# Town of New Independence

2019 Annual Meeting

MINUTES

### March 12, 2019

### 7:00 P.M.

### Town Hall

The 2019 Annual Meeting was called to order by Clerk Sandra Lee Olson at 7:02 PM and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited by the residents in attendance.

The first order of business was to elect a moderator. Jon Olson made a motion nominating Kurt Johnson. Jay Tremblay seconded the motion. There were no other nominations from the floor, so a voice vote was cast in favor of Kurt Johnson serving as the moderator. The gavel was given Kurt who lead the rest of the meeting.

Kurt asked the clerk to read the minutes of the 2018 Annual Meeting. Jon Olson made a motion to accept the minutes as read. Jay Tremblay seconded the motion, which was accepted through a unanimous vote.

When Kurt asked for a motion to dispense with the reading of all checks, Jay Tremblay offered the motion, which was seconded by Mike Ruhland, and accepted through a voice vote.

Clerk Sandra Lee Olson offer a summary of finances and explained documentation that was contained at the end of the report. Those tables are reproduced below:

Summary of Finances

CASH BALANCES FOR 2018 (This represents money in checking accounts only)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Name of Fund | Beginning Balance | Ending Balance |
| General Fund | $21,525.18 | $24,041.82 |
| Road and Bridge Fund | $9,883.27 | $5,031.56 |
| Sowle Fund | $500.00 | $500.00 |
| Total | $31,908.45 | $29,573.38 |

INVESTMENT BALANCES AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2018

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Investment* | *Beginning*  *Balance* | *Ending*  *Balance* |
| Certificate of Deposit | $26,150.72 | $26,259.88 |
| Certificate of Deposit | $26,150.72 | $26,259.88 |
| Certificate of Deposit | $25,704.81 | $25,794.93 |
| Business Premium Market Rate Public | $14,197.11 | $16,689.46 |
| Total Investment Balance | **$92,203.36** | **$95,004.15** |

SUMMARY OF CASH BALANCES AND INVESTMENTS

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Beginning*  *Balance* | *Ending*  *Balance* |
| Cash Balance Total | $31,908.45 | $29,573.38 |
| Investment Total | $92,203.36 | $95,004.15 |
| Total Balance | **$124,111.81** | **$124,577.53** |

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS, DISBURSEMENTS, AND BALANCES AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2018

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Fund* | *Beginning*  *Balance* | *Receipts* | *Disbursements* | *Ending Cash Balance* | *Investment Balance* | *Ending*  *Balance* |
| General Fund | $21,525.18 | $57,141.83 | $50,800.34 | $24,041.82 | $86,558.09 | $110,599.91 |
| Road and Bridge Fund | $9,883.27 | $11,025.73 | $16,341.84 | $8,446.06 | $8,446.06 | $13,477.62 |
| Sowle Fund | $500.00 | $0.00 | $0.00 | $500.00 | $0.00 | $500.00 |
| Total | **$31,908.45** | **$70,607.84** | **$68,167.56** | **$29,573.38** | **$95,004.15** | **$124,577.53** |

The clerk also noted that the financial books for the treasurer and clerk were audited on March 5, 2019, by the Board of Audit and found to be in order and agreement. The books were available prior to the meeting for anyone that wanted to look at them.

Jim Syria questioned the likelihood to cover a disaster if the spring rains continue to cause problems. Kurt explained that the township has sufficient funds to cover a substantial crisis should it occur. It was also pointed out that disaster funds have been made available to townships in the past. If a disaster did occur, New Independence would seek additional funds if they are available. Jim also suggested that the township might want to look at Treasury Bonds since the interest rate is so low at this point. Kurt noted that the Board will look into additional options as the CDs renew.

While the State has legislated that Annual Meetings will be held on the second Tuesday in March, state law enables townships to set the time for the upcoming Annual Meeting. If no time is set, the meeting convenes at 9:00 AM by default. Mike Ruhland made a motion to convene the 2020 Annual Meeting at 7:00 PM. Jon Olson seconded the motion, and a voice vote in favor of accepting the motion followed.

New Independence has been looking at the mail-in option balloting program available to townships under 500. Although there are multiple reasons, the Town Board is concerned with the costs associated with elections and the availability of election judges. If New Independence adopted the mail-in ballot option, all ballots would be sent out by the County Election Office and returned to them. The County would be responsible for counting and posting the results as well. New Independence would still need to have its clerk act as the election official and would be responsible for accepting Affidavits of Candidacy, attending training, posting and publishing notices, and overseeing the local Board of Canvass. The Town Board was hoping to get additional input at the Annual Meeting, but attendance was minimal. The agenda did include a summary of costs, which is reproduced below:

**Report on Disbursements Related to the 2019 Election**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **2019** | **With Mail-in Ballots** | **Notes** |
| Mileage for transporting ballots and for clerk training | $287.04 | $50.00 | Clerk will still need to attend training sessions |
| Repair and Maintenance of the AutoMark | $180.00 | $0.00 | The AutoMark will not need to be maintained |
| Office Supplies | $46.35 | $0.00 | No supplies will be needed. |
| FICA and Medicare paid for officers’ work done for the election | $9.24 | $9.24 | FICA and Medicare will need to be paid to elected officers for election related meetings—training and Board of Canvass |
| Meal supplied for election judges because they worked in excess of 14 hours | $80.47 | $0.00 | No meal would be provided when election judges are not hired |
| Wages for election judges, clerk, and Board of Canvass for training, election hours, and Board of Canvass | $3,800.47 | Election Judges--$0.00  Board of Canvass--$400.00  Training--$150.00 | The township will still need to have a trained clerk to oversee the election. In addition, the Board of Canvass is held at the local level with data received from the St. Louis County Elections Office. |
| **TOTALS** | $4,403.57 | $609.24 | St. Louis County Elections will send out the ballots, collect them, and count them. Currently, there is no townships that choose to participate. |

Jim Syria was the only resident who spoke to the issue and was opposed to having the County take over the election voting process. In his opinion, the voting should stay locally. He suggested the Town Board table any action and suggested another letter be sent to residents indicating wages that are paid to election judges. Kurt will bring this back to the next Town Board meeting. No decision was made at the Annual Meeting regarding the mail-in ballot option. The Town Board will follow up with the suggestions made.

At this point there are no elections scheduled for the remainder of 2019. However, there will be a Presidential Primary in early 2020, and there is always the possibility of a special election. Keeping those two possibilities in mind, the clerk wanted to have hours set for elections that occur between March 2019 and the 2020 Annual Meeting. Jon Olson made a motion to have polls open for voting from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM if New Independence stays with the regular in-person voting option. Jim Syria offered a second to the motion and a voice vote in favor of accepting the motion followed.

One of the major responsibilities of voters attending the Annual Meeting is to set the levy for the upcoming year. The Town Board has an option to hold a special meeting to increase the levy at a later time (usually August) if circumstances occur that the township needs to increase its levy for the following year. To assist attendees in making an informed decision, the following tables were included in the agenda:

**Levy from Previous Years**

Fund 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012-2014 2015 2016-2018 2019

General $22,224 $22,224 $23,120 $23,582 $24,054 $31,753 $40,153 $41,360

Assessor $ 7,116 $ 7,116 $ 7,400 $ 7,548 $ 7,699 \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Road & Bridge $12,394 $14,431 $15,764 $16,079 $16,400 $16,400 $8,000 $ 8,400

*Total Levy $41,734 $43,431 $46,284 $47,209 $48,153 $48,153 $48,153 $49,600*

**Levy Options for 2020**

0% 1% 2% 3% 4% 5%

General Fund $41,360 $41,774 $42,187 $42,600 $43,015 $43,428

Road & Bridge Fund $ 8.240 $ 8,322 $ 8,405 $ 8,487 $ 8,570 $ 8,652

*Total Levy $49,600 $50,096 $50,592 $51,087 $51,585 $52,080*

The Board of Supervisors recommended a 2% increase (a total of $992), which would help meet the increased expenditures expected for 2020. Fire protection typically increases and will likely increase next year by 5% (expecting $967 increase and $1,200 for booking expenses that were not on this year’s budget). Jay Tremblay made a motion to set the 2020 Levy at the 2% increase shown above (General Fund—$42,187; Road and Bridge Fund—$$8,405; Total Levy—$50,592). Mike Ruhland seconded the motion, and a voice vote in favor of accepting the motion followed. No objections were heard.

*The Voyageur* out of McGregor has been the official newspaper for several years. It meets the criteria of a legal newspaper and serves the area. Jim Syria asked if New Independence could use the *Northland Shopper* instead of the current newspaper. He didn’t feel that enough people get *The Voyageur* but knows that the *Northland Shopper* goes to most, if not all, households in New Independence. The clerk did a quick check of the State Auditors site to see if the *Northland Shopper* was listed as an official newspaper. It was not on the list. Jim Syria made a motion, which was seconded by Jon Olson, to look into additional options that might better suit New Independence residents. A voice vote in favor of accepting the motion was cast. The clerk will check with various newspapers in the area and bring the information back to the town board.

Each year there are numerous meetings that board members attend. While these meetings are posted, the following list was supplied as a point of information for residents:

***Board of Supervisors’ Meetings for 2019***

Meetings for New Independence Board of Supervisors are scheduled for the first Monday of each month unless it is a holiday or other conflict. Board of Supervisor Meetings will commence at 7 PM at the New Independence Town Hall, 7828 Swan Lake Road, Culver, MN on the following dates.

April 1, 2019

May 6, 2019

June 3, 2019

July 8, 2019

August 5, 2019

September 3, 2019

October 7, 2019

November 4, 2019

December 2, 2019

**2019 SLCAT Calendar (meetings convene at 6:30 pm) and Related Meetings**

St. Louis County Association of Townships will convene on the following dates at 6:30 pm. Locations of meetings are listed. Township officers of New Independence might be in attendance. Monthly meetings are typically held on the fourth Wednesday of the months starting in October through May. Training sessions usually occur in the spring and summer.

March 27, 2019 Cotton Townhall 6:30 pm Speaker Arrangements Megan Julin

April 18, 2019 MAT Otsego, MN Town Law Review – Rockwoods Conf. Center

April 24, 2019 Host Township 6:30 pm Midway Township Speaker Enbridge

5 pm Directors/Officers & Audit Committee

May 22, 2019 Cotton Townhall 5 pm ChitChat/5:30 Mtg/6pm Dinner/6:45 Speaker

***2019 Board of Appeal and Equalization (set by County)***

April 23, 2019 3-4 PM

New Independence, like other townships, is restricted in making contributions to certain organizations by Minn. Stat. 365.10, subd. 14, which provides that the electors may authorize the town board to contract with a non-profit organization for health, social, or recreational services not to exceed $10,000. If approved, however, the town board is not mandated to enter into such a contract, and if the donation does not meet the actual criteria of the statute, the board needs to say “no” even if it contradicts the desires of the electorate. Over the years, New Independence has sought health, social, and recreational services from the non-profit or government entities listed below:



This year New Independence has received requests from:

* St. Louis County Fair
* South Ridge Band
* South Ridge Trap Shooting
* South Ridge All-Night Grad Party
* Tester-Niemi Post
* Brookston Youth Baseball
* South Ridge School Forest
* Brookston Legion Ball

Kurt asked if there were any recommendations from the floor regarding donations for health, social, or recreational services. Hearing no recommendations, Moderator Johnson said it will go to the Town Board for the decision.

Sandra Lee Olson is the current clerk. Both she and the Town Board have expressed interest in having a deputy clerk to serve under her so another person would be able to fill the position should Sandra Lee not be able to attend a meeting and be knowledgeable to cover the position should Sandra Lee retire. No recommendations were made from the floor. The discussion will go back to the Town Board for their action.

Peter Olson is the current Road Foreman and gave an oral report on the work that was done since the last meeting. He based his oral summary on the written log he keeps on monthly road conditions and projects. According to Peter, the roads are in good condition overall, but culverts may need to be replaced on Nelson and South Johnson Roads. Brushing was completed last year and more is likely to be scheduled for the summer of 2019.

Jay Tremblay introduced Cory McDonald as a firefighter from New Independence. In addition, Jay presented his annual fire report based on the handouts he had available for residents. The complete packet was placed on file with other documents from the meeting. Jay did say that there are 22 firefighters with 6 of them being from New Independence and 16 from Alborn. The Alborn Fire Department remains strong while other fire departments are decreasing and becoming insufficient. Last year Brad Snickers did retire, and Jay Tremblay will be retiring this year. There were three new members last year and two new members in January. Jay noted that Alborn supplies mutual aid to Northland, Grand Lake, Cotton, and Meadowlands. The Fire Department has recently added parts of Culver as box alarm. Concern was expressed about the breakdown of disbursements listed on the fire department budget report. New Independence agreed to pay $1,200/year over the 40/60 budget split. The additional money was intended for bookkeeping services done by Alborn. Alborn was to supply a matching sum of $1,200 for bookkeeping services. On the budget, however, the disbursements show that $2,400 being disbursed to supervisors. New Independence has already submitted its share of the bookkeeping expenses. As the budget stands, the invoice received at the Annual Meeting is incorrect and needs to reflect the 50/50 split for bookkeeping services and 40/60 split for other budget items. Mike Ruhland will bring it to the Joint Powers Meeting. If agreement cannot be reached, it was suggested that New Independence make a request for a meeting of the two town boards.

New Independence has three supervisors who serve as the voting members on the Board of Supervisors. Each of those supervisors—Kurt Johnson, Jon Olson, and Mike Ruhland, submitted written reports that were read by the clerk. All written reports were placed with other documents from the Annual Meeting.

When Kurt asked for additional items from the floor, there were no items to discuss. He then asked for a motion for adjournment. That motion was made by Mike Ruhland, seconded by Jon Olson, and accepted through a voice vote. Kurt declared the Annual Meeting closed at 8:40 PM.

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Moderator

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Town Clerk

March 14, 2019