

Special Town Board Meeting of November 12, 2021

Meeting was called to order at 10:00 am., by Chairman Maines who noted that this meeting was held at the Town Hall in Sayner on Friday, November 12th, 2021. The meeting was duly called with notice posted at the Town Hall in Sayner, the Sayner U.S. Post Office, and the Star Lake U.S. Post Office and notice given to the Vilas County News-Review, The Lakeland Times, WRJ0 and WERL, as well as posted on the Town Website. Supervisor Rasmussen, Clerk Brooker and 23 others were present.

Response to Request Received by Vilas County to Open County Roads in the Town of Plum Lake to ATV/UTV's:

The Chairman opened the meeting. Since Supervisor Schmidt could not be present at the meeting due to travel, Chairman Maines read the email that Supervisor Schmidt had sent to the office which outlined his views on the ATV/UTV agenda item. Supervisor Schmidt stated that he was bothered by the fact that the County Board would open roads that a Town did not request to be opened. He reminded people the previous agreement was that roads to the Town would not be opened if the Town was against it. He went on to say he firmly believes the original deal is the proper way to address road openings to ATV's. He noted that they were waiting on approval from the DNR for a route the Town had already approved for a trial period to see how things went and if that went well, they would consider more access points to the Town of Plum Lake. Supervisor Schmidt ended by stating he felt it was up to the individual townships to be making these decisions.

Chairman Maines continued the discussion by sharing the results of a survey of around 1000 people in 2015. The survey results with 734 responses were 69% against and 31% for allowing ATV's. He further broke it down by ("Voters" - 65% against and 35% for); ("Trust owners" - 92% against and 8% for); ("Nonresident property owners"- 67% against and 33% for). The Board voted not to open the roads to ATVs at that time. In 2020 the Board had worked on a trail system to bring ATV traffic into town business's including Star Lake. The DNR was not able to approve the trail system developed due to Covid. So far this year DNR has yet to go out and check over the route. The Board can't move forward without their approval. The Chairman said that now the County allows not only towns to request road openings but now just one person can call and request road openings to ATV's and the County is obligated to review each request. The Chairman noted that the County will be looking at this issue on 11/16/21 at 9 am and said the Town Board will be presenting their thoughts at that meeting. The Chairman said he stands with Supervisor Schmidt saying that the decision should be up to the Town Boards whether or not any roads in their township should be opened.

Supervisor Rasmussen stated that he was also in agreement with Supervisor Schmidt's statement. He shared that he had gotten calls and emails on the subject and those contacts were all against opening the county roads to UTV traffic. He feels in order to simplify things, they should use Supervisor Schmidt's statement at the County meeting as it states their stance in a limited amount of words. The Chairman noted that if the County does pass this, the Town would have other options, such as they can decide not to open any town roads which would not help the businesses in town. He had found out from the DOT that the town has authority to approve opening Hwy 155 over the state and the county, and the Town could deny approval to open it. Chairman Maines said the stance of the Board was to push the DNR to move on the trail system the Board already had approved to help out businesses in town and that he was not willing to have the county roads opened up at this time. Supervisor Rasmussen made a motion that Gary's statement be used by Chairman Maines' at the County Board meeting on Tuesday the 16th as the Boards stance and opposition to opening all the county roads in the Town of Plum Lake to ATV/UTV usage. Chairman Maines seconded; motion carried.

Citizens Comments:

Jessica Drallmeier, President of the Sayner/Star Lake Chamber, said she was pro ATV/UTV and feels frustrated that the Town is hurting business's from reaching their full potential by not allowing the recreational traffic into the town. She noted that Errington's in Star Lake had to turn away a group of 22 due to no trails for ATV/UTV vehicles.

Dennis Horan, from the Sayner Barnstormers said he has been working on trying to get a trail system open since 2014. He noted that the DNR has been hard to work with and has no funding available. He currently is trying to get grant funding. He said he was also speaking for the local business's in saying there would be added revenue for them all if the trail system would be allowed to come into town and that there is a demand from the tourism industry for a trail system in the area.

Wayne Ax asked Denny if there was any value in bombarding the DNR to get them moving. Denny said he thought it would help and that he would share the contact information for the DNR to those who requested it.

Sheehan Donoghue asked if the County Board had already voted on the ordinance 26. Clerk Brooker answered yes. Sheehan explained that the Vilas County Law Enforcement had asked for a simplified ordinance document just pertaining to ATV/UTV vehicles so it would be easier for them to understand. She noted that they are living documents and can be amended. Holly Tomlonavich, a member of the county board who represents the town of Washington, stated that she had gotten involved with the issue because she chairs the Forestry Rec and Land Committee and ended up turning it over to the Highway Department after speaking with 3 different attorneys who said the issue belonged in the Highway Department. Sheehan Donoghue also had questions on the format to be followed at the meeting on Tuesday and what committees would be involved. The Chairman said the only thing he had gotten was that Troy was requesting that the Plum Lake Town Board be present at the meeting, Sheehan then recommended that the Chairman contact Willie Otterpohl, who is the Chairman of the Vilas County Highway Committee, for more information. Holly Tomlonavich was able to give a clearer picture of the steps that would be taken. She stated that on Tuesday the Vilas County Highway Committee will meet. There are 5 members and they will discuss this option of opening county highways in the municipalities They will make a motion, with a second, vote on it, majority in favor will move it forward to the full County Board in the form of a resolution. The full County Board will then vote on it. Holly explained it further after Sheehan still had questions saying that a resolution will be drawn up by the Highway Dept. and it will be presented to be part of the agenda for the next full Vilas County Board Meeting. That meeting will not happen until the 3rd Tuesday in January 2022. It will be presented then as a motion and 2nd and discussed and lastly a vote. Noted was input during this meeting is at the pleasure of the County Board Chairman. Sheehan stated that she is opposed to allowing ATV/UTV's on town and county roads and has spoken with others who are also deeply opposed. She feels that the towns people also support the business people, the EMT and Fire Departments, plus help in keeping AIS from invading our lakes. Sheehan hoped that the Town Board would vote in keeping with the desire of the majority of the property owners in the Town of Plum Lake. The Chairman thanked the people for being civil while discussing things. Supervisor Rasmussen stated that he wanted to take time to digest what's going on and noted that the Board has been trying to work with both sides.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:46 am.

A voice recording of this meeting is available in the Town Office.

These minutes were taken at the Special Town Board Meeting held on the 12th day of November 2021 and were entered in the Record Book by: