

MEMO

To: Town Board
From: Michael Kuchta
Re: Town Administrator's Report

DATES COVERED IN REPORT: March 11-24, 2023

1. Accomplished/Completed

- **Ferry line.** Gave interview to Dan Kraker of Minnesota Public Radio about Town's efforts to purchase the ferry line. www.mprnews.org/story/2023/03/24/on-madeline-island-residents-aim-to-preserve-their-ferry-lifeline

2. Coming Up

- Everything is covered below or elsewhere on the agenda.

3. Town Board Agenda – Information/Comments

- **Roads, Parks, MRF.** Public Works requests the following compensation adjustments:
 - Authorize transferring 50 hours from the temporary driver position held by Evan J. Erickson to the temporary driver position held by Paul Wilharm, effective 4/12/23-12/31/23 for both positions.
 - Authorize raising Parks #1 wage from \$19.25/hour to \$20.50/hour, for a maximum of 864 hours, effective 5/14/23.
 - Authorize reducing the MRF Transportation Specialist position from 40 hours/week to a maximum of 30 hours/week, effective 4/12/23.

Impact: The changes in hours for the Transportation Specialist and in the wage for the Parks #1 position will secure the leading candidates for these positions. Reducing Transportation Specialist hours will save a minimum of \$12,518.62 in wages and payroll taxes for 2023. That will more than cover the raise in the Parks #1 wage, which would increase payroll costs approximately \$1,162.62 (for a net gain of \$11,356). The transfer of hours will leave Wilharm with 75 hours for the rest of 2023, and leave Erickson with 57 hours for the rest of the year.

- **Airport.** These are follow-up actions to the March 14 public hearing. Action requested:
 - Adopt the resolution (first two pages), which lists the airport improvement projects that the Town (aka the "Sponsor") might pursue; authorizes the state secretary of transportation to act as the Town's agent in using federal funds for these improvements; and petitions the state secretary of transportation to utilize state and/or federal aid for these improvements.
 - Adopt the agency agreement and owner assurances (third page). This essentially verifies that the Town approved the resolution and petition on the first two pages.
- **Energy Committee.** The Town will not receive an Energy Innovation Grant in this cycle for the proposed Town microgrid. The state's Office of Energy Innovation recommends that the Town pursue an "Energizing Rural Communities Prize" (through the US Department of Energy). The committee requests authorization to apply for this funding to use toward the estimated \$307,000 cost of the microgrid.

RECEIVED

MAR 24 2023

Initial: dg

- **EMS Policy.** This updated draft adds language about salaried employees (Paragraph 5), in response to your request on March 14. The policy is ready for approval. *Note:* Adopting the policy will require changing the Ambulance Service compensation schedule (Item X.A.2).
- **Insurance.** We have reworked definitions on the Town's \$20,000 group life insurance policy through Wisconsin Towns Association/The Standard. The proposed amendment would continue covering elected officials and add year-round employees who average 17.5-23 hours a week, effective June 1. As with earlier changes to short-term disability coverage, the Town Board would need to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the amendment.
- **Indigenous Music Day.** Action requested: Authorize the Town Administrator to write a letter of support as appropriate for La Pointe Center to seek additional funding for Indigenous Music Day.
- **Ambulance billing contract.** The Town Attorney has reviewed the Order Form and Statement of Work (the drafts are in your packet), and the related Revenue Cycle Management Agreement, Business Associate Agreement, and Master Service Agreement. Attorney Lindsey's only significant concern is that arbitration and court remedies would be in Colorado, not Wisconsin. Action requested: Authorize the Town Administrator to sign the Order Form and Statement of Work, effective June 1, 2023.
- **Ambulance Service compensation schedule.** Action requested: Modify the current compensation schedule, changing the rate from \$100 to \$85 for a 12-hour holiday and weekend shift (6 p.m. Friday-6 a.m. Monday) between Memorial Day weekend and the weekend after Sept. 15. The change ensures that the Town complies with the "nominal fee" standards that apply to compensating volunteers under federal wage-and-hour laws.

4. Follow Up on Previous/Ongoing Projects

- **Affordable Housing Advisory Committee.** Committee members submitted questions to Maxfield Research about Maxfield's draft "housing needs assessment"; they also requested changes and additional information to include in final report.
- **BBTP accessibility.** Regional managers from the DNR provided guidance on potential state and/or federal funding to help pay for replacing the existing stairway and bridge. Application deadline would be May 1.
- **Cell towers.** Harmoni tells us the AT&T signal is now active on the new tower. We continue to seek reports from AT&T and Verizon on their radiofrequency readings or calculations.
- **Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.** Committee members and I continue to build the draft of the new plan; we anticipate a draft will be available for public review in about a month.
- **Hagen Road.** Selection committee members (Ben Schram, Evan R. Ericson, Michael Kuchta, and Ashland County highway commissioner Matt Erickson) are scheduled to finalize ratings of the eight engineering proposals on March 27. Rankings will be forwarded to the state Department of Transportation to begin negotiations.
- **La Pointe Community Clinic.** The clinic board has asked the Town to assist their upcoming job search for a new MD or nurse practitioner to succeed Dr. Margie Fredrickson when she retires.
- **Red Cliff Tribal Council.** Sat in on the Council's March 21 meeting.

5. Grant Report

- **Public Arts Committee.** Submitted grant applications totaling \$3,000 to Grutzner and Michael Madeline Island Funds to support proposed porta-potty beautification project.

6. Lawsuits/Legal Issues

- **DOR petition.** Mike Anderson, Bill Defoe and I provided additional historical information and documentation to the Town's attorneys, who then drafted a revised stipulation of facts. The County's legal team did not agree to that list, so the April 14 hearing will be necessary. It is unclear how many facts or documents the two sides will be able to agree upon in order to narrow the scope of the hearing; attorneys were talking again on the afternoon of March 24.
- **Writ of mandamus.** The Town's attorneys expect to have a confidential memo available to discuss adding this approach to our actions against Ashland County.

7. Other Information

- **Wisconsin Towns Association.** Upcoming events:
 - County Unit Meeting, March 27, 7 p.m., Pilsen Town Hall
 - Capitol Day, March 30, 8 a.m.-2 p.m., Madison
 - District Meeting: I plan to attend the session March 31 in Cable.
 - Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance: Public hearing, April 26, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Lakeland Union High School, Minocqua.
 - 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.