

## BALDWIN TOWNSHIP PUBLIC HEARING

March 22, 2011

**Present** – Supervisors Randy Atwood, Kimberly Good, Larry Handshoe, Tom Rush and Jay Swanson.

**Call to Order** – The March 22, 2011 Baldwin Township Public Hearing was called to order by Chairman Jay Swanson at 7:07 p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance** – All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Public Hearing Regarding Property Identification (Address Sign) Numbers** – Swanson stated that the Government Innovations Task Force has worked on this. Joe St. Dennis was present representing Sherburne County along with Jim Roxbury, City of Princeton Fire and Ryan Maloney, Zimmerman/Livonia fire district. Tim Kane, Government Innovations Task Force member, gave the presentation.

**Background:** At the June Initiative Foundation dinner there were 200 – 300 citizens present. The topic of Property Identification (Address Sign) Numbers was number 5 on the vote list at that dinner. Baldwin Township is the only township in the county without some uniform system of addressed. In 1999 and again at the 2003 annual meetings motions were made and passed, but no action has been taken.

**Challenges:** If the mailbox is not located easily, the address is not located easily, especially at night. Many properties are set back from the road; as well as several homes can share the same driveway. Questionnaires that were sent to the different fire departments and the townships contained information regarding the initial costs incurred by the township and the replacement cost by the resident. No one has had any issues; no negative feelings from citizens regarding costs. All fire departments cited delayed response due to lack of addressing.

**Installation scenarios:** Maps are at no cost and available from Sherburne County Public Works. The cost per sign is approximately \$10. Sign posts can be purchased locally. The townships can use a contractor or Sherburne County STS program. The labor from the STS program is no cost.

Elaine Phillipi questioned if anything was found in the research regarding an annual meeting where residents voted not to do this. Andy Schreder replied no. John Bowen stated that the issue was the funding. The voters voted not to fund it.

Joe St. Dennis, Sherburne County Planning and Zoning, questioned if there were concerns that the township might be in conflict with the county code. Tim Kane asked what defines a visible address for the county. Mr. St. Dennis stated that, as county building official, his job is to enforce the building code and read a section from the code regarding numbers or addresses. The code does not dictate how you have to display

the numbers or addresses. In Baldwin Township, his practice and policy is that before he issues a certificate of occupancy there has to be some type of property identification sign that has to be posted and visible from the street. It is a poor system but it is all the authority he has. His preference is to see uniform signs. He has no say so on what the township should do. Elaine Phillipi questioned if the state statute says that the signs need to be reflective with Joe St. Dennis responding no. Andy Schreder questioned if the county has adopted the existing fire code with Joe St. Dennis responding yes. Mr. Schreder then asked if there was any verbage regarding size or anything or on a case-by-case basis. Mr. St. Dennis replied that it is a case-by-case basis. Discussion regarding the cost and aesthetics of the signs.

The township received the following written statements from township residents:

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**Baldwin Township**

**From:** BJ SCHUMACHER (bjshs@ending@hotmail.com)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 22, 2011 3:50 PM  
**To:** baldwintwp2@qwestoffice.net  
**Subject:** Question for The Baldwin Twp Supervisors...

Baldwin Twp Supervisors,

- Will uniform signing help Baldwin Twp's Fire ISO Rating?
- I ask the question because the cost of the actual capital improvement (Uniform Signs) may help lower our homeowners insurance cost.

*Thanks,*

*Brad Schumacher*

*Cell 612-716-3566*

*Fax 763-315-0004*

*Minnesota Realtor*

*We are giving up to \$17,500 in down payment and closing cost assist.*

*Check out my website*

*www.rainsproperties.com*

*www.myrate.rocks.com*

**Please consider the environment before printing this email**

*28557-127<sup>th</sup> Street  
 Zimmerman, MN  
 55398*

**TO:** Baldwin Township Supervisors/Hearing Attendees

**FROM:** Sue Hix – 11341 300<sup>th</sup> Avenue

**DATE:** March 22, 2011

**RE:** A New Generation of “Fire Numbers”

As a resident who has (as far as I know) an adequately marked driveway, I would ask that you think long and hard and then honestly evaluate the need before spending township dollars to install and maintain a new generation of “fire numbers.”

The following questions come to mind. I hope all of them will be answered before a decision is made.

- **How serious, really, is the need for these signs?**
  - How many properties in our township do NOT already have clear identification on a mailbox or other sign?
    - If a careful survey of signage has not been done, why not?
  - Has the township ever issued guidelines to residents regarding proper signage and how and where to install it?
    - If not, why not?
    - If so, when was this done and what were the results?
  - Have the consequences of inadequate signage actually been documented?
    - If so, how many emergency responses have been delayed in the past year due to inadequate signage?
    - Have inadequate emergency responses resulted in unreimbursed or indirect expense to the township, county, and other citizens (for example, through increased insurance rates, labor, or maintenance costs)?
  - Isn't there a way to identify property access points using GPS coordinates? Seems like this would be more precise and less expensive, not to mention less esthetically offensive.
  
- **Isn't it true that a resident is responsible if an issue arises because of inadequate identification of their property access?**
  - If so, emergency response personnel should not feel guilt, anguish, or anything else if they are unable to respond effectively to a call. I can certainly understand their frustration when this happens, but if a resident doesn't provide the minimum information to allow for effective response, why should the county or township have to feel responsible?
  - If the township does begin installing and maintaining property ID numbers, is the township liable if something goes wrong; for example, a house burns down before the township can replace a missing sign?
  - It is true that uniform numbers installed to mark property access are going to make an emergency responder's job easier, but is this reason alone enough for the township to take on the burden of installing and maintaining the signs?
  - It always sounds good to say, “Everyone else is doing it,” but that's not really a logical argument. The kids that took that Internet drug that killed one and put others in the hospital probably used that same logic as they lined up to get their dose of the drug...
  
- **Aren't there more serious issues for emergency responders than signage?**
  - After making a wrong turn and getting stuck for half an hour at the bottom of a steep, narrow, icy driveway on Elk Lake recently, I would suggest that accessibility by emergency vehicles is a more serious problem than signage in some cases.
  - In the Elk Lake example, one sign alone would not enable an emergency responder to find a home on this private road/driveway. What's the solution for cases like this? Are taxpayers going to have to pay for more accessible driveways for these lake homeowners?

- **Are property ID signs the best use of our tax dollars? Are there any offsetting financial advantages to installing the signs? If so, why haven't we heard about these?**
  - If a resident already has adequate signage to mark property access, why do tax dollars need to be spent to pay for another, redundant sign?
  - And why should residents who have already installed adequate signage have to pay for signs for those who have chosen not to install them?
  - Has anyone estimated the total, actual cost of these signs—including purchase of signs and posts, Gopher State One-Call services, installation, maintenance, replacement, snowplow or mower damage from hitting a sign, etc.?
  - Wouldn't we be smarter to spend our money to convert our street signs to the new state-mandated signs instead of for signs that residents could add to their own mailboxes?
  
- **Is it correct that property ID signs will be implemented by a vote of the board rather than by establishing an ordinance?**
  - If this is the case, has anyone considered that a vote for ID signs is really a vote for a new ordinance, but "in disguise"? Is this the board's intention? It would seem that if the township is committed to "enforcing" the placement and maintenance of ID signs, then it is creating a new ordinance, whether it is called that or not.
  - Case in point: If Joe Blow decides he doesn't like his new sign or where it is placed in the ditch by his property, what recourse does the township have (or what action will the township take) if Joe takes down his sign or moves it to another location?
  
- **If the township is going to establish a new ordinance anyway, why not be up front about it, get creative, and save tax dollars at the same time?**
  - Establish and publish the ordinance, providing guidelines for size, placement, etc. of property access ID signs.
  - Notify all property owners of the requirement and give them a reply card listing their options: (1) Install your numbers according to guidelines by the deadline or (2) pay a fee (to cover all expenses) for the township to install for you.
  - Those who do not return their cards or have not installed or ordered a sign by the deadline will be "fined" the cost to cover all sign-related installation expenses—plus a premium, which can be applied to postage and administrative expense required to implement the ordinance. If a property is in foreclosure or an owner refuses to pay, then the property owner can be assessed the cost of the sign, plus "fine," and pay as part of property taxes.

Andy Schreder stated that if installation was pursued by the town board, the Sentence to Serve (STS) program suggested an application or letter of intent to be sent as soon as possible if it will be done this year.

Tim Kane stated that it would cost approximately \$30,000. There are manpower issues to get them installed and could possibly be phased in over 3 years. The cost would

then be \$10,000 per year. Funding is a question for the board. Discussion on using GPS instead of signs.

Andy Schreder stated that we are all aware of inconsistent numbering. If the program is implemented it would be beneficial to use one contractor as ordering one sign at a time is more expensive. Order signs every 6 or 12 months or order blanks and a roll of numbers. Tim Kane stated the life of the signs is 15 years and Andy Schreder stated they have a 10 year warranty.

Jeff Holm, 305<sup>th</sup> Avenue, stated that the source for GPS data comes from two companies. Teleatlas provides information to Google maps. There have been some glaring errors in which Mr. Holm had contacted Google and Teleatlas to have the errors fixed. He is of the opinion that address signs are something we should have done years ago.

Dale Hurni, 300<sup>th</sup> Avenue, believes it was a year ago at the Annual Meeting that he had asked a few questions that really stymied the process. His perception at the time is that the legwork was not complete. He believes GPS is a solution but not at this time. What the township has right now is not sufficient either. He is convinced that his concerns from last year have been addressed.

Elaine Phillipi stated that she believes Sue Hix's questions need to be answered. She stated that the signs would not work in her neighborhood as most lots are ½ acre or less and in a development. The roads are narrow and there are gas lines running through. Joe St. Dennis stated that the signs work on small lots. Ryan Maloney, Zimmerman/Livonia Fire Chief stated that the signs are fairly consistent with mailboxes. Ms. Phillipi requested the board visit her neighborhood prior to making a decision. She then held up an example of another sign that she thinks is more aesthetically pleasing.

Gary Kleinheksel, 112<sup>th</sup> Street, stated that he has a place in Aitkin where he had to install a sign himself. It is great and, if it saves one life, it is worth it. He had installed his sign 8-10 years ago and it still looks good.

Tim Kane stated that some townships absorbed the cost. If the sign needs to be replaced the citizens pick up the cost. One township did put out a special assessment for one year.

Andy Schreder stated that, in regards to liability, STS has the policies in place, vehicles for transportation, trailer to pickup materials and they take care of supervision. He has been assured that they have insurance. His question is who would liable after Gopher State One Call is called.

Tom Rush asked Chief Rademacher about how many calls have been missed. Rademacher responded saying that there are definite issues with calls and stated an example of running around knocking on doors to determine which residence needed emergency services. Assistant Chief Larry Boeke stated that it would have been nice to

have Sherburne County deputies present. Andy Schreder responded that they did try to contact deputies and were unsuccessful. Larry Boeke questioned if any contractors have been contacted if the township did not use the inmates for installation. Andy Schreder stated that some information was assembled about a year ago. It would essentially cost twice as much using a contractor.

Carol Swanson questioned what type of STS crew it would be. Andy Schreder replied that the crew usually consists of people convicted of white collar crime. Jay Swanson stated the township has used STS on some projects and the board will never know what their crimes were. Chief Roxbury stated the Mille Lacs County did the whole county (installing signs) using STS and had no problems. Chief Ryan Maloney stated that they have used STS crews in the past and has never encountered a problem.

Larry Boeke stated that, speaking as a citizen, the signs need to be put up sooner or later. He suggests getting a crew and get it done in one year, using a contractor. He could see it turning into a nightmare to save \$20,000.

Joe St. Dennis suggesting using a 6 foot post and pounded in 2-2-1/2 feet in. Do not use the red signs. The signs are also available in green. Some signs show township name and street number underneath. The critical thing is the actual address number. Tim Kane stated that highly reflective would be the preference.

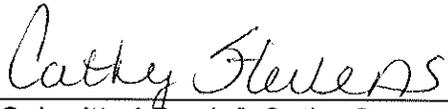
Chuck Nagle stated that he has knocked on a few doors in the last few months and has found examples of address numbers on the wrong side of the street. There are mistakes and there may be more around. He is sensitive to Elaine Phillipi's comments about aesthetics and presented an example of a sign post sleeve available at the local hardware store for \$5.00.

John Bowen, 312<sup>th</sup> Avenue, would like to speak against it. It homogenizes the community and takes away the individuality of the community. Make an ordinance, like Sue Hix says. 90-95 percent of the people have the number out there. Make it the resident's responsibility. Add a few lines to the county ordinance and it can be taken care of. He does not like it.

Elaine Phillipi stated that this can be done and maintain a nice rural look. The board could sell it to the people if aesthetics were taken into consideration. Tim Kane stated that with aesthetics comes increased costs.

Jay Swanson stated that town board will take all of these things into consideration and, at the April regular meeting; a workshop will be scheduled to deliberate this issue. He thanked everyone for attending.

**Motion to Adjourn** – Handshoe/Rush unanimous motion to adjourn at 8:17 p.m.

  
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Submitted By: (s/) Cathy Stevens

Clerk/Treasurer  
Baldwin Township

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Approved By: (s/) Jay Swanson

Chairman, Board of Supervisors  
Baldwin Township

Attendees: Chuck Nagle, Lester Kriesel, Tim Kane, Julius Dorweiler, Larry Boeke, Elaine Philippi, Dale Hurni, Carol Swanson, Joe St. Dennis, Ryan Maloney, John Bowen, Mike Rademacher, Jeff Holm, Gary Kleinheksel, Jim Roxbury