

# ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES – TOWN OF GRAND CHUTE - 1900 GRAND CHUTE BOULEVARD – APRIL 18, 2023

Annual Town Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Jason Van Eperen, presiding officer.

## PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Jason Van Eperen

## INTRODUCTIONS AND OTHERS PRESENT

Jim March, Town Administrator; Mike Patza, Community Development Director; Greg Peterson, Police Chief; Dave Maas, Police Captain; Julie Calmes, Finance Director; Kayla Raatz, Town Clerk; Brent Braun, Information Technology Director; Sue Brinkman, Human Resources Director; Katie Schwartz, Public Works Director; Steve Denzien, Fire Chief; Kelly Hanink, Assistant Fire Chief; Nick Vande Hey, McMahon Engineer; Attorney Rossmeissl, Herrling Clark Law.

See sign-in sheet for residents and non-residents in attendance.

## MINUTES

Minutes of the Annual Meeting – April 19, 2022

Presiding Officer Van Eperen stated there were two corrections that needed to be made to the minutes. The corrections were the spelling of three names, Devin Nikodem, Brad Paltzer, and Karen Petersen

**Motion (Mark Heling/Ron Torrance) to approve minutes of April 19, 2022 with corrections. Motion carried by voice vote.**

## AWARDS

Presentation of Awards – There were no awards to present.

## REPORTS

2022 Annual/Financial Report – There were no questions on the annual report.

## BUSINESS FROM TOWN ELECTORS

Presiding Officer Van Eperen asked that everyone be respectful of others' comments. He also read a statement regarding the Town Administrator: "The Town Board has been working with legal counsel to address concerns that have arisen related to the Office of Town Administrator. The citizens of the Town have a right to transparency and accountability in their Town government. The Town Board understands and appreciates the need for transparency. Legal counsel has advised against public statements, discussions, discourse, etc. while the Town Board continues its discussions with legal counsel. The Town Board will fully inform the public to the action it takes at the appropriate time."

Presiding Officer Van Eperen asked if there were any electors that wanted to speak.

Ed Perkins, 4486 N. White Hawk Drive, discussed the question surrounding Supervisor Ron Wolff's residency. He stated that the previous Town Clerk performed two investigations on Supervisor Wolff's residency and was unable to find proof that he was not a resident of Grand Chute and was entitled to hold office. Yet the issue was still being discussed. He believes that the Wolff residency question arose due to the Elsner Road special assessments. He believes that the recent change from shifting special assessments for roads onto the property taxes is an improvement. He also thinks the Town should review the current practices for obtaining estimates on costly projects, such as the painting of the water tower. He stated he was glad that the special assessment lawsuits were over because he did not like the Town having to spend money on attorney fees to challenge lawsuits filed by its own residents.

ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES – TOWN OF GRAND CHUTE - 1900 GRAND CHUTE BOULEVARD – APRIL 18, 2023

Mary Klasen, 4510 W. Tamarack Court, spoke on two topics, the potential firing on Jim March and the words and actions of an organization called “Citizens for Truth.” She stated that the motto from Grand Chute is Experience Better which can only work if town officials and residents work together. She stated that in order for this to happen there needs to be three things. The first being a talented and dedicated staff, from the Town Administrator down to the people who are in charge of cleaning the building, from what she has seen, the staff at Grand Chute are talented, professional, and work really hard to make Grand Chute a great community. Second, a Town Board to be straight, smart, forward thinking, and transparent. She thought that the Board was trying, but recently it seems that politics and nitpicking was getting in the way of good governance. She stated that in order to keep a dedicated and talented staff the Board needs to respect staff, work with them, and they cannot just decide they do not like someone and give someone the boot. All this does is make the other staff want to go somewhere else. If there is a reason for the potential firing of Administrator March then the public has a right to know. She acknowledged Presiding Officer Van Eperen’s statement. She noted that from what the public knows Administrator March’s reviews have been exemplary and there is huge support from the departments of the Town. She believes that this ongoing disruption is going to effect the Town’s ability to do business and recruitment of staff in the future. If the Town Board decides to fire Administrator March, it better hire a full-time, well-educated, experienced, and competent administrator. Lastly, the Town needs people that are willing to be positive members of the Town. She is disturbed by the group called “Citizens for Truth” that are telling lies about other citizens in Grand Chute. The group does not use their own names. She stated that she has spoken at meetings before and was not organized by Supervisor Gehring or asked to speak at his direction. She stated she has not participated in any bullying or grandstanding. She stated that the group’s rhetoric is no different than what is happening nationally. If someone does not like a policy and they cannot think of a better plan the next best thing is to slam the people who have a different opinion than theirs.

David Greene, 590 W. Highland Park Avenue Apt 1626, issued a statement of caution to the Board members considering firing Administrator March without cause. He asked who would pay the lawsuit that would no doubt come about shortly after if he were to be terminated. He asked if the Board would be notifying each citizen about the decision and that it would likely cost the Town millions. He advised the Board to give this further thought.

Frank Witt, 4055 N. Orion Lane Apt 1, stated that prior to the last election when significant Washington money was injected into the election in support of Supervisor English, local elections were about local residents assisting local candidates for a Town Board election. The residents can then decide on who to vote for on local issues. The money that came in from Open Democracy PAC has damaged the previously nonpartisan supervisor positions. Future candidates for these seats will have to consider obtaining these types of funds in order to compete. He stated that organizations like Open Democracy PAC does not give money out without wanting something in return. He does not believe that Grand Chute policies should be determined by Washington political action committees. Open Democracy PAC has been associated with the League of Women Voters which is aligned with the Democratic Party. While everything they did for Supervisor English is allowed by law, it is the personal integrity of the candidate for a nonpartisan position to decide to accept or reject those funds.

Kurt Wilmot, 3053 W. Hiawatha Drive, stated he agreed with Mr. Perkins and Mr. Witt. He stated he does not know Supervisor English and she may do a wonderful job, but he does not have faith in money coming from Washington. He stated he moved to Grand Chute because he liked the rural area and the ditches. When they put curb and gutter in by the Tech they made a large

## ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES – TOWN OF GRAND CHUTE - 1900 GRAND CHUTE BOULEVARD – APRIL 18, 2023

pond for the water to go in, but it is always empty and they charged him and other residents in the area to pay for it. He stated that after the curb and gutter were put in some of his neighbors had flooding in their basement and now Grand Chute looks like the City of Appleton.

Jeanne Collins, 3869 Wayside Lane, stated she was there to speak on the topic of firing Administrator March. She stated that Supervisor Gehring was the one to vote against firing Administrator March and has dedicated his adult life contributing to the community. She stated his credibility is very important and she believes him. She did not believe that Grand Chute would benefit from firing Administrator March and she does not want to pay for a lawyer so that the Town Board can have what they want. She stated that the newspaper article was very embarrassing and that the Town Chair should know what the Administrator's salary is and what his raises will be.

James Reider, 1324 W. Elsner Road, stated that five years ago when he spoke in front of the Board he was not respected. He had to pay for the Town's lawyer and his own lawyer because the Town was not following its own policy when they were implementing all the urbanization. At that time the people of Grand Chute made a change because they were not being respected and heard. The majority of the people voted this Town Board in and years later they are not allowed to do their job because the finger pointing will not stop. He stated it was time these elected officials were respected and that the Board has the residents' best interests in mind. The residents of Grand Chute need to support the Board.

Chris Beyer, 5060 N. Indigo Lane, stated they chose to move to Grand Chute because it appeared to be quaint and old school, but once they moved they noticed activity that does not appear to represent the people, such as special assessments. He has also seen activity against Board members, no different than at the State or Federal level. He believes it is a one man show in Grand Chute and when a Board member is treated in a way that one is over something minor, it can only be described as intimidation. With this Board he has seen changes and they are heading in the right direction. The Board is trying to cut costs and do things for the people. He stated whatever happens to Administrator March will happen one way or another, but the people need to support this Town Board as much as they can.

Sharon Huss, 1407 W. Starview Drive, stated that she brought with her the special assessment policy that was adopted in August 1993 and amended in February 2013. She suggested that the Town Board and citizens discuss and update the policy. She also stated that she brought with her the February 2019 Elsner Road urbanization public hearing. The urbanization caused much hardship on the people living on Elsner Road. The same thing happened on Spencer Street. She stated there was one resident who was 90 years old and had an assessment more than the value of her house. She stated that she believes the new Town Board is doing a great job trying to work through these issues and the people need to support them.

Dave Schowalter, 1821 Margaret Street, stated that he felt compelled to respond to some of the comments that had been made. He stated he was the Chair of the past Town Board and the 90 year old woman did not have to pay a nickel until her property was sold. Since he did not plan on speaking about this he did not have the numbers in front of him, but he said that her property sold for a large amount of money and at that time the assessment had to be paid so the 90 year old did not have to worry about how much her assessment was. In the past the Town has spent \$9 million on roads and this current Board decided they are going to spend half of that at \$4.6 million. He stated the Casaloma project this year was \$5 million for 7/10<sup>th</sup> of a mile and there are 130 miles of road in Grand Chute. With that math, roads will get done once every 183 years. This Board made the decision to suspend special assessments but has no plan on how to pay

ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES – TOWN OF GRAND CHUTE - 1900 GRAND CHUTE BOULEVARD – APRIL 18, 2023

for the roads so they are borrowing the money. It reminded him of another community that did too much borrowing and now their taxes are the highest in the region. He spoke on the attorney fees for the special assessments. The settlements were made out of court, one of the settlements was for Supervisor Ron Wolff and another for Mr. Long who donated to several of the supervisors' campaigns. The Harley Shop was another campaign contributor. He stated there were signs out for the most recent election that said "Respect for Residents", but at the meeting the other morning the Board did not show respect for the people. Supervisor Gehring made a motion to suspend the rules to allow the remaining residents who signed up to speak to address the Board, but the other Board members did not allow the residents to speak. He stated he wanted to address the salary of the Administrator and that the Board stated Administrator March made too much and did not tell Chair Van Eperen what he was making. The Chair should know how much he is making because he voted on it. If the Chair did not know what he was voting on that means he should not have voted on it and that may also mean that the Chair did not read his packet. If the Board members do not read their packets they do not belong on the Board. If they are going to compare the salary and duties of the Town Administrator, they should be comparing it to the City of De Pere. A Board member recently compared the Town Administrator to the Mayor of Appleton, if they are going to use that comparison then they should compare the salaries of the Town Board to the City Council members who are paid approximately \$4,000 less than the Grand Chute Town Board members. Others here tonight have brought up the amount of money going into the local elections. He stated that when Supervisor Ings first ran for Town Board a couple years ago he spent just under \$18,000 on his campaign. When he ran he spent about \$4,000 which is about average. The campaign finance forms are public record.

Jim Frymark, 4876 N. Indigo Lane, congratulated the re-elected members of the Board that have demonstrated forward thinking. He hoped that all Board members will work together constructively as a team to meet the challenges and growth taking place in the Town. He stated that he expects the Town Board to be the taxpayer watchdog. He asked the Board not be penny-wise and pound foolish in implementing assessment practices used in the past. He also asked the Board to respect the expertise of the Town Administrator and Town staff, and that their input should not be dismissed or ignored.

ADJOURNMENT

**Motion (Ron Torrance/James Reider) to adjourn. Motion carried by voice vote.**

2023 Annual Meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

These minutes were taken at a regular meeting held on April 18, 2023 and entered in this record book April 20, 2023 by:

---

Kayla Filen, Town Clerk  
Town of Grand Chute  
**Approved April 16, 2024**