

TOWN of MAY
WASHINGTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
May 23rd, 2023

The Board of Supervisors of the Town of May convened a special meeting on Tuesday May 23rd 2023, at 1:00 p.m. at the May Town Hall. Those present included: Steve Magner and Don Rolf. Planner Nate Sparks and Clerk/Treasurer Bobbi Hummel. Chair John Pazlar is absent.

Others present were Washington County Commissioner Fran Miron, Trust for Public Land representative Bob McGillivray. Scott Nolan, Forest Lake area Wildlife Manager, Frank Wilson, the Regional Director and Pat (inaudible), with Minnesota Fish and Wildlife. As well as 2 residents of the town.

Notice was posted on the township's website and at the Town Hall more than 72 hours prior to May 23rd, 2023.

The sole purpose of the special meeting is to gather information on the planned sale of the Kelley Cattle Company Land and ensure future township input and understanding of the process.

Acting Chair Steve Magner called the meeting to order at 12:58 p.m.

Mr. McGillivray explains that Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a non-profit organization that purchases land from sellers who want to protect their land with permanent stewardship for people to enjoy. The Kelley Land and Cattle Company property is approximately 2600 acres and has been owed by the family for many generations. This is one of the largest undeveloped pieces of land in the greater twin cities metro region. The land has high biodiversity significance, there are a number of lakes on it, a variety of habitats, wetlands, forests, and grasslands. The owners have taken care of the property very well. It is one of the county's top 10 conservation areas. It has been a priority for protection for many decades. The eastern portion has been in the county's master plan for approximately 3 decades. TPL hopes to acquire the land on the west side of Manning to the south of 155th street.

The DNR acquires approximately 6000 acres of land per year across the entire state. This is a high-quality piece of habitat and if it becomes a Wildlife Management Area (WMA) it will be open to the public. They will provide ecosystem service such as water filtration, as well as outdoor amenities. This land presents an opportunity for something a little different than a typical WMA. Meetings will be forthcoming to get feedback from the public to see what they would like on the land. From the meetings they hope to determine what the day-to-day operations will look like.

TPL and the DNR are separate organizations but do work together. In this case, TPL will buy the land and then donate it to the DNR. Magner questions why the DNR does not purchase the land outright. Some of the land the DNR acquires on its own, other times they use Non-Government Organizations (NGO) as a partner. It has to do with capacity. For example, TPL has the time and talent for conservation. The DNR couldn't accomplish their mission without partners like Pheasants Forever and TPL.

TPL is a non-profit organization that gets funds from government grants, foundations, and donations from individuals. The funding for this transaction is coming from the Outdoor Heritage Fund through the State of MN Legacy Grant. The MN Legacy Grant is a constitutional amendment that was passed in 2018. It is dedicated sales tax funding that is required in the constitution to be used for purchasing wildlife areas and improving habitat.

The Minnesota Land Trust is different from TPL as it concentrates on conservation easements, they do not actually buy the land. TPL buys the land outright, not as an easement.

The DNR does plan for a community meeting with public input and a commentary period in the fall and winter. The hope is to gain interest in what they would like on the property. There will be initial plans presented.

TPL hopes to acquire the first phase of the property (approx. 450 acres) sometime this summer and complete the acquisition with the rest of the land in the fall.

The acquisition was a surprise for the township and Magner asks about taking it off the tax rolls for the township. Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) would be available for this property. The PILT payment is estimated to be significantly more than the tax base. The estimated amount of PILT payment is about six times as much to the county as it is currently receiving. The county receives a little under ¼ of tax dollars (22%-23%). The PILT payment is split in a similar method as it would be with residential property on the land.

The entire area is planned to be a WMA. Buffers and setbacks are still in the planning stage. There are 7 houses within 300 feet of 10-mile border. Community input will be beneficial. There are four different options for buffers.

The DNR plans to remove all the buildings on the land. Magner asks if that is negotiable so the character can be kept. The DNR is open to having the buildings moved by someone as an option. However, buildings on a WMA are not consistent with the land use. Magner asks if that question can be asked at the community meeting to get the public's opinion. Rolf suggests that the buildings be checked for integrity/status. There might be an option for use of a building to create a welcome space for visitors.

The name for the WMA is proposed as Keystone Woods.

Planner Sparks remarks that the Board has sent a letter to TPL expressing their opposition to the land becoming a WMA based on the location of the land and traffic concerns for the township. The township is required to have a plan for trail corridors in that area. For these reasons it does not seem to be a good fit. The township wants balance in this area and wants to make sure everything works together. He asks what the options/restrictions are and what model the DNR looking at? What happens if this becomes a popular WMA (such as Carlos Avery)? The DNR representatives responded by stating this would be part of the public process and that there are ways to limit visitors with available parking spots. The landscape of this land wouldn't lend itself to a Carlos Avery situation due to the wide-open areas. The starting point/general rule with any WMA is that it is open to all kinds of hunting and trapping (including shot guns, single shot, rifle). From there the plan gets refined based on public input and the addition of buffers (300 feet). No firearms are allowed to be discharged in those areas. This method has been successful. There are parking

spot location being proposed (*corner of 155th/Manning, directly across from the farmstead, an access where a rental property exists, right across from the hunt club access, Hwy 4, SW off Keystone Ave.*). At this point the plan is to limit them to 8-10 spots at each lot.

Planner Sparks asks if the land south of the park could become part of the county park rather than a WMA. This would create a situation where all of the WMA is all on the west site of Manning and the Park is on the east side. Mr. McGillivray said he asked that question and said the county is not interested in that land. Commissioner Miron confirms that to be true. The county is trying to follow the master plan, if the township wishes to modify the master plan, he is willing to approach the county about it. Mr. McGillivray states if that is the case, plan would have to move along very quickly. Nate Sparks believes the township would be willing to consider a change in the plan.

The water areas will be used for fishing. Boat restrictions and catch and release requirements may be put on place. There will not be public water access to back in a boat. The lakes would allow fishing from shore and possible kayaks.

Public participation will be coordinated with a personal letter to neighboring properties and the DNR will reach out to the local units of government. They are still trying to figure out if it will be an open house format or online questionnaires. Mr. Sparks confirms that the township would like a representative at those meetings, Nate Sparks will be the contact for the township. The meetings are open to anyone.

Currently the DNR is in the planning phase and will take the information they received today and work that into their plan. They will be in touch over the summer. Exact dates of the land transfer are not available today.

Commissioner Miron will relay notes to county staff as the discussion moves forward.

Commissioner Miron is unaware (doesn't believe) that the City of Hugo has been notified about this WMA, it borders a far edge of the town. The use of this land is buffered by conservation areas in Hugo. Magner is interested in learning what Hugo's thoughts are on this area. The DNR adds that they have reached out to Hugo officials but have not gotten a response.

Neighbors in attendance had concerns that the township was planning to develop this land. Supervisor Magner explains that the township has no ownership of the property and has no control of this land/sale. The township has some zoning controls they can only regulate some land use. This is a private sale; the owners of the land have reached out to TPL to sell the land and it will most likely be eventually transferred to the DNR. The DNR plans to develop a WMA over the entire area. The property will not be developed at this point.

Meeting adjourned at 2:19 p.m.

Submitted:



Bobbi Hummel
Clerk/Treasurer

Approved:



Steve Magner
Board Supervisor, Acting Chair