

Town of Sand Lake
Annual Meeting
Tuesday, April 15th, 2025
6:00 p.m.

- The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairwoman Melanie Connor Johnson.
- Roll Call of Officers – Supervisor Karolyn Kroll absent. All others present.
- Public Notice – The annual Town meeting shall be held on the 3rd Tuesday of April. If done so, no Public Notice of the meeting is required, but the 2025 Annual Meeting was still noticed in two physical locations (Town Hall & Town Shop) and on the Town’s website (03/23/2025) per the Town’s usual requirements.
- Approval of Agenda Order – Motion to approve the agenda by Neil Ambourn with the bottom 2026 Annual Meeting date changed from Tuesday, April 21st, 2025, to 2026. Peggy Tolbert seconds. All in favor, motion carried.
- Approval of Minutes from 2024 Annual Meeting – Motion to approve the 2024 Annual Meeting minutes by Dave Deal, second by Susan Shutt. All in favor, motion carried.
- Chair Report

Welcome & General Comments – Welcome. Chairwoman Melanie Johnson introduces herself, Sand Lake Town Chair, as well as Supervisors Karolyn Kroll (designated to Services) and Supervisor Ken Pardun (designated to Roads). Introduces Maggie Olson, Town Clerk, Crystal Houman, Town Treasurer, Peggy Tolbert, Deputy Clerk for Elections and Brad Huser, lead Road Crewman who is support with two part-time Roads staff. She reviews meetings and initiatives since April 2024. In May and June 2025, the Board was introduced to two new utility infrastructure projects proposed for development in Sand Lake. The first was in May and a proposal for a cell phone tower on Normans Landing Road near Mallard Lake. The developer was Vertical Bridge. Some community concerns regarding the location and construction of the tower. The Town provided a letter to Vertical Bridge outlining the community concerns and requesting they meet or exceed the building standards of this tower. Ultimately, Municipalities do not have the authority to approve or deny utility towers and oversight of these projects are the responsibility of the State. This tower was erected in November 2024. In June, the Town was introduced to a solar farm project proposed for a private land vacant field, off HWY 70 just across from Viola Lake near Dongola Road. The utility partner is Polk Burnett, the installation firm is One Energy. One Energy provided a comprehensive overview of their proposed project. The Board provided a similar letter requesting public participation/notification of neighbors for this project, and requiring that this utility project be constructed to meet or exceed all construction codes and be well maintained. This project is currently in the environmental survey stage, but construction is expected later this year. Earlier this year we heard from Mosaic Technologies with a Wisconsin BEAD grant proposal for fiber broadband expansion in Sand Lake. They presented to the Board and we supported their application with a non-committal letter of support. 2024 Ambulance Response Report was 78 Call, 34 were lights and sirens, average response time was 12:56. The Life Flight Helicopter responded to calls in Burnett County almost once every day. In July, the Board responded to a legal summons regarding an accident that occurred several years ago at the intersection of Lily Lake Road and Austin Lake Road. There has been no update to date on that matter. In August, the Board learned its \$600k grant proposal under the ARIP “Agricultural Road Improvement Project” program was not selected for award. This proposal included paving Emerson Road and Bridge repairs. Road/transportation funding continues to be a challenge in all rural communities in NW Wisconsin. Road improvement is the single largest budget line item each year, but the cost of road paving costs has greatly outpaced tax collection revenues. The cost of paving one mile of road is \$200k+. The Board continues to evaluate roads annually and identify those in the most need for repair or essential maintenance. We continue to advocate through the Wisconsin Towns Association and our regional state representatives to bring transportation funding to Northern Wisconsin. Sand Lake will continue to apply for available grant funding to improve roads, because even if not awarded it will demonstrate the need. The Roads Department worked with Monarch to complete the Olsen Road and Sand Lake Road improvement projects in September. They completed the “big culvert – small bridge inventory” with Burnett County. They did a lot of road patching/pothole

filling, grading and graveling, more is scheduled to start this spring into summer. They have been working on brushing and site line clearing, completed some waterway landing maintenance projects, and equipment service. No major equipment issues or new purchases were needed in 2024. Road projects planned for 2025 include improvements to sections of Gaslyn Road and Dongola Road to be done later this summer. These improvements are included in our approved budget, we are mindful of cost changes as we move through summer, and will adjust project scope if the costs increase. Our bridge inspections were completed with no critical repairs, our bridge rating did not change. Our 2025 budget was approved in November, and tax roll was completed in December. We had a smooth tax collection season, thanks to Crystal. We have completed and submitted our annual Form-C report to the State of Wisconsin, this is a big report requiring a lot of record keeping reporting that is required each year by the state. Thanks to Maggie for putting this report together. Our election team had a very busy year last year with so many big elections. Sand Lake had a great voter turnout with no election process challenges. Election laws continue to evolve and running smooth, legal elections is a huge effort. We have a great election crew, and are very grateful to them for their hard work. During the election facility review this year, we were provided notice that our current "Town Hall" election facility does not and cannot meet ADA requirements for access to elections polls. This is a situation that we were aware of, and last year we discussed at this meeting the electors feelings for a solution. From your response last year, we have been exploring options for a new town hall facility to be located next to the town shop on Dongola Road. Chairwoman Johnson was able to receive an estimate of cost for a new facility. It seems we are now at the place where we need to move forward with a new space. The intention would be to use the Wisconsin State Trust Fund to secure a loan for the new facility, sell our current building and apply that funding toward the new building. Estimated annual expense for debt service for \$300,000 loan for 15 years at 6% is \$31,500 one payment per year if applied over 20 years it reduces to \$26,500/year. This is an amount that could be included in future town budgets with minimal impact to property owners, currently we budget about \$10,000 for town hall repairs annually, about the same as equipment payment. This will be a consideration for the board in 2026 budget formulation. This Board has been conservative with the budget and its impact on property taxes. The Town's portion of your total tax bill is the smallest allocation; school districts are the biggest. We are sensitive to property tax increases and have done our best on the town level to work within a conservative budget, while costs are increasing and these facility needs are incurred.

On the Agenda for 2025: Based on response we will continue to move forward with a new town hall project. Review/Updating of town ordinances, some are outdated and need review, some have been suggested by WTA have never been adopted. So we will be looking at those. Still working through comprehensive zoning, the county has created new comprehensive zoning districts, which was requested, to relax the exclusion of hobby farming in rural residential, this was a concern for our town when considering zoning, it shows the county is responding to towns/property owner requests. We are seeing increased pressure for development and need to be ahead of these trends. Overall, she believes the Town is in good shape, we have a solid foundation, our finances and administrative practices are in good order. She encourages everyone to stay connected with the Town, through the website, email notifications, or on Facebook, and have a great year.

- Treasurer Report – The General Fund Account as of March 31, 2025, is \$275,756.73 and the Equipment Fund Account is \$26,167.82. A summary of the 2024 Tax Collection Completed by the Municipal Treasurer is a total tax roll of \$1,387,525.62. Total Property Tax Received Prior to February 7, 2025, was \$875,620.88 or 63%. Burnett County Treasurer will collect the remaining property taxes. Tax settlements were made to Siren School District (\$112,989.24), Webster School District (\$298,247.45), Northwoods Technical College (\$27,598.41), and Burnett County (\$283,463.90). The Town of Sand Lake retained \$149,377.33, or about 17%.
- Annual Financial Report – Clerk – She is excited about the reports that are available in the new QuickBooks Intuit Online System, was able to print a Budget to Actual for 2025 which shows numbers for 01/01-04/15. Nothing alarming, the Town remains in (and often times) under budget with 1/3 of the year underway. New revenue line item for the year is Public Accommodation Taxes, which is Room Tax (Air BNB, VRBO, etc.) Questions about QuickBooks Desktop vs. Online and the pros/cons/costs from Mallard Lake Resort Owners. Question from Neil Ambourn about if we can afford road projects with the budget we have, we could consider raising taxes to afford more road work. Work on Dongola Rd planned for 2025. Chairwoman Johnson explains solutions, large levy with all the road projects in it, incrementally increasing taxes each year (which sounds small) but compounds to a big tax bill in a number of years, or work with what we have as we have it.

- Matters for Discussion and Possible Action
 1. Report of Liquor License Fees for 2025 – (2024 Fees Listed)
 - Liquor (\$250)
 - Beer (\$75)
 - Operator (\$5)
 - Cigarette Vendor (\$5)

Motion to keep the fees the same as 2024 in 2025 by Peggy Tolbert, second by Dave Deal. All in favor, motion carried.

2. Give Town Board permission to borrow up to \$20,000.00 without elector approval in case of emergencies – Motion by Dave Deal, second by Brad Huser. All in favor, motion carried.
3. Set Gopher Bounty – Motion to leave the Gopher Bounty at \$5 by Susan Shutt, second by Laurel Scriviani. All in favor, motion carried.
4. Future of the Town Hall – Discussion refers back to Town Hall information provided by Chairwoman Johnson in her Chair Report. 25x40 feet steel building with a vestibule entrance, two storage rooms, one mechanical room, ADA bathroom, completely finished building. Not fancy. Positioned next to the existing Town Shop on Dongola Rd. Structural Builders was the only company to send a quote. Without being seriously in the market for a new building, it has been a challenge to get bids. \$250,000-\$300,000 estimated for building and systems. Includes project management, architectural design, utility systems, flooring, etc. Drawing proposes two rooms which could be used for Treasurer and Clerk. Does not include furniture or kitchen. Unknowns include utility connections, paving, landscaping, etc. Question on how long the bid is good for, it does not have a date per Chairwoman Johnson. She received it on 03/24. We would ultimately need to publish it in a newspaper and go out for bids, solicit proposals. Peggy Tolbert states the Elections Commission has a lot of rules for not just ADA compliance but also how people move through the building, etc., there is engineering in the bid to meet those requirements. Sandy Hinckly asks about internet access in a steel building, Chairwoman Johnson states a wifi booster can be added to the building. Dave Deal asks about the size of the building being selected based on limitations in the area, to fit in an area adjacent to the Shop and away from the septic. 60 people seated and 100 people standing is what it translated to in size provided. Neil Ambourn asks if the electors have to approve this via Special Meeting. Not at this meeting, per Chairwoman Johnson. We could go to referendum and ask people to vote to build the building. Because of the cost, it is not going to increase the taxes in a huge way. She is unsure what they would do if the electors said no to this, but we are at the place where we will not be allowed to have our current Town Hall be a polling place per Peggy Tolbert. Susan Shutt would like the Board to move forward with this in the budget for 2026. Peggy Tolbert states population is aging and the number of people who needed assistance entering the current Town Hall is a lot greater than it used to be. Dave Deal asks if we can move forward with it, Chairwoman Johnson is not sure if that would be binding, though. Town can borrow money from State Trust Fund, very quick and very receptive, quick application process. Once you go through the process and have the bid you want to move forward with, you go back to them and they release the money to the Town, invest it, and build interest on it while the project is building. Solicit bids later this summer 2025, Special Meeting to go over costs associated and for elector approval, budget a line item for Debt Service costs. Somewhere in 2026, we would go through architectural and engineering, start building to complete Summer 2026. Sandy Hinckly asks about a potential shared building. Dave Deal motions the Board take all action necessary to move forward and ensure we are ready for construction of a new Town Hall in 2026, second by Curt Henke. Dave Deal asks if we can sell the current Town Hall “as is” without lead abatement. We will have to disclose the lead situation. All in favor, motion carried.

5. Discuss Road Improvements and Potential Levy Increase – Chairwoman Johnson asks for feelings from electors for a levy increase to catch up on some road projects. Neil Ambourn asks the life expectancy of a road, ~20 years per road. Neil Ambourn thinks we should double the town levy to capture road projects. Brad Huser explains Emerson Rd would be \$200k a mile (without shoulders). Neil Ambourn thinks we should do 3 miles a year. About 48 total miles. About half roads are gravel per Brad Huser. Susan Shutt would like to leave the levy where it is at and work with what we get in the budget, Neil Ambourn and Sandy Hinckly disagree. Neil Ambourn states roads will get worse and worse. Dave Deal asks what the impact is if you double the levy. Siren School District taxpayers have seen increases on their tax bills, folks in Webster School District have not. Dave Deal is worried folks would have a hard time paying \$400 more in taxes a year. We increased about 3.5% this year. 20% increase would help the Town manage the upset residents better than a 100% increase. This will be another discussion in the Budget in October 2025. We have an LRIP this year (pays for half the project, needs to be advertised as an LRIP project) which will help us do an additional road vs what we already allocated. Peggy Tolbert asks about the 10 year road plan (it is printed at the meeting here). Town wants to tackle two sections a year. Comments on if the Town change it from a 10-year plan to a 5-year plan and increase the levy to cover the costs.

- Elector Comments – Nothing else.
- 2026 Annual Meeting, Tuesday, April 21st, 2026 (third Tuesday)
- Adjournment – Motion to adjourn at 6:51 p.m. by Brad Huser, second by Dave Deal. All in favor, motion carried.