

MINUTES OF THE HAVEN TOWN BOARD MEETING
September 18, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

The Haven Town Board met at the Haven Town Hall on Monday, September 18, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Eric Meyer. Members present: Supervisor Eric Meyer, Supervisor Randy Linn, Supervisor Mark Knowles, Supervisor Joseph Then, Supervisor Joseph Sexton, Treasurer Viki Monroe, Deputy Treasurer Roger Johnson and Clerk Tammy Scheffers. There were several people who attended the meeting in person and four who attend via Zoom.

PLEDGE OF ALLIGIANCE

SHERBURNE COUNTY SHERIFF REPORT

Sergeant Geoff Dowty sent out an e-mail report that stated there were 133 incidents for the month of August. He reviewed the report with the board members. There were no further questions.

TRIBUTE YEARS OF SERVICE

Penny Weihrauch has decided to retire. Penny Weihrauch was congratulated and honored with a plaque for her 52 years of dedicated public service within Haven Township. She has been on several committees but most of all known for her years of being the Haven Township Head Election Judge. Diane Arnold (Sherburne County Auditor-Treasurer Department) sent an e-mail stating that she would not be able to make the meeting in time but to wish her congratulations. She also said it has been a pleasure to work with Penny Weihrauch (since she's been in office 2007) and she appreciated her dedication and trustworthiness to the Election process, it's people like her that we could count on to do an honest job and in getting the election results to us correctly and timely. Penny has such a wealth of knowledge and has seen many changes in the election laws in her years working the election for Haven Township. Once again, the board members Thanked Penny Weihrauch and there were many people who came to the meeting to help celebrate her years of service.

OPEN FORUM (Time for Residents to Ask the Board Questions)

Bruce Hentges addressed to the board members about his concern on high nitrates in drinking water within Haven Township. He had passed out a paper to the board members on his concerns and read it out loud for all to hear. (Letter is attached at end of the minutes). Bruce Hentges asked the board if they would consider having a study to review the current use of chemicals in agriculture within Haven Township and review our current agricultural water usage and its impact on our aquifers and drinking water. Supervisor Mark Knowles made a comment that Bruce Hentges may want to connect with the County Commissioner and the State Legislator to see if they can help. The board members discussed this issue and made the comment that this can be placed on the agenda for next month under Old Business.

Gary Kiffmeyer made the comment that he is a farmer within Haven Township and they have to fill out paperwork every year. They also have their wells tested to stay in compliance with the state rules and regulations.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Supervisor Randy Linn made a motion to accept and approve the agenda. Supervisor Joseph Then seconded the motion. Role Call was taken; Supervisor Eric Meyer – Aye; Supervisor Randy Linn – Aye; Supervisor Mark Knowles – Aye; Supervisor Joseph Then – Aye; Supervisor Joseph Sexton – Aye; the motion carried.

READING OF THE MINUTES

Supervisor Randy Linn made a motion to approve the August 21, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes. Supervisor Joseph Sexton seconded the motion. Role Call was taken; Supervisor Eric Meyer – Aye; Supervisor Randy Linn – Aye; Supervisor Mark Knowles – Aye; Supervisor Joseph Then – Aye; Supervisor Joseph Sexton – Aye; the motion carried.

BUILDING PERMITS

Just for reference; Sherburne County sends an e-mail report of building permits each month to the Clerk for all the Townships. There were 23 building permits for Haven Township this month.

PUBLIC COMMENT (Communication that the Board Notified Residents)

None

OLD BUSINESS

Cemstone Gravel Pit IUP Amendment – Supervisor Eric Meyer reported that he is still waiting for a response yet from them.

County Road 65 - 45th Avenue – Hwy 10 Realignment – No new updates.

Wet Hydrants – No new updates.

Township Sign Replacement – Supervisor Joseph Then reported that the 911 and other signs that he ordered have been received. He will contact the sign person so they can start putting them in place starting this month.

AED (Automated External Defibrillators) Smart Monitored Cabinet Features – Supervisor Eric Meyer made the comment that training dates are being determined and residents can go online to the website and sign up to take part on which date they would like to be trained. His next step is working on getting River Haven and Prairie Woods Addition to have units installed in those areas.

Road Planning / Bonding Options – Supervisor Randy Linn reported that he is still working on this. Supervisor Mark Knowles again made the comment that he would not like to see Haven Township borrow any money with bonding. Haven Township has

always been good stewards with the township money and has always worked in the black; he would rather see the levy be bumped up. Deputy Treasurer Roger Johnson made the comment that he would like to see Haven Township up the Levy to help fund for these projects. It could be set aside in a capital reserve fund. Supervisor Randy Linn and Supervisor Joseph Then will get together to discuss the township roads and figure out some final numbers and bring the updated figures to the board next month.

Sherwood West Drainage – The board hired Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. to submit a scope of work for the assessment of drainage related issues near 36th Avenue SE in Haven Township. Stantec met with Supervisor Eric Meyer and Supervisor Joseph Then at the site to discuss the flooding issues in this area. Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. submitted the report back of what they have found. Supervisor Eric Meyer and Supervisor Joseph Then will meet with the property owners in this specific area to discuss options and what Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. suggested on how to solve the drainage issue.

Explore Next Door Property – (August Meeting) Supervisor Eric Meyer made the comment that this is still in the discussion stage. The property owners next door to the township are willing to sell and there is interest with Mayo Ambulance for options of a potential station on this end of the township for them along highway 10. Supervisor Mark Knowles made the comment that he is not in favor of selling the township property that the building is currently on. Deputy Treasurer Roger Johnson also stated that he does not think that the township should sell the current property that they own to move somewhere else. If the township wants another building for the ambulance to have a sub-station, build something right here on the current property that the township owns, you can build a beautiful building right here on the current location without having to purchase a different piece of property. Supervisor Joseph Sexton made the comment how much call volume is there for the mayo ambulance on our end? If there is an investor wanting to purchase this property that the township currently owns, how much are they willing to pay? Supervisor Eric Meyer suggested that the board look into options on selling prices; purchasing prices and call volume for use of the mayo ambulance. Supervisor Eric Meyer and Supervisor Joseph Sexton will work together to get more details and report back to the board next month.

(September Meeting) Supervisor Joseph Sexton made the comment that the party who is interested in purchasing the current town hall location wants to have at least 10 acres and their current lease comes due in April of 2024. Supervisor Eric Meyer and Supervisor Joseph Sexton will continue to work on number figures to see different options. Once again, Supervisor Mark Knowles stated that he was not in favor of selling the current property that the township hall sits on. Deputy Treasurer Roger Johnson agreed with him. He suggested that if the township wishes to purchase the neighboring property that may be an option; but he recommended to the board not to sell the current property that the township already owns.

US Solar IUP – Request for Application – There were no new updates.

NEW BUSINESS

None

BUSINESS FROM THE SUPERVISORS

Supervisor (Chairperson) Eric Meyer – Supervisor Eric Meyer made the comment that he and Supervisor Joseph Sexton met with the City of St. Cloud to proceed with the Orderly Annexation Agreement. Supervisor Eric Meyer made the comment that he feels now is the time to start talking with the neighborhoods along County Road 8 to see how the residents feel about being annexed into the city. There is no rush; however the agreement does expire in 2025 with the City of St. Cloud so it would be nice to plan now, for the future. Supervisor Eric Meyer would like to start town hall meetings with Kilian Addition and then Valley View Addition to speak with the residents and discuss on how they would like to see this proceed.

Supervisor Eric Meyer encouraged and informed residents to sign-up on the Haven Township Website for updates news communications and current events that are happening within the township. Due to the cost increases of United States Postal Mailings and Delivery Services the townships communications will be limited and more centered on Havens website and the posting board outside of the township hall.

The board will celebrate years of service for Mike Zniewski at the October Meeting. He has retired and put in 33 years of dedicated public service within Haven Township. There will be an open house before the October meeting to congratulate and celebrate with Mike Zniewski for his years of service.

Supervisor Randy Linn – Supervisor Randy Linn made the comment that he is still working on trying to close out US Bank. Supervisor Eric Meyer will give him a contact person to try for the closure.

Supervisor Randy Linn also looked into the credit card option for the board members to use. He made the comment that it is not through the bank and has to go to a third party and that personal information has to be used to complete the application for the card. After discussion on this; Supervisor Eric Meyer made the motion to approve and give the authority of the main user for the credit card to the treasurer Viki Monroe. She will sign up for the credit card for Haven Township. Supervisor Randy Linn seconded the motion. Role Call was taken; Supervisor Eric Meyer – Aye; Supervisor Randy Linn – Aye; Supervisor Mark Knowles – Aye; Supervisor Joseph Then - Aye; Supervisor Joseph Sexton – Aye; the motion carried.

Supervisor Randy Linn will also look into some governmental funding options that are offered to townships.

Supervisor Mark Knowles – Supervisor Mark Knowles made the comment that so far the grass and weeds are slowing down for the season. He made the comment that the best practice is to mow any weeds before they go into seeding.

Supervisor Joseph Then – Supervisor Joseph Then reported that the Neighborhood Watch is in progress within the Valley View Addition. Supervisor Mark Knowles made the comment that he was wondering if the Valley View Addition is going to maintain and be responsible for the neighborhood watch sign that is installed for this area.

Supervisor Joseph Then also stated that he had Driveway Services move 13 mailbox posts.

Supervisor Joseph Sexton – No new updates.

TREASURER UPDATE

Treasurer Viki Monroe reviewed the August Cash Control Statement; Receipt Register and Disbursement Register with the Supervisors.

CLAIMS LIST FOR APPROVAL

Supervisor Randy Linn made a motion to accept and approve the claims 23167-23188 totaling \$77,251.51 as presented for the month of September. This motion will also include adding the banking service fees for the end of the month when the statements arrive. Supervisor Joseph Sexton seconded the motion. Role Call was taken; Supervisor Eric Meyer – Aye; Supervisor Randy Linn – Aye; Supervisor Mark Knowles – Aye; Supervisor Joseph Then – Aye; Supervisor Joseph Sexton – Aye; the motion carried.

Deputy Treasurer Roger Johnson made the comment that his final in person meeting will be the October Meeting and then he will be heading to Arizona for the winter. He will be a phone call away if anyone should need him.

*Note: Monthly Pay-Out Claims - Payroll and Mileage/Reimbursements Need to be turned into the Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer or Deputy Clerk by **the Tuesday before the Monthly Board Meeting Date by 6:00 p.m. in order to get paid for the month.***

CLERK UPDATE

Fire Call Bills – The Clerk and Supervisor Eric Meyer have not had time to connect yet to bill out the fire invoices again. They will try to have them out by next meeting.

COMMUNICATIONS

MN Association of Townships – Online Training / Newsletter Updates / Meetings
Sherburne County Planning & Zoning – Public Hearings
Sherburne County Association of Township Meeting Agenda
Sherburne County Comprehensive Plan Land Use Plan Steering Committee
Sherburne County Connect Agenda
Sherburne Soil & Water Conservation District - Tour of Practices
Voice Mails
E-mails from Residents

OPEN FORUM (Time for Residents to Ask the Board Questions)

None

ADJOURN

It was moved by Supervisor Mark Knowles seconded by Supervisor Randy Linn to adjourn the meeting. Role Call was taken; Supervisor Eric Meyer – Aye; Supervisor Randy Linn – Aye; Supervisor Mark Knowles – Aye; Supervisor Joseph Then - Aye; Supervisor Joseph Sexton – Aye; the motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Chairperson

Date

Clerk

Date

To the Haven Township Board
Monday, September 18, 2023

Agri-Business in NOT farming. It is business.

Everyone in this room knows that the nitrate level in ground water in Haven Township is among the highest, if not THE HIGHEST in Minnesota and surrounding states. We know that. It is because of the high use of chemicals in our Agri-Business and the tremendous use of millions of gallons of water by Agri-Business. Water that is being pumped from the aquifers below our ground as land is used to produce potatoes, most of which will be turned into **French fries or potato chips**. These are the same aquifers that provide drinking water to residents of Haven Township. ***I didn't know this until recently, but we have residents in Haven Township who cannot drink their well water because of the high nitrate levels.***

Business is focused on making a profit – not *necessarily* on its impact to others. In a capitalistic system, business must be regulated, or history has shown there will be negative impacts. We know that and so we regulate businesses in Haven Township. Agri-business should be regulated.

The corporate, Agri-business owner next to my home, who I am told owns land from Fargo to Becker, does not care.

1. Several years ago, **I brought a video** to you of this new agri-business owner in the field next to me spraying what I was afraid was Round-up on the field **and township road** just north of my house. It was a breezy day, with a wind from the north. I was mowing my lawn. The sprayer actually started spraying onto the township road and then his field. Meanwhile, my glasses were covered with spray because of the northerly wind. My wife, who was also mowing the lawn ran into our house.
2. Several days later, I confronted the agri-business owner on the road in front of my house. He verified it was **Round Up** that **WAS** being sprayed, but he said it couldn't have reached my yard or my grass would all be dead. (I had spray on my glasses). He did spray Round Up on me because he didn't care that the wind was from the north and that the spray would cross the road or what the impact would be on my wife and me. There is a file with the Sherburne County Sheriff's Office on this incident.

Fast forward to August 24

3. The summer of 2023 has seen an unusually large amount of water being pumped out of the aquifers in Haven township (think millions/billions of gallons) – mostly to produce potatoes that will be turned into **potato chips or French fries**.
4. Day after day, airplanes fly over our homes as they drop pesticides, insecticides, maybe Round Up on these fields. It has been by far the most use of airplanes that we have seen in our 47 years in our home.
5. On August 24, the breeze was again from the north. Again, I happened to be mowing my lawn. The plane didn't just fly up and down the rows of potatoes, but also had to fly across the field to get the spray over the ends of the field. The flight pattern, as usual, brought the plane ***directly over our home at about 100 feet***. I mean it was barely clearing the trees and power lines. As he flew directly toward our home, he was still dropping his spray as he neared the road. The north wind again blew the spray **onto my house, onto my lawn and onto me.** - **I have the video here on my phone if you'd care to see it.**

~~6. This agri-business owner does not care about those living around his field. He has cut down trees on the edges of his fields so that he could plant as far as possible. He has added a second irrigation system to the field so that he can pump even more water from the aquifer and sink even more chemicals into our light soil in Haven Township. My wife and I are the not only ones who live directly next to his field and other neighbors have shared their concerns with us.~~

Questions for the Haven Board:

1. How much water has been pumped from our aquifers this year? There is a recent study of our nation's aquifers which warns that the aquifers that supply 90 percent of the nation's water systems are being severely depleted. (I have a copy of that study here). Will we do something before it is too late? How many tons of chemicals have been dropped onto our Haven township land – to sink into our drinking water?? We should know that answer.
2. Can't we have reasonable regulations for agri-business?
 - Time of day for airplane spraying and wind speed limitations for plane or spayer
 - Shouldn't the Township board know what is being sprayed: insecticide, pesticide, round-up, etc., especially from planes?
 - In today's electronic device world, can't agri-business owners inform anyone with contiguous land of spraying dates and what is being sprayed? By Email?? Text Messages??
 - Can't there be a required monitoring system on irrigation rigs that would tell of chemical applications and the amount of water being pumped so the Township Board would know?
 - Bottom line: Should we be polluting and diluting our aquifers in order to produce French fries and potato chips? Isn't our groundwater worth our monitoring of what is being sprayed onto our fields?

I am asking that over the coming winter months we examine what is happening to ground water and chemical use for agri-business in Haven township and develop a plan for protecting our drinking water and residents.

I think our farmers and agri-business owners should be involved. I am willing to also ask the County to join in that study and come up with a plan to protect our groundwater resources for future generations – if the Township Board will request that a plan be developed. If the Township Board wants more evidence of public concern about this issue, I am willing to go door-to-door to ask residents what they think about these issues – but I can already tell you. Clean drinking water is vital to a healthy community.

Let me emphasize that I don't think all agri-business operators are motivated only by the profit motive. Fair regulations won't hurt those hard-working farmers and agri-business owners. Fair regulations will protect all residents of Haven Township as well as future generations.

Bruce Hentges
5033 65th Street SE
St. Cloud
bchenhges@gmail.com

OPINION



Your Turn
Karen Cyson
Guest columnist

Do you really want fries with that?

"Do you want fries with that?" This question is usually part of a snarky joke about underemployed liberal arts grads.

Lately, in Minnesota, it's taken on a more serious meaning.

Do you want fries with that? Do you want long, slender, unblemished fries? Or would you settle for stubby fries with a few black spots?

Thousands of acres of Minnesota farmland is devoted to potatoes. The tubers grow best in sandy, well-drained soil, the soil left behind when forests were clear-cut a century or more ago.

Sandy soil allows the potatoes to grow long and perfectly shaped. That same soil, a very porous soil, drains rapidly. In the northern half of Minnesota, home to thousands of acres of farmland growing potatoes and crops such as sugar beets, over 6.1 billion gallons of water were pumped out of underground aquifers in 2021 above the level allowed by state permits. Not 6.1 billion gallons were pumped. 6.1 billion gallons over the level allowed were pumped. And this reporting is done on the honor system. Farmers and landowners self-report usage.

Here in the St. Cloud area, we have the luxury of living close to the Mississippi river. Our municipal water systems pump water from the river, prepare it for use, we cook, shower, and drink, and eventually the water goes down the drain, is cleaned, and returns to the river. We don't so much use it as temporarily divert it.

In the northern area of the state, in the small towns, and at homesteads and farms, water is pumped from fragile aquifers.

The pumping done to irrigate crops during the recent drought years is unsustainable.

The underground aquifers are going dry. Homes and towns are running out of water. Some towns and individuals have had to dig new, deeper wells at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars. But this, too, is unsustainable. These aquifers will also run dry with continued overuse.

Why does this matter?

Aquifers feed lakes and streams. Streams feed larger tributaries and rivers. Those rivers feed the Mississippi. Ten thousand lakes and the mightiest river will eventually become mud flats and a very long gully.

Water is life.

Everything comes with a price. If the price we pay for having perfect fries destroys the ecosystem that supports all of us, is it worth it?

Do you really want perfect fries with that?

Karen Cyson is a child-care provider in Stearns County and the coordinator for Central Minnesota Mensa. Her column is published the third Sunday of the month.