

**TOWN OF ALGOMA  
WINNEBAGO COUNTY, WI  
MINUTES FOR  
SPECIAL MEETING OF ALGOMA TOWN BOARD  
Algoma Town Hall  
15 N. Oakwood Road, Oshkosh, WI 54904  
Monday, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at 5:30 PM**

**1. Call to order.**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Blake at 5:30 PM.

**2. Roll call.**

|                                   |                        |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Chairperson Blake                 | Supervisor Haman       |
| Supervisor Timm                   | Supervisor Drexler     |
| Supervisor Kierszh                | Atty. K. Marone        |
| Treasurer Edson                   | Clerk Nelson           |
| Road/Drainage Coordinator Tollard | Fire Chief Scott Groth |

**3. Additional spending budget memos by Supervisor Drexler.**

Drexler went through her handout from the first Budget Meeting at which time she requested a bank representative come to the November Town Board Meeting, which didn't happen, so she is requesting that a bank representative come to the December Town Board Meeting. Drexler went onto compare the town financial status to that of the Sanitary District. Edson explained the Sanitary District's has a different financial outlook because hookups are financed ten years. Edson also explained there is a difference between cash flow because the Sanitary District collects on bills throughout the year. Drexler just wants to get opinions from the bank representative because she thinks there is too much financing. Drexler moved on to General Government Fund, Drexler would like to the opportunity to join the Northeast Wisconsin Stormwater Consortium and the board has not yet decided to join because they wanted more information. Edson interjected that there has to be a published budget which is past due; there is nothing in the budget that can't be moved as the year goes on. Edson also normally waits until the audit to get firm fund balances. The last two times the budget has been gone through there has been no motions to change anything in the budget. Drexler continued with her two handouts which are attached to the record copy of the meeting minutes. Drexler questioned 4% increase in the clerk's and treasurer's salaries. Drexler continued with discussions regarding the clerk's and treasurer's salaries. Drexler rallied for a salary increase for the fire chief because it is a seven day a week job, and it's in the best interest of the town to have the fire chief work with the town chair in tandem for emergency management which also deserves an increase. Drexler feels the fire chief should receive an increase in salary to \$10,000; the money for this increase could come from the legal fund (51300-2) by two thousand to pay for this increase. If this is done, the increase is only \$500.00. Drexler believes Chief Groth has done an excellent job in building a team. Drexler then moved to the Road Drainage Coordinator and looking for an increase in salary there, and then the stormwater project and the roads. The amount towards roads is decreasing and increasing stormwater management, which Drexler agrees to so there's money for the culvert. She also agrees that there is enough comments from Mr. Shubak that indicate looking at getting county financing help and delaying the project one year could really benefit our overall budget. The board has decided that all the planning will be done so that the design will be there in June when the county requires it, and if the town could get a \$150,000 match, it would

benefit our overall budget. Drexler is requesting this be re-looked at the December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Stormwater Management Meeting. Drexler would like to see a line item for stormwater maintenance. Blake explained how the budget process works and how a budget works; money just isn't put into line items and can never be moved. The purpose of the reserves is so money can be shifted if the need arises. The budget is a guide as to where the money should be spent, but money can also be moved. Blake questioned Drexler on stormwater; in one breath Drexler wants to put money towards it and the other you want to take money away from it. The money is there for the culvert, it's been discussed by the board, let's move on. Drexler clarified that the money should be there in case the town doesn't get the money from the county. The culvert is slated to be done in the spring which may not be a good time to replace the culvert, and there's still cleanout that needs to be done to the Sheldon Nature Area. Drexler is upset because money is being taken away from roads and put toward stormwater. Discussion ensued regarding the roads budget. Edson hopes the town doesn't micromanage the budget. Based upon the budget numbers for 2013 there is nothing stating that the town will spend the 2013 numbers, the ability to shift money around as needed is within the Town Board's authority. With that said, Blake doesn't see the issue with the budget. Drexler then went back to the fire chief salary. Attorney Marone advised that the Town Board does have the authority to move money around as Blake had indicated, but the budget process is neither the time nor place for rewarding merit raises. This board has taken the position of doing personnel reviews, not just doing a direct grant of money to the employees; therefore her concern is with consistency of the policy. Attorney Marone does see the point of having the money to move around later on, but the board has to watch what they're doing here. Blake also reminded the board has been advised that they can make recommendations to the next Town Board who will be doing the appointments so the funds will be there. The Fire Chief should be no different than the Town Clerk and the Town Treasurer. The process in which the Fire Chief is elected is the following: the nominations are made in December and there is a month long process for ballots to be sent out via the Town Clerk to all those eligible to vote. The ballots are returned to the Town Clerk by 5:00 PM the day of the January business meeting, the second week in January. At that meeting, the ballots are tallied for those positions that are voted on, including the Fire Chief. Those who won are notified and then the Town Clerk is notified as to the election results. The Fire Chief is approved by the Town Board, and if approved, sworn in by the Town Clerk at the January meeting. Blake reiterated that, in his opinion, merit raises for the Fire Chief should follow the same process for all town employees with the new Town Board in April. Discussion ensued regarding the person who is Fire Chief. Drexler disagreed and thought that the Fire Chief raise should be done at budget time because of when their term begins. An audience member gave a brief history of the Fire Chief raises to which Drexler agreed. Timm also agreed that the Fire Chief raise should be allocated at budget time. ***Motion by Drexler/Timm to allocate funds to increase the Fire Chief salary to \$10,000 effective with the election in January. No further discussion. Motion carried in a voice vote, 3-2 with Kierszh and Hamann voting no.*** Kierszh commented that he understands Groth is doing a good job. What happens if someone else is elected that no one on the board knows anything about, now their salary is \$10,000? Drexler indicated no, the motion just allocated to the money, it's not a guaranteed salary of \$10,000. The money is just allocated. Blake advised this was his reason for voting yes. It's no different than any other line item on the agenda. There was further discussion on the Fire Chief working in tandem with the Town Chair on emergency management. Groth clarified that the Town Chair is the emergency management director and the Fire Chief is the deputy. There is no need to discuss this further. ***Motion by Blake/Kierszh to submit this text to the electors for their approval. No further discussion. Motion carried in a voice vote, 5-0.*** Clerk Nelson advised that the budget has already been published and it is set to go to a public hearing on December 5<sup>th</sup>.

**4. Fire Chief Scott Groth to address the board about the fire department's daytime response.**

Groth informed the board that right now the Fire Department is at a crossroads as there are concerns over the amount of people who are available during the daytime to respond to fire and first responder calls. It's troubling because it's the Fire Chief's responsibility to provide protection for the town, and he comes before the board to inform of the situations that the fire department is encountering right now. This is no different than what the many volunteer fire department across the nation are experiencing. Volunteer Fire Departments are a dying breed; there isn't businesses in the Town of Algoma to be able to have workers leave their jobs to render aid for a fire or first responder call. The town had a good thing with Kolb's Garage, and John Kolb's dedication to the town is incredible. Mr. Kolb is Groth's Assistant Chief who does a lot for Groth, but he's 70 years old, retired, and doesn't want to do this forever. He'll do it because he's committed to the town along with the members who do it, not because they have to do it, but because they want to do it. Groth is concerned because the fact that when a page comes out during the day, there isn't enough staff to go. Groth worries about the number of people who can respond during the day. Thank God he has Pat Rocole, who answers about 90 percent of the first responder calls because he makes it a point to be home. There are other people in the area, but their employers have tightened the reins about leaving work to respond to a call. It's a different world today, there's a change going on in the volunteer fire department. Groth would love to say that he has fifty dedicated members and could staff the department 24/7 without an issue. Groth's biggest concern is response during the day, between 6:00 am – 6:00 pm. In the evenings, the department is staff alright; on the weekends it's a little sketchy. The members of the Fire Department know they are short staffed, this is what's become of the volunteer fire department. Out of 6,800 residents in the town, 25 are firefighters, 11 are first responders because people have busy lives and the last thing they want to do is train at the fire department. Groth decided to have some discussions with his senior staff, that being his person who is in-charge of the First Responders (Pat Rocole), his Assistant Chief (John Kolb), and his second Assistant Chief (Tim Heimann). The four of them collectively came up with a plan to address the situation for the Town of Algoma. The plan went to the Fire Department Board of Directors who voted unanimously to support the plan. The plan was presented to the First Responders and the Fire Department general body, both voted unanimously to support it. The next step is to bring it before the Town Board. The plan is to add some staffing to the department by hiring a full-time chief, full-time firefighter/first responder, and hiring a full-time position staffed by part-time people; meaning a full – time position, but staffed with a different person each day depending on work schedule. This position would have a schedule. If there wouldn't be anyone available from Algoma, they would offer the extra work to Omro, or City of Oshkosh, or Fox Valley Technical College (a wonderful opportunity for them). The department felt comfortable with this plan. Then Assistant Chief Kolb came up with weekend work. This would be 3-4 people signing up on a rotation to take a 48 hour shift of paid on-call; meaning they get paid to standby, similar to nurses at a hospital. They are guaranteeing that they are going to be in the area and they are going to respond. That way Chief Groth is guaranteed and knows that there are enough people to get a truck rolling to respond to a fire or first responder call. Nothing else changes with the department. If three people are on-call that weekend they will respond, if others are at home, they can still respond to the call as well, but at least Groth will be assured that there are three people responding. Nothing changes for staffing during the day; just because there's three people there when the page goes out, and other members are to respond, they're welcomed to respond, they will still get their per call pay, but at least there will be an adequately staffed engine company to respond. The plan also includes coverages for vacations, benefits for the two full-time positions, a savings by deducting the current fire chief salary and fire inspector wages because they can be part of the salaries. The hour of guaranteed coverage is Monday-Friday 6:00 am to 6:00 pm and Friday evening from 6:00 pm to Sunday evening at 6:00 pm. They've talked it over and feel comfortable with going forward with the plan for

the cost of about \$175,000 for salary and benefits for the Chief, Full-Time Firefighter/First Responders, and the wages for 52 weeks at 40 hours a week at \$12.00/hour. It also includes three people for a weekend response for a 48 hour shift for 52 weeks; it also includes coverage for sick and holiday coverage. Therefore, if members are home for a weekend or a holiday, they would be paid an on-call fee. If Groth takes a shift, he wouldn't be expected to be receive paid for being on-call, he would just be available. Groth explained he had submitted a budget of \$139,875 for 2013, and the \$175,000 would be in addition to that, minus the \$10,000 for both chief salary and fire inspection fees, for a total of (\$139,000 + \$175,000) \$314,000. Groth advised the roster is able to take up to 40 firefighters and 16 first responders. Currently there are 22 firefighters and 11 first responders, some of the first responders are cross trained as firefighters. Hamann questioned Groth on what has changed from last year to this year. Groth responded that it's the inability to leave work and respond. There were three people who left Kolb's Garage and are no longer able to respond from across the street. Groth has to come before the Town Board and advise that the fire department is inadequately staffed for the future. There was discussion regarding Fire Department Staffing Committee and the study that the Oshkosh Fire Department did for this committee was from 2007-2008. Some Town Board members felt this study maybe outdated and would like some updated information. Groth advised that this is a time consuming process and it's very involved for them just to say no. In 2008 the City of Oshkosh proposed providing fire protection for the Town of Algoma at a rate of \$456,656. They were going to apply for a safer grant which is a grant for adequate staffing for fire and emergency response grant. If the City was awarded that grant, they could receive federal money for the next four years; meaning for 2009 would be \$151,800, so for 2009 the City could provide fire protection to the Town for \$304,856. Groth then read the continued costs per year which is attached to the record copy of the meeting minutes. In 2012, if the town would have gone with this plan, the budget amount would be \$513,970 for fire protection. At the time of this proposal, the City was interested in purchasing three of their trucks. Groth advised that in 2009, between fire and first responder calls, there were 185 calls; 2010 – 229 calls, 2011 – 232 calls, and 2012 – 217 calls with an average around fifty percent of the calls occurring during the day. Basing a need off of just the amount of calls for service is dangerous. If no one responds to a call and there's a fatality, is that acceptable? The fire department must be thought about as an "insurance policy" for the town; you pay for it, and when you need it, it's there. Groth handed out a summary of the salaries and benefits the \$175,000 additional costs entail. A copy is attached to the record meeting minutes. The salaries were based off a Salary Survey from the Wisconsin Fire Chiefs Association of the Wisconsin Fire Departments. The survey was for fire chief salaries without benefits and may be dependent on the population of the municipalities in which they serve. A copy of this is also attached to the record copy of the meeting minutes. Timm asked about the hiring processes and if the department looked at the hiring process. Discussion ensued. However, it was assumed by the department that the fire chief would be reporting to the Town Board and therefore a town employee. The Mutual Aid Agreement was talked about. Groth indicated that mutual aid is reciprocal; meaning if he calls for mutual aid with Omro, he needs to go and help them. If the call comes in for mutual aid and the department can't go, then we don't go; it's not a guarantee. With Omro, there is an auto aid for structure fires; meaning if there's a structure fire in the town, they know Omro is going to come and assist the town. However, it doesn't mean that Omro is going to come and fight every fire. It wouldn't look good if there was a structure fire in the town and no one, or few people, responded. Mutual Aid is just that it's mutually agreed upon aid, it's not auto aid. If there's a MABAS call goes out, neighboring municipalities are going to respond, but they're not going to come and fight our fires. Groth can't call for mutual aid for a carbon monoxide detector going off, or to do CPR on a patient when they're ten to fifteen minutes away. Benefits are included in the plan. The fire department worked with Mrs. Pat Rocolle (Human Resources Director for Bemis) on benefits, who advised them that 35% of their salaries would be a safe estimate

for a full benefit package. Edson added that if the fire department full-time employees receive benefits, then all town employees must receive the same benefits. Currently the Town Clerk doesn't receive any health insurance or stipend for health insurance. Drexler brought up the fact that most companies are asking the employees to pay for a portion if not all of their health insurance. If the town does not provide health insurance then they would provide the money for the fire chief to get health insurance. There was talk of regional fire departments. It's the best way to provide fire protection, but to get everyone to agree to it is difficult, and more than likely not going to happen anytime soon.

Edson complimented the fire department on presenting their plan. However, the town doesn't have \$175,000 flexibility in the current budget. A referendum is going to be needed in order for the town to increase the levy limit because this would put us over that. In long term planning, the fire department will probably need to replace another truck along with possibly building a new fire station. Keep this in mind when preparing for a referendum. Groth understands what Edson is saying, but how does he provide fire protection or first responder protection. A few years ago, people had a little more flexibility with their employers, people worked shift work, and there were more people available during the day. Hamann thinks there needs to be more discussion on this. Assistant Chief Kolb spoke on how the department has changed since he's started with the department. Kolb also spoke on Fire Department Staffing Committee and the process they went through in 2007-2008. Kolb doesn't think they would do it all over again. The proposal was for the City to take over the fire department. Kolb asked the board members to think about the plan, look into the plan, and if there are any ideas, the department would be open to listening to them. However, the department is starting to hurt for responders during the day.

***Motion by Blake/Drexler, if it is amenable by the Fire Department Board of Directors, that the Town Board and the Board of Directors meet to discuss this, and continue to discuss this in the same vein as the Stormwater Management Meetings; meaning we continue to discuss this on a monthly basis, the Town Board and the Board of Directors in a public meeting so that a better understanding and a solution can be determined, along with finding ways to fund this.*** There was discussion on the safer grant. At this point in time, until the Town Board and Board of Directors can work together to get to the point of where grants could be considered, it's all a manner of getting to that point. Groth would like the Town Treasurer involved in these meetings as well. There is a definite starting point with the handouts Chief Groth gave to the Town Board this evening. If there is a list of questions from board members prior to the first meeting, please forward them to the Town Clerk so that the Board of Directors can discuss them ahead of time. Kierszh would like the Town Board to meet prior to meeting with their Board of Directors so that there could be discussions prior to the meeting. ***No further discussion. Motion carried in a voice vote, 5-0.*** Groth thanked the Town Board for taking a serious look at this proposal.

**5. Approve minutes from previous meetings.**

**A. October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Special Town Board Meeting – Stormwater Management.**

*Motion by Hamann/Kierszh to accept. No further discussion. Motion carried in a voice vote, 5-0.*

**B. October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Regular Town Board Meeting.**

Under New Business, Item A2, Drexler seconded the motion. *Motion by Timm/Kierszh to accept with one correction. No further discussion. Motion carried in a voice vote, 5-0.*

**C. October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 Special Town Board Meeting – Stormwater Management.**

*Motion by Timm/Hamann to approve. No further discussion. Motion carried in a voice vote, 5-0.*

Approved at the December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Regular Town Board Meeting.

**D. October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012 Special Town Board Meeting – Budget Workshop.**

*Motion by Timm/Hamann to approve. No further discussion. Motion carried in a voice vote, 5-0.*

**E. October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Special Town Board Meeting – Budget Workshop.**

*Motion by Kierszh/Timm to approve. No further discussion. Motion carried in a voice vote, 4-0-1 with Drexler abstaining because she wasn't in attendance of this meeting.*

**6. Adjourn.**

Motion to adjourn by Kierszh/Haman. No further discussion. Motion carried in a voice vote, 5-0.  
Meeting adjourned at 7:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlotte K. Nelson, WCMC  
Algoma Town Clerk  
Town of Algoma, Winnebago County, WI