

TOWN OF ERIN PRAIRIE
ANNUAL MEETING
MONDAY, APRIL 21, 2025

The Town of Erin Prairie Annual Meeting was called to order Monday, April 21, 2025 at 6:00p.m. at the Erin Prairie Town Hall by Chairman, John Van Dyk. Present were Board Members John Van Dyk, Brad Hermansen, and Dennis Mitchell. About fifty town residents were also present.

A motion was made by Brad to approve the 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes. Dennis seconded the motion which passed by affirmative vote.

John read information from the Wisconsin Town's Association that indicated that any votes at the Annual Town Meeting are advisory only unless they pertain to certain issues listed in the statutes.

John briefly reviewed the 2025 budget, mentioning what is budgeted for ambulance, fire, road work, etc. He stated that the township will be paving 140th Ave. between 200th St. and Hwy. 63 this year. The cost to pave a road is about \$250,000-\$300,000 per mile. We received Local Road Improvement Project funds of \$20,000 last year so we will not receive that this year but will apply to receive it again next year. In 2026 we will receive funds from the Agricultural Road Improvement Program to complete widening and paving 190th St. from County Road G to 140th Ave.

Dennis mentioned that last year at our annual Meeting we discussed the condition of the Town Hall. The basement walls are not in good shape, the bathroom has no running water and only a composting toilet, and the walls and insulation are old. Should we be thinking about doing something with the Hall or continue using what we have? The new clerk/treasurer may want office hours in the Town Hall. The comment was made that the Clerk/Treasurer could bring in what she needs for working and set it up on the table. That would work for now.

Steve Wlodyga, speaking for the committee that was set up to work on the Xcel Solar project information, read a resolution of the concerns raised by the committee. (See attached.) A motion was made by Steve Wlodyga to pass the resolution. Steve Brockphaler seconded the motion. The majority of the crowd in attendance voted "yes" to passing the resolution. The resolution passed. One Township resident did express concerns about what exactly was being voted on. How accurate is the information that was written? Because he flies often he questioned the statement that the solar panels may cause glare and radar interference. He has not seen that even where solar panels were located next to an airport. The response was that some places the panels are covered and that prevents glare.

Greg Tellijohn, a member of the County Board, mentioned that the County is working with Xcel to put together Community Development Agreements. They are putting together a developer agreement that will ask for certain things such as setbacks and other regulations. There will be a meeting with the County and Townships together to discuss what is needed in the agreement. The permit application has been pushed back to late summer so the meeting with Xcel and the County and townships has been pushed back also. The Public Service Commission regulates the solar projects in the state.

Steve Wlodyga made the following motions: "I move that the Town of Erin Prairie Board vote on the resolution that we just passed at their next Board Meeting." Dave Franey seconded the motion.

"I move that the Town of Erin Prairie Board pass a Solar Health and Safety Ordinance within the next 6 months." Steve Brockphaler seconded the motion.

"I move that the Town of Erin Prairie Board pass a Solar Licensing and Permitting Ordinance within the next 6 months." Dave Franey seconded the motion.

"I move that the Town of Erin Prairie Board pass a Battery Storage Ordinance within the next 6 months." Dave Franey seconded the motion.

"I move that the Town of Erin Prairie Board pass a Solar Moratorium Ordinance or resolution to be in place until the forementioned ordinances are passed and effective." Dave Franey seconded the motion.

"I move that the funds be appropriated to fund the legal notices, etc. to put the ordinances in place." The motion was seconded by Dave Franey.

All the preceding motions passed by affirmative votes.

This Solar Committee has been meeting Wednesdays at 6:00p.m. to put information together.

A township resident mentioned that she has been talking with Tara Gremain about the Solar Project. She mentioned there are things we can address and we need to come up with ways to meet in the middle. We need to stick to the facts, not our emotions. Companies are making concessions, making changes to projects such as allowing grazing of sheep or cattle under the panels. The Community Development Agreement that the County is working on is the way to get these things in place.

A motion was made by Dennis to adjourn at 6:55p.m. Brad seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jackie Mitchell, Clerk/Treasurer
Town of Erin Prairie

TOWN OF ERIN PRAIRIE

ST. CROIX COUNTY, WISCONSIN

Whereas a 5,000-acre, 650-megawatt solar project currently known as The Ten Mile Creek Solar Project is being proposed by Xcel Energy to replace its current power plant (Allen S. King) in Bayport, MN to continue serving primarily energy customers in the State of Minnesota.

Whereas, the Town of Erin Prairie, St. Croix County, Wisconsin has prided itself in being an “Exclusive Ag Zoning” area with a right-to-farm mentality allowing for family farms to thrive without interference from neighboring parcels or competing interests impeding primary farm land use.

Whereas, the Town of Erin Prairie has adopted the Comprehensive Plan on January 13, 2010 with the goals of protecting and preserving the natural resources, farmlands, open/green spaces, and wildlife habitat that define the agricultural character of Erin Prairie and to promote sustainable agricultural practices that will preserve farming as a major economic activity as a way of life.

Whereas, the vast majority of the Town of Erin Prairie contains “Prime Farmland” and some of Wisconsin’s best.

Whereas, most of the Town of Erin Prairie’s land is part of the St. Croix County Comprehensive Plan Agriculture & Farm Preservation adopted January 3, 2012 recognizing “that agricultural land is not undeveloped land waiting for other uses, but is a valuable and productive resource that supports a healthy agricultural industry.”

Whereas, the Town of Erin Prairie sits in the watershed of the Willow River (a Class II trout stream), the Kinnickinnic River (a Class I trout stream), Baldwin Pine Lake (providing public fishing through St. Croix County’s park and boat ramp) and Casey Lake Wildlife Area (a 364-acre WI DNR Western Prairie Habitat Restoration Area allowing public hunting opportunities).

Whereas, the Town of Erin Prairie, St. Croix County, Wisconsin has prided itself in being an area for family dairy farms to exist without the danger of stray voltage affecting dairy production and other livestock.

Whereas, the Town of Erin Prairie is not immune from storms including major damage caused by a 2008 storm. Future storms could create shards from damaged solar panels during storms and inclement weather that can get into hay fields without detection causing fatal injury to livestock and harming soils for future root crops.

Whereas, the Town of Erin Prairie sits primarily on shallow carbonate bedrock (limestone) allowing for past, current and future karst formations creating sinkholes, caves and underground drainage systems allowing rapid movement of underground water which is a super-highway of contaminants into groundwater.

Whereas, the consistent pounding of stakes into the expansive project area over years will have a large effect in creating additional karst in the carbonate bedrock, causing additional and ongoing treats to the Town of Erin Prairie's clean ground water for the life of the project.

Whereas, the Town of Erin Prairie has experienced and continues to experience the real financial and cleanup effect of PFAS ("forever chemicals") contamination based on its role as operator and contributor of a dump in 1980 that contaminated ground water that is still contaminated 45 years later.

Whereas. The Town of Erin Prairie is serviced by United Fire & Rescue and the New Richmond Fire & Rescue Department, neither of which have the training, equipment or funding to handle the toxic, high heat and large-scale conditions created by a solar project fire.

Whereas, the Town of Erin Prairie is in close proximity to two airports (Baldwin Airport and New Richmond Regional Airport) which may cause glare, radar interference and wildlife impact on airplanes during takeoff and landing.

Whereas, Excel has not been forthcoming in its public meetings as to the exact location of the known placement of solar panels, provisions to protect the surrounding property owners, maintenance of the project, ground vegetation, soil erosion, and damage to lakes, rivers, creeks, and wildlife refuges.

Whereas, the expansive nature, size and scope of Excel's Ten Mile Creek Solar Project will forever change the Town of Erin Prairie from its agricultural roots and self-determined agricultural destiny.

Now therefore be it resolved, that the residents of the Town of Erin Prairie, St. Croix County, Wisconsin at their Annual Meeting on April 21, 2025 voted to oppose the development of the Ten Mile Creek Solar Project or any other large scale solar project based on the irreversible detrimental effects stated above.