Insurance Insight

by Jon Mocol, Manager of MAT Agency

Insurance Changes & We Are Here to Help

The heart of the summer is here! In the past, we would be busy at the lakes and people would be traveling, but 2020 has been a different year with many challenges. As townships, you have not seen a majority of what has affected the more urban areas of the state. The first topic in this article will look at what we have for COVID 19 data so far and what is happening regarding the presumption laws for first responders and frontline workers. The second topic that is critical at this time of year is that storms have, and will still be, occurring that will impact both town roads, culverts, buildings, and other properties. The last topic that will be covered will be changes that the board has made and adopted in regard to endorsements to policies.

The Minnesota Legislature on April 8th passed a bill providing protection to all frontline first responders and healthcare providers. This law states that if a frontline person contracts COVID-19, it is automatically presumed to have been contracted at work and that the employer will need to state why this is not a Workers' Compensation claim. This puts the burden of proof on the township to state that the individual contracted the virus somewhere else. This right now is going to be hard for townships to prove, as we currently are lacking the process to trace the source. While MATIT supported protecting the frontline worker, we are concerned where the funding to support these claims will come from. The strain this presumption could put on the Workers' Compensation fund that MATIT manages is concerning. Hopefully in the special session there will be a funding bill that will help control the risk to MATIT, so please reach out to your legislators and let them know that funding needs to be provided to help offset the presumption claims. Currently, MATIT has not had any cases that have been reported, so we hope that continues.

As we enjoy the warm days, this brings storms that move through our area. These storms can bring wind, hail, tornados, and heavy rain. As these storms move through, they cause damage that needs maintenance. Some of the concerns that occur are culverts that are plugged, so it is important to make sure that they are clear of debris so that the water can properly flow, which will help to save damage to the roads. Regarding the storm damage, it is important to inspect this right away to protect your assets whether that is a townhall or a pavilion. Checking the township after a storm moves through can help to control costs for the township as well as the trust, because any damage can be fixed quickly .

In recent years there has been an uptick in the number of claims that are reported after the due date. While townships may have reasons to hold onto claims before turning them in, it creates a couple of issues and concerns for the staff of MATIT. One of the largest issues is that it is very difficult to project claims exposure if we do not know about them for a couple of years. Another issue is that not checking for damages promptly and turning in a claim, can create additional losses that the trust ends up paying to repair. In the May meeting of the MATIT Board of Trustees, they passed an endorsement that states all claims must be turned in within 90 days of damage to be considered for a claim. To comply with this new endorsement to the policy, a township would need to make sure to check all property, autos, and contractor equipment at least quarterly. If there is damage, report right away to the agency at **1-800-262-2864**. A simple phone call, giving notice of a possible claim, would be better than putting in a claim that doesn't get paid because of the new endorsement.

The board also passed another endorsement for our policy relating to the keeping of two sets of financial records. The board is concerned that if only one set of financial records is kept that there is a potential risk to the township for improprieties to occur. The endorsement will read "**If a township fails to have two sets of books, one kept by the clerk and one by the treasurer or one of the supervisors, or an independent audit isn't performed every year, the trust will not provide coverage for any actions in relation to the clerk's or treasurer's misconduct.**" If you have questions about this please reach out to one of the Association Trainers or an agency staff member.

In the last couple of weeks, we have had a couple of townships that have contacted us about the cost of their insurance. While talking with them, we found out that they have multiple policies that were costing the townships double on their insurance! Please review your policies and if you have questions, reach out to the agency and we will help review them with you.

Jon Mocol's Contact Information

jmocol@mntownships.org

Office Phone: 800-228-0296

Capitol Corner

by Shep Harris, Fredrikson & Byron, P.A.

MAT/MATIT STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Below is a basic review of the 2020 legislative session and special legislative session, issue areas of interest to the Minnesota Association of Townships/Minnesota Association of Townships Insurance Trust (MAT/MATIT) and potential next steps for MAT/MATIT government relations advocacy at the state level.

Regular Session/Special Session Overview

- 2020 Legislative Session (Part 1): a.k.a. the "Bonding Session" or "Short Session"

  • Started Feb. 11 with expected finish by May 18

  • Focus on policy items, bonding bill, supplemental budget items

  • Forecasted FY20-21 Budget Surplus grew to $1.5 Billion

  • Normal session process under way (eg; committee deadlines) until mid-March.

As a reminder from the previous MAT Legislative Update, the legislative session got off to a good start in February for MAT and was looking promising in early March. The state budget forecast projected a $1.5 billion surplus and we were tracking over 100+ bills for MAT including its legislative priorities:

- Annexation – getting our annexation bill heard and passed out of the House and Senate local government committees as a stand-alone bill;

- Transportation – getting funding for local roads and bridges in a supplemental budget bill or through the bonding bill;

- Local Government Aid – getting additional LGA for townships;

- Truck Weight Exemptions – blocking additional truck weight exemption bills from passing out of committee and beyond;

- Broadband – increasing the broadband grant funding from last year's amount to local government;

- Elections – always monitoring legislation to protect or assist townships;

- Allowing local government to issue street assessment fees on development;

- Requiring private property owners to pay replacement costs for flooded out culverts (instead of townships); and

- Allowing towns to lower speed limits from 55 mph to 30 mph.

MAT had already succeeded in stopping Rep. Freiberg's HF3200, which would have required audio recordings of all open meetings by local government; including townships. We got SF3535 introduced, a bill to appropriate $8 million for township roads and bridge funding, and a verbal commitment from the House Tax Committee Chair, Rep. Paul Marquart, to hear a bill on increasing Local Government Aid (LGA) funding for townships. Then COVID hit the U.S. and the state of Minnesota…

2020 Legislative Session (Part 2): The COVID Session (Mid-March-May 18)

- Committee hearings temporarily halted for a month

- Typical committee deadline process stopped

- Adjusted Forecast FY20-21 Budget Deficit - $2.4 Billion

- Governor/Caucus Leaders agreed on minimal agenda items (eg; a bonding bill, COVID-related legislation, anything else without opposition that didn't add to the budget deficit)

- Final month of session dealt with many technology/distance-governing delays and difficulties with typical end of session negotiations

- Much political acrimony over Governor's emergency powers, business closings, end of school year events

- Session ended with few major legislative items passed including township transportation funding and broadband funding.

2020 Special Legislative Session (June 12 – June 20)

- Pre-May 25, purpose of special session was to give legislature the option to overturn Governor's peacetime emergency resolution and resolve outstanding major legislative items: bonding, COVID relief funding for local governments and businesses, possible tax bill, etc.

- May 25: George Floyd was killed

- May 26-June 5: Governor and key state legislators pre-occupied with George Floyd aftermath and civil unrest; unable to significantly negotiate on any outstanding items from regular legislative session

- June 8: Most negotiations start back up and in-

clude policing reforms and economic recovery from George Floyd aftermath

- June 12: Special Session starts with few items resolved, Governor's peacetime emergency is not overturned and goes for another 30 days (until July 13)

- Special Session finished on June 20 without agreement on major issues – including any MAT/MATIT issues of interest (see below) -- except for COVID small business funding relief

- Governor expected to call another special session to address outstanding issues (eg; bonding, any additional COVID relief, policing reforms, etc.)

- Speculation that these on and off special sessions could go rest of summer.

Special Session Bill/Post-Session Activity

NOT PASSED: Transportation Funding

- Senate bonding bill (SF4) included $8 million in one-time funding to help upgrade town roads to 10-ton capacity.

- SF4 not voted on by the Senate.

- MAT is continuing to work behind the scenes with legislators for town road funding to be included in the bonding bill for next special session.

NOT PASSED: Broadband Funding (SF6/HF35)

- Broadband proposal altered during Special Session. SF6 still included $15 million for education distance learning and $2 million for telehealth.

- New portion included $10 million supplemental broadband "Challenge" grant to unserved and underserved areas for "last-mile" and "middle-mile" infrastructure costs.

- SF6 passed the Senate but it and its House companion (HF35) were not passed by the House.

- MAT is continuing to work as part of the broadband coalition to "line up" this bill for passage in the next special legislative session.

NOT PASSED: Workers' Compensation (HF94)

- The Workers' Compensation Advisory Council (WCAC) bill was introduced but without any proposal to address payments to local governments for COVID claims.

- HF94 had no Senate companion bill and was not passed.

- To avoid large cost burdens on local government (eg; towns, counties, cities), MAT had helped organize a coalition of local governments and self-insured entities to negotiate with the insurance and business sectors, legislators and the Walz Administration.

- Efforts were made in the final days and weeks of the regular legislative session to pass legislation.

- Efforts by stakeholders to cover local government COVID claims payments was shifted over to the COVID local government bill.

- MAT will continue to monitor the WCAC bill in the next special legislative session to protect townships from any liabilities.

NOT PASSED: COVID Local Government Funding (Part 1)

- Governor and legislators agreed to plan to distribute $853 million in federal CARES Act funding to Minnesota communities impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Local governments can use the funding to reimburse themselves for COVID-related support services like Workers' Compensation claims, overtime public safety costs and grants to businesses, hospitals, and individuals impacted by the pandemic.

- SF47 was passed by the Senate, amended in the House and passed. However, the Senate did not agree to House amendments and SF47 (amended version) did not have final agreement.

SUCCESS - COVID Local Government Funding (Part 2)

- After the Special Legislative Session ended, House Republican Leader Kurt Daudt and Rep. Garofalo called for Gov. Walz to distribute CARES Act funding based on legislative agreement (see above in Part 1).

- On June 25, Gov. Walz announced the release of the federal CARES Act funding to local governments based on the special legislative session agreement. Funding is based on a per capita formula developed by lawmakers.

  - Counties with a population of less than 500,000 will receive $121.28 per person

  - Townships with a population over 5,000 will receive $75.34 per person

  - Townships with a population less than 4,999 will receive $25 per person

  - Townships with a population under 200 will have their distribution sent to their county.

  - The specific aid amounts for each township, based on 2018 population, can be found at https://www.revenue.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/2020-06/LGD_Town_Runs_2020_06_25.pdf.

- Before receiving funding, local governments will have to certify how they intend to use the money, as the CARES Act requires payments only to be used to cover necessary costs related to the pandemic that weren't account for in budgets.

Clerk Clarifications

by Lucinda Messman, MAT Trainer

Welcome to a new way of doing things! Isn't it wonderful? Isn't it magical? Isn't it another day of "are you *&^%$ kidding me?" Feeling it? Are we overwhelmed yet?

Tracking and doing things during this whole Covid-19 environment has gotten interesting for clerks. Think of your minutes for a minute.

- Who is at meetings?
- How are they attending?
- When did they arrive?
- Roll Call voting – "remember to say your name"
- Constant questions and changes in requirements for meeting environments.
- How about listening and taking minutes by phone or computer? That is exciting and easy and can be done in your PJ's with that Hawaiian background and sipping coffee (or other beverage) while listening. Your thinking, "You have got to be kidding!" Yes – I am. I never had such a great appreciation for minutes in the same room as supervisors once we could meet on site again. I could hear, didn't have to keep asking who said what and didn't have to make phone calls to various people trying to confirm I heard what I thought they said.

How about those additional postings, longer postings, longer publishings, more expensive publishings, budgets are shot in some instances. And, just in case we were getting the hang of things – lets throw in a few elections – just for fun.

I am guessing you have figured most of this out by now, but just in case:

1. Talk to other clerks for ideas.

2. Keep a template with the part of your notice about remote meetings.

3. Alter your minutes typing. Add the paragraph about remote meetings to the top so future clerks (and us as well) can see particular meetings occurred during COVID and things may have been a bit different.

4. Take the time to write things down as notes to yourself. Much as I like computers, I have a spiral notebook I have been trying to track things in so I can date various changes.

5. Make sure you have your resolution book in good order. If you have changed to incorporate full text resolutions into your minutes – be sure you have a listing of them for easy reference.

6. Are you the one doing cleaning between meetings? Or do you need assistance – fill a bunch of spray bottles with your cleaning solution and have a few extra rolls of paper towels next to the spray bottles (and a trash can). People don't mind helping clean up these days.

7. Call the trainers if you have questions. Several new types of money coming in require specific account numbers for year end.

8. Getting overwhelmed – TELL THE BOARD! We all know the board members often check with clerk for first information on how to find things – trying to stay on top of all that is going on with the regular duties is difficult at best. If you need help you have to tell them.

9. Have some fun with your signs. While department of health and CDC have good informative ones, there are some other free ones out there that have the same information but with a humorous twist. These can be fun!

Look for the good wherever you can. Remember, while there are a lot of extra little things that must be done prior to a meeting, once you get into the groove of adding a paragraph here and there (and keeping it where it can easily be located again) you can do this!

If you are a new clerk in this environment – it isn't always like this! While there are always things to do, the amount of extra work involved right now will eventually go away. Elections don't always need to include worry about supplies like masks, hand sanitizers and cleaning each booth between voters. We also usually know the rules about elections going in and aren't worried about last minute changes.

Being a clerk usually follows a fairly set pattern (and constant change). Once you get the hang of it, just stay on top of your calendar and things will go fairly smooth. There are always the bumps in the road and changing laws and rules (though not as fast as recently), but overall it is a lot of fun and a wonderful way to help out in your community!

Step back and breathe. You got this and can do it.

Office of the State Auditor

by Julie Blaha, State Auditor

CTAS 2020 Update Available & Electronic Fund Transfers

Over the last few months, local elected officials and community leaders have been called to respond to both a pandemic and Minnesota's deep racial disparities. All of us in the Office of the State Auditor (OSA) can see the care and thoughtfulness local government officials and staff are using to rise to this moment.

Through all of this, local government can't neglect the day-to-day work it does to keep the gears turning. It is on this note that I would like to highlight a key collaboration between the OSA, the Minnesota Township Association, and many local officials and employees.

Our Small City and Town Accounting System (CTAS) is a good example of what can be done when State and local governments work together. This program is designed to assist small local governments maintain their financial records and facilitate reporting to our office. It is the culmination of specialized technical work by OSA staff and invaluable input and testing from our local government partners, including the Minnesota Association of Townships.

The OSA recently released our annual CTAS update. We used input from local government CTAS users to improve the program and stay current with changes in laws and regulations. This year, CTAS 2020 includes updated Federal and Minnesota tax tables, updated withholding calculations for the new 2020 Form W-4, and the addition of information on paystubs to comply with Minnesota's new wage theft law.

If your entity purchased CTAS 8, CTAS 2018, or CTAS 2019, there is no additional cost to download and use CTAS 2020. CTAS Version 7 users, who have not purchased an upgrade and want to submit the year-end financial reporting forms via CTAS, must purchase an upgrade. To download CTAS 2020, log into the State Auditor's Form Entry System (SAFES) at: **https://www.auditor.state.mn.us/SAFES/** and click on the CTAS tab. For more information on CTAS, and to purchase the latest version, please go to: **http://www.auditor.state.mn.us/default.aspx?page=ctas**

Another valuable technology tool we would like to highlight is Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) payments from the State. The payments are generated by Minnesota Management & Budget (MMB). Each local government can log into MMB's website to view EFT payment information. Local governments can also sign up for e-mail alerts indicating when payments are made, the amounts, and the type of payment. There are many benefits to receiving electronic fund payments from the State, including assuring that checks do not get lost or that you will not have to go out in a snowstorm to pick up or deposit a check. To sign up, please send an email to **efthelpline.mmb@state.mn.us** or call 651-201-8106.

The better we handle our day-to-day tasks, the more bandwidth we have to tackle the unprecedented challenges and opportunities before us. Whether it be a big idea or daily task, the OSA stands ready to support the important work you do to make our communities safe, just, and strong.

Due to the pandemic emergency and out of consideration for the well-being of our members the MAT Board has adopted some changes to our regular events planned for August (District Meetings) and September (L&R).

The annual district meetings will take place. However, most of them will be conducted using remote meeting technology. **You will receive instructions on how to join along with the agenda in the mail.** Here is a summary of each district meeting:

Aug 4	District 2	Zoom/Conference Call	7:00pm
Aug 6	District 1*	Event Center, Kasson, Dodge County	7:00pm
Aug 10	District 3	Zoom/Conference Call	7:00pm
Aug 12	District 4	Conference Call	7:00pm
Aug 13	District 7*	Zoom/Conference Call	7:00pm
Aug 17	District 9	Zoom/Conference Call	7:00pm
Aug 18	District 6*	Shooter's, Appleton, Swift County	7:00pm
Aug 19	District 8	Zoom/Conference Call	6:30pm
Aug 20	District 5*	Zoom/Conference Call	7:00pm
Aug 24	District 13	Zoom/Conference Call	7:00pm
Aug 25	District 12	Zoom/Conference Call	7:00pm
Aug 26	District 11*	Conference Call	6:00pm
Aug 27	District 10	Zoom/Conference Call	6:00pm

*Five Districts will hold elections this year to select a board member for MAT: Districts 1, 5, 6, 7, and 11. Districts 1 and 6 will hold their district meetings and elections at local venues as they have done in the past. Districts 5, 7, and 11 will conduct their elections using a mail-ballot.

At the time the notice of the district meeting is mailed, <u>all</u> township officers in the mail-ballot districts (5, 7, & 11) will receive a ballot in addition to the agenda. Instructions for completing the ballot and returning it will also be included. In the event an officer in those districts does not receive a ballot, the MAT office should be notified, and one will be provided.

Each township officer will receive **a ballot** showing: the candidate who filed and a nominated candidate, if applicable (blank line). Each officer will complete the ballot, place it in the **small white envelope**, then seal and place that envelope in the **larger blue envelope**. (See picture.) **It is important to make sure no identifying marks other than the district number are put on the small white ballot envelope, as such ballots will NOT be counted.** The larger blue envelope will have a pre-stamped return address on it so staff at MAT can validate that only qualified voters cast ballots. After staff have validated the received ballots, the sealed small ballot envelope will be removed from the blue envelope and the blue envelope with the members name on it will be discarded.

All ballots must be received at the MAT office one week before the scheduled district meeting: the **due date for ballots from District 5 will be August 13; for District 7 the due date will be August 6; and for District 11 the due date will be August 19**. Ballots received after those dates will NOT be counted. The ballots will be counted by tellers from each district and the results will be announced at the district meeting.
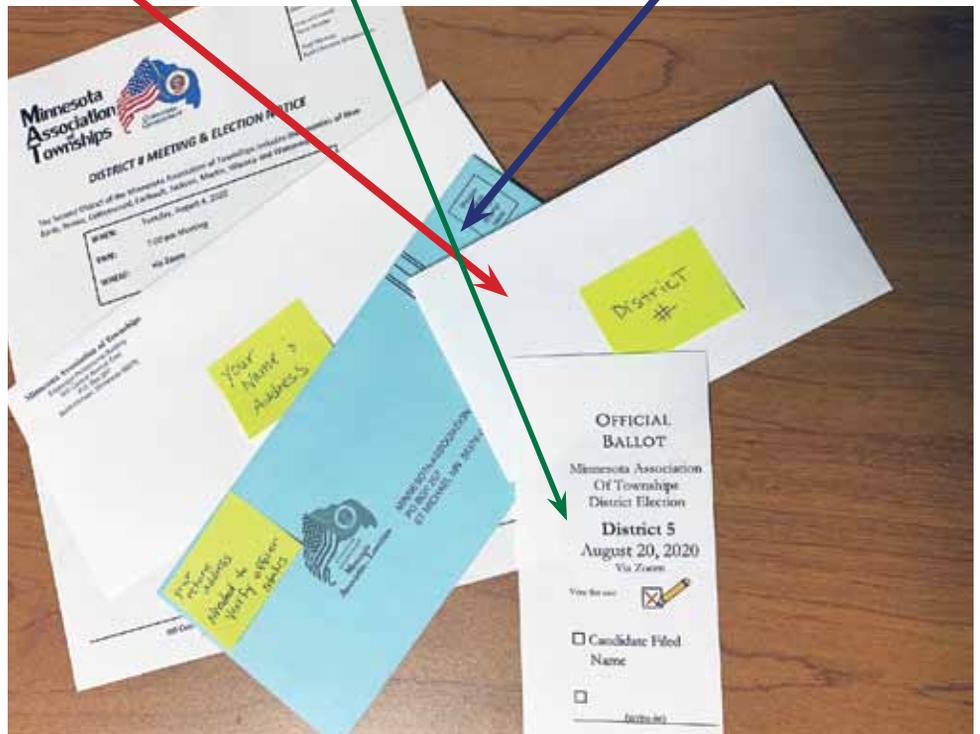
Zoom Conference Call Instructions and Procedures for Township Officers Provided by the Minnesota Association of Townships

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency declaration and out of concern for the health and safety of township officers, the Minnesota Association of Townships Board of Directors has decided to organize MOST (but not all) of the annual District Meetings to allow for remote participation via computer or telephone conference call.

MAT will be using a Zoom conference call arrangement and two different participation methods are available.

Option 1: participate via telephone on a conference call of the District Meeting (which will allow audio only – no visual):

1.   Dial in (312) 626-6799, passcode 5827281212

2.   Remember to mute yourself by using the "mute" key or by dialing *6.

Option 2 (preferred): participate via your computer, smart phone, tablet (which will allow the camera to be used to interact, and you'll see the video presentations) through a Zoom conference call system for the District Meeting. *Each participant will need to have created a free Zoom account online in advance of the meeting, which takes 5-10 minutes.*

To create a Zoom account:

1.   Use your computer browser, and go to **https://www.zoom.us/signup** (or download the App)

2.   Enter your birth date for verification purposes

3.   Enter your email address and click "sign-up"

4.   Go to your email account and click on the activation link, "activate account."

5.   On the website link, enter your name and put in a password of your choice. Remember you'll need a variety of capitol and lower-case letters, as well as a symbol.

6.   Next screen – no need to invite friends. Press on "skip this step."

7.   Next screen – click "Start meeting now." This is to test your computer speakers/camera.

8.   When a little box comes up, click on "Open Zoom.us"

9.   A screen will pop up. DO NOT press on any of these items.

10.   If you are prompted, make sure to allow ZOOM access to your microphone and camera.

11.   Your picture may or may not show up on the screen.

12.   Go to the bottom of the screen and you can click on and off your "start video" and "stop video."

13.   To test audio, hover over the microphone/mute on the bottom left of the screen and click on the "carrot" next to the "Mute" key. Make sure "built in microphone" and "built in output" are selected/checked.

14.   In the mute "carrot" menu, select "test speaker and microphone" and follow the prompts.

NOTE: If you don't have a microphone on your computer, you can dial in on the phone, and still watch the program on your computer. You will be prompted to do this.

To join a meeting on Zoom:

1.   Click on the **link** provided in your Constant Contact reminder/invitation and join the meeting or find the link on our website on the District Meeting event page. *Zoom has added this 'clicked link' requirement as a security measure.*

2.   Remember to mute yourself by using the "mute" button.

2020 Educational Conference & Annual Meeting going Virtual

The 2020 Educational Conference & Annual Meeting slated to be held in St Cloud on November 19-21, 2020, will now be held virtually. The in-person event at the River's Edge Convention Center will not be held in 2020.

While we hope the virus is better understood and managed by the time November arrives, the unknown nature of this pandemic has made it very difficult to plan in-person events. Township officials may not be comfortable attending nor may any speakers and/or exhibitors. Many companies and agencies are not allowing any travel until further notice.

We can however, plan and arrange a virtual event for Township officials.

There has been a lot of interest with the Zoom video-conferencing and tele-conferencing events arranged by MAT recently.

During part of the same time-frame in November, MAT will host our Annual Business Meeting and more via Zoom and/or other virtual methods.

This decision was made recently and we have just begun discussing what we can include for possible training and who we can invite for speakers.

If you have any suggestions on what you would like to have offered, please reach out to us at **1-800-228-0296** or **info@mntownships.org**.

Fall L&R Meeting

The regular September L&R event will be cancelled. In its place, MAT will conduct the five L&R Committee meetings via Zoom to discuss legislative issues and resolutions. Any resolutions passed by the committees will be compiled in a summary by Steve Fenske, MAT General Counsel.

The L&R general session will then be held as part of the Annual Conference business meeting. The MAT Board has decided due to the pandemic to cancel the "in person" Annual Conference and conduct it in a virtual format. MAT staff are working out details currently and a process to deal with the resolutions passed by the L&R Committees will be determined and announced in the next issue of the Insider.

SEMINARWEB: ONLINE TRAINING FOR TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, large group gatherings are still prohibited in Minnesota. That restriction inhibits our ability to provide in-person training for Township Officials. 2020 has seen the unprecedented cancellation of the Spring Short Courses, Town Law Review, Winter L&R, and Summer Specialized Training. The Fall L&R and Annual Conference will not be held in-person, but will be held in some capacity virtually.

As part of our brave new, socially distanced world, MAT has begun offering online, computer-based training seminars to township officers using a program called SeminarWeb. The trainings will be available live in real-time online, as well as recorded/Self-Paced, after the live event concludes. To register for the the live and recorded trainings, please create an SeminarWeb account and select the seminars you'd like to attend (See page 26 for registration help). Registration for the classes is through SeminarWeb. You can find a link to the SeminarWeb offerings on MAT's website (circled in red).
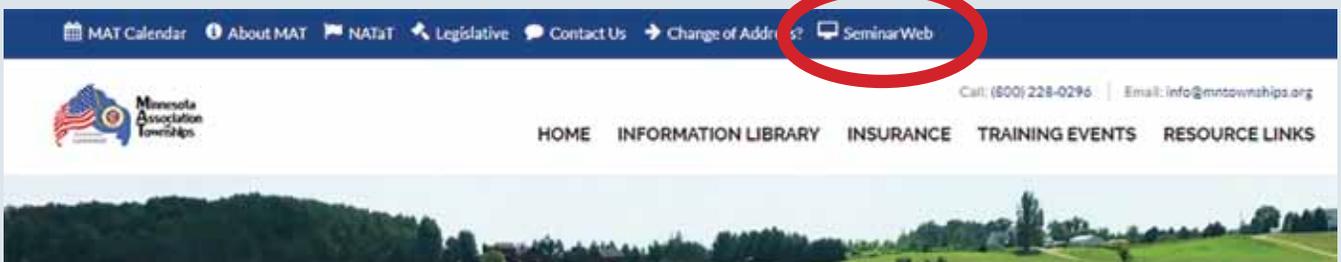
Currently Available SeminarWeb Self-Paced Trainings

MAT New Officer Training: Part 1
 Cost: $25
Part 1 of the New Officer Training discusses the nature of township government, municipal powers and the rules of township officers, holding public office, and conducting public business. This training provides all officers with essential information on the basics of township government.

MAT New Officer Training: Part 2
Cost: $25
Part 2 of the New Officer Training discusses the Open Meeting Law, making decisions at a board, and the Municipal Contracting Law. This training provides all officers with essential information on the basics of township government.

MAT New Officer Training: Part 3
Cost: $25
Part 3 of the New Officer Training discusses purchasing municipal property, conflicts of interest, township liability, and data practices. This training provides all officers with essential information on the basics of township government.

Managing Trees in the Right of Way
Cost: $25
Right of way management nearly always involves the removal of trees and brush, and townships must know how to and when they can remove trees from their rights of way. This training seminar discusses the tree removal statute, how it is applied, and the proper processes to legally removing trees.

NEW ONLINE TRAINING SEMINARS AVAILABLE ON MAT'S WEBSITE!

Recently Added SeminarWeb Trainings

Frequently Asked Questions for Township Elections

LIVE Tuesday June 26.

OnDemand after Tuesday, June 26.

Cost: $25

This presentation will look at many of the frequently asked questions of township elections and what the law is. Some of the topics to be discussed will include campaigning, canvassing boards, polling place conduct, and taking office after being elected.

2020 Clerk Head Election Official Training

LIVE Tuesday July 14. 9:30am-10:30am

OnDemand after Tuesday, July 14.

Cost: $25

What is required of the head election official in 2020? This presentation will review some new guidelines as well as what is expected of the Township Clerk during elections - including pre-and post-election. Focus is the August Primary and November General Election in 2020.

Clerks: Posting, Publishing and Meetings

LIVE Tuesday July 16. 5:00pm-6:00pm

OnDemand after Tuesday, July 16.

Cost: $25

As a clerk, you have to post and publish all sorts of information. This class will review exactly what is expected for posting and publishing and how to post and/or publishing various types of meetings.

Clerk Basics: Statutory Duties

LIVE Tuesday July 21. 1:00pm-2:00pm

OnDemand after Tuesday, July 21.

Cost: $25

You are a new clerk. What are your duties? This class will review the 8 statutory duties all Township Clerk's are to complete. This is not a detailed how to for all clerk duties, but a good, all encompassing look at the variety of tasks that need to be completed.

Treasurers: Election Judge Payroll

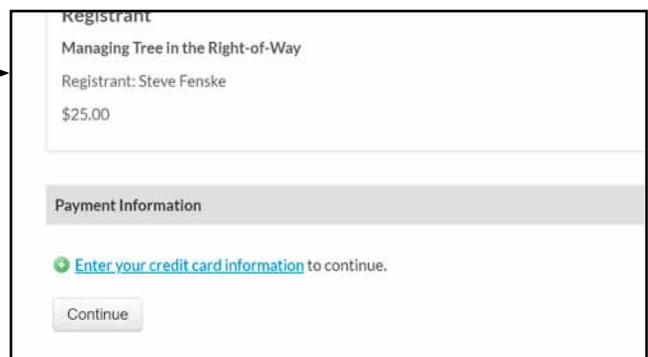LIVE Thursday July 23. 9:30am-10:30am
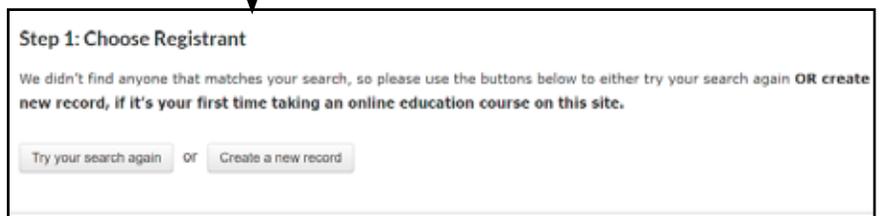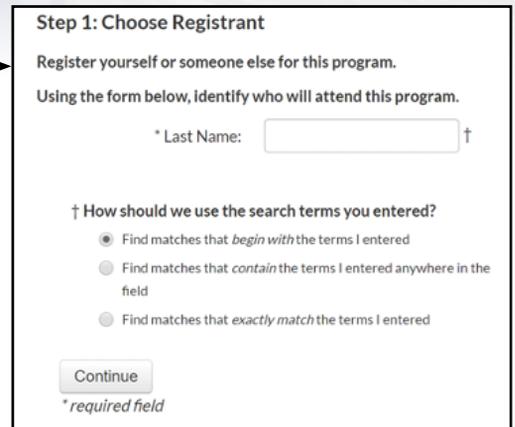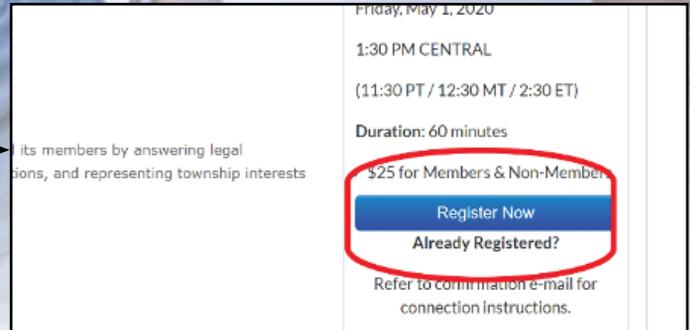
OnDemand after Tuesday, July 23.

Cost: $25

Election judge payroll is simple enough. However, compliance with all the rules and regulations can cause the best of us to want to toss in our hats. This presentation is designed to help you understand what paperwork is required for election judges based on if they are members of the general public, board members, clerks, or treasurers.

To create an account for SeminarWeb events:

1. Select "Register Now" from the right side of the event description page. It looks like this:

2. Try entering your name into the search field and press "enter/return". It is possible you may already have an account. It looks like this:

3. If you do not already have an account with SeminarWeb, you will be able to create one by selecting "Create New Record." It looks like this:

4. Enter your name, email address, and other required information.

5. Select the "Enter your credit card information" link to provide payment information. It looks like this:

6. After payment is entered, the member should receive a message that the registration is complete.

Friday, May 1, 2020

1:30 PM CENTRAL

(11:30 PT / 12:30 MT / 2:30 ET)

Duration: 60 minutes

its members by answering legal
tions, and representing township interests

$25 for Members & Non-Member

Register Now

Already Registered?

Refer to confirmation e-mail for
connection instructions.

Step 1: Choose Registrant

Register yourself or someone else for this program.

Using the form below, identify who will attend this program.

* Last Name: ⸸

⸸ **How should we use the search terms you entered?**

◉ Find matches that *begin with* the terms I entered

○ Find matches that *contain* the terms I entered anywhere in the field

○ Find matches that *exactly match* the terms I entered

Continue

* *required field*

Step 1: Choose Registrant

We didn't find anyone that matches your search, so please use the buttons below to either try your search again **OR create new record, if it's your first time taking an online education course on this site.**

Try your search again   or   Create a new record

Registrant

Managing Tree in the Right-of-Way

Registrant: Steve Fenske

$25.00

Payment Information

➕ **Enter your credit card information** to continue.

Continue

Documenting Minnesota townships response to the COVID-19 pandemic

by Charles Rodgers, MN Historical Society

In these unusual times, the State Archives of the Minnesota Historical Society offers guidance on how to document the response by Minnesota's townships to the COVID-19 pandemic. Future researchers, as well as future township officers, will benefit from the records you keep now regarding pandemic-related decisions and activities, including what was communicated with the public and how your township continued delivering their services. The lessons you learn along the way now may also assist in planning for or responding to a future crisis, such as a flood, tornado, or a fire that destroys your town hall.

While maintaining your normal records according to the Minnesota township general records retention schedule, please keep in mind any new activities or engagement carried out in response to the pandemic that should be preserved for permanent retention for historical purposes. For more information about township records retention see the MAT website at: **https://mntownships.org/information-library/**

Below is a list of suggested record types which we encourage you to capture during this time. We appreciate your help in preserving a record of how the State of Minnesota is staying strong and weathering the pandemic.

If you have any comments, suggestions, or questions, including how to identify pertinent records and manage them, please contact the State Archives staff: Charles Rodgers and Anjanette Schussler. Email: **Statearchives@mnhs.org**. Telephone: **651.259.3260**.

Charles Rodgers is a government records archivist with the State Archives of the Minnesota Historical Society where he has worked for over 35 years. His primary duties include acquiring government records with historical value from state and local governments, and advising on the historical value of Minnesota government records. He is familiar with the General Records Retention Schedule for Minnesota Townships, and with general records management policies and practices.

Tips for documenting your township's response to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic

Note: Only save what is produced by your township, not documents or information that originated elsewhere.

- Preserve such written documents as:
  - Working from home and social distancing plans created internally for township officers and staff, and for the public.
  - Reports and memos on work and communications during this time.
  - Press releases and press coverage of your township's response and related activities.
  - Correspondence showing significant new policies or work practices in place during the pandemic.
- Audio-visual material such as photos, videos, and other visual documents that show the life of your township, both on-site and virtually.
- Document how your township mobilized for a cause outside of work, like donating supplies to a medical facility or food bank, or making masks. Take pictures and save correspondence about it.
- Start one or more COVID-19 files for records specifically related to this time (e.g., internal network files, a folder in your email, a folder for paper files).
- Store digital records in their native format for the time being (including social media content, email, websites, etc.).
- Compile a list of all the locations with digital content you created for preservation, including URLs, social media, email folders, hashtags, etc., so that you have a central reference point to use later when you want to capture the content. Refer to the State Archives' preferred formats document as a starting point for choosing file formats.

Questions or concerns? Please contact State Archives staff, Charles Rodgers and Anjanette Schussler at **statearchives@mnhs.org**. **651.259.3260**.

Townships Are Key to Achieving Border-to-Border Broadband Goal

COVID-19 has made crystal clear how important it is for all Minnesotans to have reliable, high-speed Internet access.

During the pandemic, demand for broadband service has skyrocketed as people use it for telework, distance learning, telehealth, and for staying socially connected while physically isolating. Businesses have been relying on it more than ever to stay connected with their customers, employees, and suppliers.

Gov. Tim Walz joined the governors of 10 other states in signing a June 25th letter asking President Trump and Congressional leaders to partner with states in helping to close the gap between those who have broadband access and those who don't. As stated in that letter, "Broadband is not a luxury, but rather critical infrastructure that's vitally important to our economic future.... communities, businesses and families without adequate access are left behind, and the consequences are staggering."

Grants help pay for broadband expansion

Minnesota has long been committed to expansion of broadband internet connectivity. The state's Office of Broadband Development (OBD) – part of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) – oversees the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program.

Now in its sixth year, the program helps fund the expansion of broadband service to areas of Minnesota that are unserved or underserved. Since 2014, the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program has invested $108 million across Minnesota through 140 projects which have helped connect over 50,000 homes, businesses, farms and community institutions.

"We know that fast, reliable broadband access improves quality of life, makes businesses more competitive, and provides career opportunities for our Greater Minnesota workforce," said DEED Commissioner Steve Grove. "We can see how it's playing a key role during this pandemic, but access will continue to be essential to Minnesotans and to our innovation economy going forward."

The State of Minnesota has set a goal for universal access and high-speed internet so that:

- by no later than 2022, all Minnesota businesses and homes have access to high-speed broadband that provides minimum download speeds of at least 25 megabits per second and minimum upload speeds of at least three megabits per second; and

- by no later than 2026, all Minnesota businesses and homes have access to at least one provider of broadband with download speeds of at least 100 megabits per second and upload speeds of at least 20 megabits per second.

"Townships are often at the frontlines of the broadband discussion," said Angie Dickison, manager of the Office of Broadband Development. "Rural residents are the most likely to not have a fast and reliable option for their broadband needs.

"We encourage townships to partner with service providers and with other government entities in applying for state grants to help pay for broadband expansion projects," she added. "They may be able to provide a portion of the project funding – often through bonding."

Applying for fiscal year 2021 funding

In 2019, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated $20 million for each of FY20 and FY21 – and in January, OBD announced 2020 awards totaling $23.3 million for 30 projects across the state. These grants were matched by $35.9 million in local funds, for a total investment in broadband infrastructure of $59.2 million. (For a complete list of these projects, visit **mn.gov/deed/b2b** and see the 2019 Grantees tab.)

In the 2019 grant round, the majority of projects submitted were not able to be funded due to the high demand for this grant program. Given the rising need for broadband service during the pandemic, OBD officials expect that grant dollars requested will again exceed the funding available.

Applications for FY21 grant funding will open in July and will close Sept. 30, 2020.

If your township is interested in using bonding to help fund a broadband project, the Office of Broadband Development can help you find a service provider to be a partner. However, given the six-week legal requirement for notifying existing broadband providers of the intent to file a grant application, townships would need to move quickly in order to have their plans in place by mid-August.
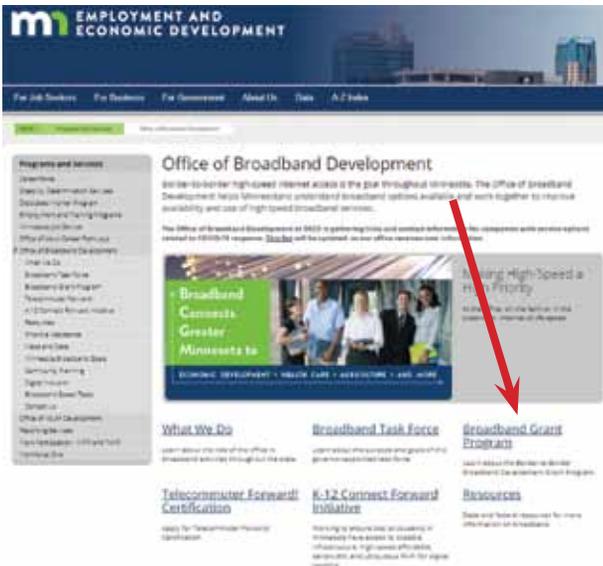
Successful partnerships

Here are just a few examples in which Minnesota townships have partnered with service providers and other government entities in applying for broadband grant awards.

- In rural Chisago County, Fish Lake Township partnered with Century Link in a last mile, fiber-to-the-home project designed to serve 919 unserved households, seven unserved businesses, and one unserved community anchor institution. A state grant of $1.83 million provided 40% of the project's

infrastructure costs, with the township putting in 25%, and CenturyLink the remaining 35%.

Total cost for the project is $4.58 million, with $1.83 million from a state broadband grant and a local match of $2.75 million from the township and Century Link. CenturyLink committed to improving broadband service levels to 1 gigabit down and 1 gigabit up, exceeding the 2026 state speed goal.

- In Aitkin County, Savage Communications Inc. (SCI) is constructing a last-mile project designed to serve 374 unserved households in and around Shamrock Township. A state grant of $148,503 provided 50% of the project's infrastructure costs.

SCI is providing the other half of the $297,006 project cost. In another project in the township, Aitkin County partnered with SCI to construct broadband service. For both projects, SCI committed to improving broadband service levels to 250 megabits down and 20 megabits up, meeting and exceeding the 2026 state speed goal.

- Morcom Township in St. Louis County is one of several partners in the North Central Minnesota Fiber Project which was awarded a $2.56 million state grant by OBD in January. Paul Bunyan Communications is the service provider in this project which will add or upgrade service in parts of the Leech Lake Indian Reservation and rural portions of Cass, Itasca, Koochiching, and St. Louis counties. Total project cost is $6.27 million.

For the Morcom Township portion of the project, the township is contributing $10,000, the state $331,704; Paul Bunyan Communications $332,692; and the Minnesota Department of Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation is putting in $224,800. This portion of the fiber-to-premise project is slated to add service for 124 locations currently unserved.

While most broadband projects are for fiber optic cable, some service providers install fixed wireless systems. They put a transmitter in a high place – such as atop a water tower – which sends a wireless broadband signal to a receiver attached to the side of a home or business. These projects can be installed year-round, whereas the fiber projects are dependent on having ground that isn't frozen. All projects – regardless of the technology used – need to meet the state's speed goals.

Digital Equity

In addition to the need for broadband connectivity, the pandemic has also highlighted other digital equity issues that township leaders may be hearing about from residents:

- Affordability is an issue for both urban and rural residents. While some providers offer a low-income plan, others have the Lifeline program, which is a discount of $9.25 for qualifying low-income subscribers available through the FCC's universal service funding. However, if the monthly broadband bill is $50 or $60, a discount of $9.25 may not make the service affordable for some families.

Townships Are Key to Achieving Border-to-Border Broadband Goal

- Broadband service is defined by the federal government as speeds of at least 25 megabits download and 3 megabits upload. With so many people working or learning from home, the capacity needed to upload content is increasing – and often exceeds 3 megabits.

- Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan recently announced a public-private partnership of philanthropic and business leaders from across Minnesota that aims to meet the technology and connectivity needs of families with school-age children. Partnership for a ConnectedMN is led by Best Buy, Comcast, Blandin Foundation, Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation, and the Minnesota Business Partnership, in collaboration with the State of Minnesota.

Before the start of the upcoming school year, ConnectedMN's goal is to bring technology and internet access to students across the state, especially communities most in need, including Indigenous students and students of color, students from low-income families, and families residing in rural Minnesota. Partnership for a ConnectedMN's application process will be available later in July. The Governor and State of Minnesota do not have a role in fundraising or directing its funds. More information on it can be found at www.connectedmn.us.

- The Governor and Lieutenant Governor have prioritized the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) dollars to meet technology and connectivity challenges, with approximately $14 million earmarked for districts for devices and connectivity. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has prioritized distributions of GEER and the discretionary Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief fund dollars to districts with the highest numbers of students receiving special education, students of color, homeless students, English language learners, and students who qualify for free- and reduced-price meals. Districts applying for these funds should visit MDE's website.

Find out more

Visit **mn.gov/deed/broadband** for links to more information about the broadband grant program, maps, and other data.

For more about township financing options, see **https://mntownships.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Chapter-8.pdf**.

Article provided by the Office of Broadband Development at DEED.

Curbside Voting

As the upcoming statewide primaries and general election approach, towns with in-person polling places must consider how to protect residents and election judges from the possible spread of COVID-19. One often overlooked method is through so-called "curbside voting." This method of voting was initially intended to help those with limited mobility to vote without entering the polling place. However, curbside voting can also be used to limit the number of people in the polling place. The statute says:

"An individual who is **unable to** enter a polling place where paper ballots or an electronic voting system are used **may register and vote without leaving a motor vehicle. Two election judges who are members of different major political parties** shall assist the voter to register and to complete a voter's certificate and shall provide the necessary ballots." (emphasis added)

Minnesota Statutes § 204C.15. The voter decides if he or she will use curbside voting, and election judges should not question or impede their use of it. If an election judge is concerned about a person's use of curbside voting, the concern should be expressed in writing in the polling place incident log.

The Minnesota Election Judge guide describes the process as follows:

1. **Two judges from different major political parties go out to assist the voter.** Ask & write down their name & return inside to check the roster & determine if the voter is registered.

2. **Bring a Certificate of Registered Voter** form to each curbside voter. This form takes the place of signing the roster. If not registered, bring a registration application.

3. **Have the voter complete the form(s).** Ask for proof of residence if they needed to register.

4. **Process forms.** Give the Certificate to the Roster Judge (if they were pre-registered) or the Registration Judge (if they needed to register) in exchange for a receipt. Have the Roster or Registration Judge print 'curbside' on the appropriate roster signature line. Attach the certificate to the page where the voter's name appears on the roster. (If ePollbooks are being used, follow instructions provided by local election official.)

5. **Hand the receipt to the Ballot Judge for a ballot & bring it out to the voter.**

6. **Have the voter fill out the ballot.** Provide assistance as needed.

7. **Place the ballot into the ballot box.**

8. **For public health purposes, your local official may have further instructions about curbside voting.**

Towns should expect some voters to use curbside voting this year so the board and election officials should consider how they will incorporate curbside voting into their operations if they have not already. Election judges should also be consulted about any personal protective equipment or practices they feel will help them stay safe as they administer curbside voting.