

Town of Onalaska

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Newsletter Winter 2011

What Has Been Happening in our Town

Well, the answer to that question is that a lot has changed during 2011 in the Town of Onalaska. In this issue of your Town of Onalaska Newsletter we will bring you up to date on the new personnel in our Town working for you.



In June, the Board of Supervisors appointed Melissa Erdman as our new full-time Town Clerk and Secretary, replacing the previously separate positions of part-time Clerk and full time Secretary. Those two previous positions were vacated in April with the resignation/retirement of Sue Schultz and Peg Hanson. Prior to joining the Town of Onalaska team, Melissa was employed with Tri-State Financial Services where she processed mortgage loans while also managing their payroll, accounts payable and accounts receivable. Melissa has been a Town resident for over 10 years and lives in the Halfway Creek area with husband, Scott and her four children, Kasey-15, Jesse-14, and twins Isaac and Axell, aged 9. Melissa is looking forward to meeting many more of the town residents over time. Since being hired, she has completed multiple training opportunities in all phases of her Clerk's duties, is up to speed and ready for April's election, and has assisted in converting our accounting system from Peachtree to Quickbooks. She is doing a super job, and we are pleased to have her on board.

When Melissa has to be out of the office for training or Clerk conferences or meetings, or is gone for any personal reasons, Gerald Monti is our new Deputy Clerk at the helm. Jerry and his wife Daphne live on County Road S, and have been town residents for over 10 years. Gerry stepped up to the plate and staffed our town hall as an interim Clerk until our new full time Clerk came on board. He enjoys golfing and spending time with his 4 grown children, and is "Grampa" to multiple grandchildren. You will occasionally find him accompanied by his faithful canine sidekick, Murphy. We Thank Jerry for helping us through the transition, and hope he will stay on as Deputy Clerk. We will try not to get in the way of his golfing next summer.



Town Assessor

In June, former Town Assessor Bud Raymer lost his State Assessor Certification, and the Town found itself in need of hiring a new Assessor. Multiple resumes were received, and after interviewing applicants, the Board unanimously approved the hiring of Hart Appraisals from Tomah, WI. Patrick Hart also assisted the Town in the submission of State required reports during the time that the Assessor position was vacant. He is responsive to the residents of our Town, and is already in the process of a much needed Revaluation of the entire town. We are pleased to have Patrick Hart, and Hart Appraisals on board. Patrick welcomes questions from residents, and wants them to feel as if they have been treated fairly and equitably. He says "When this occurs, I have done my job". Our residents will find him very professional to work with.



Welcome, Assessor, Patrick Hart

Town Building Inspector

The Town of Onalaska has contracted with Jim Webb to be our Building Inspector. Jim is a Professional Engineer and the owner of Jim Webb, PE, Engineering & Construction, LLC. Mr. Webb has been active in commercial and residential construction projects in the La Crosse area for over 38 years. Jim and his wife, Gail are La Crosse residents. He is the father of 4 children, and enjoys spending free time on the golf course with his grandson. Jim has previously been employed by HSR Associates, TCI General Contractors, and W. F. Gilster Construction. He is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, is a park commissioner for the City of La Crosse, and is the current Building Inspector in the Town Shelby. Since coming on board he has been in the Town Hall regularly handling permits, and on site conducting inspections.



Welcome, Building Inspector, Jim Webb

A new Treasurer, and an addition to the Town shop crew



Effective September 30th former Treasurer, Paula Hammes, officially retired and resigned her position as the Town of Onalaska Treasurer. Paula's resignation required the Board of Supervisors to seek out and appoint a new Treasurer to fill out the unexpired Treasurer's term. Don Boisen was appointed Treasurer and will serve in that capacity until April of 2013 when he will decide if he wishes to run for the elected Treasurer position. Don and his wife, Audrey of 40 years reside on County Road ZZ on Brice Prairie, and have been residents of the Town of Onalaska for 60 years. The Boisen's have one grown son and daughter, and are also grandparents. Being retired from other employment, Don was interested in and able to take on the role of Town Treasurer. He has assisted with the process of transitioning the Town's tax processing back to the La Crosse County system, and has completed the county's training on their tax system. Don wants residents to know that he will be on hand to accept tax payments in the Town Hall, where you can stop in with payments, or avoid the waiting lines and mail checks to the town hall. Payments must be made by check. No cash will be accepted for tax payments. River Bank and Park Bank are now both also able to accept Town of Onalaska tax payments.

This Fall the Board of Supervisors determined that we needed to fill the vacancy in our shop crew to be better prepared to handle all road and park services we provide to our town residents. The main priority was to hire someone who brought a mechanic's background, so that we could be more fiscally responsible by conducting our own equipment maintenance and repairs, rather than contracting it out to others. After review of multiple applications and interviewing 5 possible candidates, we hired Bill Reibel. Bill was previously a mechanic with Kwik Trip with many years of experience in vehicle repair and maintenance, as well as plowing and other maintenance responsibilities. After growing up on Brice Prairie, Bill now resides in the Halfway Creek area with his wife Kim and 4 daughters, Kelsie, Lysie, Marsie and Cassie. Bill is enthusiastically looking forward to all the responsibilities that his position on the Town Crew will provide. Please welcome Bill when you see him working around the town.



The Town has also entered into an agreement with former Town crew member, Al Steck, to assist with snow plowing on an on-call, as needed, basis. With 3 full time, experienced crew members back on staff, and the ability to call on Al Steck when needed, your board feels we are now much better positioned to cover whatever winter weather event we may find ourselves faced with. Of course, this writer is still hoping for a mild winter and not too much of that fluffy white stuff to deal with.

A Report from your Recycling Committee

Changes to the Town Recycling Center have been the focus of the Recycling Committee lately. The old salt and sand shed has been removed, and we have increased the size the remaining salt shed to better suit our needs. Grass, leaves and shrubs have been relocated to the back of the yard. The Town is also working on a new entrance road to the Center from the back of the yard, allowing traffic to exit onto both Josie and Second Streets, which will reduce traffic in other areas of the neighborhood. The cost of operating the Recycling Center is significant, and the committee continues to look for ways cut costs and still provide residents with this service. Enforcing the rules for use of the Center is an area where some cost savings can hopefully be realized. The Recycling Center is for the use of Town of Onalaska RESIDENTS ONLY and residents must pick up a sticker from the Town Hall and affix it to the windshield of the vehicle that they use to bring items to the Center. Another way to potentially save cost is for residents to remember that the Center is for large items only. If it will fit in the Town garbage bags, you should do so, and it will be picked up curbside on regular refuse collection days. The number of the town employees working the Recycle Center will be reduced to 2, and they will be there to direct you where to unload your items. The crew should not be expected to unload for you. They will assist as needed. The Committee also asks you to remember that this is a large item drop off Center, and not a refuse dump. Please reference the Recycle Newsletter for a list of what is acceptable and not acceptable to bring to the Center. If everyone will help us better manage what comes into the Center, we should be able to continue to hold costs in line and avoid having to consider reducing the days it is open.

For additional information and schedules, etc. please check the Town's website or stop into the Town Hall and pick up our complete 2012 Recycling Newsletter.

One final note of information for you - Effective with the 2012 Town budget, the cost of the required Town of Onalaska clear refuse bags will increase to \$1.30 per bag. Bags are available at the Town Hall and at all the usual purchase outlets. The Town has never increased the price of the bags since we began requiring them. A review of the total cost versus the price of the bag supported the need to increase the cost. The Recycle Committee continues to regularly review how we handle our refuse, recycle, and large item drop off Center, looking for ways to most efficiently use your tax dollars and still provide all the services you have asked for. We are always open to the thoughts and suggestions of interested residents.

Upcoming elections information Spring elections will be held on Tuesday, April 3, 2012. Please check the Town's website or contact the Clerk for information on candidacy, absentee ballots, or becoming a poll worker.

Stormwater Utility News

Town Supervisors, acting in their capacity as the Stormwater Utility Board, have received and reviewed a number of vendor proposals, and have scheduled a January 10, 2012 Stormwater Utility meeting to interview selected candidates for the purpose of contracting with a new Stormwater Utility Consultant/Engineer. Changes have occurred with our former Stormwater consultant that provided us the opportunity to review our needs and consider competitive bids to refill the position. The Board has also recently completed the 2012 Stormwater Utility budget, that for the first time budgets income as well as expenses, and provides for a detailed and transparent transfer of funds from the Stormwater Utility to the town for services by the Town employees provided to the utility. Since we are no longer utilizing the services of GCS Software, a new billing database will be developed with our new Stormwater Consultant/Engineer, and 2012 Stormwater bills will not be mailed until sometime after January. Any currently delinquent Stormwater bills will appear on residents tax bills mailed from La Crosse County in December this year. Please remember that your Stormwater payments are NOT tax deductible, like your property taxes are.

Once we have contracted with our new consultant/engineer, the Utility will be refining the budget, if needed, and will determine projects to be completed for 2012. It will also be working during the year to review the Town's property records for any corrections or adjustments that might be needed to assure the accuracy of our Stormwater Utility billing database.

It has been busy in our Town

Watching the progress of the new US Fish and Wildlife facility has been exciting, but it is not the only activity that has gone on in our Town.

The often patched and leaking roof of the town shop has been replaced with a new metal roof that should keep us dry for many years to come. The Town shop also has all new windows and has been completely insulated. It is so bright and fresh in there - it will surely be appreciated at our April elections, and will yield us a noticeable reduction in our utility bills for the shop. We are waiting to receive our grant funds from the State, now that this project is completed. We will also be upgrading the restroom in the shop, and hope to have our fresh, new, and handicap accessible bathroom completed relatively soon. Funds reserved for a new salt shed were used this past year to complete the process of tearing down the old and unsafe shed, and building a new and expanded salt storage facility.

Even the town hall has seen some improvements. Have you noticed our new free standing posting board. We now have lots of room to post agenda and meeting notices in a new and attractive weather proof sign case detached from our building. And that broken and loose tile floor in the entry area to the Town Hall is being replaced.

Yes, there have been a lot of building upgrades and renovations, and employee changes, but through it all, everyone has come in with a willingness to dig right in and get things done. Efficiencies are improving constantly. Residents offered to help when we found ourselves without any regular office staff for awhile. Shop crew did whatever they could to keep things moving along smoothly. Supervisors even volunteered when needed, and the Town has emerged ready to make 2012 even more eventful. We welcome your thoughts and suggestions.

You have asked for an audit.

For some time now, the Town has been talking about an audit, in response to residents requests. We were previously delayed with lots of discussion about just what we were looking for.

What type of audit should we do? How many years should it encompass? Can we afford it? Who will do it? There were many reasons to proceed slowly and ultimately do it right.

We are getting closer. Shortly after Chairman Rolly Bogert was installed as the Town Board Chairman he received notice from our then accountants, Tostrud and Temp, that they did not feel that they could continue to meet our accounting needs. We contacted many accounting firms that came highly recommended and requested proposals to assist with our Town's accounting oversight and reporting. Ultimately only one firm submitted a proposal, and the Town contracted with PKC & Associates as the Town's new accountants.

PKC's accountants worked with our Clerk and we completed the transition from Peachtree to Quickbooks for our accounting software. The transition was time consuming, but all in all, went fairly smoothly. We are now positioned to provide more comprehensive and transparent financial data to our Board and to our residents. We are also now better prepared to keep adding more annotations to our budget to make it more understandable.

With this transition in our accounting process in place, we plan to move forward very early in 2012 with the audit. Chairman Bogert is in the process of identifying firms that may meet our needs. The Board will soon make a determination of how many years to go back in the audit, and will determine the final scope of the audit.

Thank you for your patience.

Thank you, Paula Hammes.

During the weeks that we were without our former Clerk and secretary, one person was absolutely invaluable to Chairman Bogert and our Board. Paula Hammes, went "above and beyond" in her time commitment to help staff the office and assist interim Clerk, Jerry Monti, to determine what needed to be done, and when to do it. She helped us locate and organize files and documentation needed to simply keep operating day by day till we hired and trained our new Clerk. She was an information resource to Jerry and the accountants as they kept the bills paid. Paula, we don't think we could have done it without you. Thank You is not nearly enough to express our appreciation. May you relax and enjoy your retirement to the fullest. If you see our former Treasurer, Paula Hammes, around Town, please take a minute to add your Thanks.

We want to take this opportunity to
sincerely Thank You
for any way that you may have worked
with us this year to effect a successful
year of transition.

*May each of you be richly blessed with whatever you are wishing for in
the New Year, and may you celebrate your own personal Holiday
traditions in the company of all who fulfill your life.
HAPPY HOLIDAYS !*

The Town of Onalaska's website is a valuable resource and offers you a wealth of
information about your Town. Check it out regularly.
Don't forget to let us know if you would rather receive this Newsletter electronically.
Call or e-mail the Town Hall with your e-mail address and we will send you a
message when future newsletters are posted on the website.

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