

BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP NEWSLETTER

January 2019

MEETING NOTICE:

The first of four township meetings to discuss Bridgewater incorporating (becoming a city) will be held Saturday, February 2 at 9:00 AM at the town hall. The purpose of the meeting is to answer questions and gather opinions on incorporation and changes in land use that may occur with incorporation.

Meetings will also be held on the following dates:

1. February 7, Thursday, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM
2. February 27, Wednesday, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM
3. March 2, Saturday, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

If you would like to be notified of upcoming meetings by email, send a note to clerk@bridgewaterwp.org. Meetings will be posted on the web site (www.bridgewaterwp.org) and at the Town Hall.

TOWNSHIP FACTS

- The township encompasses 36.4 square miles. When Bridgewater was settled in 1853 and organized as a township in 1856 it was 6 x 7 miles or 42 square miles. Over the years Northfield and Dundas have annexed 5.8 square miles (3,712 acres).
- There are 32 miles of gravel and 5 miles of asphalt roads.
- The population in 2017 was 1,819 in 689 homes. Ten years earlier, in 2007, it was 1,935 in 656 homes.

INCORPORATION STUDY

The primary reason to consider becoming a city is that it gives us more control over what happens to Bridgewater in the future. We gain control over the town's borders in that annexations, over which as a township we have little say, can no longer occur. Currently, we have annexation agreements with Northfield and Dundas which do place some constraints on annexation. The Northfield agreement expires at the end of 2019 and the Dundas agreement expires in 2033. We also gain control over the town's zoning. As a township Bridgewater's zoning must be at least as restrictive as the County. As a city we are able to establish our own zoning. Townships which have incorporated in the last two decades include Rice Lake (2014), Nowthen (2007), Scandia (2005) and Columbus (2005).

Some issues that the town board has been exploring over the last several months:

- If Bridgewater becomes a city will taxes increase?
- Will the cost of administration increase?
- Will we, the citizens, have a say in affairs as we do now in the annual meeting?
- What changes in zoning are likely?

The timeline the Board intends to follow in considering incorporation is:

1. Town meetings in February and March to identify benefits, concerns and problems,
2. Decide in late April whether to continue exploring incorporation,
3. May through August develop the petition for incorporation,
4. Final decision in September on whether to petition for incorporation.

If the Board decides to file for incorporation, we first give 30 days' notice to the adjacent jurisdictions. At the end of the 30 days the petition is submitted to the Minnesota Boundary Adjustment Unit. Within 90 days the Administrative Law Judge who reviews the petition will hold a public hearing and take testimony from residents and representatives of adjacent jurisdictions. Then render a decision. The process that the Administrative Law Judge follows is specified in MN Statute 414.02. If you want a copy of the statute (3 pages), contact the township clerk.

In parallel with exploring incorporation, we are negotiating a new annexation agreement with Northfield since the current agreement expires at the end of 2019 and we are proposing changes to County zoning rules to gain more flexibility for the Township.

LAND USE

One of the reasons to consider incorporation is that it gives us a path to broadening our tax base. Potentially this means more revenue without increasing taxes. For example, there are some areas which are not suitable for farming that could be used for housing clusters similar to Upper Oak Hills or Telemark. There has been some interest in industrial development. If we control zoning it may be possible to allow some development while preserving quality farm land. If we remain a township then changes in land use can occur through annexation and we have very little to say about what happens.

STORM CLEANUP

The last pass through neighborhoods for storm cleanup was at the end of November. The Township has not yet been notified about what portion of the cost will be paid by the State and Federal governments. As soon as we know we will decide about assessment and hold a public hearing.

ELECTIONS AND ANNUAL MEETING

Township elections for the positions of Supervisor and Treasurer will be held on Tuesday, March 12, from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm at the Bridgewater Town Hall. The Annual Township Meeting will be held at 8:15 pm on March 12, following the elections. All residents are welcome to attend.

WEBSITE PHOTOS

The Township is in the process of updating our website. We would like to include photos showing life and nature in the township. If you have any photos what you would like to submit, please email them to the clerk. Photos submitted will be reviewed by the Supervisors and selected ones will be placed on the website.

Bridgewater Township Board

Supervisors:

Email: board@bridgewatertp.org

Gary Ebling

John Holden

Glen Castore

Treasurer:

Brad Pfahning

Clerk:

Frances Boehning

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