Stillwater Township News

October 2008

Town board urges "yes" vote on measure to change clerk position from elected to appointed

"Should the Town of Stillwater Clerk's position become appointed rather than elected?"

This question will be on township residents' ballots on Nov. 4 amid all the many federal, state and local contests and questions. The question is easy to overlook or skip by the time you've marked all those little circles and double-checked all your choices. But the question is important to the smooth operation of the township in the future, and the Town Board is asking citizens to support the initiative.

Since the 1970s, the town clerk position has been held by Pat Bantli. According to the current board of supervisors and those who have served with her in the past, she is an excellent clerk, growing her skills and expertise as the position has evolved and become more challenging and specific. Over time, Pat has developed an encyclopedic knowledge of the history of Stillwater Township. She has developed contacts and relationships with Washington County officials and departments that are incredibly valuable.

Sometime in the future Pat will decide to retire and a new clerk will have to replace her. To prepare for this, the Town Board has put together a job description of the clerk's duties and responsibilities, coupled with the corresponding set of skills required for the position. It was that extensive job description that caused the Board to question the wisdom of filling such a critical position in a general election. Townships do have the option of appointing a clerk through a ballot question, which is what it will be asking the citizens to consider on Election Day.

Neighboring Washington County townships Baytown and Denmark have already taken the step of having appointed clerks. Stillwater Township currently appoints one important position— treasurer—because the job is critical to the operation of the township. The clerk position is equally vital and has become complex, requiring specialized skills and experience.

The Stillwater Town Board and Pat Bantli support this initiative.

Pat has declined to be interviewed about her years of excellent service to the township. She doesn't like people fussing over her. But township officials are determined to make this one statement: *Pat, thank you for all your years of dedicated service. You are a true Township gem.*

And finally, they say this: *Please vote Yes on Nov. 4 so that when she retires we may hunt for a worthy successor to her.*

Also on the ballot

Township residents will be going to the polls in November to decide on a variety of offices, including president, congressional representatives, local legislative representatives and school board members.

In addition, residents will be choosing representatives for the Town Board. Three seats are being decided, but only one of the seats is contested. These are the seats and the candidates:

Board Seat 1: Jim Riehle, Sheila-Marie Untiedt.

Board Seat 2: Matthew R. Beane.

Board Seat 3: Linda P. Countryman.

Township residents will vote at the Town Hall on Nov. 4 from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Groups seeking donations from township should speak up now

Organizations seeking donations from Stillwater Township for the services they provide to township residents are asked to get involved in the budgeting process a little earlier than usual. Typically, representatives of the organizations will attend the annual meeting in March to describe what they provide to township residents and to solicit donations.

But township officials would like them to become involved in the budgeting process a little earlier so the requests can be considered in the overall budgeting process. The meeting to consider donations will be held on Dec. 3 at 7 p.m., and township residents are encouraged to attend to hear the presentations.

In the past, the township has supported such organizations as the Youth Service Bureau, Lucy Winton Bell athletic fields and the Stillwater Public Library.

Township planning a Farmers' Market for next summer

The township is seeking vendors for a Farmers' Market that will be held weekly next summer in the town hall parking lot.

The market will be a small one, at least to start. Organizer Rick Jacobson says the township will accept the first 10 vendors who meet the requirement of offering locally grown items. Township officials are particularly encouraging town residents to apply. The event will be held each Wednesday evening from May 1 to Oct. 1. Times will be announced later.

Anyone with questions should email Jacobson at jacobsonrl@msn.com or call (651) 351-0299.

Dogs must be licensed

Dog licenses were due July 1 and are good through June 30, 2010. All dogs residing in the township for more than 30 days each year need to be licensed. Contact Kathy Nelson at 439-0796 for more information or check the township website at www.stillwatertownship.com.

In the know

Dog licenses are free for any township dog that is neutered or spayed and has an implanted identification chip.

If your dog is missing for more than two hours please call Steve Nelson at (651) 439-0796. Dogs that are impounded are taken to the Hillcrest Animal Hospital in Maplewood.

Live traps available to capture wild animals

Wild animals can be cantankerous in the fall as they prepare for colder weather. If animals on your property become a nuisance, the township has a live trap that you may use without charge. Contact Police Chief Nelson to make arrangements.

Comprehensive plan nearing completion

The township's comprehensive plan has been approved by the Town Board, after being recommended for approval by the Planning Commission. The plan will now be submitted to the Metropolitan Council for approval.

The township has been soliciting comments from surrounding cities and watershed districts, and held a public hearing for citizens to comment on the plan. Planner Sherri Buss said no substantive comments were made. That was not unexpected, however, since the comprehensive plan was not significantly changed from the current one.

Fall burning permits

The hours for burning brush piles are 6 p.m. to 8 a.m. in the fall. However, once there is 3 inches of snow on the ground, burning can be done at any time.

Contact Steve Nelson at (651) 439-0796 to get a burning permit. There is a fee of $15 for the permit, and a 24-hour advance notice is requested. No fee is charged for burning piles of buckthorn.

Recreational fires don't need a permit and are allowed any time. Recreational fires must be kept smaller than a 3-foot cube. Please notify the township Police Department at 439-0796 if you plan on having a recreational fire.

Rules about off-road vehicles

Four-wheelers, dirt bikes, and other off-road vehicles are not allowed on township, county and state road right-of-ways between April 1and August 1 of each year. They are never allowed on roads or the shoulder of roads. The only exception is a vehicle that is being used for a farming operation.

Off-road vehicles can be operated on private property, but ordinances prohibit the building of dirt tracks and jumps.Township officials ask that you be respectful of your neighbors and limit the times that you ride.

Township is soliciting land for parks

Township residents who go to the town hall to vote in November will see a big map of the township, along with some designated areas on the map indicating areas where the township's park committee is hoping to locate some parks in the future.

Sherri Buss, the township planner, said the map is a first step toward the process of soliciting landowners who might be willing to donate or sell land to the township for the parks. "The committee thought it might be efficient to show the area and see if anyone is interested, rather than knocking on doors," she said.

The parks committee would like to find five or 10 acres in the northern part of the township, acquire it in the near future, and develop it sometime further in the future when funds allow. In addition to the usual park amenities, the new park would offer ball fields. Currently, the only ball fields in the township are located at Otto Berg Park.

Ideally, the parks committee is hoping a landowner will donate land for the park, rather than wishing to sell it. Current ordinances require that anyone who proposes a development—which could be as small as a 20-acre parcel being divided in two—donate funds or land toward the acquisition and development of parks in the township. If a landowner is considering subdividing land in the future, the donation of land now could satisfy the park requirement. In other cases, Buss says, elderly landowners may want to keep their land from being developed. They may choose to preserve the land for a park and take the tax benefits that come with it.

Currently, the township has three parks: Otto Berg, Arcola Heights, and Stonebridge Park, near Little Carnelian Lake.

Anyone who would like more information about donating land should contact a board member or the clerk, who will refer them to the appropriate person. Contact information is listed on the back page of this newsletter..

Update *on the Stone Bridge*

The effort to preserve the Stone Bridge, a national historic site in Stillwater Township, is moving forward on several fronts, including grant applications, stone mortar analysis and the involvement of local artists in a fundraising venture.

At the township's annual meeting in March, Barb Medinger, a township resident whose property includes the bridge, detailed her efforts to raise funds to restore the historic bridge, which had started to crumble in spots. Medinger reports that about $3,500 in private donations have been made to the Stone Bridge Preservation Fund sponsored by River Town Restoration, a local nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving historic sites.

Earlier this month, River Town Restoration applied for a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to fund a detailed historic bridge management plan. The plan would involve rehabilitation of the bridge and ongoing maintenance. The consultants will be bridge engineer Steve Olson (who manages and inspects the Stone Arch Bridge in Minneapolis), of the Minneapolis firm HNTB Corp., and Robert Frame, senior historian for Mead & Hunt, Minneapolis. This expert team has been consulting on the project for free for more than a year and will ensure that all structural work will comply with standards set by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Recently, says Medinger, samples of stone and mortar were collected by representatives of the International Masonry Institute and turned over to Minneapolis geotechnical firm Braun Intertec for analysis. Braun is doing the $3,000 job for free in conjunction with its Chicago partner Wiss Janney Elstner Associates. The analysis will help ensure that masonry used in the restoration will match the original.

In early summer, representatives of the Brown's Creek Watershed District offered to get involved, and the organization is planning to undertake a stream bank stabilization project at the site. It will include the installation of boulder vanes to deflect and redirect high water flow, as well as bio-engineering to address erosion at the wing walls.

Finally, says Medinger, a large group of artists, including Stillwater Art Guild members, have been painting, drawing and photographing the bridge all summer, and will donate proceeds from the sale of their work at an art show fundraiser being planned for later this year.

Stillwater Township
P.O. Box 117
Stillwater, MN 55082

Presorted
Standard
US Postage
PAID
SPC

Meetings

Township meetings are free and open to the public. Check the bulletin board at the town hall or the website for current agenda and meeting information.

Township Board of Supervisors meets on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month at 7 p.m., except for November and December, when it meets only on the second Thursday.

Planning Commission meets as necessary on the first Thursday of each month at 7 p.m.

Parks Committee meets as necessary on the second Monday of the month at 7 p.m.

If you need.....

Burning permits
Steve Nelson
(651) 439-0796

Building inspections
Jack Kramer
(651) 351-5051

Park reservations
Rick Jacobson
(651) 351-0299

Animal Control
Steve Nelson
(651) 439-0796

Contact us

Township Board of Supervisors
Linda Countryman (651) 351-0714
Jim Doriott (651) 439-8499
Jim Hiniker (651) 351-1867
David Johnson (651) 439-5448
Sheila-Marie Untiedt (651) 439-6476

Township Clerk
Pat Bantli (651) 439-9051

Clerk for Parks and Planning Commmission
Kathy Schmoeckel (651) 439-6451

Township Treasurer
Carol Collins (651) 340-7600

Police Chief
Steve Nelson (651) 439-0796

Website Publisher
Bob Ranalla (612) 819-8497

Newsletter Editor
Beverly Petrie (651) 430-9294

Find this information plus email addresses at www.stillwatertownship.com