

Breitung Township
Regular Board Meeting 10-21-2025, 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, Treasurer Teresa Dolinar

Public: Police Chief Daniel Reing, Fire Chief Trevor Banks, Maintenance Supervisor Tom Gorsma, Nancy Larson, Dianna Sundahl, 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 Chairman Tuchel to approve the minutes of the 09-16-2025 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 September 2025 Treasurers Report as presented

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion passed 3-0

Correspondence

- St. Louis County – AIS Grant
 - Supervisor Tekautz agreed to look over the opportunity to benefit either McKinley Park or Stuntz Bay Landing
- St. Louis County – Board of Adjustment
- Stephanie Ukkola – Girl Scout Troop 1302
 - Clerk Zak agreed to work with the girl scout troop on dates pending whether others would like to reserve the town hall as paying renters on reserved dates
- St. Louis County Association of Townships
- RAMS Annual Dinner Invitation

Correspondence so noted.

Public Input

None

Reports

- Police – Attached, Chief Reing reported that 175-200 people had been present at Tacos with Cops. Supervisor Tekautz questioned whether the township could continue to event; Clerk Zak explained that the event was fine, however donations could be accepted but not *solicited*.
- Fire – Attached.
- Road and Bridge – Attached.
- Wastewater Board – Chairman Tuchel noted that water plant construction was still ongoing.
- Ambulance Commission – No meeting; Chairman Tuchel noted that the ALS would not start until next year as they were still waiting on fleet vehicles but offered to start training with TAAS.
- Housing – No meeting/report
- Recreation – Supervisor Peitso stated that she had not yet heard if Breitung Township had received the grant, the expectation was to hear this month.
- Lake Vermilion Lodging Tax Joint Powers Board – Chairman Tuchel discussed the same day meeting held at the Timothy Tomsich Community Center; revenue is up by 17.5%, the switch to MN Dept of Revenue collections would be occurring in November. The next meeting is scheduled for January.

Old Business:

Police Local 346 Union Contract

The proposed updates of the contract were reviewed by Supervisors. It was noted that the biggest change was the pay increase and the uniform allowance increase with the option to carryover balances up to \$2000. Chairman Tuchel questioned whether the uniform allowance increase and carryover was necessary; Fire Chief Trevor Banks volunteered information as a former law enforcement agent, explaining that the cost of uniforms was only going up and it only took one incident to ruin any part of a uniform (blood, tears, etc).

Clerk Zak requested that the holiday pay wording be updated to match that of the Maintenance Union Contract as it contained the same benefit but clearer description. She stated that should there be new personnel in the positions of clerk or treasurer in the future, it would be easier for a new employee to follow the pay benefit. Additionally, it was clarified that the work week and pay schedule could be determined by the Treasurer to better suit payroll needs.

Further discussion was had concerning the funding of the contract; Chairman Tuchel noted that his goal was to have a fully funded year of police coverage in the bank in the event that the City of Tower should opt out of the contract. Clerk Zak and Deputy Clerk Sunsdahl offered that they were under the impression that those funds were already in township accounts; Chairman Tuchel directed Treasurer Dolinar to verify that the funds had been set aside.

Motion by Supervisor Tekautz to accept the proposed contract with the contingency that the new wording ("Holidays will be compensated by an extra paid day off, or on approval of the Employer, payment will be given to the employee. If work is required on a holiday, employee will be paid time and a half plus one day off") be applied to the holiday section and the removal of Uniform Allowance Carryover language be removed

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion passed 3-0

Police Squad Replacement

Chief Reing noted that his previously supplied quotes from ESU Pursuits were not associated with the state's cooperative purchasing venture. Clerk Zak referred to the MAT Manual on Town Government, explaining that, "When a contract is estimated to exceed \$25,000, a town "must consider the availability, price and quality of supplies, materials, or equipment available through the state's cooperative purchasing venture (CPV) before purchasing through another source." Minn. Stat. SS 471.345, subd 15. Therefore, the minutes of the meeting should at least reflect that the board reviewed the items available through and explain why the board decided not to purchase from the state (if that is the decision)."

With this information, the board tasked Chief Reing with getting a quote for the add-on equipment if the vehicles were purchased from Lundgren Motors (CPV) prior to the next meeting. If the quotation for the add-ons was comparable, the board could make a decision at that time to order the new vehicle.

Current Infrastructure Projects

- 2023 Infrastructure Project – A final pay estimate was submitted in the amount of \$16,611.22 with a contingency that Mesabi Bituminous submit their IC-134 forms. The board questioned Change Order #3 in the amount of #7,280.35; not being able to locate said change order and with the IC-134 forms still not submitted, the board elected to table the matter until next meeting. The clerk was directed to contact JPJ regarding Change Order #3 as well as find out if there were any additional invoices to be received from JPJ.
- McKinley Loop Trail – Nothing new, waiting on wetland credits and easements
- Thompson Farm Road Project – MNDOT stipulated 6 additional requirements prior to going to bid; 4 of the 6 changes have been completed with the next two expected to be completed next week. Chairman Tuchel noted that the DNR was intending to do a grand opening of the new recreation area Memorial Weekend of 2026; it is his desire that the trail at least be punched in by that time for the riders
- Stuntz Bay Access Road – Waiting to hear from Eric Fallstrom of St Louis County on project closeout

Flood/FEMA process – Attached, Clerk Zak questioned whether Stuntz Bay Road would be repaired, Chairman Tuchel indicated a 50/50 chance.

Broadband Project

Nothing new to report.

Joint Comprehensive Plan

Heard that Tower made a motion to update the JCP pending project funding from IRRR, however the City was not currently ready to start the project as they will soon be losing their Clerk/Treasurer and are in the process of replacement. It was decided to hold off on the JCP until the city had someone established in the position and ready to take on the task of meetings and organization. The JCP will again be looked at in February.

Workers' Compensation Insurance

Supervisors Reviewed the Employee Handbook changes submitted by township attorney; heard that two items were cause for concern:

Page 4, remove suggestion regarding Accommodations: *Breitung Township will provide reasonable accommodations for disability, including, but not limited to, reassignment of marginal job duties, additional breaks, or leave.*

Page 16, keep suggestion subtraction regarding Jury Duty Leave: *Breitung Township may request that an employee be relieved from jury duty if we think that their absence from work would cause serious operational problems.*

Motion by Chairman Tuchel to approve the changes to the Breitung Township Employee Handbook contingent on the adjustments referred to above and approved as legal by the township attorney

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion Passed 3-0

Minnesota Paid Leave Act

Treasurer Dolinar indicated that the township would need to display a poster for employees as well as send out a letter notifying them of how the MN Paid Leave Act will be handled by December 1, 1025.

Board members discussed paying the full .88% versus having the employee and township split the cost by paying .44%/.44%, with concerns over future costs. It was noted that the coverage could be changed yearly, if necessary, Supervisor Tekautz indicated that he expected the unions to push for full township coverage

Motion by Supervisor Tekautz to pay the full .88% of the assessment for the wages of qualifying employees

2nd by Chairman Tuchel

Motion passed 3-0

McKinley Park Campground

- Manager & Contract: Supervisor Tekautz noted that he'd like to see the township make more revenue on the campground venture, mentioning he'd like to see a contract more similar to that of the City of Tower; issues to note in updating the contract include added responsibilities and the cost associated with those responsibilities and whether equipment should be provided by the contractor or the township (mowers, weed whips, etc). Supervisors agreed to review the current contract and mark it up for edits; Clerk Zak agreed to compile the requested changes into one draft document.
- Accessibility Project: Supervisor Tekautz proposed the project making McKinley Park Campground handicap accessibility, note that Hibbing had recently developed the only accessible campground in the area, gave the floor to Nancy Larson to discuss the process. Nancy explained that the funding of an accessibility project could come from the DNR Outdoor Recreation Grant; for this grant, she explained, planning is the most important piece. She noted that to figure out what needed to be adjusted (accessible docks, beach, camper pads, amenities, etc), the township could hire an Accessibility Specialist with an estimated cost of \$2,000 - \$7,000 which could be covered by a 50/50 IRRR grant. She discussed that an updated Comprehensive Plan would be very helpful, it would be important to have a committee, do a survey of the needs, and meetings. She tasked the township with organizing a committee to get an assessment of what improvements citizens and visitors feel should be made.

New Business:

Pay Bills as Presented

Motion by Supervisor Peitso to Pay Bills as Presented

2nd by Supervisor Tekautz

Motion Passed 3-0

Fire Truck Purchase

Fire Chief Banks spoke on his request to purchase a used fire truck to replace Tender #2, detailing benefits of the vehicle (automatic transmission, back up camera, run & pump, etc), and the negotiation process (original asking price was \$200k).

Clerk Zak provided attorney correspondence information indicating that the truck could be purchased without going through the steps of receiving sealed bids. The explanation provided by Robert Pearson, township attorney, was as follows: 'Minn Stat 471.3455 that carves out an exception for the purchase of public safety equipment (like fire trucks). The law specifies that "Notwithstanding section 465.71 or 471.345, a local government may acquire by purchase or lease used public safety equipment without competitive bidding or proposals if the equipment is clearly and legitimately limited to a single source of supply, and the contract price may be best established by direct negotiation."

It was noted that once the purchase and transfer of vehicle was completed, the Fire Department and Breitung Township would look into selling the old truck.

Motion by Supervisor Tekautz to approve the purchase of the fire truck as presented for the price of \$190,000

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion passed 2-0 with Chairman Tuchel abstaining due to conflict of interest

Equipment Sale

The board reviewed a request by Maintenance Supervisor Gorsma to sell two pieces of equipment on MN-Bid, a mower with snowblower attachments and a 9 x 12 utility trailer with a lifetime license
Motion by Chairman Tuchel to approve the sale of said equipment on MN-Bid
2nd by Supervisor Peitso
Motion Passed 3-0

Snow Removal Contractor

Maintenance Supervisor Gorsma expressed interest in hiring a contractor to do snow removal this winter; due to the Maintenance Assistance being out on injury and only minimal interest from local snow plow drivers previously used, he requested to have operators from C & C Winger contracted to do the work on heavy snowfalls. The cost of an operator was currently unknown, but it would be a union rate as the employees of the company are unionized operators.

Motion by Supervisor Tekautz to have Supervisor Peitso negotiate the cost and scope of work with Maintenance Supervisor Gorsma and Corey Winger of C & C Winger
2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion Passed 2-0 with Chairman Tuchel abstaining due to conflict of interest

St Louis County Association of Townships

Board discussed the merits of being part of the SLCAT and that the cost of \$150 + \$0.10/capita was relatively minimal, board approved membership to the SLCAT for the fee, no motion was made due to the relatively low dollar amount of the membership

Resolution 2025-21: Accepting Donations

Motion by Chairman Tuchel to approve Resolution 2025-21
2nd by Supervisor Peitso
Motion passed 3-0

Next Board Meetings

Regular Board Meeting on 11/18/2025 at 6:00 PM

Adjourn

Motion by Chairman Tuchel to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 PM
2nd by Supervisor Peitso
Motion passed 3-0

Respectfully Submitted

Amber Zak
Clerk, Breitung Township