

ELLSBURG TOWNSHIP
P. O. BOX 308
1767 MELRUDE ROAD
MELRUDE, MN 55766

ELLSBURG TOWNSHIP SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
Blackburn Drive Petition

November 28, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm at the corner of Blackburn Drive and Water Hen Rd, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. After petitioner Bill MacKechnie presented the affidavit of service and an explanation of his request, the meeting was then moved to the town hall.

Board members present were Chairperson Beth Caple, Vice Chair Kevin Davidson, Supervisor John Upton and Clerk Cindy Brown. Treasurer Elaine Wick was present at the town hall only.

Guests present at the town hall were: Dale Wick, Arrlette Krog, Charles Danielson, Steve Danielson, Todd Bechthold, Keith Lockhart, Deb Lockhart, Brian Laurie, Carla Moberg, Steve Moberg, Jeff Johnson, Bill MacKechnie, Dan Marks, MaryAnn Marks, Robert Larson, Cheryl Larson, Terry Giernett, Donna Cline, Liz Larson, Bob Larson and Loren Mesedahl.

The meeting at the town hall started with Bill MacKechnie giving a short speech on what the road conditions are at this time. He also stated that it is recorded incorrectly as a public cart path as a public cart path cannot be over ½ mile long and this section of road is ¾ of a mile long. He also cited a new law that went into effect in 2022 which states that plotted roads not recorded by the township within 40 years goes back to the landowners making it a private road. The landowners want the road turned into a minimum maintenance road maintained by the township. Landowners are very concerned with emergency vehicles not being able to get through the road in its current state.

There was a short discussion among attendees and supervisors on public cart paths and plotted roads not recognized by the township.

Chairperson Beth Caple then went down the sign-in sheet asking each attendee for their comments on turning this road into a minimum maintenance road.

Arrlette Krog shared that there is an option called a subordinate service district available that the landowners may want to research to maintain the road if the township does not grant their request.

Bob Larson gave some history on the road and issues within the township over past requests to maintain the road. The landowners had been promised by a previous board to take on the road but the board then backed out. He stated the road has been worked on by the township several times over the many years he has owned property so there is precedent that town should continue to maintain, we shouldn't be able to use the "if we touch it, we own it" argument to turn down the request.

Chairperson Beth Caple asked the attendees to remember that this board was not involved in any past decisions about the road and they are trying their best to research what course of action to take. She also stated that while the board is sympathetic to their situation, as officers of the township they are fiscally responsible to all residents and they need to make the best decision for the township.

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Charles Danielson asked what the process is for the petition. It was explained that the board is here to hear their comments/opinions/arguments for making that section of Blackburn Drive into a minimum maintenance road but the board ultimately makes that decision, it is not made by the electors.

Bob Larson Jr asked how many roads are used but not maintained by the township. He believes all roads in the township should be maintained by the township.

Keith Lockhart stated his biggest concern is with public safety, wonders why they don't get the same service as the other side of the Lake Wilson.

Brian Laurie, Carla and Steve Moberg, Dan and MaryAnn Marks and Liz Larson all agree with the township taking over the road for all of the reasons given by others.

Sharon MacKechnie shared that she doesn't understand the argument that other roads being maintained by the residents will now want to be maintained by the township, she feels the comparison for need is not the same. The section they are concerned about has 21 affected taxpayers.

Someone asked how many residents live year-round on the road but were told by another resident it doesn't matter, all of the landowners on that road pay taxes.

There was a short plowing discussion as a couple of supervisors don't think the county will plow the road due to width if we do take over the road.

Cheryl Larson shared that she has seen this scenario several times over the many years as a landowner. She can think of at least several times the township has taken over maintenance for additional sections of Mink/Blackburn as the community grew and the roads were used more.

Terry Giernett asked how far back they want the township to maintain, would Bill want the township to take on his road as well in the future. Bill said no, that would not be expected.

Loren Mesedahl stated that as a member of the fire department he also has concerns about getting to anyone in need if there was an emergency.

Bill MacKechnie ended with a recap that they just want it to be designated a minimum maintenance road, get occasional gravel and occasional snowplowing.

Chairperson Beth Caple then read Bill's original petition and also a letter from St Louis County the township had received in 2013 listing 10 questions/concerns they have if the township requests their services to help maintain the road.

Chairperson Beth Caple made a motion to take the next month for research and make a decision at the December 20 board meeting, Supervisor John Upton second, motion approved.

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As there was no further business, Chairperson Beth Caple made a motion to adjourn, Supervisor John Upton second, motion approved. The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 pm.

Cindy Brown, Clerk

Beth Caple, Chairperson

Date