

Township of Breitung Regular Board Meeting 12-19-2024 at 6:00 PM. In Person Meeting at the Breitung Community Center

Present In Person:

Board Members: Chairman Tim Tomsich, Supervisor Matt Tuchel, Supervisor Erin Peitso, Clerk Amber Zak

Public: Chief Daniel Reing, Bradley Roy, Clara Roy, Trish Roy, Pam Hill, Tooty Roy, Paul Roy, Jodi Summit (The Timberjay Newspaper), Terry Carlson (The Tower News, arrived at 6:01 PM), Jim Battin (arrived at 6:34 PM)

Call to Order at 6:00 PM by Chairman Tim Tomsich

Acceptance of Agenda

Motion by Supervisor Peitso to accept the agenda as presented

2nd by Supervisor Tuchel

Motion Passed 3-0

Approval of Minutes and Treasurer's Report

Motion by Supervisor Tuchel to approve the minutes of the 11/19/24 Special Board Meeting as presented and the November 2024 Treasurer's Report as presented

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion passed 3-0

Correspondence

- St. Louis County: Variance Request Application - McCarty
- St. Louis County: Proposed Floodplain Ordinance
- Highway 169 Task Force

Public Input

- None

Reports

- Police – Chief Reing initiated his report with the retirement of Badge #136, having belonged to Officer James Hill; members of Officer Hill's family were present for the retirement of the badge and Chief Reing's speech of appreciation for him, listing many of his accomplishments for Breitung Police Department. Chairman Tomsich additionally commented on the advancements that Officer Hill made for the Breitung Police Department, bringing it fully into a modern police department. The family were appreciative of the gesture.

Chief Reing further discussed the possibility of enforcing parking tickets; he explained that while the tickets are generally for the same few households, they generally remain unpaid and the issues continue to go unresolved. The board could look into formally correcting the issue or advancing the enforcement of the ordinances (blight and parking).

- Fire – Attached
- Road and Bridge – Attached
- Wastewater Board – Supervisor Tuchel noted that funding would need to go up from both Tower and Soudan, he further noted that Breitung Water & Sewer Rates would need an increase

- Ambulance Commission – Supervisor Tuchel informed the board that the City of Tower had signed a contract with St Louis County and Virginia Fire & Ambulance to have a sprint medic stationed in Tower. The sprint medic would provide advance life support when needed, beginning in March 2025.
- Housing – Attached

Reports so noted.

Old Business:

2025 Infrastructure

Remains the same, Chairman Tomsich will continue to work with IRRR to get the project funded now that the CDBG funding is gone.

Current Infrastructure Projects

John Jamnick of JPJ provided an update on several projects via email:

- 2022 Infrastructure: sent final pay estimate #4 to Mesabi Bituminous on 11/13/24, no return
- 2023 Infrastructure: sent Partial pay estimate #2 to Mesabi Bituminous on 11/12/24, no return
- Thompson Farm Road: sent plans and permit applications to MnDOT for review, spoke to Eric Fallstrom, after MnDOT comments are received, plans can be submitted for final state aid review (February 2025) for spring bidding
- McKinley Loop Trail: plans 95% done, environmental review 90% done, wetland delineation started; working with DNR, SHPOI on final environmental comments, met with the trail committee in Tower on 12/06/24 to review the plans, Tower is working with the airport on the final location in the airport area, easement issues to address, funding application is being submitted
- Wastewater board: received Braun Intertec report on the RIB project on 12/17/24, need to review with Matt Tuchel and bring final engineering report to wastewater board.

Loop Trail Connection

Chairman Tomsich discussed further status on the loop trail: the FAA was okay with the plans, however wetlands were still an issue. The funding had changed due to wetlands eligibility; IRRRB funds could be applied for and the City of Tower would need to split the \$60k-\$70k shortfall, St Louis County board had approved the plans and resolved to be the fiscal agent.

Thompson Farm Road

Previously discussed during current infrastructure projects.

Flood/FEMA process

Clerk Zak expressed frustration with the SAM.gov activation progress, citing the township's name as the main issue; in reviewing multiple documents, it was noted that the township used multiple iterations of its name (Town of Breitung, Breitung Township, Township of Breitung, etc). Supervisor Tuchel noted that if issues continue, the board could consider contacting local congresspeople to help move things along.

Police Contract with City of Tower

The police contract had been approved by Tower and includes the usual increases for labor, benefits and inflation. It also include a 50% split of part-time officers up to 500 hours per year; it was noted that the next contract should consider the amount of time spent in Tower vs Breitung. The current contract is based on a 50/50 time split and the board wasn't sure that was an accurate representation of police hours.

Motion by Supervisor Tuchel to approve the 2025 police contract with the City of Tower

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion Passed 3-0

Water Commission Dissolution and Department Formation

Resolution 2024-26: Resolution Accepting Control of Water Accounts Within Breitung Township and Forming The Breitung Township Water Department Under Management of the Breitung Town Board as of January 1, 2025.

Motion by Supervisor Tuchel to pass Resolution 2024-26

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion passed 3-0

Resolution 2024-27: Resolution Authorizing Contract with Interested Officer Under Minn. Stat. 471.88, subd.5
Motion by Supervisor Tuchel to amend and pass Resolution 2024-26 citing 3/31/2025 as an end date for said contract.

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion passed 3-0

The job description provided by Jorgine Gornick would be approved and amended following the initial 3-month experience with the newly created position.

New Business:

Pay Bills as Presented

Motion by Supervisor Tuchel to Pay Bills as Presented

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion Passed 3-0

Account Balances Review

Discussion was had regarding the account balances and equipment replacement fund; it was noted that in previous years, funds had generally been transferred prior to year end so that at the annual meeting, residents had a clear year end picture. However, since all receipts were not yet in place, it was decided that the board would finalize the balances once all money and bills had been received.

Resolution 2024-28: Support of the Construction of the McKinley Trail CR 697 and make Application to the MN-Dot Active Transportation Grant

Motion by Supervisor Tuchel to pass resolution 2024-28, noting the application to be submitted January 2025

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion Passed 3-0

Resolution 2024-29: Resolution Authorizing the Township of Breitung to make Application to and Accept Funds From the IRRRB FY24 Grant Writing Assistance

Motion by Supervisor Tuchel to pass resolution 2024-29

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion Passed 3-0

International Union of Operating Engineers: Memorandum of Understanding

Chairman Tomsich commented on the document to be signed, indicating that it had to do with the dissolution of the Breitung Township Water Commission and that Tom Gorsma would now be compensated for his work for the Water Department directly from the Township of Breitung as part of his union agreement

Motion by Supervisor Peitso to approve and sign the Memorandum of Understanding from the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 49

2nd by Supervisor Tichel

Motion passed 3-0

PFA Loan Cancellation

Supervisor Tichel discussed the Waste Water Board having had a gap in funding for the Force Main Project, which was why the PFA loan was originally needed. He elaborated that disbursements can only be made if the property is *owned*; easements had been lost due to expiration of the railroad lease. The Wastewater Board chose to not go forward with the loan and decided to cancel it

Motion by Supervisor Peitso to cancel the PFA loan

2nd by Supervisor Tichel

Motion passed 3-0

Soudan Store Cigarette License: 2025

Motion by Supervisor Peitso to issue a 2025 Cigarette License to the Soudan Store pending necessary items (Certificate of Liability Insurance, Application, and fee) being returned

2nd by Supervisor Tichel

Motion passed 3-0

Police Badge & Patch Update

Chief Dan Reing explained that due to the change in the Minnesota State Flag, all law enforcement agencies were required to update their badges, and that ordering prior to January 1, 2025 was necessary to be in compliance with state law. Chief Reing presented a mock-up badge displaying Breitung Township's logo; he was requesting 8 new badges (2 for Chief Reing and an additional 6 for part time officers) for an estimated cost of \$1216.00. Discussion was had on whether purchasing all of them at this time was necessary, it was noted that surcharges would likely be applied to multiple orders over time and that this was likely the lowest cost for all 8 badges. Retired Officer Battin volunteered to purchase one of the previous badges as a keepsake to offset the cost of the new badges; it was noted that selling the badges was likely not allowed, but Officer Battin could certainly make a donation to the Township if he wished to do so.

Motion by Supervisor Tichel to approve the change and purchase of the 8 badges

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion passed 3-0

Police Department Applicant

Chief Reing discussed that he had a new applicant for part-time police officer and provided the board with the application. He would be running background checks, physical, and psych evaluation and would be looking to make an offer in January if all tests were passed. The board acknowledged the process.

Police Department Employment Offer: Ashlan Barthorpe

Motion by Supervisor Peitso to extend a conditional offer of employment to Ashlan Barthorpe pending the passing of the background, physical, and psych evaluations

2nd by Supervisor Tichel

Motion passed 3-0

New Squad Car

Chief Reing notified the board that he was interested in starting the process of replacing the current squad car, noting the current vehicle had 91k miles on it, though no other issues at this time. He estimated a new squad would be in the \$50k range and would likely have a lead time of 6 months to a year. Retired Officer Battin noted that in other agencies that he had worked, squads were usually replaced at 75k miles. Chief

Reing's concerns were that the wear on the car would start showing and that the Township would then need to spend money repairing it. He estimated that he puts 15k – 20k miles on per year and it was a 2017 model. It was noted that there was \$42k in the reserve fund. Chief Reing was given the go-ahead to start pricing out squad purchase prices and report back to the board.

Firehouse Grant Side x Side

Chief Reing indicated his interest in again applying for a Firehouse Grant for a side by side to be used mutually by the fire department and the police department.

Motion by Supervisor Tichel to pass Resolution 2024-30: Resolution Authorizing The Township of Breitung, Breitung Police Department, and Breitung Fire Department to Make Application to and Accept Funds From Firehouse Subs Foundation Grant Program

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion passed 3-0

Public Comment

James Battin: Requested a moment at the end of the meeting to thank Chief Reing and the Breitung Township Board for the opportunity to serve the community.

Next Board Meetings

St. Louis County Board Meeting: January 14, 2025 at 10:00 AM at the Breitung Community Center
Regular Board Meeting: Thursday, January 16, 2025 at 6:00 PM at the Breitung Community Center

Adjourn

Motion by Supervisor Tichel to adjourn the meeting at 7:39 PM

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion passed 3-0

Respectfully Submitted

Amber Zak
Clerk, Breitung Township