

**SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
BEMIDJI TOWNSHIP, NORTHERN TOWNSHIP, CITY OF BEMIDJI**

**Wednesday, February 1, 2012
Northern Town Hall
6:00 pm.**

PRESENT:

Bemidji Town Board Members; Jan Heuer, Joan McKinnon, Rick Petrowske, John Rowles, and Lowell Vagle. Northern Town Board Members; Dan Bahr, Clark Chambers, Jim Humeniuk and Mike Kelly. City Council Members; Rita Albrecht, Roger Hellquist, Ron Johnson, Greg Negard, Jim Thompson, and Kevin Waldhausen. Joint Planning Administrator Mayana Rice, Northern Township Clerk Mary Israelson, City Attorney Al Felix, City Engineer Craig Gray, and City Administrator John Chattin, HRDC Director Cliff Tweedale. See guest book for visitors.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of calling this special meeting of the local governmental units involved in the Greater Bemidji Area Orderly Annexation Agreement, was to respond to the City Council's action to delay initiation of Phase I of the agreement in order that consideration be given to re-evaluating the annexation boundaries, as requested by both townships. Other discussion topics that involve the three (3) entities were also included in tonight's agenda.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Northern Township Chair Mike Kelly asked that everyone seated at the table introduce themselves, and then asked for direction on appointing a moderator for this meeting. Following the introductions, Humeniuk offered a motion to appoint Kelly as moderator, with Vagle seconding. Thompson then moved to appoint Tweedale, with Johnson seconding. Discussion followed noting that this meeting included several topics unrelated to the annexation issue and Tweedale might not feel comfortable leading those discussions. Vagle moved, and Bahr seconded, a motion to cease nominations which carried unanimously. A vote was taken with Kelly being elected moderator.

ORDERLY ANNEXATION AGREEMENT/PHASES DISCUSSION:

Kelly reported that the Northern Township Board had discussed the upcoming process and suggests that each township select two (2) representatives to meet with representatives of the City (staff and/or council reps) separately and have something back to the entire group hopefully within 60 days.

Johnson suggested that Tweedale be used to facilitate these meetings as a neutral party and both of the townships agreed that they did not believe he was needed. Discussion followed with the general consensus of the townships being that Tweedale was needed at the beginning of the process whereby the Greater Bemidji Area Joint Planning Board was formed, but the group has made large strides in being able to sit down and work with each other without using an outside facilitator.

Heuer explained that the Bemidji Township Board has not discussed these ideas and would like to be able to do that before continuing. She also reported that this was the first she had heard of a 60 day timeline.

After considerable discussion, Johnson offered a motion to move on, allowing each entity to appoint two (2) representatives that would meet separately bringing their decisions back to the entire group within 4-6 weeks. Tweedale would be used to schedule the meetings and facilitate. Thompson seconded the motion. Tweedale indicated that he would be willing to help but did not believe he would be effective if everyone wasn't in agreement to use him. It was suggested that Mayana Rice or Andrew Mack be used instead. Johnson then withdrew his motion.

Waldhausen then offered a motion to appoint two (2) representatives from each entity (Northern Township will meet separately with the City and Bemidji Township will meet separately with the City), with all three (3) entities coming back to the entire group. It is hoped that this could be done within 60 days and if each entity is satisfied with the outcome of its negotiation, the other entity would support the decision. Bemidji Township would be able to appoint their representatives at their next meeting. Bahr seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken with everyone voting in favor. It was then suggested that each entity come to the meetings prepared and that the JPB office could be used along with Rice.

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES DISCUSSION:

Kelly posed the next topic for discussion; is the City of Bemidji interested in exploring the concept of a 'fire district' for the Bemidji area, and what is the progress on a new agreement?

Johnson explained that the executive committee met recently with the area's legislators about the possibility of charging non-taxable properties for emergency management services. That matter is now being researched at the state level.

Chattin added that the City was the one who suggested investigating this option, so yes, they are interested. This would involve a taxing or funding authority for not only Bemidji but statewide.

Hellquist reported that there is one (1) year left on the contract agreement, with the option of extending it. It is working, so the possibility of extending it is probable.

Rowles sits on the RFA Board and explained that this topic involves many more entities than just the three (3) sitting at this table. The RFA makes up 46% of the Bemidji Fire Department budget, but yet has no 'say' in its operation. There is no simple solution and the Fire Chief is working hard on this complex issue.

SEWER AND WATER UTILITY EXTENSIONS DISCUSSION:

Kelly asked if the City of Bemidji still requires annexation before extending utilities to an area outside of the City. The City's policy hasn't changed. Annexation has been a part of the utility extension equation in order that taxes can be collected, noting that monthly sewer/water fees do not cover the actual expense.

Humeniuk explained that his personal position is to sewer the entire lake, posing the question of how it would work. He asked if another tier of annexation could be added to the discussions, or the idea of annexing if the services are provided. It was agreed that the topic *could* be added to future discussions.

Albrecht added that there are many sides of this issue with costs a big factor in it. Protection of our waters is a community issue and there are outside agencies that ultimately need to be brought into the discussions.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE:

Bemidji Area Joint Planning Administrator Mayana Rice reported that the process has started to complete a comprehensive plan for our community. There are many different ideas and lots of plans in place already with the goal of bringing everything together without 're-inventing the wheel'.

A BSU intern will complete a land use analysis, followed by a community wide survey. Every voice will be encouraged to be heard with surveys being introduced in many different ways. Help in getting the 'word' out will be needed.

Preparation for a fall visit by the Minnesota Design Team (MDT) will take place this summer. Their weekend visit will begin on a Friday evening with a giant potluck and groups sitting at tables responding to questions that are then passed on to the next table, etc. Saturday will be spent looking at the area and presenting ideas that evening to the entire group. It should be noted that there is no obligation to take their ideas and put in a plan.

Then during the fall/winter, sub-committees will be formed to look at every aspect that might be included in the plan, i.e.; housing, history, lake, parks/recreation, stormwater, etc. Ideas from volunteers will be important.

Hopefully, following that entire process, a comprehensive plan for the entire area will be developed that will look at the future. Everyone is encouraged to get involved!!

OTHER:

Spring meeting of LGUs – Because the group has come together a couple times recently, and will do so again in the next 60 days, it was decided to focus on the task at hand (annexation phase discussions), and to play-it-by-ear before scheduling the regular spring meeting. A meeting might be scheduled that would combine a spring meeting with an introduction to the comprehensive plan project.

The meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Mary Israelson, Northern Township Clerk