

**Bridgewater Township Board of Supervisors**  
**County of Rice, State of Minnesota**  
**June 7, 2023**  
**Official Minutes**

Call to order

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call: Kathleen Kopseng, Andrew Ebling, Thomas Hart, Glen Castore, Mike Little, Lori Noreen

- **Landfill Fire**

- Glen Castore explained the reason for the special meeting being called is to address and hear feedback from the community regarding the May 22<sup>nd</sup> Landfill Fire.
- Glen Castore explained that not all information has been gathered and noted that there will be a public meeting held on Tuesday, June 13 at 6pm in the Commissioners meeting room at the Rice County Government Services Building which should provide further information and results of tests performed pertaining to the fire.
- Glen Castore introduced Tom Nelson, Chief of NAFRS.
- Tom Nelson provided a brief background of himself then provided information regarding the roll NAFRS had during the fire. He noted that in his 35 years of service they had never responded to a fire of this nature at the Landfill.
  - Tom stated that he went out to the fire first to assess the situation along with the NAFRS trucks. He then called the Fire Chief of Faribault Fire Department, Dustin Dienst for help.
  - Tom explained that he spoke with the foreman of the Landfill. They discussed that the main concern was that the fire would spread into more of the Landfill. Based on this concern a plan was made to permit the spread by creating a fire line which held. During this time there was approximately 15K gallons of water dumped on the fire.
  - It was determined that water alone would not put the fire out and other alternatives would need to be pursued.
  - It was noted that there was a call to the Duty Officer to notify the Fire Marshall and MPCA of the fire.
  - Tom then stated that on May 24 there was dirt that was dumped on the fire, which was helping, but there was an area that was too high, so the decision was made to perform a tanker shuttle. NAFRS, Faribault Fire Department, Lonsdale Fire Department, and Morristown Fire Department worked together to haul approximately 70K gallons of water to cool down the leading edge. This action knocked down the high area enough to cover it with dirt as well.
  - Tom stated that on May 26<sup>th</sup> there was a Fire Services Specialist meeting.
  - After providing the information, Tom asked guests for input on what can be done better for the next time a fire occurs, which opened the meeting to the Community for comment.
- Joe Hollinger commented first off that he has full faith in NAFRS but was wondering if there were other options as to how to handle the fire from the start. He questioned why the fire went on as long as it did/has and why wasn't

the landfill's own water supply not used. Joe also questioned if the liner is still intact.

- It was noted that most of the questions Joe and other guests had will be better answered at the June 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.
  - Deb Salaba made the comment that there was a lack of communication with Rice County. There was no response from them when reaching out regarding the situation. She also questioned who monitors the Landfill after business hours.
  - Nancy Johnson had concerns as to what types of items were/are burning. What should the Community be concerned about. She questioned how quickly it would/will dissipate and what starts fires of this nature.
  - Mary Klockeman had concerns regarding what sediments were/are settling on crops and ground from this fire. She questioned the status of the Landfill liner. She also noted the lack of communication during the fire.
  - Dustin Dienst commented that the liner is a concern for all, and he is under the understanding that the Landfill will open the area up and check the liner when the area is ready to do so. He noted that the smoke is out at this time. He stated that the Landfill takes care of fires that the public is not even aware of. He mentioned that most likely there will not be a determination of what caused the initial fire but there is speculation of what did.
  - John Klockeman commented that he received a visit from a staff member from Rice County. He suggested that there could perhaps be more procedural steps to follow when fires of this nature do occur. He mentioned that the County could be better with communication protocols during these situations. He expressed his concern of the sediments that have covered ground and crops from the fire.
  - Sue Hollinger expressed her opinion that residents should be more conscious of what they are disposing of. She also noted that due to the fire she is experiencing the aftermath of compromised health.
  - Mike Little noted that he had his windows open the evening of the fire and he woke up to a home filled with smoke. He expressed his concern about what the smoke did to he and his family's health.
  - Barbara Zaveruha suggested that an air quality monitoring system should be in place immediately.
  - Senator Bill Lieske commented that he received notice of the fire and started reaching out to obtain information as to the situation of the fire and he too did not have success when he reached out to Rice County. He called MPCA for information. Senator Lieske stated that he learned from the MPCA that they are only a resource unless a formal request is filed to obtain their help. Senator Lieske also stated that there were news reporters reaching out to him. He was able to speak with Fox 9. Once those comments were viewed Rice County did respond to the Senator.
  - Andrew Murray commented that the Community may need better awareness of how to dispose of certain items that can cause these types of fires. He also stated he felt the meeting was a good start to handle situations like this better in the future.
  - Nate Watters expressed his concern of the lifetime and management of the Landfill. He would like to have a better understanding of this and would like the Township to focus on not just the fire but the bigger picture of the landfill in the future. He also questioned the status of the liner.
- Kerry Barbetti provided a brief background of himself which happens to pertain to this event. He provided a list of items that he feels need to be addressed

regarding the fire. He stated that his intention is to address the gaps in the emergency response and provided suggestions as to how to obtain a better plan of action in the future. He mentioned the key notes of a plan should be to have a list of resources, roles and responsibilities and proper training of those involved.

Some questions Kerry has are:

- Why was there no activity over the holiday weekend.
- Where did the pollution go.
- Why was the public restricted from the landfill but not the licensed operators.
- What all has been exposed to the pollution.

Some main notes from Kerry's observations were:

- There should be a Community Action Plan established between Rice County and Bridgewater Township.
  - Rice County should be responsible for creating an Integrated Contingency Plan.
  - What is the Off-Site Impact from the fire.
  - If a plan is intact, it would provide the opportunity to help the Fire Department to have better experience, resources, and training for future events.
- Glen Castore noted that the Community has many talented members. He stated that Rice County has recognized its short falls during this event. He stated that Bridgewater Township would like to be a part of how to better handle future situations. The Township will relay the Community's concerns and they will work with Rice County to have better communication and create improvements for the future. He encouraged the guests to attend the Tuesday June 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Adjourn

Chair	
Clerk	