



# Fish Lake Township

2170 Brunswick Road  
Harris, MN 55032  
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www.fishlaketownship.com

## Town Board Meeting Minutes January 13, 2025

### Board Members and Staff Present

Chair Bruce Fitzwater, Vice-Chair Jim Thill, Supervisor Donna Ferguson, ~~Treasurer Corey Johnson~~, Clerk Andrea Nekowitsch, Gary Guse Road Superintendent. Treasurer Johnsons was absent from the meeting.

### Call to Order and Approval of the Agenda

Chairman Fitzwater called the Regular Monthly Fish Lake Town Board meeting to order at 6:00 pm in the Township Office at 2170 Brunswick Road, Harris, MN. The pledge of allegiance was recited by all. Motion made Fitzwater by and seconded by Thill to approve the agenda as presented with the exception of moving the first appointment with the township's engineer and DW companies to the road report rather than under appointments. Approved unanimously.

### Road Report

Gary Guse presented the road report and updated the Board on projects that have been completed and in process from the last month and projects planned for the upcoming month.

Township Engineer Marcus Johnson from Bolton and Menk, along with representatives Steve Strandlund and Brandon Points from DW Companies, discussed proposed road improvement projects with the board. The roads under discussion were North Pine Lake Road and 430th Street, both of which require substantial upgrades including shouldering, widening, replacing culverts, and paving the roads.

The board also discussed with the engineer the associated design and project fees. These fees are intended to ensure the roads are designed and constructed to meet safety standards and eliminate potential future liabilities for the township. Additionally, they have in preparing accurate and compliant bids for the project.

To accommodate budget constraints and avoid bonding the full amount upfront, the board considered completing the work in phases over three years. This phased approach allows the township to manage its financial resources effectively while addressing critical infrastructure needs.

The board requested that the engineer prepare detailed plans and cost estimates for review at next month's meeting. Additionally, a representative from Ehlers and Associates will be asked to attend a meeting to provide information on bonding options, enabling the board to make an informed decision on funding the projects.

### Treasurers Report

The Board reviewed the treasurer's report.

### Bank Balances as of: 12/31/2024

Checking	\$101,524.60	Broadband Debt. Service	\$95,463.80
Savings (Camb. State)	\$635,216.94	Anchor Ave. Debt Service	\$32,758.10

*Motion made by Ferguson and seconded by Thill to accept the Treasurer's report approve expenses of \$128,743.15, authorize outstanding bills presented to be paid and authorize the transfer of \$88,604.38 from Broadband account to checking account and \$26,218.75 from Anchor Ave. account to Checking account and \$28,000 from Savings account to Checking account. Approved unanimously.*

### Minutes

Motion made by Thill and seconded by Ferguson to approve the minutes of the previous month's meeting. Approved unanimously.

### Schedule Appointments

1. Township Highway Engineer: See Road Report
2. Harris Fire Department: Harris Fire Department Chief Drew Chapeau provided an overview of the fire and first responder services that the department can offer. Chief Chapeau emphasized the department's readiness, capabilities, and commitment to delivering efficient and cost-effective emergency services to the community. The Harris Fire Department currently has 20 certified firefighters, all trained to Firefighter I and II standards, with several members also working for Allina Health and Lakes Region Medical, bringing additional medical expertise to the team. Seven of the firefighters reside in Fish Lake Township, which contributes to the department's quick response times. Typically, the initial response time is within one to two minutes, with firefighters arriving on the scene in about eight minutes.

Chief Chapeau also highlighted the importance of the department's ISO rating, a measure of a fire department's effectiveness that directly impacts community safety and insurance costs. The Insurance Services Office (ISO) assigns ratings on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being the best and 10 indicating no recognized fire protection. The rating is determined by factors such as response times, water supply, communication systems, and firefighter training. A strong ISO rating not only reflects the department's efficiency but can also lower insurance premiums for residents and businesses.

To minimize financial burdens on the cities, townships, and residents they serve, the Harris Fire Department actively pursues grant funding. These grants help cover the costs of equipment, training, and operations, reducing the need for additional local funding. Firefighters train every week on Wednesdays to ensure their skills are continually refined and up-to-date. Chief Chapeau informed the board that the department would follow up with more detailed information about their equipment and services. The board expressed their appreciation for the department's dedication and looks forward to further discussions.

### Clerk Report

**Road Abandonment Procedure:** The clerk consulted the township attorney to confirm the process for initiating a road abandonment procedure. The attorney explained that the process can be started either through a public petition or by residents at an annual meeting, with the subsequent steps remaining the same.

**Filing Closes:** The clerk reminded the board that filing for township supervisor closes at 5 PM on January 14, 2025

**MATIT Insurance Quote:** The clerk presented the board with an insurance quote from MATIT. The board reviewed the quote to ensure it matched the coverage provided by the current policy and allowed for a direct comparison. A second quote from Carney Insurance has been requested.

**CenterPoint Energy Geothermal Pilot Project:** CenterPoint Energy has received approval from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission to launch its first Innovation Plan under the state’s Natural Gas Innovation Act, aimed at reducing emissions and advancing cleaner energy solutions. The plan includes a networked geothermal (net-geo) pilot project in a community CenterPoint currently serves. The system uses underground water pipes and electric heat pumps to leverage the earth's constant temperature, providing heating in winter and cooling in summer, while supporting decarbonization efforts in a cold climate. CenterPoint is seeking input from interested communities via a Request for Information (RFI) to explore collaboration opportunities. Communities can express interest and suggest potential pilot sites through a form by January 24, 2025. Ideal sites include a mix of residential, commercial, and community facilities. CenterPoint also encourages forwarding this opportunity to other potentially interested local government units.

**Board Member Reports**

None.

**Old Business**

None

**New Business**

**Citizen Comment**

**Adjourn**

*Motion made by Fitzwater and seconded by Thill to adjourn at 7:55 p.m. Approved unanimously.*

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Bruce Fitzwater, Chair	Date	Andrea Nekowitsch, Clerk	Date
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