

Breitung Township
Regular Board Meeting 09-16-2025, 6:00 PM
In Person Meeting at the Timothy Tomsich Community Center
33 First Avenue, Soudan MN 55782

Present In Person:

Board Members: Chairman Matthew Tuchel, Supervisor Erin Peitso, Supervisor Stephen Tekautz, Clerk Amber Zak

Public: Police Chief Daniel Reing, Robert Tammen, Trudy Hendricks Stephanie Ukkola (The Timberjay Newspaper)

Call to Order at 6:00 PM by Chairman Tuchel

Pledge of Allegiance

Acceptance of Agenda

Motion by Supervisor Tekautz to accept the agenda as presented

2nd by Chairman Peitso

Motion Passed 3-0

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Supervisor Peitso to approve the minutes of the 08-19-2025 Regular Board Meeting as presented

2nd by Supervisor Tekautz

Motion passed 3-0

Approval of Treasurer's Report

Motion by Chairman Tuchel to accept the August 2025 Treasurers Report as presented

2nd by Supervisor Tekautz

Motion passed 3-0

Correspondence

- Dena Suihkonen
- St. Louis County - LRIP
- St. Louis County Association of Townships
 - Chairman Tuchel noted that the group would begin charging for membership at a rate of \$150/year + \$0.10/capita; questioned the necessity of being part of this association and its usefulness, mentioned going to an upcoming meeting to find out more
- St. Louis County – Cannabis Ordinance Amendments
 - Chairman Tuchel mentioned placing the notice regarding cannabis use in public spaces on Facebook so that people would start becoming aware of the ordinance.

Correspondence so noted.

Public Input

Robert Tammen was in the audience; when asked whether he had any input, he noted that he hadn't attended a meeting in quite some time and was there only out of interest and noted that he was very happy with the way the Township was currently being ran. Noted with a thank you by Chairman Tuchel and others.

Reports

- Police – Attached, Chief Reing mentioned that he'd received several reports of motorists not pulling over for emergency vehicles with flashing lights. Clerk Zak offered to make a reminder on Facebook regarding the issue.
- Fire – Attached, Chairman and Assistant Chief Tuchel noted that he and Chief Banks would be looking at a used water tender next week citing that it might be more financially responsible to consider a used option rather than brand-new.
- Road and Bridge – Attached, Chairman Tuchel also noted that 6 hydrants had been repaired around town and the Public Works department with assistance from MN Rural Water Association had found one completely non-functioning and leaking which would be replaced later this week.
- Wastewater Board – Chairman Tuchel updated the board that the new water plant was still fully under construction, the old filter was gone and so the water plant is now fully dependent on the new equipment. The WWB is currently in the permitting process for the Rapid Infiltration Basin; testing was completed and results looked good. Further, the WWB is currently in the process of signing easements on the Force Main Project.
- Ambulance Commission – No meeting; nothing to report other than the planned ALS start-up was about one month out
- Housing – No meeting/report
- Recreation – Supervisor Peitso noted that Breitung Township should hear if it would be receiving the grant in October. Discussed a resident wanting to donated trees to be planted at the park, Supervisor Peitso would be researching trees for survivability in the park considering the issues that have plagued other trees planted in previous years.
- Lake Vermilion Lodging Tax Joint Powers Board – No updated, the board would be meeting at the Timothy Tomsich Community Center on October 14th at 10 AM.

Old Business:

Current Infrastructure Projects

- 2023 Infrastructure Project – JPJ has not yet gotten a final pay estimate to Mesabi Bituminous, nothing new
- McKinley Loop Trail – Currently going through the Wetland/Environmental steps; signs need to be put up notating IRRR as a fiscal sponsor for the project
- Thompson Farm Road Project – MNDoT stipulated 6 additional requirements prior to going to bid, a note from JPJ indicated the requirements would be met by the end of the week
- Stuntz Bay Access Road – Waiting for the county to close with the state for the final payout and then the project would be finished

Flood/FEMA process – Attached

Police Local 346 Union Contract

Supervisor Tekautz noted he would be meeting with the Union Representative and Chief Reing to go over the contract on October 3, 2025.

Broadband Project

9/16/2025 meeting was cancelled by CTC, they cited a desire to hold off until the current construction is complete to see how much money is left of the grant. Chairman Tuchel had reached out to note that Breitung Township still wants our area served, specifically those areas that are inaccessible by directional boring (need for Lake Country Power to allow hung wires) whether or not other communities are interested.

Joint Comprehensive Plan

Clerk Zak presented a proposal and quote from Arrowhead Regional Development Commission; she notated a price tag of approximately \$25k. It was further noted that there was 50% funding available from the IRRR and that the overall process would take between 9 – 10 months. Chairman Tuchel noted the advantages of the plan being that the township and the city would then have a clear insight into what our residents want and any changes that should be made

Motion by Chairman Tuchel to move forward with the Joint Comprehensive Plan and request that the City of Tower move to participate as well with the contingency that our entities receive funding for the plan from the IRRR

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion Passed 3-0

Workers' Compensation Insurance

A late addition to the Public Packet was received by Clerk Zak. While confirming legality of the updated Workers' Compensation policy in the Breitung Employee Handbook, it was noted that the handbook was due for an update. Clerk Zak requested the necessary changes to be made by attorneys at Johnson, Killen, and Seiler PA. The law firm provided a draft of the changes just ahead of the meeting; because it was received on such short notice, the decision was made to table the changes until they could be reviewed completely. It was noted that the Workers' Compensation was satisfactory and should be approved by the union representatives; once approved, that section would be ready for board approval.

Minnesota Paid Leave Act

Chairman Tuchel noted that funding of the Paid Leave Act should be part of Union Contract Negotiations; he elaborated that he would like to see the township pay the full .88% tax on employee income, but would need to take consideration of the cost. The issue was tabled for the time being.

Turn existing trails over to Mesabi Trail

Clerk Zak had discussed the topic with the City of Tower Clerk; he was under the impression that this would be occurring for Tower once the trails were complete. Clerk Zak advised the board to wait until the trails were complete to pursue turning them over and suggested doing so jointly with the City of Tower. Item to be removed from Old Business until such a time as it is ready to be addressed.

Police Squad Replacement

Chief Reing presented two new quotes for police vehicle replacement; the board was open to the replacement, requested Chief Reing make sure that the company he received the quote from was on the Minnesota State Bid System – this would ensure Breitung not needing to acquire multiple quotes. Further discussion on whether equipment could be transferred between old and new vehicles considering they would be the same make and model; Chief Reing felt that due to changes of the vehicle and the state of some of the equipment, the ability to transfer it to the new vehicle would be unlikely. Chief Reing noted that the current squad was in good condition (2017, 105k miles, putting on roughly 20k/year), however he was concerned that parts of it would start to fail as it aged – he further noted that most agencies change vehicles every 3 – 4 years, which Breitung Police Department was well past. The board directed Chief Reing to find out if the 2025 model came with radar and to get a quote with a push-bumper included. Tabled the issue for the time being.

New Business:

Pay Bills as Presented

Motion by Supervisor Tekautz to Pay Bills as Presented

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion Passed 3-0

McKinley Park Campground

Supervisor Tekautz had received a verbal notice from Campground Hosts Susie & Jerry Chiabotti that they would not be renewing their contract for the 2026 camping season. In discussion on host replacement and contract changes, Supervisor Tekautz is hoping that the Chiabotti's will let the township know what needs to be acquired as far as tools and equipment go. Chairman Tichel requested Clerk Zak to obtain contracts from Babbitt and Hoyt Lakes Municipal campgrounds if they would be willing to share; he provided a copy of Tower's contract to the supervisors noting that McKinley Park Campground has the potential to bring in some great revenue to the township. Other considerations were whether the township would pay additional employees, and whether an online reservation system should be implemented. No action taken at this time, supervisors to consider changes to be made to the contract.

Resolution 2025-20: Resolution to Open a High Yield Money Market account with Frandsen Bank & Trust

Motion by Chairman Tichel to approve Resolution 2025-20

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion Passed 3-0

Boat Launch Fee Waiver

City of Tower requested waived fee during DNR scheduled maintenance on their public landing beginning September 29th. Considering that the close of campground season would be September 30th, the board was hesitant to grant the waiver due to potential congestion.

Motion by Chairman Tichel to waive the fee beginning Wednesday, October 1st (after closure of campground) and ending Friday, October 31st, 2025.

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion Passed 3-0

Parcel 270-0110-2912 – Driveway/Utilities

Chairman Tuchel discussed a request from Geoff Griffin to place a driveway and water utilities to his property at the top of 2nd Avenue; driveway would cross township property and sewer could be tied into sewer manhole located in front of the neighboring house. Supervisor Tuchel explained that this would be of no cost to the township and any damages incurred due to the work would be payable by Mr. Griffin. He elaborated further that the township should retain easement on the property and should they ever wish to develop neighboring lots, they would be able to create a road over Mr. Griffin's driveway. Another facet to the request is snow placement; currently public works uses the space to push snow; Mr. Griffin has offered to clear additional trees for the purpose of creating a space for the snow.

Motion by Supervisor Tekautz to accept the plan of water/sewer/driveway access with the caveats that the township would retain the easement to their land, Mr. Griffin would pay applicable connection fees to the water department, if adjoining lots are developed and a street needs to be placed the township would be able to do so, full restoration of impacted areas would be the responsibility of Mr. Griffin and that the motion be contingent upon township attorney approval

2nd by Chairman Tuchel

Discussion: Supervisor Peitso noted that she does not prefer to see garages and pole buildings erected, would prefer homes. Short of attempting to take planning and zoning back over, the township had no say in this according to Chairman Tuchel. Chairman Tuchel reiterated a concern that after 7 years of continual use and improvement to a section of another's property, the user retains a permanent right to continue using it as such; he aimed to avoid this with the caveats in the motion.

Motion Passed 3-0

Next Board Meetings

Regular Board Meeting on 10/21/2025 at 6:00 PM

Adjourn

Motion by Supervisor Tekautz to adjourn the meeting at 7:23 PM

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion passed 3-0

Respectfully Submitted

Amber Zak
Clerk, Breitung Township