

## Special Electors Meeting of December 17, 2020

Chairman Maines called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. He started out by asking Supervisor Schmidt to give an overview of where the process of the Building Projects was at this time and explain why they called the Special Electors Meeting.

### **D & A on Possible Building Projects for the Town of Plum Lake - Rec Building:**

Supervisor Schmidt explained that even though three buildings had already been approved, the Board felt the need to call the meeting to get the Electors input due to the fact that the cost of the buildings had gone substantially up from what was previously quoted. He said that the Board had accepted bids for the Town Garage and Salt/Sand Shed and that things were already in the works for those two projects. Supervisor Schmidt then explained the Rec Building had come in at double the original price expected and the Town Board at this point felt that they could not go forward without getting the Electors input. He went on to explain that if they moved forward with the Rec Building, they would get a \$57,434 discount from the Builder if they combined it with the Town Garage. The contractor needs to know by January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 if the Town wants to combine the two buildings. He also said that this coming Spring there will be a 4% increase in the price of steel which will add additional cost to the Rec Building.

Chairman Maines then explained to the Electors present that he was going to open the meeting up to their comments and that they should be short and concise while still getting their point across. He then asked Curt from Hassinger to come up and give a brief overview of what is pertinent information, Curt explained that they were able to give a discount on the Rec Building due to the fact that all their equipment will already be in the area. He explained that the new Rec Building would be more efficient, would have a nice kitchen and mentioned the Athletic Flooring for the combined Pickle Ball, Basketball and Volley Ball courts along with the equipment needed for the individual sports.

Shane Zaruba asked about the flooring for the sports and Curt explained it was a resilient athletic rubber floor. Shane also asked if the Volleyball poles would be in ground and Curt said yes, they would be.

Sheehan Donoghue presented her figures on what she thought the added costs would be to taxpayers for the building projects already in the works, saying that the increase in taxes already will be a hardship for a lot of jobless people, people on fixed incomes etc. She stated that the increase has already caused consternation with a lot of the taxpayers and to add an additional tax burden for the Rec Building might be more than some people could manage. She said she felt the Community Center project should be put off for a couple of years or until the economy stabilizes.

Lauri Gerlach asked about the time line of the Town Garage from start to finish, the Rec Building time line and about price increases for supplies, Curt answered her that the Town Garage would take about 6 months and that if the Rec Building project moves forward it would start in the Fall of 2021. He said he couldn't really predict the price of Steel, but thought lumber could come down, but every year labor does go up. He didn't feel lumber was relevant to the Rec Building as very little would be used

Gary Errington commented that he had no opinion on whether to start or delay the Rec Building. He did ask why the existing Rec Building needed to be torn down and suggested it be used by the Fire Department and others for cold storage and felt there would be no need to heat the Building.

Dale Buss said he went over his tax bills and said that his tax bill today was within \$10 of what it was back in 2011. He said that there was always something going on in the world and felt waiting would only end up costing the Town more and asked that people support moving forward with the Rec Center.

David Kiss asked what's wrong with the Rec Building we have, saying that it's a beautiful building and can always fix things rather than spend a lot of money to build new.

Dan Zellner addressed the Chairman saying he was at a meeting 2 years ago where the Chairman had stated the Town needed to form plans and goals. Dan asked where is that plan, why is the Town going from one crisis to the next. Dan said it is an aging Town with aging Buildings and Roads. There should be a plan to fix things before they become a crisis. He wondered who is benefiting from a hidden away 1.5-million-dollar Town Garage for two employees. He asked why the price for the new Grader jumped from \$30,000 to \$100,000. Dan noted that a huge percentage of Vilas County were retirees on fixed income. He said his taxes went up 7.6% and his Social Security went up 1.3%. Dan said he felt that the Ambulance Barn should have been fixed before it became a "Crisis" and again asked, where's the plan? Dan said it is upsetting to him to spend \$1.8 million on a new Rec Center and feels it's time to get realistic.

Meadow Lofy a Resort owner on Plum Lake says her taxes would go up 30%. She checked with contacts in St. Germain who said their taxes didn't go up with their projects. She feels there are a lot of unknown repercussions to the decisions that are being made. She said she feels that it's not a good time frame for all these upgrades during the Pandemic and wonders if the Board could back off on some things. Thinks it would be a good idea to wait out the Pandemic to see how the supply chain will be up here and how tourism will be affected. Meadow wondered about what the usage would be in the next year for a new Rec Center. She asked why all the Buildings need to be done now and wants to see a Plan for the future.

Shane Zaruba asked if this meeting was something about the Referendum, Chairman Maines replied that last Spring the Electors approved all 3 Buildings in the amount of \$2 million. The bids this Fall came in at \$3.4 million and the Board felt the Electors should have the chance to give their input on whether to back off, hold off or move ahead with the Rec Building. He did mention that the Electors vote would be advisory only and that the Board will have the final say as to which direction the Town will move in regard to the Rec Building.

Lauri Gerlach went through some of the best things added to the new Rec Building plan saying she was really happy about the new restrooms plan versus the outhouses. She said the Kitchen now was awful to work in and that the new plan had a new storage area and serving windows to the outside and inside from the kitchen. She said that there were a lot of things the Building Committee worked on to make it more user friendly. She feels it will get a lot of use with fundraisers and other events.

Barb Gloss said she felt the improvements to the Rec Building should be spread out over time. Just do the bathrooms, kitchen etc.

Danelle Moran stated she wants to see the Town move forward for herself and her children.

Wayne Seeger said he felt the taxes are very reasonable and felt the Town should move forward.

Sheehan Donoghue said she would like to know on a yearly and weekly basis how many times the Rec Building is used. She would also like to know for what purpose and how many Towns people who live here year-round use it on a weekly basis. Sheehan said if she knew these facts it could affect her decision. She said taxes will go up 7% due to the project and realizes it will be easier for some to handle the increase than others. She feels the Town does need to come up with a plan.

Bob Klager asked how much had been borrowed so far for the Building Projects. Chairman Maines told him \$1.25 million. Bob then wanted to know what the added debt would be for the Rec Building. Chairman Maines told him it would be \$1.7 million. Bob then said he didn't feel it was clear to people how much the taxes would go up the next year and wanted it clarified that in addition to the 7% increase already in effect for the 1.25 million borrowed there would be at least be another 7% increase in taxes and possibly more for the additional 1.7 million borrowed. The Board confirmed that yes it would be at least 7% more.

Katie Mortag said she would like to move forward with building the new Rec Building, not only for herself but for her children. She said the existing Building is old and she says that she can afford the tax increase.

Doug Ralston said he felt the decisions were being made on the assumption that things will be back to normal and social distancing will be over due to the Pandemic. He reminded people how many Town activities and festivals were cancelled. He asked what we are committing to now and will COVID-19 be gone or will it still be around. He asked, should we move forward if we do not know that answer? He stated that his taxes went up 30%. He feels the Town of Plum Lake needs a Public Works Plan.

Chairman Maines gave his summary of the steps taken to get to the point they are now with the Rec Building. Highlights are that he has taken a lot of calls and has given a lot of thought on the best way to move forward. He shared that they had already borrowed \$1.25 million for 10 years at 2.75% for the Town Garage and Salt/Sand Shed. He stated that both the buildings being currently done were unsafe. He said he is now having second thoughts about moving forward with the Rec Building for a number of reasons. Reasons he listed were taxes would double, they have other loans for Carl Eliason St., Nixon Lake Road, Camp 2 Road, new truck, new grader, repairing EMS Building and roof repair for Fire Department. He did clarify that the new Grader cost was \$84,000 and that the \$30,000 cost mentioned earlier by Mr. Zellner was for repairing the old Grader not buying a new Grader. His final thoughts were they need to hold off and build the Rec Building in the future saying we need to live within our means. He said after the vote tonight the Board will have a better idea on how the Electors feel which will help the Board make the decision on what to do in regard to the Rec Building at their next meeting.

Supervisor Rasmussen started out by thanking the Building Committee for all their ideas, time, and work on the project. He also thanked all the people who had called him with their questions and concerns. He stated it was a "sad" year, mentioning that it was the first time Camp Highlands has not opened in 118 years. He said they may need to back off for a while but would not be in favor of putting a "band-aid" on the existing Rec Building stating that the Town needs to move forward when the time is right. He did say he was disappointed with the architect when the cost estimates given came in almost double.

Supervisor Schmidt also thanked the Building Committee and said that they did have a plan to always do the priorities first, which is what they did with the Town Garage and Salt/Sand Shed, saying it was always their plan to build the Rec Building last. Supervisor Schmidt was also disappointed in how far off the building costs estimates from the architect were. He shared that his personal taxes went up by \$150.00 and felt that it was worth it to him if it moved the Town forward. He noted that the Rec Building does get a lot of weekly use and the newly designed Rec Building is much more functional and energy efficient. He closed with saying that he is very proud of the Building Committee for the work they did and that he will be voting in favor of the new Rec Building. Shane Zaruba asked if the new loan would be for 10 years too and suggested that going out to a 30-year loan would lessen the impact on the tax payers. Supervisor Schmidt said he saw his point but, in their planning, they know they will have road and equipment expenses coming up and had decided to go with a 20-year term for the Rec Building.

Chairman Maines called for a vote and noted that there were 38 people who could vote present and asked that everyone respect one another's votes. He asked for a show of hands for everyone who was in favor of going ahead with the building of a new Rec Building. Aye votes – 18. Then those who were against with moving forward raised their hands. Nay votes – 18. Chairman Maines asked that the Rec Building be put on the January meeting's agenda. He thanked the Electors for coming and said the Board would decide at the next meeting if they could afford to go forward or not with the Rec Building,

Meeting Adjourned at 7:08 pm.

A voice recording of the meeting is available in the Town Office.

These minutes were taken at the Special Electors Meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of December 2020 and were entered in the Record Book by: