

MEMO

To: Town Board
From: Michael Kuchta
Re: Town Administrator's Report
DATES COVERED IN REPORT: Feb. 24-March 10, 2023

1. Accomplished/Completed

- **Hagen Road.** Sent a revised RFP to potential vendors alerting them of DOT's willingness to extend department's deadline to Feb. 1, 2024.
- **Media.** Wrote and reviewed Town articles for Gazette; spoke with Ashland Daily Press about ferry line; wrote article for Bottom Line News and Views about Ashland County issues; wrote and sent news release after filing of claim against Ashland County.
- **Rental ordinance.** Worked with Town Attorney, Ed Schaffer, and members of the Town Plan Commission to finalize the draft ordinance and summary that goes to public hearing on March 15. Fielded questions, opinions from residents.

2. Coming Up

- **Airport public hearing.** March 14, 4:30 p.m. (before regular Town Board meeting). The hearing is to receive comment on including the following projects in the Town's resolution to the state secretary of transportation for airport improvement aid for Major Gilbert Field:
 - Construct/reconstruct/rehabilitate the terminal building and hangar
 - Sealcoat and crackfill airfield pavements
 - Conduct airport master plan/Exhibit A/ALP Update
 - Conduct wildlife site visit
 - Clear and maintain runway approaches

The Town needs to follow this process to free up more than \$1.2 million in state funding for airport work (with a 5% Town match).

- **Rental ordinance public hearing.** March 15, 5 p.m. You have a copy of the draft ordinance in your mailbox.
- **Comprehensive Plan public hearing.** March 29, 5 p.m. The steering committee is asking to postpone this hearing, because a draft of the plan will not be available far enough in advance for adequate public review.

3. Town Board Agenda – Information/Comments

- **Hagen Road.** Proposals were due March 10 from engineering firms for the 2024 repaving of Hagen Road. Proposals need to be evaluated under a qualification-based selection process. The Town needs to set up a "consultant selection committee," with a chair and at least two other voting members. The committee will review proposals, rank firms in order of preference, and submit recommendations to the state Department of Transportation. Ben Schram and I hope to have suggestions about potential members of the selection committee; if we do not have names of willing participants in time, we ask authority to appoint a committee ourselves.
- **Posting for Temporary Driver.** The posting allows Roads to continue building its roster of available drivers.

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- **Postings for Parks positions.** These are the usual seasonal postings for Parks maintenance and Campground hosts.
- **Dog park.** A group of residents is developing a dog park proposal. Their first choice is the area beyond the outfield fence on rec center grounds. A dog park would require a conditional use permit, fencing, and other steps. Before planning goes further, the Town Plan Commission would like a sense from the Town Board if this site is worth pursuing or not.
- **Contract for cemetery mowing.** The rate and terms are the same as in 2022.
- **Town employees as EMTs.** Please see memo labeled Draft 2.
- **Assessor contract.** The contract achieves two purposes:
 - It authorizes an island-wide revaluation in 2024 to comply with state law; as the worksheet highlights, the Department of Revenue estimates that assessed values in La Pointe are only 87.33 percent of market value, which exceeds the legally allowable variance of 10 percent.
 - It renews the agreement with the current assessor for four more years, through 2027; the current contract expires Aug. 31. The proposed rate is \$1,300 more per year than the current rate, which was set in 2018.

Note: On Page 2, Paragraph 2, please amend the date of the first payment to Jan. 1, 2024.

- **Accounting Administrator.** This is an updated job description and posting to begin hiring a replacement for Barb Nelson when she retires in August.
- **Life insurance.** This is a replacement resolution to the version of ET-1301 that you approved on Feb. 16. As some of you suspected, that resolution (which this one rescinds) would have committed the Town to pay premiums for any supplemental, additional, or family insurance that employees requested. This replacement version specifies that the Town pays premiums only for a Basic life insurance policy for eligible employees.
- **Ambulance billing contract.** A contract with Cvikota Medical Billing Services would replace our existing billing arrangement with Andres Medical. The goal is to increase revenue and the rate of payments from patients. Cvikota (pronounced Sih-kota) has an established relationship with Memorial Medical Center, which should improve our ability to obtain insurance and other information. Cvikota will also refer collections to the State Debt Collection Initiative on our behalf. The document in your packet is the Order Form and Statement of Work; we are hoping the Town Attorney can review these documents and other agreements in time for the March 14 meeting (including the Revenue Cycle Management Agreement, the Business Associate Agreement, and the Master Services Agreement). If that review is not completed, please postpone action. The current billing company requires 60 days' notification of termination.

4. Follow Up on Previous/Ongoing Projects

- **Affordable Housing Advisory Committee.** The committee intends to review the first draft of the housing needs assessment from Maxfield Research at its March 14 meeting. See the separate memo for an overview of the draft report.
- **Comprehensive Plan.** Continue to work with committee members and student researchers from Northland on initial drafts of topics that will be included in the draft of the Plan. The committee is asking TPC to postpone the public hearing because a draft of the plan will not be available far enough in advance of March 29 for adequate public review.
- **Insurance.** Continue to work with The Standard and ETF to complete the transition of life insurance and upgrade of short-term disability.

5. Grant Report

- **Congressionally Directed Spending.** Filed a request before the March 6 deadline seeking an appropriation of \$2.5 million in fiscal year 2024 for the potential BBTP accessibility project.

6. Lawsuits/Legal Issues

- **Financial and Constitutional Claim against Ashland County.** Our claim for \$363,654.63 was filed with the County on March 8. The County Board met later in the day but, after originally planning to place the claim on their agenda and reject it, pulled it off their agenda.
- **DOR Petition against Ashland County.** County and Town attorneys continue to discuss what level of agreement they can reach on facts. That stipulation would narrow the scope of the hearing the Department of Revenue has scheduled for April 14.

7. Other Information

- **Public bathrooms.** Received a call from Clayton and Claire Douglas, upset that the Town has no public bathrooms available in the winter, and upset that the Town spent a lot of money renovating the Rec Center but did not winterize it so bathrooms can remain open year-round.
- **Wisconsin Towns Association.** Upcoming events: Capitol Day, March 30, 8 a.m.-2 p.m. (event is free, lodging reservation must be made by March 14 to get group rate); District Meeting (I plan to attend the session March 31 in Cable); Board of Review Training (at least one board member must attend training each year: the closest in-person session is April 28 in Eau Claire; a virtual session is May 1 at 6:30 p.m.); Town Officials Workshop (closest in-person sessions – especially for newly elected officers – are May 8 in Cable or May 9 in Minocqua; virtual webinars are May 22-25).