



Fish Lake Township

2014

In this issue:

- Road Reallocation-1
- Contractor-1
- Fire Department-2
- Notice Public Hearing-2
- Lawsuit Update-2
- Snow Plow Policy-3
- Township Website-3
- Facebook Page-4
- Hall Rental-4
- Notice of Election and Annual Meeting-4

Road Reallocation

by: Diane Larkin

Mon. March 3rd is an important date.

This is the day several **County Commissioners will be holding a public hearing at the Fish Lake Town Hall at 6 pm.** The purpose for the meeting is the reallocation of 8.3 miles of county roads, citing that these particular roads serve mainly Township residents. The roads that are being reallocated are County Road 61 (from township line to CSAH 8); CR 62 (from CR 63 to township line, *thus making this our most heavily traveled road in the township*) and CR 63 (from CSAH 4 to CSAH 7). Of this 8.3 miles, 3.1 is blacktop; the rest will remain gravel. We believe that Skogman Lake Road (off of CSAH 4) is mainly serving County residents; we are proposing that Chisago County reallocate Skogman Lake Road to a county road, unfortunately, with not much success. Fish Lake will be receiving the most miles of road of all the Townships in Chisago County. This will increase our road responsibility by 14% for a total of 60.3 miles of road. The county has the authority to reallocate its roads to townships if they feel it is necessary. The issue is not whether we choose to accept these roads, rather their condition when they officially become township roads. The County would maintain these roads for two years after the hearing. However, a proposal is on the table from Chisago County that Fish Lake Township be allocated funds to perform the maintenance for this two year period. As well as, what would be a reasonable amount to do so and what will the County do to upgrade these roads beforehand. The residents of Fish Lake have a right to question the County on this issue and get answers to any other ques-

(Continued on page 2)

Employee/Equipment or Contractor?

by Board of Supervisors

We have worked diligently to come up with a fair comparison between having maintenance equipment and a full-time employee position or if it would be in the best interest of the township to hire a contractor to perform all of the township's maintenance. This had proven to be a bit difficult as some of the local contractors we contacted ignored our requests for information and costs associated with their services. We found that the best way to compare was to use the actual 2013 expenses from two townships with similar road mileage, Nessel and North Branch Townships, and break it down to an average hourly wage. While having no equipment or a full-time employee is obviously less expensive on paper, what we discovered is that in the end we would be paying more and getting less by contracting all of the work in the township. Based on our actual expenses in 2013 the average hourly wage for Fish Lake to have an employee and equipment is \$74.21/hr. The average hourly wage for the Nessel Contractor is \$90.92/hr. and North Branch Township is \$84.25/hr, this also is based on the actual 2013 expenses for each of the townships. Furthermore, by retaining our equipment and an employee, we are in a better position to control future costs. Whereas, once you no longer have your own equipment you are at the mercy of the few contractors there are locally and what they choose to charge and when they choose to perform the work you are requesting. The IRS and Department of Revenue have many documents and point tests to determine who is an employee and who is a contractor. The main difference is an employee's duties are directed by a supervisor and the definition of a contractor is: *"The general rule is that an individual is an independent contractor if the payer has the right to control or direct **only the result** of the work and not what will be done and how it will be done."* definition from www.irs.gov. This is

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

tions you may have. Your taxes will definitely have to increase to accommodate the costs of maintaining 14% more road. Please attend this Public Hearing.

When: Mon. March 3, 2014

Time: 6:00 PM

Where: Fish Lake Township Hall

Fire Department Update

by Corey Johnson

Over the last few years we have become a closer partner with our local Fire Departments. The main reason is because we spend about \$59,000 per year on fire protection which is a good portion of our budget. We understand that our Fire Departments work hard and give us an excellent service but we still question purchases because that is part of our money also. This year the Cambridge Fire Department is going to be hiring on a full time Deputy Fire Chief/Emergency Management Director. They say this hiring is critical to the safety of all residents both in the city and in the rural areas. The Deputy Fire Chief will be conducting annual fire inspections of all commercial buildings in Cambridge Fire Department's service area which includes the townships. Residents from both the city and the rural areas use the schools, industrial business, Wal Mart, Mills Fleet, Menards, Target etc. It is crucial to know that these buildings are routinely being inspected to ensure fire safety compliance. The Deputy Fire Chief will also respond to all daytime calls, perform the daily tasks it takes to run a fire department, develop a proactive fire prevention program and offer home fire safety inspections to all residents that request one. This will also help relieve some of the guys/girls that are taking a large portion of their day to help out our community. Our fire service may see a small increase because of it but if there are any reasons to use their services let them know. A note from the local Fire Department: Remember to change your batteries once a year in your CO and fire alarms. This is for your safety and will also help keep the call volume down in our township and that is one of the inputs into formulating the contract amount we pay for fire service. The life expectancy when CO alarms first came into use was 2 years, now they recommend replacing the entire unit at 7 years.

(Continued from page 1)

where the Township loses control of the starting and completion of a task, a contractor has the choice of when and who will fulfill their obligation agreements. In cases of road emergencies a town board member would be unable to assist and it would have to wait (at the minimum 1-2 hours) for a contractor to arrive and respond. This winter has proven to be challenging for everyone. Road salt stops working at 15 degrees and below, then we rely on sand for traction. There have been two incidents thus far that having an employee has been essential. The first one was the intersection of Little Pine Lake Rd/Zodiac and Hwy. 95. This is considered a border road with North Branch Township. One of our town board members received two phone calls at 6 am on January 3, 2014 reporting that cars were unable to stop and were sliding onto 95. Our township employee was called at home and immediately dispatched. The intersection was sanded within 20 minutes of the complaint calls. Another incident was at 4:30 am on January 20, 2014. A Chisago County Sheriff Deputy called our current employee at home to report that there was a fire at a residence in the township. The fire departments draw water from a stand point well in Horseshoe Lake and due to the snow frozen roads coupled with the size and weight of the fire trucks the departments were having trouble making it up the hill to the lake. Again our employee was at the scene in 20 minutes sanding the hill for the fire trucks. In conclusion, at this time the Board does not feel that it is in the best interest of the Township to eliminate all of the township's equipment and full-time employee position. To review a comprehensive breakdown and spreadsheet of 2013 expenses for Fish Lake, Nessel and North Branch Township, please visit www.fishlaketownship.com/information.

Township Hall Rental

The hall is available to rent daily for residents at \$100 and non-residents at \$200. Tables and chairs are available for use during the rental day. There is also a full kitchen with appliances and basic dishware, utensils, men and women's rest-rooms and air conditioning/heat. The next time you are having a special occasion or family get together consider the town hall. Pictures are available at www.fishlaketownship.com Call Andrea Nekowitsch at 320-358-3924 for pricing and availability

Monthly meetings are held on the second Monday of each month.

Meetings start at 6 p.m. with scheduled agenda appearances beginning at 8 p.m.

We're on the Web!
See us at
fishlaketownship.com

Snow Plowing

by: *Elvin Norling*

The issue of garbage cans being left along the roadway in the path of the snowplow has come up this year. This winter has brought many plowable snow falls, and garbage cans/recycle containers have become an issue for our plow drivers. Please keep your garbage cans/recycle containers off the roadway. Garbage cans should be placed at the end of the driveway, off the roadway, so as to not interfere with the snow removal. If containers must be placed across the road from the driveway, please remove them as soon as possible after pick up has been completed. Our plow drivers will do their best not to hit them but, please keep in mind, just the snow coming off the plow wing can knock them over. When it is necessary for our plow drivers to go around the cans left on the roadway, there will be piles of snow left where the cans are and these snow piles can freeze into a hard mass causing hazards for vehicles and snow plows.

Stark Summer Stroll

Mark your calendars on **June 28th** for the Stark Summer Stroll. The SSS volunteer committee has already begun meeting to plan this exciting event. Last year's celebration was such a success they are planning for larger event this summer. To stay informed of the festivities or if you would like to volunteer to help out, check out their Facebook page at

www.facebook.com/StarkSummerStroll

2009 Lawsuit Officially Over

The Supreme Court dismissed Mr. O'Keefe's Petition to Review the Court of Appeals decision as untimely on March 22, 2013, thus ending the lawsuit against Fish Lake Township. Furthermore, the court awarded to the Township the \$500 cost bond that Mr. O'Keefe was required to pay to the court. The township has received the cost bond and the \$500 has been forwarded to Minnesota Association of Townships, our insurer that paid all of the legal fees incurred by Fish Lake Township to contest Mr. O'Keefe's ridiculous lawsuit.

New and Improved Website

by: *Andrea Nekowitsch-Clerk*

I am excited to announce that I have re-designed and re-created a new and improved township website that is mobile ready and able to operate on smart phones. It contains more detailed material, meeting agendas, interesting historical information and documents, minutes, newsletters, hall rental information, maps and contacts. I hope you enjoy the new site and if there is anything that you believe would benefit the site and residents, please contact me.

While I was researching, I learned a lot of interesting history about our township such as, Lars Johan Stark, first postmaster for which the town is named after, was also one of the very first settlers in Chisago County before coming to Fish Lake and he was a representative in the state legislature for 10 years. There are also links to free history e-books under "Information/Town History" tabs.

If you have historical pictures and stories you would be willing to share, I would greatly appreciate if you would send a scanned copy. If you are unable to scan the material I would be more than happy to scan them for you at the town office. Scanning these images into an electronic file also aids in the preservation of such historical material.



Fish Lake Embraces Social Networking

by *Andrea Nekowitsch*

I have recently begun a Facebook page as an additional form of communication for township residents. Information, notices and events will be posted on the page in addition to the website. Please stop by and "Like" *Fish Lake Township, Chisago County, MN* to receive information from the township on your timeline.

Speed Signs

We asked that Chisago County install digital speed signs for eastbound and westbound traffic on County Rd. 10 in Stark. Look for the signs to be installed this spring.

Town Board

Diane Larkin
dianelarkin@fishlaketownship.com

Corey Johnson
coreyjohanson@fishlaketownship.com

Elvin Norling
elvinnorling@fishlaketownship.com

Treasurer

Sharon McAndrew

Clerk

Andrea Nekowitsch
clerk@fishlaketownship.com

Employees

Gary Guse
Grader Operator

Fish Lake Twp
2170 Brunswick Rd
Harris, MN 55032

Phone
651-674-7709

Election Notice

Notice is hereby given to the qualified voters of Fish Lake Township, County of Chisago, State of Minnesota, that the **Annual Election of Town Officers and Annual Township Meeting** will be held on Tuesday, March 11, 2014. In case of inclement weather, the meeting and election may be postponed until the third Tuesday in March. The Election poll hours will be open from 10am to 8 pm, at which time the voters will elect: One Supervisor – 3 year term. The annual meeting will commence at 8:05 pm to conduct all necessary business prescribed by law. The annual meeting and election will be held at the Fish Lake Town Hall, 2170 Brunswick Road, Harris, MN 55032. The Board of Canvass will meet directly after the annual meeting on March 11, 2014 to certify the official election results. Andrea Nekowitsch, Clerk, Fish Lake Township



Official Hearing Notice from Chisago County Commissioners

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

March 3, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

The Chisago County Board of Commissioners will meet on Monday, March 3, 2014 at 6:00p.m. to 7:00p.m. with the intent to consider oral and written testimony for purposes of hearing comment on the proposed reversion of **CR 61** (from Township line to CSAH 8), **CR 62** (from CR 63 to Township line) and **CR 63** (from CSAH 4 to CSAH 7). The meeting will be held at the Fish Lake Town Hall located at 2170 Brunswick Road, Harris, MN 55032. All persons interested may appear and be heard at the time and place as set forth above or may file written comments with the Clerk of the County Board prior to the date of hearing at the address set forth above (313 N Main St. Room 174 Center City, MN 55012). For answers to questions, please contact the Clerk of the County Board in the County Administration Office at 651-213-8877.

By Order of the Chisago County Board of Commissioners

Richard Greene, Chair
Chase Burnham, Clerk
County Board, Chisago County

FISH LAKE TOWNSHIP
2170 BRUNSWICK ROAD
HARRIS MN 55032

STANDARD
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO 11
HARRIS MN