lake and enjoy all aspects Minnesota lake life. For the past 17 yrs. Emily has grown & managed a successful massage therapy business in Fergus Falls at Salon Tru & Day Spa. Emily feels she will be a fair and honest representative of the township, and a good steward of our natural resources. Emily will be running as a "Write In" candidate.

AGENDA for ANNUAL MEETING on March 9, 2021 (8:15 PM)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| A. Meeting Call to Order | H. Board Chairman Comments |
| B. Election of Moderator | I. Annual Levy Recommendation |
| C. Read Agenda for Meeting | J. Motion for Board to contract services |
| D. Minutes of 2020 Meeting | K. Set time/place for next meeting |
| E. Read Financial Reports | L. Other Business |
| F. Board of Audit (Election Results) | M. Motion to Adjourn |
| G. Hospital District Report | |

CORONAVIRUS AID RELIEF & ECONOMIC SECURITY ACT

– commonly called the CARES ACT

Not going to spend a lot of time on this as I think we're all getting pretty tired of talking and hearing about it. What you should know is this act provided \$10,700 in Federal Aid to SLT as well as every other township in MN with a population of over 500, as part of that first massive relief package passed by congress last year. The amounts sent to townships were based upon population. It came with some very specific guidelines as to what it could be used for and a pretty short timeline to use. If townships choose not to use it (and there were some), or not to use all their funds, they had to return the funds to Otter Tail County. After reviewing the program details the SLT Board chose to invest it in technology, i.e., laptop computers for all officers, a wall mounted TV monitor, and related equipment.

The rationale for this decision was to enable our ability to conduct remote meetings during periods like Covid-19, and to allow our Board Members and employees the capability to attend remote training opportunities. The cost of the above was about \$7,000 and we returned about \$3,800 to the county. So much of what we do now involve electronic communications it seemed an appropriate use of these funds. We could not use them to pay for gravel, or snowplows, etc.

ROAD RIGHT OF WAY (ROW) ISSUES

This is a topic that has been discussed in every single edition of our past newsletters, and likely will be in all future editions. The Road Right of Way is a “legal easement” provided to the road authority. Nearly all SLT roads are “4 rod” roads, (1 rod=16.5’ a standard measurement in the land survey world). Therefore, the standard ROW in SLT is 66’ wide/33’ from center of roadway. There are a few exceptions to this – if unsure of your ROW contact a Town Supervisor.

ROW laws are very prescriptive with ample legal precedent and are rarely over-turned. The ROW provides for effective maintenance operations, the accommodation of public utilities, and the safety of the general travelling public. The MN Statute that covers state, county, township, and municipal roadways is MN Statute 160.

Here’s the Cliff Notes Version –

1. *Do not plant, place, or build “anything” but grass and a legal mailbox within the road right of way.*
2. *Do not push or dump snow onto a roadway or within its ROW.*
3. *Do not cultivate/farm the ROW or it’s ditch.*
4. *Trees do not become “trees” until they are 6” in diameter at a point 24” above ground – less than that, they are legally considered “brush” and can be legally removed by the road authority at its discretion.*
5. *If you have any questions on your ROW contract any of the Supervisors.*

It is acknowledged that SLT like most rural MN Townships has a multitude of uncorrected ROW violations for a variety of reasons. A concentrated effort to correct them all would be very expensive and time-consuming. However, the SLT Board is committed to developing and implementing a plan to eventually address all these issues.

The initial steps of the plan are:

- A. ROW violations that present a clear and present danger to the travelling public or to town employees will be addressed immediately and dependent upon circumstances may be corrected without prior notice.
 - B. “New” ROW violations will be addressed next in order to avoid “growing” more problems. Property owners will be advised of the violation and requested to take corrective action.
 - C. SLT will continue tree trimming operations which essentially includes the trimming of branches over-hanging the ROW at an elevation of less than 14 feet. Removal of trees will only be done with owner permission (see item 4 above).
 - D. An increased use of legal counsel to address troublesome SLT ROW issues to insure property owner and township rights are properly respected.
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NOXIOUS WEEDS - It's Everybody's Business

Many folks are surprised to learn that the control/elimination of Noxious Weeds is one of the three basic responsibilities of SLT. The other two are the conduct of safe, creditable, and accurate elections; and the provision of an effective and safe roads network.

The elimination/control of Noxious Weeds is on this list because of the extreme negative impact they pose to the economy of our community, and the need for early detection and effective treatment for their elimination/control. The advent of Palmer Amaranth is posing a huge threat to crop yields for our farmers. Canadian Thistles and similar weeds if left untreated can spread widely and quickly with similar results.



This is why every township in the state is required to appoint one of its Supervisors as the “Township Weed Inspector”. These inspectors tour the township during each growing season in search of noxious weeds and if found will notify the property owner to take immediate corrective action. These notices are reported to Otter Tail County which can take corrective action and may fine property owners accordingly.

To save time and money SLT property owners are encouraged to monitor their own property and take necessary action to eliminate/control any noxious weeds they may have. This applies to “all” SLT property owners – not just farmers.

Thank You for your cooperation.

- Tammy Ziegler, Star Lake Township Noxious Weeds Inspector

DUST CONTROL FOR 2021

Individuals interested in requesting seasonal dust control are reminded that applications for such are due to the Town Clerk by April 1, 2021 and payment for the application must be received by the Town Clerk by May 1, 2021.

Application forms may be obtained from the township website “Road Services” tab, or by contacting the Township Clerk.

We do not have specific cost information for this year but expect costs to remain about the same. We will communicate the new rate once we receive that information from the vendor.

Please direct any questions you may have on Dust Control to the Township Clerk (clerk@starlaketownship.org).



MAPLE WOOD RV DEVELOPMENT

We've recently been made aware of a new development coming to the township. Maple Wood RV Development, a 14-unit RV park is in the early stages of development.

The development will be in Section 31 at 34943 285th Ave. on 40 acres on the west side of road. This is potentially a 3-Phase project.

5-TON ROAD WEIGHT LIMITS

The Board has approved placing a permanent 5 ton/axle weight restriction on two sections of township road.

The roads in question are 390th Street from County Hwy 41 west to the intersection of 280th Ave., and 300th Ave. south from State Hwy. 108 to the intersection of 390th Street.

This action is being taken to limit heavy truck traffic and the resulting road damage caused by this heavy traffic. Signs are to be placed in the spring after the ground thaws. If you have questions on this contact any Supervisor.



A reminder regarding seasonal weight limits on township roads. In the spring the weight limits on all unpaved roads in the state of MN is 5 tons/axle. The timing of this is announced by the MNDOT, last year that restriction was in place from 3/9 to 5/4. SLT does NOT place weight restrictions signs during the spring MNDOT Spring Load Restriction period. Truckers are required to know this and comply.

COUNTY HWY 41 BRIDGE STATUS



As of this writing the status of the Hwy 41 bridge remains unchanged.

OTC has reportedly bonded a million dollars for the bridge replacement and is waiting for contractor/engineer analysis.

Construction is slated for the 2021 summer season but there are no further details available.

SOME WINTER REMINDERS

A couple of brief reminders on snow operations:

1. When cleaning out your drive, **DO NOT** deposit snow upon the roadway or it's ROW (Right of Way). This applies for all public roads and it is state law.
2. Please do not park anything on the roadway in advance of, or during a snow event. Many of our roads are narrow, and we cannot afford to have a plow truck get stuck trying to get around a parked vehicle.
3. Again, for a copy of the SLT Snow Removal Policy and Snow-plowing Routes consult the Road Services Tab on the township website.
4. Property Owners – **if possible, please do not park seasonal use items such as watercraft, trailers, docks/lifts, or any type of vehicle within the ROW or close to it.** This is especially critical for those areas prone to severe drifting during the winter. This greatly complicates/inhibits our snow plowing ability.

Your cooperation in this regard is greatly appreciated.



CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS - 2020 OVERVIEW

I'm pleased to announce that Star Lake Township is in sound financial condition. Our total cash assets at the conclusion of 2020 were in excess of \$154,000. Specific 2020 financial data will be shared as part of the Annual Meeting on March 9th, and as always will be posted on the Town Hall bulletin board for public viewing.

So far - old man winter has been relatively kind to us this season; though I would like to note we were more ready this year. Your Board spent a significant amount of time, effort, and money this past spring-summer-fall researching, negotiating, and discussing our plans to upgrade our snow plowing capabilities.

SLT is the proud new owner of a 2009 Sterling Model L8500 purchased through Brent Lamblez of Star Truck, Inc. right here in Star Lake Township. The truck was purchased new in late 2008 by the City of Brooklyn Park, MN. The unit is in excellent condition, originally equipped as a snowplow truck, and had only 17,500 miles/1200 hours on it. After some retrofitting, the addition of a new Falls power reversible front plow, and snow tires SLT was able to acquire this unit for approximately \$82,000.



CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS ... continued

Additionally, we also purchased a new Falls power reversible plow for the front of the CAT 12M3 Motor Grader for \$8,900. This new attachment greatly increased the capability of this key piece of equipment. These acquisitions put SLT in the enviable position of having TWO relatively new, well equipped snow removal units, that should provide SLT 20 years of service. It should be noted that both these snow removal upgrades were purchased with existing funds.

I would submit the next major projects regarding equipment and facilities upgrade should be:

1. The addition/expansion of additional heated garage/shop space. Not sure what that looks like – but suggest the board begin discussions/long range plan on what and how this might play out. (Think Maplewood & Lida Twps.)
2. The ultimate replacement of the two 1996 John Deere tractors with one newer larger tractor with capabilities of front-end loader, rear mounted boom mower, a snow blower (front/rear mounted), and rear mounted disc mower (current Vermeer disc-mower)

Your SLT Board remains committed to doing the best job we can with the resources at hand. However, we have learned the importance of having good reliable equipment – especially so because of our location. The two items noted above are not currently being actively researched, but I believe should be put on the radar screen so to speak. We are always appreciative of your support and open to hearing your ideas.

Best Wishes to you for 2021 and beyond.

- Respectfully, Lee Mindemann



STAR LAKE TOWNSHIP BOARD/STAFF

The SLT Board consists of three elected Supervisors, an appointed Clerk, and an appointed Treasurer.

Chairman: Keith Aune (2019-2022)
218-457-0520 | sup1@starlaketownship.org

Clerk: Jeff Michaelson (Appointed)
612-210-6144 | clerk@starlaketownship.org

Vice-Chairman: Tammy Ziegler (2020-2023)
701-367-7164 | sup3@starlaketownship.org

Treasurer: Ronola Richards (Appointed)
218-205-7916 | treas@starlaketownship.org

Supervisor: _____ (2021-2023)
(open) | sup2@starlaketownship.org

Star Lake Township Website:
starlaketownship.org

The current Township Staff is as follows:

Terry Johnson: General Maintenance Man, Mowing, and primary operator of “Snow Grader”

Mike Sundblad: Summer Motor Grader Operator, and alternate for winter operations

Jeff Michaelson: Snowplow Driver and serves as Township Clerk

Jim Piper: Alternate Snowplow Driver

The Supervisors would like to thank each of our staff for their excellent work during 2020.

