

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

To: Town Board

From: Michael Kuchta

DATES COVERED IN REPORT: Dec. 21, 2023-Jan. 4, 2024

1. Accomplished/Completed

- See below.

2. Coming Up

- **Documentary.** A film crew led by Justin Giergerich is gathering footage for a documentary on winter on Madeline Island. They expect to film part of Tuesday's Town Board meeting.
- **Rental Ordinance Workshop.** Thursday Jan. 11, 4:45 p.m.
- **Comprehensive Plan Workshop.** Tuesday Jan. 16, 5 p.m.

3. Town Board Agenda – Information/Comments

- See separate memo.

4. Follow Up on Previous/Ongoing Projects

- **Fire numbers.** The zoning administrator continues to identify driveways that need multiple numbers, to identify multi-unit buildings that will need additional signs, and to work with Ashland County GIS and Land Description departments to coordinate the data base of numbers. I continue to talk with Public Works and the emergency services to coordinate replacement and/or installation of new signs at road intersections.
- **Harbor Commission.** Working capital has been transferred from the Town bank account to the commission's bank account.
- **Whitefish St. parking.** Public Works and Police continue to pursue options for enforcing the "no parking" ordinance across from the school.

5. Grant Report

- No update.

6. Lawsuits/Legal Issues

- No update.

7. Other Information

- **Madeline Island Museum.** Glenn Carlson and I met Jan. 5 with representatives of the Wisconsin Historical Society to learn about their plans following Keldi Merton's departure.
- **Premier resort area.** Talked with Stacey Hessel (district director in Sen. Romaine Quinn's office), to request legislative authorization for La Pointe to implement a half-cent resort area sales tax. She forwarded request to Madison office. Note: Hayward also is pursuing this authorization.
- **Service Award Program.** Payments were made into the accounts of qualifying volunteer fire and ambulance members.
- **Xcel Energy.** I met Jan. 11 with Xcel representatives to learn about their long-range plans for the cable supplying energy to the island.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

To: Town Board

From: Michael Kuchta

DATES COVERED IN REPORT: Jan. 5-19, 2024

1. Accomplished/Completed

- **Comprehensive Plan maps.** Completed review and submitted corrections for the 13 maps prepared by Northwest Regional Planning Commission.
- **SAM.gov.** Received approval of Town's "entity validation" for federal funding.

2. Coming Up

- **WTA Unit Meeting.** Monday Jan. 22, 7 p.m., Pilsen Town Hall, Moquah.

3. Town Board Agenda – Information/Comments

- See separate memo

4. Follow Up on Previous/Ongoing Projects

- **Accounting.** Lauren Burtaux and I met separately with CPA Angela Truchon of Ehlers & Pierce, and auditor Vanessa Kane of Baker Tilly. We continue trying to understand and resolve issues with the Workhorse software on how transactions flow and show up in budget reports. We also provided Baker Tilly with the first round of forms for the 2023 audit.
- **Ambulance.** Lauren and I met with Brittany Mattison of Cvikota to continue working through billing glitches.
- **Bayfield School District.** The district continues to discuss potential capital projects to include in a bonding referendum. For La Pointe, the list includes a renovated kitchen, new classroom space, ADA renovations, a new gym, and/or a new building.
- **Fire numbers.** Zoning Administrator Ed Schaffer and I sent more than 930 addresses to Lange Enterprises, which is manufacture new signs to install across the island. Still to come: additional signs for multi-unit buildings, and new road signs for all public and private roads.
- **Madeline Island Museum.** The Wisconsin Historical Society hired former Bad River Tribal Chair Mike Wiggins Jr. as interim director of the museum; he succeeds Keldi Merton.
- **RV Sanitary Disposal site.** Ben Schram and I met Jan. 19 with Zach Montagne of the sanitary district, and David Lindsley and Bob Skalitzyk of the DNR. We will move forward on drafting language on a new MOU to relocate the site, determine the best location to tie into the sanitary sewer system, determine upfront financing, and determine how to collect user fees.
- **Xcel Energy.** I met Jan. 11 with Xcel representatives Ken Disher, Zach Hughes and Aaron Orenstein to learn about plans to install a new power cable between Bayfield and La Pointe. The work possibly could take place this fall, though more likely in 2025. The plan is to bore an 8-inch pipe into the lakebed, rather than simply laying a cable on the ground. Xcel would bring the cable up near the current location at the Griggs Approach, then splice it into the island grid.

5. Grant Report

- No updates.

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6. Lawsuits/Legal Issues

- **Appeal of DOR Declaratory Ruling.** Initial briefs are due to the Wisconsin Tax Appeals Commission by Jan. 31. Bill Defoe and I prepared the flier in your packet as a way to update interested parties on Ashland County's level of patrol and response services. Finally, your packet includes a copy of a letter the Town Chair and I sent to various county officials.

7. Other Information

- **Chamber of Commerce MOUs.** Drafted language for agreements on fireworks and porta-potty payments; sent to chamber for review and eventual board action.
- **Managed Forest Law.** The Town received a check for \$87,306.60 in withdrawal tax on land taken out of the state's managed forest program.
- **Small bridge inventory.** Attended WTA webinar on towns' role in upcoming statewide program.

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TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

To: Town Board

From: Michael Kuchta

DATES COVERED IN REPORT: Jan. 19-Feb. 8, 2024

1. Accomplished/Completed

- See below

2. Coming Up

- **Medallion hunt.** The Public Arts Committee's winter event is scheduled for Saturday Feb. 17-24. Clues will be posted on the Town website and around town.
- **Snow Snake.** Tribal competition is scheduled to begin at 8 a.m. Saturday Feb. 24 at Joni's Beach.

3. Town Board Agenda – Information/Comments

- See separate memo

4. Follow Up on Previous/Ongoing Projects

- **Airport.** The Bureau of Aeronautics hopes to have a "kickoff meeting" March 14 to discuss a Terminal Area Master Plan for renovation of the pilots' lounge and hangar. BOA wants to create a "stakeholder advisory committee"; ideas on how to select or appoint members are welcome.
- **Big Bay Town Park.** Compiled end-of-year reservations reports. See charts below on trends.
- **Hagen Road.** Cooper Engineering submitted final engineering plans to the state on Feb. 1. For cost reasons, the public works director and I approved 2 inches of asphalt (which is the same as County H), with a 12-inch base. The project is still on schedule to go out for bid on May 14, with construction potentially starting as soon as July 15.
- **Metasys.** After multiple rounds of phone calls and emails, Johnson Controls (the subcontractor) and Wendel (the project manager) finally are on the same page about who should pay for the delayed installation of the ESB building control system. It is not the Town.
- **Fire number signs.** Lange delivered posts and hardware for new fire number signs; they are at the Town shops. Ordered 139 street name signs from Decker for all public and private roads on the island; 3 additional "directional" signs will be ordered for selected T-intersections.
- **Rental ordinance.** The revised ordinance is posted on the website. The zoning administrator mailed updated renewal applications to 105 existing permit holders.
- **RV sanitary disposal site.** Sent a draft MOU that would allow the DNR, sanitary district, and Town to move the site to Town-owned land near the ESB/MRF, connect it to the sanitary sewer system, and begin charging users. We are waiting for a reply from the DNR.

5. Grant Report

- **Energy Committee:**
 - Ashland County filed a grant application with the federal EPA, seeking more than \$19 million to install 22 solar-powered microgrids (including 10 "community resilience hubs"), plus electric vehicle charging stations around the county. Their application includes a microgrid and resilience hub at La Pointe's ESB, plus four EV charging stations on the Island. The county expects to know by April if it is advancing in the competition.

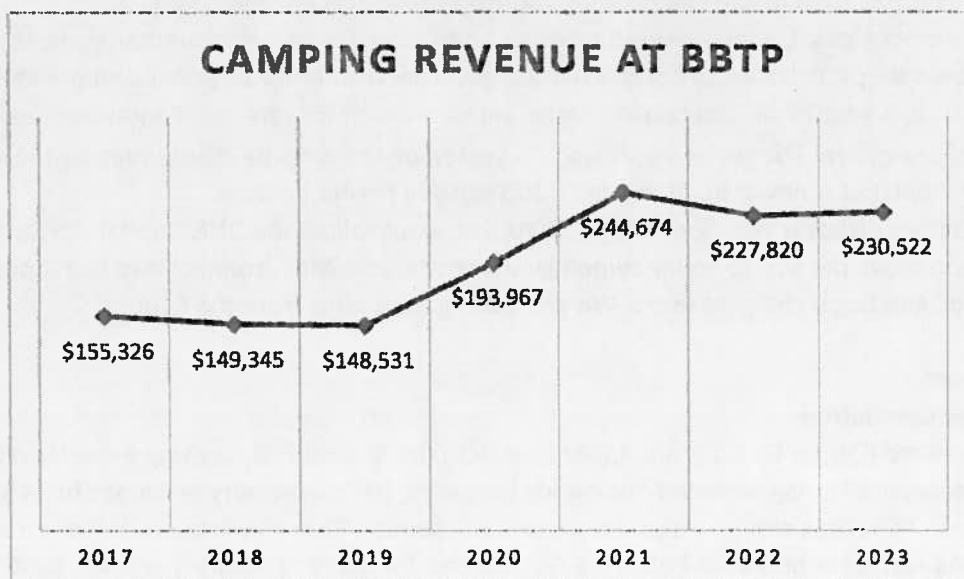
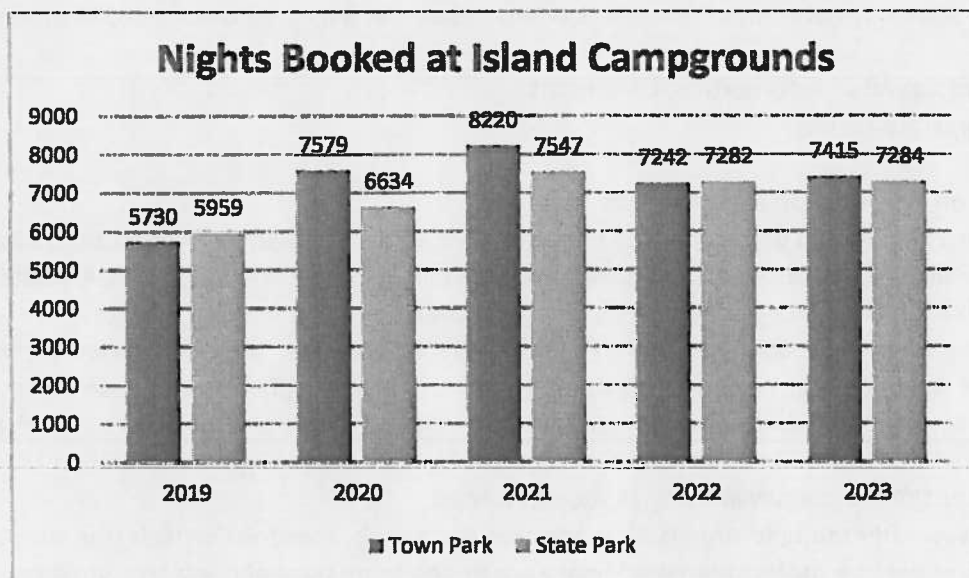
- The committee meets Feb. 16 to decide whether to submit the ESB microgrid proposal independently through the state's Energy Innovation Grant Program. The Town has set aside \$50,000 for its share of the estimated \$277,000 project.

6. Lawsuits/Legal Issues

- **Ashland County.** Town attorneys filed initial briefs on Jan. 31 to the Wisconsin Tax Appeals Commission, seeking to overturn the Department of Revenue and shift a portion of the county's law enforcement levy to the Town levy. Reply briefs are due on Feb. 29.

7. Other Information

- **Records requests.** Alex, Jamie and I fulfilled two separate records requests from John Carlson regarding police pay, overtime, and benefits in 2023.



TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

To: Town Board

From: Michael Kuchta

DATES COVERED IN REPORT: Feb. 9-22, 2024

1. Accomplished/Completed

- **Energy Innovation Grant Program application.** With help from Bill Bailey and members of the Energy Committee, the application is ready to submit upon your authorization. The deadline is this Friday, March 1.

2. Coming Up

- **Special Town Meeting. Thursday, Feb. 29, 5 p.m.** Electors will vote on the portions of the Harbor Commission's financing package that could be subject to the property tax levy.
- **Gazette deadline.** Saturday March 2. The issue will be on streets from March 23-May 18.

3. Town Board Agenda – Information/Comments

- See separate memo.

4. Follow Up on Previous/Ongoing Projects

- **Airport.** The Town crew has used the weather to its advantage and cleared additional vegetation and stumps near the weather station and runway, to meet BOA guidelines.
- **Fire Department cascade bottles.** These will be donated to Cornucopia's fire department.
- **MRF solar panels.** The panels are back online and producing power.
- **Road name signs.** Decker Supply is manufacturing 138 signs for intersections; they expect delivery within the next week or so.
- **Room accommodations tax.** With substantial help from Paul Wilharm, we sent official notice to Airbnb and Vrbo requesting that they post the increase in the Town's tax rate from 6.5% to 8%.

5. Grant Report

- **Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation.** The Town is not submitting any applications to this family of funds so that we are not in competition with the Harbor Commission.
- The Energy Committee is recommending that you approve their application for the ESB microgrid. The request is in Resolution 2024-0227B.

6. Lawsuits/Legal Issues

- **Ashland County.** Reply briefs are due by this Thursday, Feb. 29, in the Town's appeal to the Wisconsin Tax Appeals Commission.

7. Other Information

- **WCMA.** I will attend the Wisconsin City/County Management Association winter conference from Feb. 28-March 1.

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TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

To: Town Board

From: Michael Kuchta

DATES COVERED IN REPORT: Feb. 23-March 8, 2024

1. Accomplished/Completed

- **Comprehensive Plan.** Completed revision.
- **Energy Innovation Grant Program.** Submitted application for ESB microgrid.
- **Gazette.** Submitted articles for March edition.

2. Coming Up

- **Wisconsin Towns Association County Unit Meeting.** Monday March 25, 7 p.m., Pilsen Town Hall, Moquah.

3. Town Board Agenda – Information/Comments

- See separate memo.

4. Follow Up on Previous/Ongoing Projects

- **Ashland County Hazard Mitigation Review.** Continue to sit in on these meetings in preparation for revising the Town's outdated emergency plan.
- **Fire Department 1994 Ford ¾-ton crew cab pickup.** Public Works will use the truck for seasonal crews this summer, then perhaps auction it in 2025.
- **Fire number costs.** The Town has set aside \$40,478 for signs and installation. Anything above that will be subject to a special charge, as you approved on Feb. 27. So far, the Town has spent \$34,240 on engineering and manufacturing. We anticipate the total cost (with installation) will be closer to \$50,000. That would put the special charge in the vicinity of \$10-\$12 per sign.
- **Town attorneys.** Consulted (or continue to consult) on topics including Department of Revenue petition, proposed "perpetual easement" on new cell tower, Bayfield Wireless lease, harbor construction debt, personal use of town-owned shops by employees, mutual aid agreement with county highway department, resolution to adopt Comp Plan.
- **Town Plan Commission.** Voted 4-1 on March 6 to recommend keeping the TPC at 5 members.
- **Wisconsin City/County Management Association.** The winter conference Feb. 28-March 1 was one of the best I have attended. I made connections with potential accounting and insurance vendors. Sessions included useful discussions on workforce housing, utilizing artificial intelligence in a municipal setting, project management, and professional development. There were ample opportunities to compare notes with administrators from other municipalities.

5. Grant Report

- No updates.

6. Lawsuits/Legal Issues

- No updates

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MAR 8 2024

Initial: dg

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

To: Town Board

From: Michael Kuchta

DATES COVERED IN REPORT: March 9-21, 2024

1. Accomplished/Completed

- **Congressionally Directed Spending.** Submitted request for \$1.8 million in funding for Big Bay Town Park Accessibility Project.
- **Ambulance, Fire Department volunteer insurance.** Completed two-page brochure outlining benefits in the new accident and sickness policy the Town is providing this year. Jamie is distributing brochures to volunteer members of both departments. (Sample is in your packet.)

2. Coming Up

- **Spring elections.** Tuesday April 2, 7 a.m.-8 p.m.

3. Town Board Agenda – Information/Comments

- See separate Meeting Memo.

4. Follow Up on Previous/Ongoing Projects

- **Affordable Housing Advisory Committee.** Members met with the Sanitary District Board March 20 to get a better understanding of the possibilities of connecting the Capser Trail and 687 Middle Road sites to the sanitary sewer system.
- **Airport Terminal Area Master Plan.** The local stakeholder group will meet with BOA representatives and their engineering firm on April 11.
- **Rieman parcel.** Letter mailed to Rieman family seeking their direction on returning the parcel.
- **RV disposal site.** Town staff and the sanitary district are making headway with the DNR on a new memorandum of understanding. Financing is the main point still to be decided. So far:
 - Staff have agreed to pursue relocating the RV disposal site and connecting it to the sanitary system near the ESB. That should reduce the impact of the site's high-strength waste on the sanitary district's treatment ponds and effluent. The preferred location is Town-owned land on the north side of Big Bay Road between the ESB and MRF. This site provides ready access to the sanitary system; a driveway could be constructed into the woods, with one-way traffic utilizing the existing MRF exit.
 - The draft MOU also allows the Town, for the first time, to levy a user fee on the disposal site. As a first step, we are asking the Harbor Commission to add a surcharge to the ferry's tariff schedule; this \$5 fee would be charged on RVs and campers coming to the Island from Bayfield. The surcharge would help offset the Town's cost of maintaining the site, which is more than \$6,000/year that is currently being covered by property taxpayers. The surcharge also would provide data on demand for the sanitary disposal site. There are other potential funding streams as well, such as a user fee collected electronically on site, or a surcharge placed on RV site reservations at both the Town and State parks.

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- We anticipate the next steps would be engineering for the site – done either in-house by the DNR, or through an RFP for an outside consultant – and following up with a Town application for a state Clean Water Fund loan and/or USDA rural development grant.

5. Grant Report

- Updates are covered above and in separate Meeting Memo.

6. Lawsuits/Legal Issues

- No update.

7. Other Information

- **Bayfield school district.** The district intends to mail a survey in late April to gauge opinions on projects that could be funded by a building and/or operating referendum in November. Renovation and/or new construction at the La Pointe School are among potential projects.
- **Highway 13 reconstruction in Washburn.** When the Town crew hauls from the MRF, weight limits will force them to follow the truck detour: Highway 13 to Port Wing, then Highway A to Iron River, before being able to get back on Highway 2 to Ashland. This will add an hour-and-a-half to a typical trip. The road work will not detour the Ambulance Service on runs to Ashland.
- **Police training range.** The Police Department and Public Works are investigating moving the site from sanitary district land near the airport to the Town gravel pit on the north end.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

To: Town Board

From: Michael Kuchta

DATES COVERED IN REPORT: March 22-April 4, 2024

1. Accomplished/Completed

- **Annual Town Meeting.** Financial report prepared, printed.
- **ARPA.** Annual expenditures report for Covid-related federal grant filed.
- **Comprehensive Plan.** Final document sent to printer, posted on Town website. Files organized as archives on server.

2. Coming Up

- **Annual Town Meeting.** Tuesday April 16, 5 p.m.

3. Town Board Agenda – Information/Comments

- See separate memo.

4. Follow Up on Previous/Ongoing Projects

- **Airport Terminal Area Master Plan.** The local stakeholder group meets with BOA representatives and their engineering firm on April 11.
- **Workforce housing.** Zoning Administrator Ed Schaffer and I met with Evan J. Erickson about options for housing on private and/or public land along Big Bay Road.

5. Grant Report

- No updates

6. Lawsuits/Legal Issues

- No updates

7. Other Information

- **Ashland County.** Wrote letter of support for county request for federal funding to improve law enforcement radio infrastructure.

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TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

To: Town Board

From: Michael Kuchta

DATES COVERED IN REPORT: April 5-18, 2024

1. Accomplished/Completed

- **Comprehensive Plan.** Printed copies were mailed to the required government agencies.
- **Expenditure Restraint Program.** Filed Form SL-203 with the Department of Revenue on April 12. Based on initial data, La Pointe meets the criteria to be eligible for a payment in 2025.

2. Coming Up

- **Gazette deadline.** Saturday April 27
- **Auditors on site.** Monday April 29-Friday May 3
- **Webinar: Being a Good Board Member.** Monday April 29, noon
- **Great Lakes Island Association monthly meeting.** Wednesday May 1, 9 a.m.
- **Wisconsin Rural Summit.** Wednesday May 15, 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Ashland

3. Town Board Agenda – Information/Comments

- See separate memo.

4. Follow Up on Previous/Ongoing Projects

- **Airport.** Ray Hakola, Ben Schram, Paul Wilharm, pilots Leslie Mack and Nick Widmar, and I met April 11 with representatives of the Bureau of Aeronautics and SEH to discuss the BOA's development of a terminal area plan. Next meeting is in June.
- **Board retreat.** Proposals to facilitate a Town Board retreat this year are expected by April 30.
- **CheqBUILT.** The regional land trust for affordable housing held its first annual meeting, elected a board of directors, and chose officers on April 15. La Pointe resident Charlie Bertel (a member of the Town's Affordable Housing Advisory Committee) is on the CheqBUILT board.
- **Hagen Road.** Ben Schram and I met April 17 with representatives of Northwoods Paving, which intends to bid on the Hagen Road repaving project. If Northwoods is awarded the project, they hope to set up an asphalt plant at the airport. We are exploring gravel options.
- **UDC inspector.** Met April 18 with James Price to continue discussing new contract language.

5. Grant Report

- **Clean Water Fund Program.** The Town's application for a \$325,000 loan to relocate the sanitary disposal site received a score of 50 out of 100. It allows us to apply for fiscal year 2025 funding.
- **Energy Innovation Grant.** See Agenda memo.

6. Lawsuits/Legal Issues

- See separate memo on the cell tower lease conversion proposal.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

To: Town Board

From: Michael Kuchta

DATES COVERED IN REPORT: April 19-May 9, 2024

1. Accomplished/Completed

- **Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.** Updated this plan; see the Agenda Memo for details.
- **Harbor Commission.** Compiled amortization schedules for ferry purchase debt service into single spreadsheet.
- **Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant.** Submitted application on April 25 for potential funding of BBTP accessibility project.

2. Coming Up

- **La Pointe School Facility Needs Meeting.** Monday May 13, 3 p.m.
- **Wisconsin Rural Summit.** Wednesday May 15, 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Ashland.
- **Madeline Island Marathon.** Saturday May 18, 6 a.m.-5 p.m.
- **Initial Board of Review.** Friday May 24, 4:30 p.m.
- **Memorial Day.** Monday May 27.

3. Town Board Agenda – Information/Comments

- See separate memo.

4. Follow Up on Previous/Ongoing Projects

- **Cell Tower lease.** Harmoni Towers is willing to switch from seeking a perpetual easement on the AT&T tower to a prepayment of a 99-year lease. That would be similar to what the Town Board approved for the Verizon tower. The Anich law firm is comparing the Verizon lease with the proposed Harmoni lease so we can align them as much as possible in negotiation.
- **Energy Committee.** The committee meets May 15 to discuss electric vehicle charging stations on the island. Potential public and private locations would be included in a county application for federal funds.
- **Hagen Road.** Town crews continue to replace culverts as time allows, in preparation for the repaving project. There will be an article in the next Gazette with additional information about the repaving. In addition, the Town is working with the state Bureau of Aeronautics to seek Federal Aviation Administration approval to set up an asphalt plant in unused hangar lots.
- **Metasys.** The town attorney, Johnson Controls and I continue to research options to resolve two issues: Johnson Controls' claim that the Town owes them \$1,800 to complete Metasys installation, and helping Johnson Controls obtain the \$12,000 they claim the primary contractor, Brown Mechanical, still owes them. We have located the original bid specifications and the surety company that issued Brown's payment bond. We believe Johnson Controls can successfully take its claim directly to the surety company if they cancel the charge to the Town.
- **UDC inspector.** The Zoning Administrator and I continue conversations with Alder Engineering regarding a new contract. Unresolved issues focus on jurisdictional issues such as solar installations and "camping units," as defined by the state. We are leaning toward

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recommending that the Town change its building construction ordinance (Chapter 205) to allow UDC jurisdiction over additions and alterations on buildings constructed before 1980.

5. Grant Report

- No further updates.

6. Lawsuits/Legal Issues

- **Ashland County.** The Wisconsin Tax Appeals Commission, by statute, has 90 days to issue a decision on our appeal of the Department of Revenue's rejection of our request for a tax levy shift in response to the county's shift of law enforcement responsibilities. That would mean May 29. However, the Commission has the option to extend the deadline an additional 90 days.

7. Other Information

- **County Board.** The board elected Gary Mertig as its new chair and Clarence Campbell as the new vice-chair. William Metzger, Bradley Ray and Martin Vitek join them on the Executive Committee. The new Finance Committee is Ray, Blake Ellefson, Pat Kinney, Richard Pufall and Ron Sztynodor. Note: the board has only 19 members; there is no representation in 2 districts.
- **Dock injury.** A resident fell on the Town Dock when leaving a ferry boat. Insurance companies for the Town and ferry management have been informed. I prepared a checklist of steps the resident would have to follow (as outlined in state statute) if they need to pursue a claim.
- **Payroll.** After my online Bremer Bank profile was mistakenly deleted in the transition of treasurers, Melissa Pusateri and I were able to restore my access to submit payroll in time to issue May 2 paychecks.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

To: Town Board

From: Michael Kuchta

DATES COVERED IN REPORT: May 25-June 7, 2024

1. Accomplished/Completed

- **Airport sponsor certifications.** Completed nine FAA documents for Glenn's signature to send to the state Bureau of Aeronautics.
- **Electric ferry grant application.** Electronically filed application with EPA (on behalf of Harbor Commission) ahead of May 28 deadline.
- **Gazette.** Submitted Report from Town Hall, edited Town Chair's column for June issue.
- **Maintenance of Effort.** Filed this new EMS and fire reporting requirement with the state on June 4; not doing so jeopardizes a portion of the \$43,000 in state municipal aid that the Town is supposed to receive in 2024.
- **Performance reviews.** Finished written evaluations of Town Hall staff and department heads; will be scheduling one-on-one meetings.
- **SAM.gov.** Finally navigated all hurdles to renew Town's UEI with accurate, current information.
- **Zoning map.** Sent corrections to Northwest Regional Planning Commission.

2. Coming Up

- **Inline Marathon.** Saturday June 15, 7 a.m.-noon.
- **WCMA Conference.** Wednesday-Friday, June 19-21.
- **Make Music Day.** Friday June 21

3. Town Board Agenda – Information/Comments

- See separate memo.

4. Follow Up on Previous/Ongoing Projects

- **Bad River MOU.** I have a preliminary meeting with tribal representatives on June 10.
- **La Pointe School.** I met with school parents, teachers, and district staff on June 4. We continued discussions on building needs and strategies as the school board continues to debate what capital projects to pursue in a 2025 referendum. Some parents intend to attend the district's building and grounds committee meeting June 10.

5. Grant Report

- **BBTP Accessibility Project.** Sen. Tammy Baldwin's office is recommending \$1.36 million in federal funding. The project would replace the park's aging, narrow, wooden staircase and bridge with a wider ADA-compliant ramp and bridge connecting the bluff with the lagoon, beach, and Lake Superior below. Baldwin's request to the Senate Appropriations Committee does not mean this is a done deal. The Town is also pursuing up to \$250,000 in grants from the state's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program and the Recreational Trail Program.
- **ESB Microgrid.** I started the "onboarding" paperwork from the Office of Energy Innovation. No official grant contract yet for Town Board approval.

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6. Lawsuits/Legal Issues

- See June 11 Agenda Memo.

7. Other Information

- **Extreme weather meeting.** UW Extension in Ashland County intends to hold a community meeting in La Pointe July 18 to discuss which impacts of climate change concern Islanders the most. Possibly at Town Hall; details to be determined.
- **Fire Department.** Members re-elected Rick Reichkitzer as chief on June 5.
- **MOU with Chamber of Commerce.** Met June 4 with director Sharon Zanto on agreement to designate the Chamber as the Town's "tourism entity." She will present the language to the Chamber board.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

To: Town Board

From: Michael Kuchta

DATES COVERED IN REPORT: June 8-19, 2024

1. Accomplished/Completed

- **Audit.** Lauren Burtaux, Glenn Carlson and I have reviewed the preliminary 2023 audit and financial statements from Baker Tilly. I answered the required questions about significant financial changes since Dec. 31. Alex Smith, Lauren and I signed the required "management letter" and returned it June 19.
- **Ambulance radio authorization.** Renewed the FCC license for 10 years.
- **Credit cards.** Worked with Bremer Bank to enable all staff credit card balances to be paid by phone, to avoid mail delays that increasingly are resulting in late fees and penalties. Added Lauren Burtaux as an authorized representative to make payments.

2. Coming Up

- **Make Music Day.** Friday June 21 (co-sponsored by Public Arts Committee)
- **Liquor licenses expire.** Friday June 28
- **Great Lakes Islands Alliance.** Wednesday July 3
- **Independence Day.** Thursday July 4 (Town Hall closed, festivities everywhere)

3. Town Board Agenda – Information/Comments

- See separate memo

4. Follow Up on Previous/Ongoing Projects

- **Airport.** The terminal building committee met June 18 with BOA representatives. Because federal funding will support improvements only if they can be expected to last 40 years, the consensus is that the Town needs to build a new terminal in a similar location, rather than attempt to rehab the existing structure. The recommendation opposes a new terminal, because there is no way to envision a terminal paying for itself. The SEH consulting firm will draft floor plans to consider in July, probably for a terminal in the ballpark of 900 square feet. Continue working on county and DOR paperwork necessary to establish individual PINs for airport hangars and update lease agreements, all to adjust to state's shift in treating hangars as real property, not personal property, for tax purposes.
- **Bad River.** I met June 10 with Tribal Chair Robert Blanchard and three other Tribal representatives to discuss a memorandum of understanding authorizing Town Fire and EMS to respond to emergency dispatches on Tribal land on Mooningwaanikaaning. Chair Blanchard gave verbal approval until a written agreement can be finalized; our emergency services have been informed. The Tribe will install a lock box providing access if necessary. An agreement might include joint maintenance of the portion of Kron-Dahlin Road adjacent to Tribal land. Attorneys for the Town and Tribe are working on language.
- **Copier training.** Staff received training from a Toshiba rep on June 13.

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- **Hartzell development.** Zoning administrator Ed Schaffer and I met June 11 with Bob Hartzell and his team about barriers to resuming the Raspberry Fields development. Wisconsin DSHS does not keep records that could verify installation of the water system, so it is up to the Town to determine what kinds of inspections and testing are required to demonstrate the system's safety and ability to provide potable water. Attorney Bryce Schoenborn is working to draft conditions. Meanwhile, Ed and I continue to meet with UDC inspector James Price to resolve other issues.
- **Inline marathon.** Volunteered to assist traffic control and assess event's impact on residents first-hand.

5. Grant Report

- **ESB microgrid.** Ben and I filed grant "onboarding" documentation June 14 with the state Office of Energy Innovation.

6. Lawsuits/Legal Issues

- No updates.

7. Other Information

- **Mellen police.** The southern Ashland County city (which disbanded its police department) will pay the sheriff's department \$132,565.78 per year to provide 40 hours of dedicated patrol and response per week, with an annual inflation increase. (Editorial comment: That rate means the county was getting quite a deal paying La Pointe only \$135,000 a year to provide a 24/7 FTE.)

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

To: Town Board

From: Michael Kuchta

DATES COVERED IN REPORT: June 20-July 5, 2024

1. Accomplished/Completed

- **Performance reviews.** One-on-one performance discussions are completed with all Town Hall staff and department heads (except one).
- **Raffle license.** State license is renewed and available if departments need it.
- **Town Board retreat.** UW-Superior's Daniella Mansbach interviewed me in advance of September's Town Board retreat.
- **WCMA Summer Conference.** Attended June 19-21 (on my own time and dime).

2. Coming Up

- **Great Lakes Islands Alliance.** Rescheduled for Wednesday July 10, 9 a.m. CDT
- **Gazette deadline.** Saturday July 13 (for publication Aug. 3)
- **Wisconsin Towns Association.** Virtual meeting of Town Advocacy Council, Monday July 15, 6 p.m. Link sent to you by email.
- **UW Extension Extreme Weather meetings.** Thursday July 18, 1 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

3. Town Board Agenda – Information/Comments

- See separate memo.

4. Follow Up on Previous/Ongoing Projects

- **687 Middle Road.** Habitat for Humanity's construction manager was scheduled to meet with housing committee members July 8 to assess the house for rehabilitation possibilities.
- **Airport hangars.** Sent revised contracts and additional documentation to all lease holders. This is the next step in meeting state requirements that hangars be treated as real property, not personal property.
- **Cell tower lease prepayment.** Attorney Katie Posewitz of the Anich law firm outlined changes to make Harmoni Towers' proposed lease agreement more consistent with the Verizon lease. We sent those revisions to Harmoni. Even if Harmoni agrees to the changes, there is a substantial gap between their proposed prepayment of \$175,410 and Verizon's prepayment of \$500,000.
- **CPAs.** I have requested proposals from two CPA firms (one in Wausau, one in Eau Claire) to provide professional accounting support to Town Hall staff; both firms are more familiar with and comfortable with Workhorse software than our current vendor.
- **Designated tourism entity.** The proposed MOU with the Chamber of Commerce was forwarded on May 31; the Chamber board is awaiting legal review before taking action. I am advising delaying 2nd quarter room tax payments until we have a tourism entity agreement in place.
- **Dog park.** Public Works and the dog park organizers are working to place "no parking" signs and directional signs for users.
- **Hartzell development.** The Zoning Administrator, UDC inspector, and developer continue to identify and clear barriers to construction on the seasonal condominiums off Mondamin Trail.

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- **Managed forest land.** DNR and 4 Seasons Forest Products in Hurley are still working to log roughly a dozen parcels in 2024-2025 that are not in compliance with the state program. Property owners were supposed to receive updated options last week.
- **Police training range.** County Board member Mike Starck obtained clearance from the county so La Pointe Police can conduct training exercises at the county gravel pit on North Shore Road.
- **RV sanitary disposal site.** A meeting was scheduled for July 8 with the DNR and Sanitary District to seek agreement on a new MOU and an engineering study to relocate the site.
- **Town Hall copier.** Public Works has decided to utilize the old copier.
- **Zoning enforcement.** In response to complaints, the Zoning Administrator sent letters to property owners with multiple campers on their parcels as a first step toward understanding the status of the campers and getting them into compliance with Town zoning. It is possible that the Town Board may need to authorize eviction in some situations.
The ZA also sent letters to property owners who are in violation of the Town's sign provisions – primarily involving signs in the public right-of-way.

5. Grant Report

- **BBTP accessibility project.** DNR grant manager Patrick Anderson asked if the Town could build the proposed ADA-compliant ramp and bridge without congressionally directed spending. He suggested the Town could receive up to \$489,000 in state grants this year. However, that would require the Town to spend roughly \$1 million of its own, depending on the option selected. At this point, the Town cannot fund that much through the budget or through borrowing. Therefore, the Town would have to pass up any state grants.
As detailed in my May 24 memo, the Town Board has borrowed \$2.5 million for Town purposes, borrowed \$13.3 million for ferry line purposes, and committed \$3.4 million in borrowing to the ferry line's EPA application for an electric ferry and related infrastructure. Combined, that is 99.5% of the Town's current legal borrowing capacity, leaving only about \$90,000 available. We do not expect an EPA decision until December; that likely will be too late for the DNR's timeline. A decision on congressionally directed spending is not likely until September, at the earliest. (Sen. Baldwin is recommending \$1.362 million for our BBTP project.)
Without state and federal funding, and with Town borrowing options restricted or eliminated entirely, the Town would have to pursue alternative sources to build the project. Approaches to pursue could include seeking substantial private donations or selling naming rights.
- **Hagen Road.** WisDOT sent final information on the contract with Northwoods Paving; it is about \$309,000 less than first estimated. That would make the Town's 20% share roughly \$302,960. Combined with engineering costs, the Town's approximate contribution for the project would be \$353,920 (assuming no cost overruns). That's about \$60,800 less than originally estimated.

6. Lawsuits/Legal Issues

- No updates.

7. Other Information

- **Police back pay.** We discovered a spreadsheet formula error in police timesheets dating back to December 2022. The result: officers were not paid overtime at the legally required time-and-a-half rate. Payroll has calculated that the Town owes back pay totaling \$29,998.39, including FICA and WRS contributions. Checks will be sent this week.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

To: Town Board

From: Michael Kuchta

DATES COVERED IN REPORT: July 6-18, 2024

1. Accomplished/Completed

- **Budget amendment.** Completed first version of revised budget of 2024 for Town Board review.
- **Gazette.** Submitted articles for Aug. 3 edition.
- **Ordinances.** Created new drafts of Construction Ordinance Chapter 205 and Direct Sellers Ordinance Chapter 345 for Town Plan Commission and Town Board review.
- **Resignation.** Organized files, drafted memos to help staff transition in my absence.

2. Coming Up

- **Open Book Board of Review.** Tuesday July 30, 3-6 p.m., Town Hall.
- **Point to La Pointe Swim.** Saturday Aug. 3.
- **Board of Review.** Tuesday Aug. 6, 4-6 p.m., Town Hall.
- **Great Lakes Islands Alliance.** Monthly meeting: Wednesday Aug. 7, 9 a.m. Central time. Note: Early registration deadline is Aug. 1 for annual Summit, which is Sept. 22-25 on Les Cheneaux Islands in Michigan's UP. Zoning administrator Ed Schaffer hopes to attend.
- **Primary election.** Tuesday Aug. 13, 7 a.m.-8 p.m., Town Hall.

3. Town Board Agenda – Information/Comments

- See separate memo.

4. Follow Up on Previous/Ongoing Projects

- **Airport hangar leases.** Continue talking with hangar owners about revised leases, and gathering required information in order to create individual parcel numbers as part of state's transition away from hangars being designated personal property. Town needs to submit electronic real estate transfer returns with the state for each hangar, then file with county recorder of deeds.
- **ESB microgrid.** Began filling out the EQ-1 environmental assessment for the state grant; forwarded the draft to Public Works, Jolma Electric, and Cheq Bay Renewables for more detail.
- **Fire number signs.** The new crew is making substantial progress, with additional signs mounted on Big Bay Road and elsewhere.
- **Law enforcement survey.** The survey launched July 10. In its first week, the survey had 390 responses: 38.5% from year-round residents, 38.9% from seasonal residents, and 22.6% from others. The survey closes on Aug. 15.
- **Police back pay.** Checks were issued July 12.
- **RV sanitary disposal site.** Met July 8 with Zach Montagne and Paul Brummer from sanitary district, and David Lindsley and Robert Skalitzky from DNR. If the site is relocated to Town property adjacent to MRF, DNR likely will need easement language to codify the state's interest in the site. Sanitary district will seek a quote to incorporate preliminary engineering for various options as part of facility planning the district already has under way with SEH. Because of the state budget cycle, the DNR cannot commit funding until 2026-2028 biennium at the earliest.

How to pay for engineering and other work remains a major challenge, especially because the Town has no borrowing capacity at the moment. It is unlikely that engineering work will be completed in time to seek a loan by the Sept. 30 deadline for the state's Clean Water Fund program. A new MOU needs to confirm a location, easement language, and shared funding.

- **UW Extension Extreme Weather meetings.** Sessions in La Pointe are postponed, with hopes of rescheduling them in fall.

5. Grant Report

- **Big Bay Town Park accessibility project.** DNR informed us that, because of the Town's inability to commit local money, our application for a \$500,000 Knowles-Nelson grant was denied. The regional manager said "the application you put together was highly competitive" and urged the Town to apply again next year, even though less funding will be available.

6. Lawsuits/Legal Issues

- No updates.

7. Other Information

- My last day in the office was July 18.

(5) TB, TA, A, Clerk, Public

To: Town Board
From: Glenn Carlson, Town Board Chair
Date: August 11, 2024
Re: Town Administration Report

Here's a brief recap of my Town Hall activities since Michael Kuchta departed.

Office hours

I have been at Town Hall nearly every weekday morning, generally from about 9am – 11am, and many afternoons. I've met one-on-one with nearly all department heads, at least once. Morale seems to be good. Dorgene has been a great help during this time. If you don't see her at the front desk, she's likely in the former TA's workspace handling incoming and some ongoing issues.

Town Chair supervisory authority

The Wisconsin Towns Association attorney (Carol Nowacki) suggested that the Town Board should explicitly delegate supervisory authority over department heads to the Town Chair, in the absence of a Town Administrator. Town Attorney Bryce Schoenborn concurred and has drafted such an ordinance.

Cell Tower Lease

I signed the Letter of Intent and we are awaiting a draft formal agreement from Harmoni. Once we receive that, we will ask our attorney to review it. It is understood that Harmoni is expecting we will seek modifications in the language (but not in the amount).

Ferry line operations

Zach Montagne, Katie Kisner, and I met with Robin and Cal from MIFL LLC last week to discuss the post-Labor Day 7pm boat from Bayfield, to accommodate after-school extra-curricular participation by Island middle and high school students. Due to staffing limitations, this will curtail the availability of a second boat from Bayfield at 7:00am. A second crew will likely not be available until the 9:00am trip during the week. Depending on weather and staffing, this will continue through Thanksgiving week. There will thus be a 5pm and a 7pm departure from Bayfield during the week (M-F). There will not be a 6pm departure.

Financial reporting

Lauren has begun working with Nicole from KerberRose to increase her fluency with WorkHorse and has also been taking online courses in governmental accounting.

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