

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

To: Town Board

From: Michael Kuchta

DATES COVERED IN REPORT: May 20-June 9, 2023

1. Accomplished/Completed

- **Gazette.** Submitted Town Hall column and other content for June issue.
- **GLIA.** Attended monthly meeting; gave update on Town's affordable housing initiatives.
- **Island School.** Met with parents and the school district's buildings supervisor to discuss ADA and other renovations planned for 2024-2025.

2. Coming Up

- **Inline Skate Marathon.** Event is Saturday morning June 17 at Rec Center. Course is a loop along Rice Street to Big Bay Road to Black Shanty Road to Middle Road. Rice Street will be closed; other roads will have one-way traffic. (County road crews are repaving culvert patches along the route in advance of the event.) MRF will have reduced hours: 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

3. Town Board Agenda – Information/Comments

- **Dock issues.** See separate memo.
- **Dock use by Apostle Island Cruises.** The company would like to anchor the 65-foot Superior Princess at the outer wall of the dock on Saturday July 21 after 7 p.m. for a wedding charter. They would cancel if weather conditions make that location unsafe for passengers. There is no Town policy on such requests; drafts for "intermittent commercial use" were discussed in 2014 but never acted upon. There is no set rate for commercial use of the dock in this fashion; the Town charges construction companies 20 cents per ton for offloaded materials. The ferry line's lease does not grant it exclusive passenger use of the dock (see Paragraph 7).
- **Fee schedule for restaurants seeking additional seating on Town property.** Many communities charge restaurants that utilize public space for outdoor seating. Fees often are a combination of an upfront permit fee plus a square footage charge for use of sidewalks or parkland. The Zoning Administrator and I propose an annual fee of \$200 plus 25 cents per square foot.
- **Airport Fee Schedule.** On April 11, the Town Board cut the nightly tie-down fee in half and established an overnight camping fee. At your May 23 meeting, you asked to discuss this further. Related: A revised pay envelope is in your packet, which enables the PayPal option.
- **Industrial Lots 4&5.** You have a copy of the letter terminating the leaseholder's occupancy. He has asked to appeal the eviction to the Town Board.
- **Cemetery contract.** This is for cleaning the Michael Chapel on a regular basis.
- **Planning and Zoning.** TPC has scheduled public hearings on the dog park CUP for June 28, the Comprehensive Plan for Aug. 24, and the Rental Ordinance for Aug. 30.
- **Public Arts Committee.** See separate memo.
- **Special Event Permit (Indigenous Market).** The permit will allow vendors to sell goods during the multi-day event at Joni's Beach; organizers already have a rental permit in place.
- **July 4 Fireworks Permit.** A May 25 email from the event manager and related documents are in your packet.

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- **Contract with Superior Plumbing.** The contract locks in rates for HVAC services on Town property for the next three years. (Note: Draft2 is the correct version.)
- **Harmoni Tower lease conversion proposal.** Harmoni, which manages the new cell tower on MRF property, has revised its proposal. What is different is the total payment – \$157,410 – either in monthly payments for 3 years or as a one-time lump sum. That is \$27,090 more than its previous buy-out offer. (Current lease payments are \$9,000/year; they increase 1.5% every five years, for a total payment over the 50-year lease of about \$481,605). What is not different is that Harmoni is proposing to buy out the current lease and convert that lease to a perpetual easement. (Their approach is different from the 2021 Verizon lease *renewal*, which prepaid \$500,000 for a 99-year lease.)
- **Vacation extension.** The request would extend 67.5 hours through May 31, 2024.
- **Police Department.** You have the memos from Chief Defoe concerning Jon Rahlf’s resignation from a full-time position, and the request to promote Thomas Rossberger to full time.
- **Fire Department.** Purchasing policy requires Town Board approval of department credit cards. Please re-authorize a card with a \$5,000 limit in Tim Eldred’s name.
- **Updates on ESB issues.** See separate memo.

4. Follow Up on Previous/Ongoing Projects

- **Accounting administrator.** We have received no applications for Barb Nelson’s position. We did solicit a proposal from Ehlers & Pierce (an Ashland CPA firm) to provide some monthly accounting services on a contract basis. Barb and I are examining how we might handle remaining responsibilities after her retirement. At this point, we are leaning toward creating an in-house position, approximately .75 FTE, that would handle accounts payable and related duties. How to assign remaining tasks, primarily dealing with the annual budget, is yet to be determined.
- **Cell tower.** The Town received the radiofrequency exposure study we requested from American Tower (the original cell tower on MRF grounds). The study says exposure at ground level is 1.62% of the federal standard for maximum permissible exposure. We previously received a categorical exclusion letter from AT&T regarding the new tower, confirming “that the RF exposure to the general population complies with the FCC exposure limits”.
- **Comprehensive Plan.** A rough draft of the plan is completed and undergoing final review by the steering committee. A 2-page summary for community distribution is also in the works.
- **Disaster Damage Aids Program.** We filed the approved petition with WisDOT to obtain reimbursement for gravel road and culvert repairs after spring melt damage. Ben Schram now must submit a designated reimbursement form and additional documentation.
- **Legal fund.** I sent thank-you letters to 4 more donors. Donations now total \$7,413. (Town legal expenses on Ashland County issues are \$39,310 through May. The County’s legal expenses are \$38,746.85 through April, according to information obtained by Mike Starck.)
- **Rental ordinance.** The TPC work group, the Zoning Administrator and I continue to meet weekly on further revisions that reflect feedback from the initial public hearing. Changes focus on language governing events and short-term rentals. We expect to have a new draft finished by June 15 that can be submitted to the Town Attorney.
- **Town Hall AV system.** The system has been installed and tested at several meetings. The Town Clerk will convert live-streaming and web access to Town Board meetings to a YouTube channel.

- **Wisconsin Towns Association.** I attended the Ashland-Bayfield County unit meeting; by default, I was elected vice-chair from Ashland County.

5. Grant Report

- **BBTP Accessibility Study.** I filed the final report, which will enable us to receive \$15,000 reimbursement through the Wisconsin Coastal Management grant program. I spoke with the US Department of Agriculture's Rural Development representative in Wisconsin about whether an ADA-compliant bridge and ramp would be eligible under their community facilities guidelines (their answer: maybe), then forwarded that information to Sen. Baldwin's staff for potential inclusion in a congressionally directed spending request.

6. Lawsuits/Legal Issues

- **Ashland County.** The County Board, on a 15-2 vote on June 6, denied our claim, which seeks \$363,654.63 for law enforcement patrol and response that La Pointe property owners pay for but are not receiving. The Town has six months from the date of official notice of disallowance to determine whether to sue the County. We have not received official notification yet.

7. Other Information

- **Bell Street Tavern.** The building is being put up for sale; Dave Marchetti gave Glenn Carlson and I a tour in case we want to consider potential Town uses.
- **Library Board.** Board chair Lisa Potswald has resigned. That will create an additional opening beyond appointments that expire on July 31.