MINNESOTA Township Insider
2019 Winter Issue

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January is the time of year when we typically think of the future. Many of us commit ourselves to personal improvement by making New Year’s Resolutions. We contemplate the challenges and opportunities in our business and work lives and begin to plan. A new year is a new beginning.

This new year also brings with it the start of a new legislative session. The Minnesota Legislature conducts its work during a “biennial session,” which simply means that we have one legislative session that takes place over two calendar years. The major work of the first year of the biennium is to pass the state budget. This budget goes into effect on July 1 of the odd numbered years and outlines the revenue and spending plans for the state for the next two-year period.

Minnesota’s Constitution requires that the state have a balanced budget. This means the spending commitments in each budget cannot exceed the revenue projected. Unfortunately, we don’t have such a constitutional provision at the Federal level. That’s a story for another day.

The L&R meeting last September identified three top legislative priorities for this session: increased funding for township roads and bridges, increased broadband access, and establishing a fair and equitable process for annexation. We have begun the work to identify legislators who will be willing to carry legislation to address these issues. We will, in the coming weeks, be meeting with the chairs in both the House and the Senate of the committees that will work on our priorities. We will be working to get favorable votes in the committees so they can be taken up and passed by each body.

This process, part of our government relations plan is to implement a direct contact plan with you – the township officers across the state. We hope to have this project up and running in the next two months. As issues and votes come up, we will notify you directly with a prepared statement that you can modify, or send as is, directly to your senator and representative. Our goal is to make the process easy for you to execute. By taking advantage of this process, we can amplify our voice in the legislature. More details on how to participate will be available soon.

Our Association has also begun to work on a longer-term project to educate the general public about townships. It is safe to say that most citizens in Minnesota know very little about townships and the role they play in our communities. Building township strength means we must build awareness and appreciation among Minnesotans who do not live in townships since most of them are not township residents. We will keep you informed about this project as we move forward.

We are continuing to get invitations to attend County meetings and am trying to attend as many as possible. We have been a great opportunity for me to meet township residents across the state and I look forward to seeing you!

President Gary Burdorf
The Association is gearing up for the Legislative Session. The Legislative and Research Committee (L&R) is scheduled for February 20-21 in St. Paul. If your County Unit isn’t sending one or two representatives, it surely is time to think about doing so. Your District Directors will soon set up a Lobby Day at the State Capital. I’ve talked to David Hann, and he’s willing to assist in setting up appointments with our Legislators in their offices for Lobby Day. You may contact David directly for that assistance.

Remember, you will need to let us know if you plan to come on Lobby Day. Times and appointments need to be made to make the most of the day. It is very important for Township Officers to get to know their Legislators. Make a good impression on them, so they remember you by name.

In March, Spring Short Courses will begin. We hope to have a great turnout for these Courses. MAT staff doesn’t see the point of all this planning for their own satisfaction.

This is all done for our Township Officers. There is so much to learn! At the Annual Convention in Duluth, David challenged all Townships to send at least one officer to a Short Course – either Spring or Summer Courses.

I feel it is our duty to go to these events so we can do the best job that we can of governing for our Township residents. Again, Remember “communication” is one of the best things we can do for ourselves and others! Feel free to call David Hann, myself, or any of my fellow Directors with any concerns.

Until next time.

State of the Township

The Internal Revenue Service issued the 2019 optional standard mileage rates used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable, medical or moving purposes.

Beginning on Jan. 1, 2019, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car (also vans, pickups or panel trucks) will be:

- 58 cents per mile driven for business use, up 3.5 cents from the rate for 2018.
- 20 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes, up 3.5 cents from the rate for 2018.
- 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations.

The business mileage rate increased 3.5 cents for business travel driven and 2 cents for medical and certain moving expense from the rates for 2018. The charitable rate is set by statute and remains unchanged.

It is important to note that under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, taxpayers cannot claim a miscellaneous itemized deduction for un-reimbursed employee travel expenses. Taxpayers also cannot claim a deduction for moving expenses, except members of the Armed Forces on active duty moving under orders to a permanent change of station. For more details see Notice 2019-02.

The standard mileage rate for business use is based on an annual study of the fixed and variable costs of operating an automobile. The rate for medical and moving purposes is based on the variable costs.

Taxpayers always have the option of calculating the actual costs of using their vehicle rather than using the standard mileage rates. A taxpayer may not use the business standard mileage rate for a vehicle on which the taxpayer has elected to use the Accelerated Cost Recovery System (MACRS) or after claiming a Section 179 deduction for that vehicle. In addition, the business standard mileage rate cannot be used for more than four vehicles used simultaneously. These and other limitations are described in section 4.05 of Rev. Proc. 2010-51.

Notice 2019-02 posted today on IRS.gov contains the standard mileage rates, the amount a taxpayer must use in calculating reductions to basis for depreciation taken under the business standard mileage rate, and the maximum standard automobile cost that a taxpayer may use in computing the allowance under a fixed and variable rate plan.


Executive Perspective

By David Hann, MAT Executive Director

It’s 2019… Happy New Year! The Holiday festivities are now over and it’s time to get back to preparing for 2019 and new things to come.

Businesses and farmers are probably getting ready for Tax Season! It takes some time to get all of their financial papers together. Receipts, expenditures, etc. are on our minds as we get ready to fill out our 2019 Taxes.

Farmers are thinking about what they want to plant in their fields, order seeds, get their machinery ready to go and so much more.

Now, if you are a Township Officer, hang on to your hats! Clerks and Treasurers have more to do than I can imagine. It seems there is one deadline after another to get done this time of the year and into the Spring. These jobs are very important and have great responsibility and sometimes are very time consuming. Communication goes a long way in helping with this responsibility. Supervisors also have things to think about more this time of year. Keeping snow plowed off the roads is, of course, top on our minds. Safe roads are a priority this time of year. Equipment needs to be maintained and kept in good working order. It won’t take long and we will be watching for frost boils on the township roads. They can be a real mess! Later on, gravel will need to be ordered and spread, weeds controlled, roadsides mowed and much more.

In December. The new administration seems motivated to find ways to meet the needs of rural Minnesota. This was encouraging, and I look forward to continuing to develop positive relationships with the new Commissioners and their staff.

We have scheduled our Spring L&R meeting for February 20-21 in St. Paul. The major focus of this meeting will be to visit with key legislators and help them to understand the positive effect increased transportation funding, better access to broadband, and orderly annexation will have on our state and local townships. If your District is planning to come to St. Paul for a Lobby Day, I encourage you to consider participating. The biggest influence we can have on the legislative process is when we each take the time to meet with and get to know our legislators. Lobby Days are an excellent way to do this.

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I feel it is our duty to go to these events so we can do the best job that we can of governing for our Township residents. Again, Remember “communication” is one of the best things we can do for ourselves and others! Feel free to call David Hann, myself, or any of my fellow Directors with any concerns.

State of the Township
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Director Insight

Nathan Redalen, District 1 Director

How long have you lived in your Township?
I have been a resident of Pleasant Grove Township for 55 years. Pleasant Grove is part of District 1, which is made up of nine counties and 150 townships that cover 5,586 square miles and, in 2016, had a population of 391,960. The district is bordered by the Mississippi River on the north and east, Iowa on the south, and Districts 2 and 4 on the west.

Please tell us more about your District…
Being part of Minnesota’s limestone country means that our district is a beautiful area of farms, rolling hills, caves, and scenic bluffs and valleys. In District 1, you can have fun exploring Mystery Cave and Forestville State Parks in Fillmore County, Niagara Cave in Harmony, the National Owl Center in Houston and the National Eagle Center in Wabasha. For county fair enthusiasts, the Steele County Fair in Owatonna is the largest county fair in Minnesota, hosting over 300,000 visitors in 2018. Along with this natural beauty, our geography presents some interesting challenges. In the Southeastern part of District 1, we have an area of karst fragile ground, which makes protection of our water resources challenging. The limestone is also the reason our area is known as the Sinkhole Capital of Minnesota. While Minnesota is home to more than 10,000 lakes, District 1 is home to more than 10,000 sinkholes.

District 1 also boasts two of Minnesota’s top 25 largest employers - the Mayo Clinic in Rochester and Hormel Meats in Austin. Austin is also home of the Hormel Institute for Cancer Research, part of the University of Minnesota. The Al-Corn Ethanol Plant in Claremont and the Poet Ethanol Plant in Preston are both important businesses for the production of sustainable fuels.

How did you initially get involved in Township governance? How long have you been, and why did you choose to be a District Director?
I am proud to have been representing my District since 2012 and my Township since 2000. I entered township government in March 2000 when I won the election as a write-in candidate. As a township officer, I always attended the Olmsted County Township Officers’ meetings. I was asked to become an Olmsted County Township Association Director and was honored to be elected to that position in 2003. In 2012, when Gary Pedersen, who was chair at the time, was hired to be the Executive Director of MAT, I decided to put my name up for the District 1 Director position and was honored to win that election. It seems that being active in Township governance is in my genes. I was recently reading my family genealogy book and learned that my grandfather served as a Pilot Mound Township Road Supervisor for two terms starting in 1899.

I believe that, as a Township Officer, it is very important to be proactive in your county unit, attend the Short Courses (Spring and Summer) and the L&R sessions. These meetings are followed by the District Directors meeting. One event that seems to get overlooked is the Annual Conference. All of these events have educational training sessions to help you as a township officer to learn and understand new laws and policies and to make your job easier and up-to-date. You must broaden your education to provide the best service to your township.

When you are not working, how do you like to spend your time?
When I am not involved in Township affairs, I stay busy running a 285-acre beef farm. My biggest asset is my wife, Sandy. When I am home, we do the farm work together, but she takes on all of the work when I am gone to MAT functions. I couldn’t serve my District and Township without her support.
Minnesota House of Representatives

The Minnesota House of Representatives underwent a significant change after the 2018 election. The DFL picked up 18 seats and now holds a 73-59 advantage in the House. Rep. Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park) is the new Speaker and Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL-Golden Valley) is the new Majority Leader. Former Speaker Kurt Daudt (R-Crown) is now the Minority Leader.

Addressing the rural child care shortage is one of Senate Republicans’ first five bills this year. Another will make mental health resources more available, particularly in our schools. A third bill includes a package of innovations and penalties. Referred to the Committee on Health Finance and Policy.

S.F. No. 1 (Sen. Rosen) A bill establishing mental health grants. Referred to the Committee on Human Services Reform Finance and Policy.

S.F. No. 2 (Sen. Housley) A bill modifying day care initial licensure requirement; directing and modifying child care tax credits. Referred to the Committee on Family Care and Aging.

S.F. No. 3 (Sen. Draheim) A bill requiring health plan companies to develop and implement a shared savings incentive program. Referred to the Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection Finance and Policy.

S.F. No. 4 (Sen. Abeler) A bill clarifying income eligibility determinations for public assistance and child care programs; creating and modifying surety bond requirements for child care program providers; personal care assistance service providers and durable medical supply providers; modifying documentation requirements for child care program providers, personal care assistance providers, mental health providers, and home and community-based services providers; modifying provider enrollment requirements for medical assistance; establishing a visit verification system for home and community-based services; requiring a report. Referred to the Committee on Family Care and Aging.

S.F. No. 5 (Sen. Chamberlain) A bill providing for conformity to new federal tax provisions. Referred to the Committee on Taxes.

Our conversation with Minnesotans will continue and have conversations about our shared values. Legislators continued those conversations with community members and organizations, shaping part of the agenda for the 2019 Legislative Session. It quickly became clear no matter where we went that Minnesotans care deeply about our state and want to see one another succeed. We want affordable health care, both for our own families and for our neighbors’ families. We want world-class schools for our children, and all the children in our community. We want jobs that provide good wages and benefits to support all of our families. We want everyone to be safe at home, in school, at work, and in our public spaces.

Our shared values as Minnesotans bring us together and serve as a guide for how we move forward — and how we make our state work better for everyone, no matter what we look like or where we come from.

Through the Minnesota Values Agenda, we’re offering ideas to make our state a better place for all Minnesotans through affordable health care, greater economic security, improved educational opportunities, and investments in critically-needed infrastructure — including transportation and broadband — and Minnesota jobs.

We are committed to education and give our children, and all the children in our community, the tools they need to succeed in school and beyond.

We’re making significant changes to the way we make our state work better for everyone.

In 2017, House DFLers traveled the state to listen to Minnesotans and have conversations about our shared values. Legislators continued those conversations with community members and organizations, shaping part of the agenda for the 2019 Legislative Session.

In 2019, Minnesota DFLers traveled the state to listen to Minnesotans and have conversations about our shared values.

Sen. Paul Gazelka, Majority Leader in the Minnesota Senate shares his thoughts for 2019:

I’m optimistic about this year’s legislative session; the State Capitol is buzzing with new energy. Senate Republicans have proactively started to build positive relationships with Governor Walz and Speaker Hortman, with an agreement that we’d like to make early progress on issues that have broad bipartisan agreement. Some of those initial achievements may be on the topics of preventing elder abuse, treating opioid addiction, making our elections even more secure, and addressing distracted driving.

Over the past two years, Republicans have been proud of our work to fund infrastructure in rural Minnesota. In total, we passed $33 million in broadband funding between 2017-18. Unfortunately, $15 million of that was vetoed by Gov. Dayton last year. We also dedicated millions toward roads and bridges; the gas tax is an unreliable source of revenue as cars become more fuel-efficient.

This summer and fall, Senate Republicans didn’t take any time off. We stayed active in our own districts and traveled throughout the state to listen to Minnesotans’ concerns. Senator Bill Weber, for example, took his committee on a statewide listening tour to hear about the challenges rural Minnesota families face finding child care. The committee heard from business owners and chambers of commerce that the child care provider shortage is so acute that it has turned into a workforce issue.

Sen. Jeff Howe (R-Rockville), who was re-elected by Governor Tim Walz. A special election for the Commissioner of Human Services by DFL-Kerrick was named the Commissioner of Human Services by Governor Tim Walz. A special election for Governor. Sen. Jeremy Miller (R-Winona) was elected the new Senate President.


H.F. No. 2 (Rep. Edelson) A bill increasing funding for school-linked mental health services grants; funding for school mental health programs and school support professionals, as well as funding for “full-service community schools” and creating greater opportunities for children of color. Referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

H.F. No. 3 (Rep. Liebling) A bill to allow individuals whose income is greater than the income eligibility limit for MinnesotaCare to purchase coverage through MinnesotaCare through a MinnesotaCare purchase option. Referred to the Committee on Health and Human Services Policy.

H.F. No. 4 (Rep. Lesch) A bill prohibiting a manufacturer or wholesale drug distributor from price gouging and holding pharmaceutical companies accountable. Referred to the Committee on Health and Human Services Policy.

H.F. No. 5 (Rep. Halverson) A bill to allow for paid family and medical leave. Referred to the Committee on Labor.

H.F. No. 6 (Rep. Mahoney) A bill to prevent wage theft and provide additional enforcement mechanisms and penalties. Referred to the Committee on Labor.

H.F. No. 7 (Rep. Ecklund) A bill to expand rural broadband. Referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

H.F. No. 8 (Rep. Pinto) A bill to require criminal background checks for fireworks transfers. Referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

H.F. No. 9 (Rep. Richardson) A bill enabling law enforcement and family members to petition a court to prohibit people from possessing firearms if they pose a significant danger to themselves or others by possessing a firearm. Referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

H.F. No. 10 (Rep. Moller) A bill clarifying the definition of sexual harassment to remove the “severe or pervasive” requirement. Referred to the Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Division.
Represented by Counsel

by Steve Fenske, MAT Attorney

Increasing the Levy

Townships are known as frugal and restrained governments when it comes to taxing and spending, in large part because town voters directly decide their property tax levy. The 2017 State Auditor’s Town Finances report shows townships increased their revenue by 2.6% since 2016, and reduced expenses by 1.4%. This amounted to some savings in the bank for townships, but at the same time, township infrastructure is aging. Larger and heavier vehicles are allowed on town roads. Town officers that attended the 2017 Annual Meeting learned that any culvert over 50 years old is living on borrowed time and is coming to the end of its useful life. Many older town halls will need renovation or complete replacement. Township tax base is being reduced because of public land acquisitions and recent tax court cases brought by large commercial landowners. These factors add up to one thing—eventually most townships will need more money than the current levy to maintain what they already have.

This is Part of Your Job:

The Township Board should explain what the township’s infrastructure will look like at different funding levels, over many years. Since township voters set the maximum levy for the township, the supervisors must provide the voters with the information they need to justify raising taxes on themselves. The remarkable thing is that township voters will increase their own taxes when they understand how the money will be used. The Board should explain what the town will be able to do with the funding and without. Use a side-by-side comparison of the likely outcomes at different funding levels and explain the Town cannot provide the same service unless funding increases to meet the needs. As much as possible, the Board should explain a basic plan for repairs, improvements, and replacements so voters understand how the money will be used.

Identify Possible Savings and Required Cuts:

When asking for an increase in funding, the Board should list the ways they have and will save money. The public will appreciate the attempt to make cuts before being asked for more funding. It can be helpful to list specific examples of savings or cuts. The Board should also estimate what they will need to stop doing and what will not be cared for if funding is not increased. The voters need to understand the consequences of refusing to raise the levy. It’s a powerful and personal message when a voter learns his road may not be plowed for a couple of days after snowfall, all because the voters wouldn’t give enough money to care for roads in the way they expect.

Sell Your Belief, or ... Budget:

The Board must convince voters that the proposed increase is good and will give them a benefit. Some say a budget is a numerical expression of the goals and values of the group that uses it. Others say, put your money where your mouth is. Either way, the Board reached its budget request because it sees the real-world consequences of the town's work. Voters will need to understand what the town will be able to do with the funding and without. Use a side-by-side comparison of the likely outcomes at different funding levels and explain the Town cannot provide the same level service unless funding increases to meet the needs. As much as possible, the Board should explain a basic plan for repairs, improvements, and replacements so voters understand how the money will be used.

Jump the Gun:

Do not wait until the Annual Meeting to talk about the increase. The Board and supporters should talk to voters about the need for more funding before they go to the Annual Meeting. This can be done by publishing in print or online, discussion at town board meetings before the Annual Meeting Day, or one-on-one discussion. The odds of success increase when voters arrive at the meeting ready to support the levy increase. This process takes time and effort, but its essential to convincing voters that a levy increase is what they want and it is essential to maintaining townships.

MAT Capitol Corner

New Faces, New Opportunities

Political surprises are becoming the norm at the State Capitol. Last year, the legislative session came to a close with a bang. DFL Gov. Mark Dayton vetoed a Republican-majority legislature’s mega-omnibus budget bill (a.k.a. “Omnibus Prime”), leaving many large-scale items - tax conformity, significant school safety funding, sexual harassment workplace reforms, etc. – to be addressed this year. Instead of seeing a continuation of these political firework, we may see something different at the State Capitol in 2019.

The fall elections have now ushered in new DFL Gov. Tim Walz and a new DFL House majority, led by Speaker Melissa Hortman and House Majority Leader Ryan Winkler. Along with Republican Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka, the collective tone is much more bi-partisan. As the only divided state legislature in the entire country, there is an emphasis on quickly passing items which were agreed to last year and got caught up in the partisan rancor of Omnibus Prime.

Of course, there will be disagreement over major issues including a possible gas tax increase, transportation funding, tax conformity, gun regulation and the possible continuation of the health care provider tax. But the general tenor to these debates has the potential to be more cooperative.

Within this political environment, MAT continues to advocate protecting Towns which enter into Orderly Annexation Agreements with neighboring entities. We are hopeful that the Minnesota Supreme Court will soon decide to rule in favor of Towns, but we are preparing for an uphill battle at the State Capitol if the ruling is not acceptable. Finally, broadband and annexation are two additional areas where Towns will play an active role. MAT will continue to fight for ample broadband funding for underserved areas, while we work with the Secretary of State and key legislators on adequate funding to improve and protect the Town election process.

But none of this can be accomplished without the active involvement of YOU! MAT needs Town officers to strongly urge your legislators and the Governor to support and champion the needs and desires of our Towns. Members of the MAT Government Relations Team – including your lobbyists at Fredrikson & Byron – are here to guide you. For more information about the MAT legislative priorities and how to engage your legislators on these and other efforts, please contact MAT Executive Director David Hahn at dhahn@minnesotawings.org or 800-228-0296.

See you at the L&ER! Shep Harris, Fredrikson & Byron
Winter 2019 • Minnesota Township Insider

Washington Report

NATaT Board Elects New Leadership and Says Goodbye and Thank you to a Member

The NATaT Board of Directors recently elected Bryan Smith (Exec. Director, Township Officials of Illinois) as President, Mike Koles (Executive Director, Wisconsin Towns Association) as Vice President, and Gerry Geist (Exec. Director, Association of Towns of the State of New York) as Secretary/Treasurer. It also thanked Dave Sanke (Exec. Director, Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors) for his service as President and that recognized board member Loren Ingebretsen for serving as the NATaT Representative from MAT the past year.

Government Shutdown Ends

With the 35-day partial federal government shutdown over, negotiations begin in earnest as lawmakers return to work with the clock ticking as the February 15 deadline to keep the government funded quickly approaches. Additionally, the conference committee of lawmakers are crafting a plan for the southern U.S. border, which was created on January 25 after a deal was struck to end the shutdown. Both chambers named conference for negotiations to keep the government open.

End of 2017-2018 Session Bills Signed

Farm Bill: On December 20, President Trump signed the $867 billion Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-334) into law. Agriculture and nutrition programs are reauthorized for five years, through FY 2023 or the related crop year, under the legislation. The measure does not expand work requirements for recipients under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), however, it does modify waivers and exemptions, as well as oversight of the program. Commodity support programs are reauthorized with some changes to how benefits are calculated and to the definition of family member for payment purposes. The measure does not include restrictions on payments that were in the Senate bill. The measure increases acreage of Conservation Reserve Program and crop payments. It also increases funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and reduces funding for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The agreement legalizes hemp and also covers crop insurance, farm credit, rural development, energy, horticulture, trade, and research.

Additionally, on Dec. 20, the Trump Administration separately unveiled a proposed rule which would force hundreds of thousands more Americans to hold jobs if they want to keep receiving SNAP benefits, pursuing through executive powers what it could not achieve in Congress.

NFIP Extension: On December 21, President Trump signed the National Flood Insurance Program Extension Act (Public Law 115-397) into law, which authorizes the Federal Emergency Management Agency to enter into new contracts for flood insurance and borrow from the Treasury up to specified amounts through Friday, May 31, 2019.

Criminal Justice: On December 21, President Trump signed the First Step Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-340), which includes numerous policy changes regarding federal sentencing guidelines, recidivism reduction measures, solitary confinement for pregnant inmates and the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018/(Public Law 115-357), which renews juvenile just and at-risk youth programs, into law.

Wildfire Relief: On December 21, President Trump signed Executive Order 13855, entitled “Promoting Active Management of America’s Forests, Rangelands, and other Federal Lands to Improve Conditions and Reduce Wildfire Risk.” Its purpose is aimed at preventing catastrophic wildfires by directing the Interior and Agriculture Departments to develop plans to remove brush and dead trees on millions of acres of federally owned land. In the wake of California’s deadly Camp fire in early November, Trump also ordered the agencies to develop a wildfire strategy by December 31, 2020 with state and local partners to minimize the risk of property loss and injuries. The E.O. also calls for addressing invasive species and working to mitigate flooding and erosion risks that result from wildland fires.

Water Infrastructure: On January 14, the President signed the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-397) into law. The bill codifies the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) 2012 “Integrated Municipal Stormwater and Wastewater Planning Approach Framework” guidance into law. The bill allows a municipality to meet multiple Clean Water Act (CWA) requirements by identifying efficiencies from separate wastewater and stormwater programs and sequencing investments so that the highest priority projects are addressed first. The bill also establishes an ombudsman within EPA to serve as a liaison between EPA headquarters, regional offices and municipalities on integrated planning issues, as well as promotes the use of green infrastructure.

Fighting Algal Bloom: On January 7, the President signed the National Integrated Drought Information System Reauthorization Act of 2018. The bill reauthorizes, through FY 2023, the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), which provides vital drought information to farmers, ranchers, and other industries affected by severe weather conditions.

Phishing attacks present themselves as regular emails, but on close inspection they are procurement scams with malicious hyperlinks that could threaten financial loss for your firm and/or the state.

Recently, the attackers have looked up specific employees and are impersonating them. The phishing emails look like they are from a real person or agency that you know and trust. However, the fake email address domains contain slight adjustments (such as a misplaced dash or other unusual characters) that may look like these two examples:

Real_firstname.real_lastname@state-mn.gov.us
Real_firstname.real_lastname@state-mn.us

The email signature of a phishing attack may also contain the name of a real state employee at a legitimate address; however, the phone numbers are incorrect and may contain malicious hyperlinks as shown below:

Best Regards
Real_name of state employee | Office of State Procurement State of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155
Tel: 651-433-XXXX | Fax: 651-433-XXXX

The number will be incorrect and may contain malicious hyperlinks.

Always remember

Be alert for any emails that prompt you to click on a link or open an attachment and note the following:

- Do not click any hyperlinks from a suspicious email.
- A real State of Minnesota email will have an email address (domain) that includes either “.state.mn.us” or “.mn.gov”
- Confirm questionable emails by contacting the named agency.
- Validate State of Minnesota emails and phone numbers at the white pages.

If you believe you have been phishing and your computer has been compromised, please do the following:

1) Highlight the suspicious message in your inbox. Do not forward it without following the next steps.
2) IMPORTANT: Use the key combination (CONTROL)(ALT)(F) to create a new email that automatically attaches the suspicious email.
3) Address the email to: abuse@state.mn.us.
4) Add the Subject: Attempted Fraud. Type a short message if you wish.
5) Select Send or the key combination (Alt)(S).

Minnesota IT Services (MNIT) and Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) are partnering to bring you this alert notice.
Eye-Opening Facts About Townships

In 2017, Minnesota townships reported total revenues of $323.3 million. This amount represents a 2.6 percent increase over the total revenues reported in 2016. From 2013 to 2017, total township revenues increased 16.3 percent.

Minnesota townships reported total expenditures of $306.4 million in 2017. This amount represents a decrease of 1.4 percent from the amount reported in 2016. Over the five-year period of 2013 to 2017, town total expenditures increased 14.7 percent.

Debt service expenditures are the principal and interest payments on outstanding indebtedness. Townships had debt service expenditures of $13.3 million in 2017. This amount represents an increase of 18.5 percent from 2016. Over the five-year period of 2013 to 2017, debt service expenditures increased 3.8 percent.

Outstanding indebtedness totaled $56 million in 2017. This represents a decrease of 2.4 percent from 2016. Outstanding bonded indebtedness totaled $34.9 million in 2017, which represents a decrease of 1.7 percent from the $35.5 million outstanding in 2016.

Between 2008 and 2017, total township revenues in actual dollars increased 29.5 percent. In constant, or inflation-adjusted, dollars, total township revenues increased 9.8 percent over this 10-year period.

In the west central region of the state, which includes Douglas County, 222 townships reported total revenues in 2017 that increased 1.6 percent and totaled $37.6 million, accounting for 11.6 percent of total town revenues. Total expenditures in this region decreased 7 percent and totaled $35.8 million, accounting for 11.6 percent of total town expenditures. Debt service in the region increased 25.0 percent and totaled $2.2 million, accounting for 16.7 percent of total town debt service.

The bottom line: Many townships have significant populations and manage their budgets efficiently. All of them make important decisions with taxpayer dollars. And townships have clout. A total of 10,559 township residents in Douglas County voted in the Nov. 6 election, representing 58 percent of the turnout. That's something that Legislature should consider while making decisions that impact rural Minnesota.

Reprinted with permission from November 14, 2018, Echo Press, Alexandria, MN.

Prior to the meeting: Thirty minutes before the Annual Town Meeting begins, the clerk must post the financial report that was approved by the Board of Audit. Minn. Stat. § 366.22. The clerk should also set out a sign-in sheet for those attending the meeting. Although the statutes do not require townships to have a sign-in sheet, it serves to enhance the record of the meeting as well as ensures that only eligible people are voting.

The Meeting Begins. The clerk opens the meeting. If the clerk is absent, the voters elect a chair by acclamation. Minn. Stat. § 365.54, subd. 3. Then the electors choose a moderator to conduct the meeting. Minn. Stat. § 365.54, subd. 4.

The moderator must state the order of business for the meeting. Minn. Stat. § 365.56, subd. 1. It is common for the clerk to prepare an agenda for the Annual Meeting. Voters may vote to modify the agenda at any time during the meeting, except the vote on any tax must occur in the order listed on the approved agenda.

Supervisors can participate as citizens in the Annual Meeting and provide information, but the town board does not run the meeting.

Reports:
1. The Board of Audit report must be read at the meeting. Minn. Stat. § 366.22
2. A written Road Report is required to be provided; however, there is no requirement it be read. Minn. Stat. § 164.03. Road and bridge maintenance are an important priority for the township, so it is a best practice to provide both a written and oral road report for the Annual Meeting.
3. Townships may have other reports that may be of interest to members. Town Hall, Garbage and Reuse, Cemetery, or Fire

Parliamentary Procedure. While no parliamentary procedure is required for town board meetings, the Annual Town Meeting is an exception. Minn. Stat. § 365.56 outlines parliamentary procedures that must be used. The only significant deviation from many parliamentary procedures is the motion to reconsider, which can only be made within 30 minutes of the vote. Because of this time limitation, it is recommended that the clerk note in the minutes when motions are voted on. The 30-minute time limitation is in place to guard against reversing a vote after a majority of those interested in the vote have left the meeting.

The Electors. While any member of the public can attend the Annual Town Meeting, only those eligible to vote in the township election may cast a vote or act on motions (making or seconding) at the meeting. Owners of land within the township who do not reside in the township cannot vote at the Annual Town Meeting. A person's eligibility to vote may be challenged by any resident, and the validity of the challenge is determined by the election judges appointed for the township election. Minn. Stat. § 365.57. Because the statutes assign certain roles for election judges at the Annual Town Meeting, it is a good idea for the clerk to request the election judges attend the meeting. The statutes are silent as to a required method of voting at the annual meeting. Therefore, the electors can decide to cast voice votes, use a show of hands, require a paper ball, or use any other method a majority feels is most appropriate.

Town Levy and Much More. The main reason for the Annual Town Meeting is to vote on the town levy – the tax rate that residents pay for local services, like roads and bridges. (Remember the vote on the levy must occur in the order listed on the approved agenda.) There is a lot more that can happen at your township meeting. Minn. Stat. § 365.10 lists the powers the electors have at the meeting. A best practice at the Annual meeting is to have electors vote to authorize an amount of money that the Board can spend on a town celebration or recognition of service, like volunteers or a retiring board member. The money does not have to be spent, but without this authorization, it makes it difficult to provide a plaque...
The ANNUAL TOWN MEETING: FROM PG. 15

PREPARATION LIST:

1. Review TM-6000 Preparing for and Conducting the Annual Town Meeting. It can be found in MAT’s Information Library on the MAT website - www.mntownships.org. Each township is required to have an Annual Meeting the 2nd Tuesday of March, which is March 12 this year.

2. Hold a Board of Audit Meeting. The Board Town must meet as the Board of Audit at a meeting between the close of the fiscal year (Dec. 31) and one week before the annual meeting. The Board of Audit examines and audits the town’s accounts. From the Board of Audit meeting, a financial report is prepared, which the Clerk is required to post at least 30 minutes before the annual meeting convenes. Even though the report must also be read at the meeting, MAT recommends copies of the report be made available for those attending the meeting. Minn. Stat. § 366.22. See a checklist for preparing for the Board of Audit meeting at the end of the article.

At the Board of Audit meeting, the Board can recommend the local tax levy that voters will need to approve at the Annual Meeting. CTAS provides a good budgeting program and supervisors can review last year’s expenses and look at anticipated expenses for the following year: road and bridge maintenance, fire protection, town hall maintenance, town cemetery or park expenses or any other projects the township will need to fund in the future.

3. Notice. The clerk must provide ten (10) days published notice of the time and place of the Annual Town Meeting in a qualified newspaper of general circulation within the town. Minn. Stat. § 365.51, subd. 2. The notice must include the 1st and 2nd alternate dates for the annual meeting. The alternate dates are used only if inclement weather prevents the meeting from being held.

- The 1st alternate date is allowed the third Tuesday in March. Minn. Stat. § 365.51, subd. 1.
- The 2nd alternate date is set by the supervisors and must be within 30 days of the third Tuesday in March.

The law allows an alternative to published notice – the supervisors may order the notice be posted in
Board of Audit Preparation - Checklist

Determine if the Board will meet at a regular meeting or special meeting.
If special – be sure to post.

Minutes are required.
Minutes are different than the financial report. The report is a summary of the findings.

Clerk and Treasurer should meet in advance to compare books.

Disbursements

1. If using CTAS: Run Disbursement Ledgers – compare Fund/Account/Object Codes
2. By Hand: Compare each transaction’s accounting (Fund/Account)
3. EFT Transactions:
   a. is there a paper trail?
   b. Are EFT’s listed somewhere other than bank withdrawal?
   c. Do all EFT approvals show in minutes?

Receipts

1. CTAS: Run Receipts Ledgers – compare Fund/Account
2. By Hand: Compare each transaction and fund account
3. Triplicate Pre-numbered Receipt Book: any missing for year?
4. Automatic deposits – do they have a triplicate receipt?
5. Automatic deposits – check all interest payments – are they receipted?
6. Automatic deposits – do both C/T have a copy of original paperwork?
7. Is this email/paperwork attached to the triplicate receipt?
8. Any disallowed claims? Reason included?

For Board of Audit:
• Clerk to provide a statement/listing of all money received from the county.
• Treasurer to provide listing of all monies received/outgoing

Bank Statements

1. Are they balanced with the Clerk and Treasurer books?
2. Do Cash Control Reports demonstrate this?

Board of Audit Meeting has arrived

Clerk/Treasurer Book Review

1. If CTAS – C/T BOTH provide receipts registers to board
   If Manual – C/T BOTH provide receipts list to the board
2. Board members select 3+ receipts
3. Check:
   1) that identification is the same on C/T records
   2) that deposit can be noted on the appropriate bank statement
4. If CTAS – C/T BOTH provide disbursements registers to the board
   If Manual – C/T BOTH provide disbursements list (like the book) to the board
5. Board members select 3+ disbursements to review and check
   1) that identification is the same on C/T records
   2) transaction matches
   3) check went through bank for approved amount
6. Board members should also verify that
   1) C/T have been balancing bank statements
   2) C/T have the same balance for each fund
   3) C/T Schedule 1 matches (called statement of receipts, disbursements and balances in a manual system)

Best Practice: Board members to review the budget

Budget Related

1. Note: If you haven’t used budgeting, start with Road and Bridge Fund – easiest to begin.
   Anticipated expenses for next year: Road projects, new town hall, new equipment
2. Budget by Fund
   CTAS can provide a list for you.
3. Previous year’s expenses by category
   CTAS – Interim Financial Report by Account number & Budget Reports work well for this
4. Board members to recommend the levy for the following year

Sample of Annual Meeting Agenda

The following is a sample agenda only, but the bolded items are mandatory at every Annual Town Meeting:
1. Call the meeting to order. (Clerk)
2. Election of a moderator. (By the voters)
3. Announce Agenda for Rest of Meeting. (Moderator, subject to modification by vote of electorate)
4. Review and approve previous year’s annual meeting minutes. (Clerk)
5. Reading of Board of Audit Report as posted prior to meeting. (Clerk)
6. Road report: (Note: A written report must be available, but there is no requirement to read it) Minn. Stat. § 164.03.
7. Motion(s) to authorize town board to initiate specific road opening, vacation, or alteration process.
8. Motion to authorize the Board of Supervisors to adopt an ordinance to allow permitting and regulation of pressurized flexible force mains (manure lines) in the right of way under Minn. Stat. § 160.07.
9. Motion(s) as needed to authorize actions provided in Minn. Stat. § 365.10, subs. 1-18 as well as other statutes requiring approval or prior authorization at the annual meeting, common examples include:
   a. authorization of new town hall site,
   b. construction and maximum expenditure,
   c. authorization for town cemetery;
   d. authorization for certain town park expenditures;
   e. authorization to contribute to construction of a community center;
   f. authorization to spend money on previously abandoned road;
   g. authorization to expend funds for historical town celebration and/or a general community celebration;
   h. authorization to recognize retirees, volunteers, and/or special service efforts;
   i. authorization to expend up to $10,000 for contracted health, social or recreational services.
10. Motion(s) to approve general levy and any dedicated levies (road & bridge, plus others determined helpful to treat as designated and not just a budget item from the general fund) and to affirm total levy. (Note: Once the agenda has been set, the levy must be voted on in the order determined by the agenda)
11. General Discussion of Items of Concern. (Note: This section can be used to allow the residents to voice their opinions on any matter, but such input is only advisory to the board. Common issues may include curbelt policies, preferred newspaper for publication, desired posting locations, etc.)
12. Motion to set later starting time for any State election (Note: Applies only to State election, not town elections, and only for townships with a population under 500 located outside the 11-county metropolitan area (a later starting time for March elections may be discussed at the annual meeting, but only the town board can set the later starting time, and the voters may subsequently petition for an earlier starting time.)
13. Motion to set the location for the next annual meeting.
14. Motion to set time to convene and call to order next annual meeting. (Note: If no time is set, 9:00 a.m. is the default.)
15. Motion to adjourn, or to recess to a specific continuation date, time and location.
16. Adjourn or Recess Meeting.
**MnDOT Integrates Township Data into Statewide Mapping System**

By Amy Sanda, MnDOT

The Minnesota Department of Transportation is updating Township Maps using GIS technology. Last year, Geographic Information & Mapping sent maps and letters to each township to expand a statewide system for all townships, and received almost 900 responses. Township boards and the public use these maps for future planning efforts.

Many townships and county GIS employees shared information to improve MnDOT’s LRS (Linear Reference System) to include more details on calibrated lines, including shoulders, curbs, and pavement type and width. MnDOT staff continue updating the roads and highways statewide; however, some townships may not be completed by the end of 2018.

Township Chairs and Clerks shared information on street names and helped determine which roads are public or private. MnDOT maps include private roads, such as farm roads that serve more than one postal address, but not driveways or roads that are just platted or proposed.

Geographic Information & mapping re-designed the website and created the new township listing. People can access any Minnesota Township by clicking on the Minnesota Map, then choose a County. Select a specific Township.

The public can access the maps by going to this website: [www.mndot.gov/maps/gdma/mapfinder.html](http://www.mndot.gov/maps/gdma/mapfinder.html).

Copies of Maps will be available at the Spring Short Courses!

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Here is an example of how to find a township map:

1. Choose Municipality & County Maps from the map type menu (the one with a yellow check mark below).

2. The Township Clerk or Chair can choose the County, then click on the Township. Ex: Otter Tail Co.

3. On the County Map, choose the township you would like to see. Fergus Falls Township was selected in the example below.

4. And here is the map of Fergus Falls Township!
Ruth’s Roundup
by Ruth Simpson, MAT Attorney & Education Director

2019 – Changes Ahead

One-on-One Training
MAT will host another One-on-One Training on Thursday, February 28 at Mark Albarado from the State Auditor’s Office, and the Clerk Trainers, Lucinda Messman, Lori Stalker, and Petra Hartness – will help clerks and treasurers in filing their annual reports with the State Auditor. The sessions will be a bit shorter than last year, but each person will receive individual assistance. Preference was given to those townships not filing audit reports, however after February 1, sign-up is on a first-come, first-serve basis. Contact Jesi Petersen at the MAT office, jpeterson@mntownships.org, if you are interested in signing up.

In addition, at the Spring Short Courses, there will be an opportunity to meet with a Clerk Trainer for one-on-one assistance. Thirty (30)-minute sessions will be scheduled throughout the day. There will be a sign-up sheet at each location. People can sign up on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Clerk Training
This year, MAT will continue to offer specialized training in the Summer, but we are making a change in the time of the event. We will be meeting during the morning — 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Registration will start at 7:30 a.m. with a full breakfast. Also, our plan is not to offer the Board of Appeal and Equalization Training (BAE) at this time.

The 2019 Spring Short Courses begin March 18 and run through April 5. The program has been designed to meet the needs of all township officers. This annual educational training program is important to all officers including veteran officers, as well as recently elected officers. Issues regarding proper performance for duty, responsibility, authority, and current law are discussed throughout the program.

All newly elected officers are strongly encouraged to attend as “getting started right” will certainly be a plus for a new career. If this is your first time on a Township Board, you will want to attend “Session C” for Newly Elected Officials.

This is your chance to meet the MAT staff and ask them questions relating to your township. At each location, you will have access to MAT’s attorneys, MAT Agency staff, speakers, and other MAT staff for any questions you may have. Additionally, and for your information, one of your MAT Board of Directors will be at each Short Course. Take advantage of this opportunity and find the answers you are looking for!

For more information or to register, please visit the MAT website. be a sign-up sheet at each location. People can sign up on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Webinars
With increasing frequency, MAT is being asked to provide some online training. We are committed to move this project forward and will be looking to purchase equipment and software to make this a reality. Other township associations are hosting webinars and we are hoping to tap into their experiences. Look for more information on this later in the year.

Clerk Training
There are three clerk trainings in January – one session for new clerks and two sessions for clerk and treasurers about the early deadlines – Workers Comp Audit, payroll, the Board of Audit and the Annual Meeting. Materials are online.

We have also been discussing doing some additional training around the state. Last year, Lucinda led a three-hour class for clerks, that was mainly question and answer, in Mower County that was widely praised. If your county is interested in having a similar session, please contact me, rsimpson@mntownships.org. We may be looking to do something periodically throughout the year in other counties.

Treasurer Training
This being a year where Treasurers are elected in March, we are working on offering a New Treasurer Training class in May. Look for more details at the Spring Short Course.

MAT Educational Conference & Annual Meeting
After reviewing the last Educational Conference in Duluth, the Board has approved a schedule change for the Educational Conference and Annual Meeting in Mankato. We will be shortening the event to one and one-half (1½) days – starting on Friday, November 22 and ending on Saturday, November 23. This year we will be in Mankato, Minnesota and our theme is The Sense of The Census: Rural Representation At Risk. The Census takes around every 10 years and will come in 2020. This year much is at stake for Minnesota, which may face losing a Congressional seat as well as the redrawning of lines for the Minnesota Legislature in 2021.

The event begins with an Exhibition Showcase, which will start earlier – from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Friday. We plan to include Round Tables during the evening.

Saturday morning will have a breakfast and a shortened general session. Workshops will follow until 11:30 a.m. Lunch will feature a main speaker. We had rave reviews for Tim Gabrielson, our speaker in Duluth, and are once again looking for a motivational speaker. If you have ideas and suggestions, please let us know. We will also recognize our Scholarship winners. The afternoon will feature the Annual Business Meeting before we adjourn.

We will be closely following the responses to the schedule change to see if we will continue with that format for future Educational Conferences.

MAT Educational Conference & Annual Meeting
The MAT Educational Conference & Annual Meeting is the premier event for township officers, clerks, and treasurers in Minnesota. This year’s theme is “The Sense of the Census: Rural Representation At Risk.” The event will take place in Mankato, Minnesota, on Thursday, February 28, and Friday, February 29.

MAT will host an additional One-on-One Training on Thursday, February 28. Mark Albarado, MAT Attorney & Education Director, will be on hand to answer any questions township officers, clerks, and treasurers may have. The session will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and will be a great opportunity for officers to get personalized assistance on any issues they may be facing.

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For more information or to register, please visit the MAT website. To register, please visit the MAT website. To register, please visit the MAT website.

2019 Spring Short Course Location and MAT Board of Directors Schedule

| WEEK 1 | Monday, March 18 | Tav Center, Winona | Nate Redalen (1) |
| Tuesday, March 19 | Rochester Event Center, Rochester | Nate Redalen (1) |
| Wednesday, March 20 | Verizon Wireless Center, Mankato | Sandy Hooker (2) & Gary Burdorf (4) |
| Thursday, March 21 | Community Center, Winthrop | Sandy Hooker (2) |
| Friday, March 22 | Prairie’s Edge Casino, Granite Falls | Tammy Houle (3) & Lyle Stai (6) |

| WEEK 2 | Monday, March 25 | Breezy Point Resort, Breezy Point | Lori Stalker (8) & Reno Wells (11) |
| Tuesday, March 26 | Holiday Inn South, St Cloud | Jane Youngkrantz (5), Mike Miller (7) & Lori Stalker (8) |
| Wednesday, March 27 | Event Center, Hutchinson | Gary Burdorf (4) |
| Thursday, March 28 | Best Western Plus, Willmar | Jane Youngkrantz (5) & Lyle Stai (6) |
| Friday, March 29 | Arrowwood, Alexandria | Loren Ingebretsen (9) |

| WEEK 3 | Monday, April 1 | Shooting Star Casino, Mahnomen | Lyle Stai (6) & Mel Milender (12) |
| Tuesday, April 2 | Engelstad Arena, Thief River Falls | Jill Hall (13) |
| Wednesday, April 3 | Sanford Center, Bemidji | Mel Milender (12) |
| Thursday, April 4 | Sugar Lake Lodge, Grand Rapids | Reno C. Wells (11) |
| Friday, April 5 | DECC, Duluth | Jim Fisher (10) |