

Town Board Meeting
July 14th, 2020 ~ 7:00pm
Manitowish Waters Town Hall

Meeting called to order at 7:00pm.

Present: Town Chairman John Hanson and Board Supervisors Bob Becker and Mike Kramer.

Approval of Agenda as posted on July 9th, 2020. Approved on motion from Mike Kramer and seconded by Bob Becker. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes of June 9th, 2020. A motion was made by Mike Kramer and seconded by Bob Becker to approve the minutes of June 9th, 2020. Motion Carried.

Visitors Present: There were 35 residents and out of area visitors.

Subjects from floor: None

Agenda Items Requested to Speak On: Approximately 20 guests indicated that they would like to speak on the **4 Wheelers on Town Roads** agenda item. A few residents sent in emails regarding the **DNR Proposal for a Boat Landing on Alder Lake, DNR Proposal for Expanding Parking at Clear Lake Boat Landing**, and **4 Wheelers on Town Roads** agenda items. Due to the number of visitors who wished to discuss the **4 Wheelers on Town Roads** agenda item, Chair Hanson announced that he would change the order of the agenda and cover that item first.

Old Business:

-- None

New Business:

-- **4 Wheelers on Town Roads:** Supervisor Kramer opened the conversation by reading aloud the following letter from Iron County Recreational Council President, Joe Olson:

July 13, 2020

Re: ATV Trail/Route Development from Mercer, WI to Manitowish Waters, WI

To Whom it Concerns:

I am writing to you today to express my organization's support for an ATV trail or route development which is currently being proposed in the Manitowish Waters area. As President of the Iron County Recreational Council, and past President, and a 30 year member of the White Thunder Riders Snowmobile Club based in Hurly, I can offer an accurate, unbiased, and fair assessment of what tourism means to the Northern portion of Iron County. It is my opinion that this proposed development will substantially benefit the towns and local economy in Mercer and Manitowish Waters, and its surrounding area.

Northern Wisconsin Towns and villages certainly are the victims of a depressed economy. Through the years, this has become more and more apparent with businesses closing their doors throughout our Northern Counties. Various manufacturing firms have selected different States, Counties, and venues to build and operate or expand their businesses, causing a flat or even declining work force in our area. Businesses, organizations, and families alike, are feeling the pressures of an increasing cost of living and higher operating expenses. Our vision must focus on our future and what we, as residents, tax payers, and outdoor enthusiasts can do to improve the economic development of our own home towns.

The integrated trail system currently in place for snowmobiles offers various options for travelers when taking trips. This trail system connects most Counties throughout our State – bringing millions of dollars into local economies via tourism. The trickledown effect is huge, allowing businesses to employ thousands of people to help support their families. The tourism dollars spent in our County help other organizations survive as well. Annual fundraisers are supported by locals and visiting tourists alike – helping to raise money for these organizations, which allow them to purchase equipment, and give back to the local communities.

My organization strongly supports the future development of this expansion to the south. If you have any questions or concerns, please free to contact me.

Sincerely, Joe Olson.

Several residents took the opportunity to speak in favor of the proposed ATV/UTV trail system, highlighting the fact that this would primarily benefit our community during the 3 slower seasons of fall, winter and spring. Barry Hopkins indicated that this would mostly be spurs to connect Manitowish Waters with Mercer and other neighboring communities, and these vehicles would be welcome to park by the Pea Patch Hotel to eliminate parking downtown. One resident discussed the negative impact of opening "Pandora's Box", raising safety concerns about the downtown bridge and use violations. He felt that there should be more research into this, and the entire voting population should be able to weigh in on an advisory referendum. Chair Hanson shared aloud the following email letters from residents:

Hello town board. I wanted to touch base about a few action items on your upcoming agenda. I personally won't be attending due to the risk of being indoors with this group of people and COVID. I wish you a healthy meeting Thank you for your devotion to this community.
item 1.

utv atv use of town roads. IM quite apposed to this being allowed. My concerns is the transmission of invasive species into our community. These vehicles are very different than snowmobiles as they pick up and carry many things with them that could be a long term impact to our community greater than the current lakes issues. secondly. That there will be extra road maintenance needed and we already have a Hefty budget for road maintenance on the tax roll. There is a large push from a small minority of the "huge" business impact they will have. I tend to disagree slightly. There

would be an increase of business. But the time frames these are used we are already full as a community so there is really a nominal positive impact with a large negative impact. If you were to pose the question of how to increase business in our community it would be better to devote time, energy and policy to our current high value tourism activities than open up a new one.

item 2.

Water Safety. Ive had many negative issues with your structure and enforcement this year which is new compared to other season. Your program is causing a bad taste in the communities mouth due to subjective enforcement and poor personality engagements with the officers. You have basically become the "Minocqua" style enforcement and that is disappointing to me as our community is a happier and healthier place than that. You have some extra expense piling in for this program and honestly none of this is an effective use of tax payer dollars for what is being accomplished. These area all EMOTIONAL issues not safety and legal issues being addressed. With all my time on the water this year I have yet to see any drastic safety or legal violations worth getting excited about. There is a nation wide movement against police just starting to ramp up and this will translate to this structure over time adding costs. With all the negatives I see here and the very few safety issues actually being addressed in a very short season. I recommend just abolishing the water safety program for the time being. Maybe in few years we can reinstate it with a healthier better thought thru structure. These tax funds would be better used for a Fire/EMS community safety boat to respond to areas of the community than this enforcement structure.

item 3.

Alder lake boat landing. Im not sure who or how this is becoming a thing? ive heard of no one on alder lake interested in a boat landing. I had sent my feedback on this in the past. We on alder lake have access from many landings already. And again why is this worth the risk of adding one more location to introduce AIS to our chain? To me I would rather see the time and resources of this project devoted to enhancing the current landings of the community and updating the alder lake beaches for community use first. Im not really apposed to a landing it just doesn't seam like a priority. Steven

Manitowish Waters Town Board and Clerk,

This is Barbara LaPorte Bartling. First, I want to apologize for the late submission of comments on some of tonight's agenda items. Due to the current coronavirus situation, I have decided to not attend tonight's meeting in person. I would like to express my thoughts and concerns on a few of the topics. I will keep my comments very brief as this is being sent so late.

Proposed Boat Landing on Alder Lake: I would be interested to learn the DNR's motivation for proposing this landing. If it is to provide an additional public access point to public waters, I feel the current four public landings plus the ramp at Greer's Pier are adequate for access to our lakes.

Environmental concerns: another landing would be another point source for introduction of aquatic invasive species

Safety concerns: Alder Lake Road has become a very busy bicycle route. Adding additional vehicles pulling trailers on this curvy road would add to the issues we already see with vehicles driving quite fast and passing bicyclists on corners to avoid "getting stuck behind them".

Expanding parking at Clear Lake Boat Landing: I have no knowledge as to whether expanding this parking area is needed or not, however it is already an access point to the chain so if additional parking is required for safety reasons I would be in favor of this... IF parking lot run off is addressed.

Bike rental station at Koller Park: I feel there is a need for bike rentals somewhere in our community. My concern is the location at Koller Park, where parking already seems to be at maximum at times. Would the Community Center be a better location? Or Rest Lake Park?

It also appears we are getting more and more businesses located on or using town property. Not necessarily a problem but is that a road that the town wants to go down? And if so, do we have rules and regulations regarding this practice?

Water Patrol Discussion: My thoughts are that enforcement should be driven by safety and environmental considerations, providing education and common sense solutions to any problems encountered.

4-Wheelers on Town Roads: I am opposed to allowing ATV/UTV's to use town roads. Manitowish Waters does not need to be all things to all people. Our surrounding communities/counties seem to be a good fit for 4 wheeler activity. I think we have found our niche with our bike trails and bicyclists. Our silent sports are one thing that sets us apart.

Environmental concerns: introduction of invasive species and degradation of the environment due to a few bad actors. I have also recently had a disappointing experience in Iron County with all the noise "pollution" that comes with these vehicles.

Safety concerns: Enforcement of rules and regulations—do we need to hire ATV patrol personnel? Also, if these motorized vehicles are allowed on town roads but not county or federal roads, how do these vehicles get to a destination? Will they use snowmobile trails and private property? More enforcement issues.

Thank you to each of you for the work you do for our community.

Stay safe and be well.

Barbara LaPorte Bartling

Supervisor Becker inquired into signage requirements if Town roads were opened up to ATV/UTV use. Bob Skrobot responded that the roads where ATV/UTV use is not allowed would need to have signage denying ATV/UTV access. Chair Hanson closed the discussion, thanking all for their input and recommending that those in favor of the proposed trail, schedule a meeting with the Town Board and those encouraging an advisory referendum put together a referendum statement in time for the November election.

--DNR Proposal for a Boat Landing on Alder Lake: Chair Hanson met with representatives from the DNR a couple of weeks back to look at the site for their proposed boat landing. Hanson expressed at that time that he did not feel that a boat landing on Alder Lake was necessary. He went on to add that DNR dollars would be better spent on improving the parking at the Clear Lake boat landing. Immediately following the Alder Lake site visit, Hanson and the DNR headed over to the Clear Lake landing. The Clear Lake landing is our second busiest landing, and often people have to park their vehicles and trailers along the Town road creating congestion in a poor spot, given the hill and corner just prior to the landing. Hanson pointed out that the State land directly across the road from the landing could easily be adapted into an overflow parking area for vehicles and trailers with pull through driveways, and very few trees would have to come down to accomplish this. Chair Hanson said that discussion ensued and he felt fairly confident that the DNR was on board with the proposed parking area improvement. Public input was received in both previous email inserts, along with a third email opposing the Alder Lake landing as follows:

To the MW Town Board:

It is completely understandable that many visitors and residents in Wisconsin would love to visit a state property on a beautiful lake like Alder, but the quality of the state shoreline and lake very well could be casualties of the proposed boat landing.

An additional boat landing with expanded parking will create another portal for invasive species on the MW chain. The invasive species introduced at the Island Lake boat landing illustrates this very real threat! With milfoil on Upper Gresham Lake and spiny water flea in Trout Lake we need to practice increased caution regarding boat transmission into the chain.

Safety concerns regarding water skiers, jet skiers, and tubers are already an issue on Alder Lake. Alder is too small to sustain additional pressure, because the northwest side of the lake is 100% sand beach, it will look like a Little Star lake, with rafts of boats during peak usage. Safety concerns regarding increased traffic on Alder Lake road (narrow with blind turns) during peak usage will conflict with the cyclist and walkers who frequently use the road.

The proposed boat landing would likely destroy or reduce the last remaining wilderness campsite on this side of the MW chain which has good swimming and lake access, those traditions of camping by water and canoeing need to remain for families.

If the goal is to make the Manitowish Waters chain much more like Minocqua, the proposed boat landing will dramatically help achieve that goal. I would prefer to keep the chain accessible to the public with a few public and private landings, but do so with SMART goals.

Jim Bokern

Resident of Alder Lake

Jim Bokern was also in attendance at the meeting and reiterated the points addressed in his written email. Chair Hanson made reference to two additional emails from Joan Byram and Emily Green, both opposing a boat landing at Alder Lake. Chuck Rayala III commented on the winter problems with the Clear Lake landing because vehicles try to exit the landing from the entrance. Supervisor Becker explained that better signage could be a solution, because if they exited from the actual intended exit where the surface is relatively flat, they would not be getting stuck trying to make it up the hill of the intended entrance. Another resident questioned why the DNR rejected the expansion of parking for the Clear Lake landing in the past, to which Hanson responded that it was never rejected by the DNR ~ they just didn't have the funding at the time that section of Clear Lake road was redone. Given complete opposition to adding a boat landing to Alder Lake, a motion was made by John Hanson and seconded by Bob Becker to contest the DNR's proposed boat landing on Alder Lake. Motion carried.

--DNR Proposal for Expanding Parking at Clear Lake Boat Landing: This agenda item already covered under the previous agenda item. A motion was made by John Hanson and seconded by Mike Kramer to recommend to the DNR that they expand the parking area for the Clear Lake boat landing. Motion carried

--Telephone System Upgrade Proposal from Granite: The Town Board listened to a presentation from Granite during a workshop just prior to this meeting. Granite offered a proposal that could save the Town approximately \$1,800.00 per year on our phone system. Hanson recommended postponing action until more information can be gathered. Ty Rayala of Great Escapes Technology pointed out that he has run into problems with CenturyLink refusing to release the phone numbers to be ported over to the new system. Dave Gouwens added that the current speed of our internet could create issues as well. With regard to these comments, Hanson asked for a sit-down with Ty and Dave to go over other options. No action was taken.

--Bike Rental Station at Koller Park: Chris McMurray, Owner of River's Edge Lodge & Outfitters, provided a proposal for a Bike Station Rental Kiosk at Koller Park. This would be similar to unmanned Bike Stations you see in larger cities, where you use your smart phone or credit card to rent bikes, and would be at no cost to the Town. Supervisor Becker raised the question of allowing private businesses on Town public property, adding that River's Edge is not that far from Town and he would rather advertise his current location, than start allowing private businesses access to Town property. Several residents agreed with Becker, regarding setting a precedence and also the fact that Koller Park is already a really busy place. Chair Hanson indicated that he thought it could be a good thing for Manitowish Waters, but alternate locations should be looked at. The item was tabled with the suggestion of sitting down with Chris McMurray to discuss it further.

--Speed Limit for E-Bikes on Bike Trails: Chair Hanson received an email from Boulder Junction Chair, Dennis Reuss, including the following communication from the Boulder Junction Chamber of Commerce:

Electric-assist bicycles are allowed on some of the Heart of Vilas County paved bike trails but must observe a 15mph speed limit.

Please note that any electric bike capable of more than 30 mph is under state law a motorcycle and not a bicycle and may not be ridden on any portion of the trail.

Supervisor Becker, who owns an electric-assist bike, knows about a dozen people who have them and none of them are under the age of 65 years or capable of going over 15 mph. To be bike trail legal, electric bikes have to cut out when they reach 20 mph. Becker felt that a speed limit would require additional signage on our trails, where we already have enough signs. He went on to add that the only bikes he has observed possibly exceeding 15 mph are regular bicycles or speedsters being ridden by youth or avid bicyclists. One resident raised the point of allowing **any** motorized vehicles on our trails where motorized vehicles are prohibited. Becker responded that there is a specific state exemption from the rule for e-bikes. For the time being, we will monitor the situation and no action will be taken.

--Water Patrol Discussion: Supervisor Kramer opened the discussion, relaying his account of 4 or 5 complaints from locals regarding excessive ticketing and rude behavior of our water patrol officers, including having multiple boats pulled over at one time

in the Rest/Stone Lake channel. Water Patrol Committee member, Dan Stella responded that he recently went out with Officer Perry, and commended him on his polite and courteous manner with contacts on the water. Stella went on to acknowledge that no one is ever happy about getting a ticket, but the Patrol Officers are just doing the job they were hired to do. Clerk Hilbert expanded on Stella's comments, applauding the Water Patrol for doing a great job and announced that with only two citations issued in the entire month of June, excessive ticketing was an exaggeration. She also endorsed the practice of pulling over multiple boats to discuss slow-no-wake policies, supporting this as an opportunity to educate multiple boaters simultaneously. She noted that the chain had been pretty much un-policed for the last two years and the Water Patrol is not *out of control*, but rather *under control* for the first time in two years. Supervisor Becker also provided praise for the good job that our current Water Patrol is doing, sharing that one of the ticket recipients sent him an email admiring how polite and respectful the Officer was. Residents on Clear Lake asked if hours-per-lake were tracked and if they kept to any kind of schedule-per-lake. They expressed major concern over after hour violations on their lake as well as mentioning that with a boat landing on their lake, it should be receiving more patrol attention. Both Stella and Becker responded that they intentionally do not stick to a schedule because this would create predictability for potential violators; going on to say that attention is given to all of the lakes, focusing where there is the most traffic. Clerk Hilbert responded that she would let the Officers know about their concerns, but is only able to do so when she is notified of the issues. This did not satisfy the residents, as this notification would not lead to an instant response. Hilbert also emphasized the effectiveness of cell phone videos that capture the boat tag and the violation as it occurs. Chair Hanson concluded the conversation, observing that he and the clerk were no longer receiving daily complaints from residents on the Rest/Stone lake channel regarding slow-no-wake violations, so obviously the Water Patrol has been effective. Hanson addressed Supervisor Kramer's remarks about multiple complaints, requesting that these individuals send their complaints to the Town in writing. If they are unwilling to send their complaints in writing, then creditability is debatable.

Standing Committee Review:

--**Vouchers:** Vouchers for June 23rd, 2020 equaled \$78,199.55, and July 14th, 2018 vouchers were \$69,707.50. A motion was made by bob Becker and seconded by Mike Kramer to approve the vouchers as stated. Motion carried.

--**P & L/Bank Balances:** P&L's and Bank Balances will be provided to the Board via email.

--**Airport Report:** Airport Reports provided to the Board in hard copy. Supervisor Becker reported that the Airport is selling more gas. On a low note, the Airport Manager, Don Fields, resigned effective October 1st, 2020. The aluminum wiring for the AWOS system needs to be replaced to eliminate the problems with the cold weather. New Airport Committee member, Jerry Wilke is also the Chairman of the committee. There is one more person looking to build a private hangar. Clerk Hilbert shared a thank you note received by Don Fields for assisting a seaplane pilot that failed to switch to solid ground landing gear while landing their seaplane at the airport. Fortunately there was no major damage to the airfield or the seaplane. Fields assisted in jacking up the plane so the wheels could be dropped. The pilot was extremely thankful for Don's assistance

--**Road Report:** Provided to the Board in written form. Supervisor Kramer reported that the new dock system at Koller Park is underway. A special thanks to Dan Meier for the use of his Jet Pump. We were finally able to pick up cold patch and patching has been completed. The new Salt Shed pad and Garage approach is done. It is now imperative that the Community Garden Committee rework an appropriate drainage area for the salt shed pad. Serwe Implements sent a technician to demonstrate how to interchange the boom arm mower back to the flail mower on the John Deere tractor. Serwe is still working on a solution concerning the bucket attachment.

--**Transfer Station:** Supervisor Kramer stated that everything is going good at the Transfer Station. A visitor raised concern about the current policy of having to pay every separate time he brings in brush. He went from paying nothing in the past to the currently having to pay for every load. He feels that the brush removal problem is primarily caused by the large contractors who bring in massive loads and should not be the responsibility of the little household customers. He went on to suggest an annual sticker program, where he could purchase a yearly sticker and not have to pay each time he comes. Chair Hanson responded, stating that he liked the idea of a sticker program for residents and it is definitely something he would like to revisit with the Town Board during budgeting workshops.

--**Water Patrol Report:** Water Patrol was covered in-depth during a previous agenda item. Clerk Hilbert share the following stats for the month of June: 131 Patrol Hours; 267 Contacts with Boaters; 118 Verbal Warnings; 25 Written Warnings; and 2 Citations.

--**Parks Report:** Chair Hanson reported that Koller Park is being utilized a lot. With regard to Rest Lake Park, the Manitowish Waters Skiing Skeeters have suspended all shows and activities due to COVID 19. Representative for the ski club, Joe McFarland, sent the following email:

John,

As you know, on July 11th at 5:36 pm we were notified that a Club parent had tested positive for COVID-19. As a result, we canceled our show that night, and immediately canceled all Club activities. We have since learned of 2 additional parents and 1 Club member that have tested positive. At this time we feel it necessary to suspend all Club activities until both the Town and the Club can determine it is safe to resume activities. The Club has no plans for any group meetings, practices, or shows at this time.

I have asked that Club members seek testing even if experiencing mild symptoms. Testing information in the local area was sent to all Club members on Sunday evening. We know additional members are seeking testing and will continue to monitor the situation, and will report any new positive test results should they arise.

Thank you for the Town's continued support of the Club. Please contact me if you have any additional questions.

Joe McFarland

Manitowish Waters Skiing Skeeters, Inc.

After receiving Joe's email, Chair Hanson reached out to EAU Holdings, who currently takes care of Rest Lake Park, and asked them to go over and sanitize the building, which had already been done after the ski show. It has now been completely sanitized twice and should be okay to use. Hanson will continue to monitor the situation with Joe and the Ski Club.

--**Broadband Committee Report:** Chair Hanson reported that the committee had been meeting. CenturyLink installed a lot of broadband fiber wire in Town two years ago to structures they call *nodes*. The Broadband committee is now looking at how to complete what they are referring to as *the final mile*, in bringing fiber wire from the nodes to residential locations to increase greater high speed internet.

Correspondence: None

At 8:25pm a Motion to Convene to Closed Session pursuant to Wisconsin Statue 19.85(1)(c) Considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance evaluation data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility.

Roll Call: Bob Becker, "Aye"; Mike Kramer, "Aye"; John Hanson, "Aye".

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned from Closed Session at 8:52pm. No action was taken.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dana Hilbert
Clerk/Treasurer