



2019 Newsletter

Volume 7

February 14, 2019

SLT Township Board

- * Lee Mindemann
Chairman
- * Keith Aune
Vice Chairman
- * Tammy Ziegler
Supervisor
- * Jeff Michaelson
Clerk
- * Ronola Richards
Treasurer

Website:
starlaketownship.org

STAR LAKE TOWNSHIP ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Written/compiled by Lee Mindemann

The Star Lake Township (SLT) Board of Supervisors is pleased to report a successful conclusion of 2018 township operations; and extends a sincere thank you to our residents and tax payers for your continued support and cooperation.

We are especially pleased to report no accidents or injuries; and are appreciative of the dedication and hard work of our staff. As always, we welcome any input/feedback that you may have on this newsletter as well as any other aspect of SLT operations.

If you have email, please consider registering on the SLT website, starlaketownship.org. This would allow distribution of this newsletter as well as periodic email notices in a more cost efficient and timely manner. *Your email information will NOT be shared/sold to anyone.*

Inside this issue:

Township Meetings	#1
Township Overview	#2
Ditches	#4
Right of Way (ROW)	#5
MAT, Election Info	#6
Road Services	#7
Township Staff	#8

TOWNSHIP MEETINGS

Monthly SLT Board Meetings: SLT Board Meetings are open to the public and are a good way for citizens to communicate their concerns. You are always welcome to attend. If you do have a concern for the board it would be helpful (though not required) to provide advance notice to the Clerk or any of the Supervisors.

Monthly board meetings are held at 6:30 P.M. on the **SECOND TUESDAY** of each month, unless otherwise noted.

SLT Annual Town Meetings: 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. Accordingly, this year's meeting and election will be conducted March 12, 2019 at the Town Hall, 31030 380th Street. The election polls will be open from 5PM to 8PM, and the annual meeting will begin at 8:15 PM.

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TOWNSHIP MEETINGS ... continued

In the election township voters will cast their ballots for ONE open Supervisor position. This is the Supervisor 1 position which is a standard THREE-year term and is currently held by Keith Aune who is seeking re-election.

A sample of the Annual Town Meeting Agenda is listed on the back page of this newsletter. Amongst other things, registered SLT voters in attendance at the meeting will be asked to approve the annual SLT tax levy for 2020. **As of this writing, it is the intention of the SLT Supervisors to recommend NO CHANGE to the current annual levy.** "Town Meetings" unlike board meetings, provide registered voters the opportunity to vote on agenda items.

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

MARCH 12, 2019 - SLT ELECTION & ANNUAL MEETING
VOTING 5 PM to 8 PM - MEETING AT 8:15 PM

TOWNSHIP 2018 OVERVIEW

Your Township Board is proud to announce that Star Lake Township is in good financial condition. Our total cash assets at the conclusion of 2018 are slightly in excess of \$213,000. SLT expenses in 2018 did exceed income by approximately \$45,000; due in large part to expenses related to the late 2017 16' addition to the back storage building, the installation of a well, and the purchase of an upgraded tractor.

The building addition provided needed space for the newer/larger motor grader, the capability to garage it with the snow plow left attached, and doubled the space available for treated sand storage. The tractor upgrade provided an improved front-end loader, four-wheel drive capability, and an all-weather cab.

Specific 2018 financial data will be shared as part of the annual financial reports at the annual meeting, and as always will be posted on the Town Hall bulletin board for public viewing.

Old man winter was once again kind to us for the 2017-18 season resulting in snow removal expenses of about \$2,500 – this compared to the historical high of 2013-14 snow removal costs of \$20,000+. Fire protection costs via the Dent Fire Department were unchanged at \$12,300 in 2018 and are expected to remain the same for 2019. Gravel and road maintenance services provided by Egge Construction of Pelican Rapids remained stable at our budgeted amount of \$25,000. Tree trimming by Countryside Tree Service also remained stable at about \$4,000. Heavy equipment repair provided by Brian's Repair of

TOWNSHIP OVERVIEW ... continued

Underwood and Ziegler CAT of Fergus Falls came in at about \$3,500 and \$3,700 respectively. All in all, we continue to be pleased with the responsive and professional services of these primary vendor/contractors.

Our contracted professional beaver trapper netted 18 of these persistent and troublesome varmints in 2018 at a cost of \$450 – a real bargain considering the expedient damages they can cause to our roadways.

Two significant culvert/drainage projects were completed in 2018. The first a result of a March 30th washout of 300th Ave. south of Highway 24. Unfortunately, this caused the closure of 300th Ave. for nearly six weeks. This was a culvert failure involving a natural waterway necessitating coordination with the MN DNR to obtain approval to change the elevation of the culvert. We are hopeful this elevation change will prevent a re-occurrence of this persistent problem.

The second culvert/ditch/drainage project was proactive in nature and was completed in late summer. It involved the reshaping of a ditch and the installation of a culvert to reduce erosion of the roadway and shoulder. This was located on Beaver Dam Point.



Moving on to other subjects – SLT hosted an old-time dance at the Town Hall on June 9th. The event was sponsored by the Otter Tail County Historical Society and drew an enthusiastic crowd of 62 people. A good time was had by all.



Lastly, after three years of study, deliberation, planning, and multiple public meetings the White Earth Nation officially announced the cancellation of the proposed Star Lake Resort and Casino. See SLT E-Bulletin #23 on the SLT website for more specific information on this subject.

Speaking of the website, if you have not already done so – check it out at starlaketownship.org. The board would like to acknowledge and thank Aubrey & Brenda Ebanks for designing and providing on-going technical support for the website. We have received many positive comments regarding the site.

Images from 300th Ave Culvert/Drainage project



A FEW WORDS ABOUT DITCHES

If you're a regular reader of these SLT Newsletters you may recall the three most important things related to the proper design and maintenance of gravel roads are drainage, **Drainage**, and **DRAINAGE!!!**

To this end, "Roadside Ditches" play a critical role in removing water from the roadbed and in moving the water away from the roadbed. Roadside ditches are the legal responsibility of the local road authority and fall within the road "right of way". Supervisor Tammy Ziegler completed an inventory and marking project of all 54 SLT culverts – this is an important 1st step in developing a preventative maintenance program of this valuable asset.

"County Drainage Ditches" and "Natural Waterways" are horses of a different color.

- County Ditches are the responsibility of the owning county, i.e. in this case Otter Tail County. Ditch 55 is the only "County Ditch" located within Star Lake Township. The county collects taxes from all property owners that benefit from a particular ditch. In the case of Ditch 23 which is actually located within Dead Lake Township – the county collects taxes from SLT tax payers because they are "beneficiaries" of the ditch. This is so even though it has been inoperable for several decades. If you are one of the property owners being taxed for Ditch 23 you may want to go to SLT E-Bulletin # 24 at starlaketownship.org for more specific information.
 - Natural Waterways are what the name implies and are under the authority of the MN DNR. An example of one would be "Star Creek" on the south arm of Star Lake which is the only natural drain on the lake. Another example would be the culvert on 300th Ave. south of Hwy 24 referenced earlier in this newsletter.
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A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE ROAD RIGHT OF WAY (ROW)

This is a topic that has been discussed in every single edition of our past newsletters, and likely will be in all future editions. This is also a subject that most, if not all, Township Officers will attest is the subject of their greatest concern/frustration in performing their duties. It is so, primarily because this is where we often have to say “no” to our friends/neighbors/property owners. To be clear, Township Officers do not write these laws – but are legally sworn to insure they are complied with.

ROW laws are very prescriptive with ample legal precedent and are rarely over-turned. They are tough laws because they need to be. The road right of way provides for effective maintenance operations, the accommodation of public utilities, and the safety of the general public. The MN Statute that covers state, county, township, and municipal roadways is MN Statute 160.

MN Statute 160.2715 covers ROW Misdemeanors, while 160.22 covers Trees – copies of these are posted on the town website.

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 considered “brush” and can be legally removed by the road authority at its discretion. Conversely, tree “removal” can be complicated which is why SLT will continue ROW “brushing”, and will generally only “remove” a tree with owner permission.*

It is acknowledged that SLT like most rural MN Townships has a multitude of uncorrected ROW violations, some decades old, for a variety of

reasons. A concentrated effort to correct them all could be incredibly expensive and time-consuming. However, the law is the law and the SLT Board is committed to developing and implementing a plan to eventually address them all.

The initial steps of the plan are:

- A. ROW violations that present a clear and present danger to the travelling public will be addressed immediately and dependent upon circumstances may be corrected without prior notice.
- B. ROW violations that have a negative impact on employee safety, roadway stability, or drainage will be the next priority. Property owners will be advised of the violation and requested to take corrective action.
- C. “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.
- D. SLT will continue with its 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.
- E. All additional plans will be reviewed with an attorney to insure property owner and township rights are properly respected.
- F. SLT will research and consider the recently approved option of placing a question to the SLT voters that would relieve SLT of ROW maintenance and place that responsibility on the property owner. Failure to comply would then allow the road authority to take corrective action and bill the property owner for reimbursement. This could include the responsibility for mowing the ditches.

MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF TOWNSHIPS (MAT)

Within this newsletter and conversations with SLT Board members one might often hear a reference to “MAT” – an acronym for Minnesota Association of Townships. SLT is a dues paying member of MAT. The organization is a very valuable resource for us. It has three main purposes:

- 1) support township officials in their work by conducting training and acting as a resource in questions of town law;
- 2) protecting townships, their assets, and their officers and employees by offering a range of insurance products specifically designed for townships;
- 3) defending the prerogatives of township government and advocating for necessary resources in the state legislature.

In 2018 I had six legal consultations with a MAT Attorney, while our Clerk/Treasurer had approximately 12 consultations with MAT Administrators for assistance with the “City and

Town Accounting System”. Additionally, SLT Board members attended seven group/individual training sessions covering a broad range of subjects. Election Judges undergo separate training provided by Otter Tail County Auditor Office.

The MAT provided support is worth many times over the amount of our dues, and as tax payers you can be assured this type of support provides due diligence for your township board in the execution of our duties.



SPEAKING OF ELECTION JUDGES

In the November Mid-term election SLT voters turned out in record numbers with 250 ballots being cast – an 81.4% turn-out. Congratulations voters and thank you to all who took the time to fulfill this most basic of our civic duties!

We also would like to thank our loyal cadre of election judges who not only staff the polling place on primary and general election days, but also attend the required training sessions prior to each election.

The following serve as election judges; Ron Gilbertson, Mary Pfeffer, Alma Ronningen, Tammy Ziegler, Doris Champlin, Carole Nodsle, Brenda Ebanks, Ronola Richards, Keith Aune, Lee Mindemann, and Kathy Torklidson. Lastly, the Town Clerk – Jeff Michaelson who administers the multitude of details encompassing the entire electoral process. We are indeed fortunate to have this special group of people serve us in this capacity.

DUST CONTROL FOR 2019

Individuals interested in requesting seasonal dust control are reminded that applications for such are due to the Town Clerk by April 1, 2019 and payment for the application must be received by the Town Clerk by May 1, 2019.

Application forms may be obtained from the township website “Road Services” tab, or by contacting the Township Clerk. We anticipate the cost will remain at \$.66/linear foot but that is dependent upon the vendor and the total footage to be treated. Please direct any questions you may have on Dust Control to Lee Mindemann at sup2@starlaketownship.org.

WINTER OPERATIONS

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. 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 (already happened once this season).

Again, for a copy of the SLT Snow Removal Policy and Snow-plowing Routes consult the “Road Services” tab on the website.



CALLING ALL HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS!!!

Once again MAT (Minnesota Association of Townships) will be awarding a \$1,000 scholarship to six high school students competing in this year's essay contest. If you are a high school junior attending a MN public, private, parochial or home study program, and planning on “post high school” education this is an opportunity for you.

Contestants must submit a 450-500 word essay on “The Sense of the Census: Rural Representation at Risk.” Students should contact their high school guidance counselor, the Township Clerk, or visit mntownships.org for more information.

\$ Scholarship Opportunity \$

TRACTOR FOR SALE

As mentioned earlier we upgraded our mower tractor/front-end loader this past summer.

The old tractor is a 1986 Massey Ferguson Model 383, 2 WD, with MF 236 Loader. The tractor was purchased new as a township mower tractor. It has 1,937 original hours, excellent rubber and batteries, block heater, tire chains, and all



manuals. It is in good running order and everything works. It can be viewed at the townhall by contacting Keith at 218-457-0520, or Lee at 218-298-2010.

The SLT Board is offering this for sale by closed bid. Bids will be received until 1 PM, April 9th, 2019. We have established the minimum bid to be \$7,500. Please submit your bid in a sealed envelope with a certified check made out to Star Lake Township in the amount of your bid. If more than one high bid is received, you will be given the opportunity to increase your bid until a high bid is received.

Please submit your bid to: Star Lake Township, 39840 Star Hills Drive, Dent, MN 56528

STAR LAKE TOWNSHIP BOARD/STAFF

The SLT Board is comprised of three elected Supervisors, an appointed Clerk, and an appointed Treasurer. (See back page for contact information.)

The current township staff is as follows:

- Terry Johnson: General Maint. man, mowing, and primary operator of “Snow Grader”
- Mike Sundblad: Summer Motor Grader Operator, and alternate for winter operations
- Jeff Michaelson: Snow Plow Driver and serves as Township Clerk
- Jim Piper: Alternate Snow Plow Driver
- Ronola Richards Township Treasurer

The Supervisors would like to thank each of our staff for their excellent work during 2018.

We were saddened to accept the resignation of Ray Harthun this past summer and we wish him and his wife Judy our very best wishes and prayers as they deal with Ray’s health issues. Ray has been a terrific asset to the SLT Team – his mechanical skills, dedication & loyalty, and great sense of humor are sorely missed. God’s Peace & Grace to each of you.

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Star Lake Township
39840 Star Hills Drive
Dent, MN 56528

Star Lake Township Board

Chairman: Lee Mindemann (2018-2021)
218-298-2010 sup2@starlaketownship.org

Vice-Chairman: Keith Aune (2017-2019)
218-457-0520 sup1@starlaketownship.org

Supervisor: Tammy Ziegler (2017-2020)
701-367-7164 sup3@starlaketownship.org

Clerk: Jeff Michaelson (Appt'd 03/08/2016)
612-210-6144 clerk@starlaketownship.org

Treasurer: Ronola Richards (Appt'd 12/08/16)
218-205-7916 treas@starlaketownship.org

starlaketownship.org

Star Lake Township Annual Mtg

Agenda for Annual Mtg on 3/12/19

- Meeting Call to Order
- Election of Moderator
- Read Agenda for Meeting
- Minutes of 2018 Meeting
- Read Financial Reports
- Board of Audit (Election Results)
- Hospital District Report
- Board Chairman Comments
- Annual Levy Recommendation
- Motion for Board to contract services
- Set time/place for next annual mtg
- Other Business
- Motion to Adjourn



*** BE SURE TO ATTEND TUES, MAR 12, 2019 ***

Voting Hours: 5PM—8PM | Annual Mtg 8:15PM

Star Lake Town Hall

31030 380th Street, Dent, MN
