

Breitung Township
Regular Board Meeting 08-19-2025, 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, Treasurer Teresa Dolinar, Clerk Amber Zak

Public: Police Chief Daniel Reing, Stephanie Ukkola (The Timberjay Newspaper), John Jamnick (JPJ Engineering),

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 07-15-2025 Regular Board Meeting as presented

2nd by Supervisor Tekautz

Motion passed 3-0

Approval of Treasurer's Report

Motion by Supervisor Tekautz to accept the June 2025 Treasurers Report as presented

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion passed 3-0

Correspondence

- Amanda Meyer
- Noah Hunter & Family
- MAT District 10 Meeting Notice
- Minnesota Township Insider
 - Milestones of Tim Tomsich & Jorgine Gornick
- Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation: State of the Range Invite
- Sarah Hansen: Big Truck Night

Correspondence so noted.

Public Input

None

Reports

- Police – Attached.
- Fire – Attached.
- Road and Bridge – Attached
- Wastewater Board – Chairman Tuchel updated the board that the new water plant was up and running, the new side had been in use for approximately 2 weeks as of meeting time. Testing/sampling had been done at the Rapid Infiltration Bed area and was hopeful to have results for the next Wastewater Board meeting scheduled for 08/26/2025. Also noted that the easements are ready to be signed by landowners.
- Ambulance Commission – No meeting; nothing to report
- Housing – No meeting/report
- Recreation – Supervisor Peitso updated the board that the grant proposal had been submitted for the IRRRB Culture & Tourism FY26 grant and would receive notification if Breitung Township will be a recipient in October. Noted that the Recreation Committee had met and that they were interested in putting together a movie in the park set of events for next summer; explained that the event needed to be free but concessions could be sold. Discussion on how to stream movies was had, Chairman Tuchel noted that the Recreation Committee could potentially utilize the extra cell phone that the police kept for part-time officers, it would just be necessary to work with the department's schedule to ensure its availability.
- Lake Vermilion Lodging Tax Joint Powers Board – Discussion on when the change from tax collection by Beatty Township to MN Revenue was occurring: slated to begin collecting 10/01/2025; board would be meeting next month

Old Business:

Current Infrastructure Projects

- 2025 Infrastructure Project – the project will not be coming to fruition, remove from agenda. Work on Echo Point Road and Swamp Road will have to be addressed in future projects when funding is available.
- 2023 Infrastructure Project – John Jamnick again referenced a minor punch list, would make a recommendation to release retainage and project can be closed out at next meeting
- McKinley Loop Trail – Chairman Tuchel notified the board that Breitung Township had been awarded \$155,200 in grant funds from IRRRB Regional Trails Grant
 - IRRR Grant Agreement
 - Motion by Chairman Tuchel to accept the agreement as presented and sign
 - Second by Supervisor Peitso
 - Motion passed 3-0

John Jamnick discussed the project status: plans received back after review from St Louis County, JPJ in process of responding, center of trail had been staked and there would be easements to be worked on affecting 5 or 6 landowners along the trail route, some Lake Country Power poles would need to be moved as well.

- Thompson Farm Road Project – John Jamnick: Everything is back to MNDoT, went through the State Engineer's comments, questions, and adjustments, expects we should be able to go out for bids in the next 2 months
- Stuntz Bay Access Road – John Jamnick: minor punch list items are now complete, including striping, JPJ to produce the final pay estimate and send to county as they are the fiscal agent

Flood/FEMA process – Attached

Police Local 346 Union Contract

It was noted that Chief Reing had met with the union representative on August 15th, and it would now be time for Supervisor Tekautz to meet with the representative and go over the contract. Chairman Tuchel and Clerk Zak discussed the definition of working hours to be addressed; currently the contract stipulates overtime pay occurring after 80 hours on a bi-weekly work schedule, this is likely not compliant with state law. Supervisor Tekautz made note to have it discussed with the union representative.

Broadband Project

It was noted that the contractors installing the cable are all the way down Highway 77 and were expected to start working in our community (Puncher Point Road) within the next month. The next meeting to be held on 09/16/2025.

Joint Comprehensive Plan

Clerk Zak notified the board that the City of Tower was interested in working on updating the plan but that they were waiting for Breitung Township to take the first step. Clerk Zak had been in a meeting with Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) and heard how best to utilize a comprehensive plan, how the plan would be form, and that ARDC would come up with a proposal and quote for the next meeting. Chairman Tuchel indicated that funding had historically been available for the cost of ARDC's service and directed Clerk Zak to check with Nancy Larson on possibly getting a portion of the costs covered. When the proposal and quote were received, Clerk Zak would also share the information with the City of Tower.

Workers' Compensation Insurance

Supervisors reviewed a proposed change to the employee handbook; it was noted that the benefit of making the change was to the Township as an employer and would effectively notify the current employees how the Township would handle any future Workers' Compensation claims. The supervisors agreed with the wording and directed Clerk Zak to have the Township Attorney look over it for legality and then run it by the union representatives to make sure it would not conflict with their policies.

The current workers' compensation claim by a township employee was discussed; it was noted that Breitung Township's benefit package is robust and the current board felt that handling workers' compensation claims by paying full wages was unnecessary.

Motion by Chairman Tuchel to stop full wage payments to the injured employee at the end of the current pay period

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion Passed 3-0

Clerk Zak was directed to draft a letter to said employee to have on record; Chairman Tuchel also noted that he would be contacting the party directly via phone call out of respect

Building Access

Chairman Tuchel updated the board that the security cameras on the community center building were indeed working and currently recording for an extended length of time. Discussion was had regarding the police building security cameras; it was noted that the security cameras are currently working but not recording. In order to have recording made, it would be a hefty bill (\$20,000+) and there were a lot of stipulations due to laws; the board members discussed that the body cameras worn by officers were on during all police interactions by department policy. The board was satisfied that the officers were protected by the body camera recordings and chose not to pursue security camera recording at this time.

New Business:

Pay Bills as Presented

Motion by Chairman Tuchel to Pay Bills as Presented

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion Passed 3-0

Turn existing trails over to Mesabi Trail

Clerk Zak and Chairman Tuchel updated the board on conversations with Sarah of Mesabi Trail; she had indicated that in order to turn trails over, Breitung Township should present their trails to her and she would present it to the Mesabi Trail Board. If they were accepting of taking over the trails, an agreement would be drawn up. Clerk Zak noted that the trail coalition preferred to have maintenance such as brushing and mowing provided by the Towns as they were not always able to keep up on those items but that they trail coalition would take over major repairs such as paving. Chairman Tuchel noted that the City of Tower had also already spoken with her and they were currently in the process of having the board consider the request to turn the trail over to Mesabi Trail systems.

Stephanie Ukkola noted to the board that something to consider in having the trail turned over is that Mesabi Trail requires users to purchase a trail pass for \$20.00 annually, although the rule has not generally been enforced

Resolution 2025-18: Certification of 2025 Levy

Motion by Chairman Tuchel to approve resolution 2025-18

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion Passed 3-0

Resolution 2025-19: Accepting Donations

Motion by Supervisor Peitso to approve Resolution 2025-19

2nd by Supervisor Tekautz

Motion Passed 3-0

Deputy Treasurer

Treasurer Dolinar did not name a deputy treasurer at election time; in order to promote transparency, Treasurer Dolinar chose to name one at a public meeting, naming Barbara Burgess. The deputy treasurer was unable to attend this meeting, but would take the Oath of Office ahead of performing any duties as Deputy Treasurer.

CD #2622, \$25k, due 8/29/2025

The board discussed the merits of placing their money in a Certificate of Deposit versus a standard bank account, the only advantage to a CD being the lock-in rate. Treasurer Dolinar noted that the rate of the 4M account had not fluctuated months since the board re-opened the accounts several months ago. The board also debated the merits of placing the money in a local institution (Frandsen) versus a larger out-of-area institution (4M)

Motion by Chairman Tuchel to cash the CD out at its due date and place the money in the 4M account

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion Passed 3-0

Treasurer Dolinar was directed to look into interest rates of public funds offered by Frandsen Bank and Trust for the board to consider at their next meeting

Minnesota Paid Leave Act

Treasurer Dolinar notified the board of upcoming State law changes. She discussed that this would be going into effect in January 2026 and that the board would need to decide on whether they pay the full tax or split the cost with the employees. The tax contributing to the act was to be .88% of annual earnings. The participation in the act is mandatory and it applies to all township employees including the board members. Treasurer Dolinar was directed by the board to research payroll numbers in 2024 so the board would have a complete picture of the cost of the tax. Further discussion indicated an expectation that getting this set up would likely be part of CTAS which the treasurer was planning to implement in 2026.

Next Board Meetings

Regular Board Meeting on 09/16/2025 at 6:00 PM

Adjourn

Motion by Supervisor Tekautz to adjourn the meeting at 7:14 PM

2nd by Supervisor Peitso

Motion passed 3-0

Respectfully Submitted

Amber Zak
Clerk, Breitung Township