

Star Lake Township Annual Newsletter

Volume 3, February 2015

Welcome to the third edition of the Star Lake Township Annual Newsletter. The purpose of these newsletters is to inform you of significant township events that occurred over the past year, and how your tax dollars are being used. Your Board of Supervisors hopes you find the information interesting and helpful.

Some of you are receiving this newsletter via email for the very first time. If there are others in your family that you would like to provide a copy, please print one for them or have them register on our website. If you've received this newsletter by mail, we ask you to consider registering on the Star Lake Township website at www.starlaketownship.org, so we can communicate with you in a more efficient way. Simply go to the website and complete the box in the lower right of the home page. Email information collected will not be shared with any other party.

If you do not wish to receive future newsletters, please go to website and leave a message in the box located on the lower right of the Board/Contact tab; or mail us a note at 31317 395th St., Dent, MN 56528.

The Year In Review

A year best defined as one of snow drifts, costly repairs, & beavers!

Winter 2013-14

Like the winter of 2012-13, it was a tough one! While we had less snowfall than last year, the strong driving winds created heavy drifting – particularly on 380th Street east of Hwy 41, and the south end of Beaver Dam Road. On three occasions we were forced to contract for snow removal via the use of rotary snow throwing equipment, as the drifts became too high to plow. For perspective, the township spent nearly as much on rental services for snow removal in 2014 as what our annual average was for snow removal during the four year period of 2008-11.

An equipment failure on the motor grader snow wing resulted in damages of \$4,600+. Fortunately our insurance covered those expenses. Propane and diesel costs were at historically high levels adding to the pressure on the budget. In the end we were able to absorb these costs, but not without significant impact upon our finances. So we've had two back to back record years as it relates to snow removal costs.

Spring

It was a late spring with a delayed thaw causing some significant issues with frost heaves and displaced/washed out culverts. One culvert issue resulted in unusually high water throughout the USFWS area along Hwy 41 just south of the Galaxy Resort. This caused some flooding issues of residential basements and property. The eventual fix for this involved the replacement of the large culvert on 390th Street in the vicinity of Frank's Lodge, and the resetting of two other smaller drains. The cost of this type of work is expensive; in this case about \$9,400. This project involved extensive coordination with MN DNR and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service which never translates to an easy or quick fix. Our County Commissioner, Wayne Johnson, and County Public Works Director, Rick West were both very helpful during this project as well as others.

Summer and Fall

The plague of culvert issues continued throughout the summer with three other replacements required and the unplugging of several others due to beaver activity (a couple of these multiple times). The combined cost of these repairs was nearly \$8,200.

The Board has acquired the services of a beaver trapper for the up-coming season in an effort to mitigate this problem.

We had multiple breakdowns with our motor grader this season which culminated in a hydraulic system failure in late August. Due to the amount of grader downtime we were unable to accomplish our shouldering maintenance this season which will need to be made up for this next summer.

The expense of motor grader repairs also forced a suspension to the township gravelling plan. At the conclusion of summer we had successfully upgraded gravel on 70% of our roads over the past 3 years; we had hoped to reach 90%. We plan to complete the balance of roads in 2015 so that all roads will have received new gravel at least once in the past four years.

We also struggled with mowing this fall due to a major electrical problem with our mower tractor. The main wiring harness shorted out which also damaged several other components. The tractor is a 1984 Massey Ferguson with low hours and has served the township well with little to no problems. Unfortunately age takes a toll on everything – this was a \$2500 repair.

Motor Grader Problems

This is a complicated and expensive subject and you should know the Board of Supervisors has spent many-many hours on this subject over the past few months. The township's motor grader is a 1996 Champion with approx. 12,000 hours on it. The Board feels we are in a position that it must be replaced. Since it was purchased used, and records are scarce, we don't really know the exact hours, or the maintenance/usage history of the machine.

Here's what we do know:

- The Champion company is out of business, and our repair shop is having more & more trouble finding parts for it – often having to fabricate or search for after-market parts.
- We spent about \$26,000 in the past two years on repairs. Not to mention time lost and frustration.
- The 2009 appraised value of this vintage machine was between \$18,000 to \$30,000; and the current trade-in allowance for our specific grader is \$23,000.
- The industry expected average # of hours for a motor grader before a major component failure is around 14,000 hrs.,
- We have a major contamination of the hydraulic system with a projected repair cost of \$25 to \$30,000. We have parked the machine in the garage and made the decision to replace it. To have it fail completely would reduce its value to salvage (maybe \$10,000).
- After much research & discussion we have determined:
 - It is not financially responsible to continue to make expensive repairs to a piece of equipment with a value of less than the repair costs,
 - It is past time for the Board to aggressively establish a reserve fund to meet the equipment needs of the future,
 - It makes no sense to buy another old used machine as they are simply too expensive buy and to maintain, For example, a generation newer grader in the 7,000 hr, 7 yr old range, on a 5 yr. contract = an annual pymt of \$28-32,000, with no warranty.
 - A lease to buy a new motor grader on a 5 yr. plan provides for:
 - An annual pymt. of about \$20,000,
 - An extended full-machine warranty (nearly eliminates repair cost),
 - A preventive maintenance agreement,
 - Trade-in allow constitutes 1st payment with 1st cash pymt. in March 2016,
 - Allows the leverage of the MN State Purchase Agreement,
 - A state of the art motor grader for both summer & winter operations thereby reducing some usage of our 1994 aging snowplow truck,
 - Five years to determine alternate course of action, i.e. can we find a contractor, or reach a cooperative agreement, or buy a new machine, or continue to lease etc....

We expect delivery of leased CAT 12M3 motor grader sometime in March.

Local Road Improvement Project (LRIP)

The 2014 MN Legislative session passed two new laws that provides for funding to this little heard of program (at least at the township level). Our Treasurer, Carol Peterson, discovered this potential opportunity for us, so we have submitted an application for a grant to complete a road widening project for 280th Ave. south from State Hwy 108, and 390th Street east from the intersection with 280th Ave.. The project would provide for a 24' roadway with a 9' clear zone off each shoulder for 2,825 feet – a substantial widening of the existing roadway. These roads are currently limited to one-way traffic due to lack of shoulders, steep banks, and water on both sides.

The application process involved an engineering study (provided by our County Engineer, Rick West), a mapping analysis (provided by County GIS Dept.), multiple letters of support from local affected residents as well as Maplewood Twp., and a Resolution of Support from Otter Tail County. The application has been approved by our MnDOT District Engineer and is currently under consideration by MnDOT in St.Paul.

2014 Election News

On March 11, 2014 an election was conducted for the positions of Town Supervisor, and Town Clerk.

Mr. Victor Johnson was elected to a three year term as Supervisor, and Ms. Kathy Torkildson was elected to a two year term as Clerk.

On July 5, 2014 Otter Tail County administered a Special Election regarding the establishment of a Lake Improvement District for Star Lake property owners. The official results were: of 683 eligible voters - 422 votes were cast. The measure was defeated by a vote of 258 no, to 164 yes. There was no cost to the township for this special election.

A primary election was conducted on August 12, and the general election was held on November 4, 2014. The total cost of these elections was \$3,279.

Our thanks to the following individuals who served as township election judges in 2014: Doris Champlin, Ron Gilbertson, John Koepcke, Carol Nodsle, Carol Peterson, Ron Peterson, Mary Pfeffer, Ronola Richards, Alma Ronningen, and Kathy Torkildson.

– Meet the 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. The Board also 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. All board positions are elected positions. See back page 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

Jeff Michaelson – Snow Plow Operator

The Supervisors would like to thank each of our staff for their excellent work and support during 2014.

Inter-Township Road Maintenance Agreements

The following details the Star Lake Township roads that are 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.

Residents that have questions/concerns regarding these roads should contact that township directly. They are welcome to contact any Star Lake Township Supervisor, but a direct call to the responsible township will likely expedite the matter.

Township contacts are:

Maplewood – Jim Nelson 218-842-5237

Maine – Joanne Seeger 218-495-2109

Dora – Gregory Meyer 218-342-3056

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 Board is often reminded 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.

For these reasons the Board will continue to be proactive on Right of Way issues 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,
4. The planting of agricultural crops within the ROW,
5. The dumping of yard waste or sea weed on to the right-of-way. Doing so, creates yet another hazard our mower operator has to contend with. Thanks for your understanding.

If you have any of these conditions on the road right of way adjacent to your property, please take corrective action. This will help to eliminate/reduce township maintenance dollars, which in turn saves tax dollars for all of us. Many of you are already doing this – thank you.

Other Ways You Can Help

Earlier you read about our troubles and travails with drifting snow. We live in Minnesota so we all ought to understand the dynamics of snow drifts. In the fall, please take a look at your property along a township road and trim or remove anything that is going to contribute to the creation of a snow drift. This is important for any property close to a lake, and is especially problematic along 380th St. east of Spruce Lodge, and Downy Drive.

The Board would also like to thank those residents who install snow fences at problem sites. It would also be appreciated if seasonal residents could remove mailboxes in the off-season, or turn them inward if possible. This would be a big help to the snowplow operator.

On the subject of Winter Operations, the Board would like to remind residents of the following:

1. Township residents are reminded that the placing of snow from sidewalks, driveways, approaches and streets onto a **TOWNSHIP ROAD** is against the law. MN Statute 169.42.
A large pile of snow on the edge of the roadway can create a significant hazard for the snow plow operator.
2. **PLEASE DO NOT PARK VEHICLES ON THE ROADWAY** in advance of an anticipated snow event! This also creates a safety hazard for the plow operator and the travelling public.
3. 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.
4. If the County snowplows are **NOT** operating, the township plow will **NOT** be either.
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 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 to extract private vehicles that may be stuck in the snow, unless directed to do so by law enforcement or the Town Board.
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 outdoor lighting, landscaping, vehicles, trailers, etc.

*The entire Snow Removal Policy
can be obtained from our website,
www.starlaketownship.org*



Fire Protection

Star Lake Township contracts for fire protection with the Dent Volunteer Fire Department. 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 (these subject to change by the Dent VFD).

Dust Control Policy

Residents may obtain a copy of the Dust Control Policy by visiting www.starlaketownship.org, or contacting the Town Clerk. 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.

The Township Dust Control Policy provides cost savings for the affected residents, 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.

As a general rule the Township Board meets at the town hall at 6:30 PM every 2nd Wednesday.

Special meetings may also be scheduled, and public notice of these will be posted five days in advance.

All meetings are open to the public. 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. Your Town Board very much wants to hear from you.

Mark Your Calendar Now!

Tuesday, March 10, 2015 is Township Day in Minnesota.

Star Lake Township, will hold its annual election and meeting at the Town Hall, 31030 380th St., Dent, Minn.

Township eligible voters will elect a Supervisor for a three year term, and a Treasurer for a two year term.

Polling Hours: 5:00PM-8:00PM

Annual Meeting will begin promptly at 8:15PM





A Look at the Budget

STAR LAKE TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL LEVY, RECEIPTS, & DISBURSEMENT INFORMATION

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Levy Amount*	\$88,200	\$88,200	\$113,200	\$123,200	\$143,200	\$143,200
Total Income**	\$100,142	\$129,698	\$143,754	\$151,887	\$187,660	
Beg. Chk. Balance***	\$118,015	\$44,058	\$36,178	\$58,048	\$57,649	\$44,957
Working Balance+	\$218,157	\$173,756	\$179,932	\$211,008	\$245,309	
Total Expenses++	\$174,100	\$137,577	\$121,884	\$153,359	\$187,352	
Chk. Balance Forward	\$44,057	\$36,179	\$58,048	\$57,649	\$44,957	\$0
Savings/CD Accounts	\$38,258	\$18,521	\$18,849	\$19,183	\$32,536	
TOTAL CASH ASSETS	\$82,315	\$54,700	\$76,897	\$76,832	\$77,493	

*Included in Total Income.

**Levy + Misc. Receipts, e.g. gas tax, delinquent taxes, etc.

***Balance carried forward from previous year. +Sum of beg. balance & total income. ++Total Expenses
 Grey font-total expenses exceeded total income.

STAR LAKE TOWNSHIP 2014 SPENDING VS. BUDGET*

<u>Category</u>	<u>2014 Budget</u>	<u>2014 Expenses (thru 12/31/14)</u>
General Fund	\$47,400	\$51,980
Roads & Bridges	\$95,800	\$135,372
TOTAL	\$143,200	\$187,352

*Based on 2014 Levy approved at 2013 annual meeting.

The 2016 Township levy recommendation will be presented and voted upon at the up-coming Annual Meeting on March 10, 2015.

Star Lake Township
31317 395th St
Dent, MN 56528



Star Lake Township Board

Chairman 2012-2015

Lee Mindemann | 218-298-2010

Vice-Chmn 2013-2016

Ron Peterson | 218-758-2455

Supervisor 2014-2017

Victor Johnson | 320-333-3066

Clerk 2014-2016

Kathy Torkildson | 218-758-3117

Treasurer 2013-2015

Carol Peterson | 218-758-2455

Meeting Agenda

Star Lake Township's Annual Meeting Agenda for
March 10, 2015, 8:15 PM is as follows:

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