

TOWN OF ERIN PRAIRIE
MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2025

The Town of Erin Prairie Monthly Board meeting was called to order at 6:00p.m. at the Erin Prairie Town Hall by Chairman John Van Dyk. Present were Board Members John Van Dyk, Mike Monteith, and Dennis Mitchell. About fifty people, Town Residents and a few non-residents were also in attendance.

A motion was made by Mike to accept the agenda as presented. Dennis seconded the motion which passed by affirmative vote.

Dennis moved to approve the February Meeting Minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Mike and passed unanimously.

It was reported there is \$227,533.94 available in our checking and Money Market Accounts at this time. The bills were presented and discussed. A motion was made by Dennis and seconded by Mike to pay the bills and accept the treasurer's report as presented. The motion passed by affirmative vote.

Some people in attendance had requested a discussion regarding the economic impact the proposed Ten Mile Creek Xcel Solar Project will have on the community. It was mentioned that St. Croix Electric provides electricity in our community. They currently have a small solar farm and are planning to set up another one.

Xcel Energy is leasing land to put up a solar farm in Erin Prairie and surrounding townships. The Board felt the landowners have property rights that should not be taken away from them. The land that is leased for solar projects remains zoned agricultural and no conditional use permit is needed. Because no change in zoning or conditional use permit is needed landowners are not required to come to the Town Board for approval. The Township will benefit from the solar farm located in Erin Prairie. Xcel will pay the township and St. Croix County a substantial amount of money. For every megawatt produced the township will receive approximately \$1,600. For example, if 250 megawatts is produced in Erin Prairie the township will receive \$400,000. This amount is more than our Township levy at this time, which is \$255,000.

It was mentioned that Xcel Energy has not yet submitted their application for a permit to the Public Service Commission (PSC). Since the project is over 100 megawatts the PSC issues the permit and does not need or ask for local approval. It was noted that there are bills in the State Senate and State Assembly to move approval of large scale solar farms back to local communities.

The comment was made that the people here tonight do not want a solar farm in Erin Prairie Township. A few were frustrated, angry, and felt the Board should have been doing more. They feel it depreciates property values, may affect the sale of agricultural

products, tractors and equipment in the area, and may affect the land and rent prices. They would like the Board to have an opinion about it and should do more to stop it. Could ordinances be put in place to regulate what can be put in? An example was given, stating that an ordinance be put in place which allows an individual to have a solar set up to cover their own private needs only. Nothing larger than that.

It was then mentioned again, there are people in the township that are not here tonight, that are not against solar, and some that would like to participate in this solar project. What about their property rights?

The concern was expressed also that it costs a lot of money to try and fight this project. The township does not want to spend a lot of money fighting it. Several residents mentioned that it would be possible to collect donations to help pay the cost of fighting the solar project.

In November Tara Gremain, with Farm Bureau, was invited by the Board to attend our Meeting. She encouraged the township and residents to negotiate a Community Development Agreement with Xcel Energy to put in place the things that the township wants. Road agreements can be made that require Xcel Energy to fix roads if they are broken during installation of the solar equipment. A good neighbor agreement could be put in place which regulates set backs, barriers, and other things people feel would be needed. Tara said working with Xcel seems like the best option because fighting them may leave the township with the solar project being installed, and without any of the things that could have been asked for in an agreement.

Someone asked if Xcel would pay for training the fire department how to deal with fires if they occur in the project or if they will clean up after a storm if damage occurs, or if toxins show up in the ground? What about snow on the panels? The question was asked will Xcel be responsible for cleanup when the lease is up thirty years from now? All these things could be written into an agreement with Xcel.

John indicated that people could sign up if interested in working on putting together an ordinance. He will organize these people to meet and discuss writing something. Someone offered to get a copy of an ordinance they heard was being presented to the Town of Hammond.

John briefly mentioned information from the New Richmond Ambulance and Fire meetings he had attended.

The Annual Meeting and regular Board meeting will be held Monday, April 21 beginning at 6:00p.m.

A motion was made and passed to adjourn at 8:10p.m.
Respectfully submitted,

Jackie Mitchell, Clerk/Treasurer

