

VILLAGE OF NORTH PRAIRIE
MEETING OF PUBLIC WORKS, BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 26, 2024 5:30 p.m.
Village Hall- 130 N. Harrison Street

Call to Order. 5:32pm

Roll Call. Dave Stellpflug, Dave Molitor, Deb Hall, Amber Pellegrino

1. Discussion and/or action as necessary: Approval of January 3, 2024 minutes.

Unanimous approval of the January 3, 2024 minutes on a motion by Dave Stellpflug and 2nd by Amber Pellegrino.

2. Discussion and/or action as necessary: Open Received Bids for the Installation of 2 Covered Pavilions at Broadlands Park.

We did receive 3 bids for the project.

JG Samuels \$35,617 / \$80,665 / \$116,282

Ford Cnstr \$62,815 / \$111,215 / \$171,395

Ray Stadler \$61,104 / 162,121 / \$223,231

All met our specs, all mentioned the electrical would need to be confirmed, there is not enough power in the distribution box as thought. With this in mid Dave Molitor will contact WE Energies to see what this will add to the expense.

3. Discussion and/or action as necessary: The North Prairie Historical Society would like to host a car show in the Park this summer.

The Historical Society wants to hold fundraiser at Veterans Park. Will be from approx. 6pm-8pm. There will be music and a car show with limited size. Will be a good will offering for the fundraiser.

Unanimous approval to wave the rental fee for this event on 06/27/24 on a motion by Deb Hall and 2nd by Amber Pellegrino.

4. Discussion and/or action as necessary: Contract for Pond Maintenance.

One bid from Aquatic Biologist for \$3,932.50 includes minnows being added this year. Unanimous approval for the contract from Aquatic Biologist at an amount NTE \$3932.50 on a motion by Deb Hall and 2nd by Amber Pellegrino.

5. Discussion and/or action as necessary: Contract for Lawn Spraying Maintenance.

One bid from Trugreen for \$2772.31. Dave Molitor mentioned The Friends of the Prairie Village Native Gardens would prefer we do not spray for weeds in the parks. We discussed this and decided to do what we have done in the past and not spray the immediate areas around their gardens. We do not want broadleaf weeds taking over the playing fields.

Unanimous approval for the contract from Trugreen at an amount NTE \$2,772.31 on a motion by Dave Stellpflug and 2nd by Deb Hall.

6. Discussion and/or action as necessary: Contract for 2024 Portable Toilets.

One bid from Stop n Go Portables for \$1,900 for the season. The Village will install hand sanitizer stations on posts outside the units and maintain them.

Unanimous approval of the contract from Stop n Go Portables for an amount NTE \$1,900 on a motion by Deb Hall and 2nd by Dave Stellpflug.

7. Discussion and/or action as necessary: Security Cameras for the Village Parks and Village Hall.

There has been more issues with someone driving on the fields at Broadlands Park, Do we install dummy cameras, post signs, trail cameras? This should be a Village wide issue will send to Public Safety Committee for input. If we do live cameras there are issues that will need to be resolved.

8. Discussion and/or option as necessary: Veterans Park Infield Restoration.

9. Discussion and/or option as necessary: Proposed Recycling/Garbage Fee/Tax

John Heintz Taylor read a prepared statement to us on this issue. Will attach a copy to these minutes.

10. Discussion and/or action as necessary: Contract for mowing Prairie Village Water Trust.

Table Dave Stellpflug to find copy of contract.

11. Discussion and/or action as necessary: Adjourn

Unanimous approval for adjournment at 7:06pm on a motion by Amber Pellegrino and 2nd by Deb Hall.

Buildings and Grounds

Dave Stellpflug, Chair
Deb Hall, Member
Amber Pellegrino, Member

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JOHN HEINTZ TAYLOR

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TAXES VS FEES

There are several means by which Municipalities can generate revenues: Taxes, Contracted services between municipalities such as: fire and rescue, police, snow plowing; fundraisers similar to Genesee, Shared Revenues from the State which is paid by taxpayers, and ... Fees. Over the past few years, it seems the board has reduced it's focus to taxes and fees. Taxes are based on assessed value. Fees are based on Equalized Value. In 2023 I heard a Trustee express in a public meeting that if the Village would charge a garbage collection fee, then the Village would simply take the cost and divide it by the number of lots (1000?), and that would be the garbage collection fee each property owner would pay. Comments such as these, are the definition of fees based on equalized value.

However, the assessor does not assess all properties based on equalized value, thus we do not all pay taxes in equal amounts. Nor do we all require an equal amount of service. Nor do we all use the resources equally. Properties in North Prairie range in assessed value from \$180,000.00 up to \$3.7 million. Fees, which are based on equalized value, simply takes: cost of a service, divided by the number of properties, equals the same fee for everyone regardless of assessed value, income, or ability to recoup the fees. Fees based on equalized value favors the rich who can afford increased taxes in the first place, and penalizes lower to middle class, elderly, and entry level property owners who are a vital part of this community. Examples of the unfairness of fees based on equalized value are:

Fees for Fire Service are unfair: a property assessed at \$3.7 million dollars, and have an income to support that investment, would pay an equal fee as a single resident in their own home on social security. A few years ago, the train started some crops on fire on our farm. When the NPPFD arrived with one grass rig, one of the crew told me they were simply going to let the crops burn and just make sure the fire did not spread to other properties. I am sure this lack of service would be unacceptable in the industrial park, or a residence, or apartment complex. If the Village had been charging a fire fee based on equalized value, at that time, I doubt that the fire department would have provided equalized service.

Fees for Trash collection are unfair: a family of five or six can overflow a standard sized garbage Toter with trash every week, and would pay an equal fee as an elderly couple who can barely fill a ½ Toter every 2 weeks.

Fees for Tires / Wheel fee are unfair: usually added to vehicle registrations, collected by the State, State retains a service fee and returns a portion to the municipality for transportation improvements. A 2 car family, in a starter home, would pay the same wheel fee (either per tire or per vehicle) as would a large business in the industrial park IF that business had their own pick-up trucks to make deliveries. Some businesses use outside contract trucking companies for their hauling and may not even have 2 vehicles on which to pay a wheel tax, but still require Village roads to conduct business. Also, consider golf carts in the Broadlands vs Waukesha County DOT trucks / Sheriff's cruisers at the North Prairie substation, both use Village roads in respective areas, but not on an equalized basis.

If the tax levy is increased, then by Statute North Prairie is not entitled to receive that amount of State Shared Revenue (paid by state taxes collected), nor should we expect to do "Double Dipping". We would have generated the necessary revenue through increasing the local tax levy. Similar to: States that have tollways do not receive federal transportation aid; and, Social Security has earning limits that if surpassed then reduces benefits accordingly.

In closing, this is simply a question of: raising taxes vs. adding fees to the existing taxes. While raising Taxes is never popular, introducing Fees for services will not have taxpayers dancing in the streets. Fees will not lower taxes. In fact, the tax levy will most likely remain the same and be spent on other municipal expenses and investments. Introducing fees will be in addition to the existing taxes. In closing, the Village needs to collect an appropriate level of revenue, not by introducing fees which are based on an equalized value of all properties in the Village, but by the fairness of appropriately taxing the assessed value of those properties. The Village does have some monies in the General fund, but needs to make a concerted effort now to bring themselves into the current financial atmosphere. I recommend that the Village Board investigate all the options mentioned, hold public hearings that explore those options in their entirety, and then put it to a referendum to let the people decide. That would be the most politically responsible service the Board could provide to their taxpayers.