

**BALDWIN TOWNSHIP
PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING
DECEMBER 20TH, 2023**

Present – Chair Jay Swanson, Vice Chair Tom Rush, Scott Case and Bryan Lawrence
Jeff Holm arrived at 7:05 p.m.

Also present: Mike Couri, Township Attorney, Couri & Ruppi

Call to Order – The December 20th, 2023 Public Informational meeting of Baldwin Township was called to order by Chair Jay Swanson at 7:01 p.m.

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

Public Informational Meeting on Incorporation – Chair Jay Swanson welcomed the residents and thanked them for attending. Supervisor Lawrence spoke of Resolution 23-44 and stated it has all of the fundamentals of what the Township is hoping to achieve by incorporating. He stated the Town Board has been speaking of incorporation for many years and there has been a lot of work in getting to this decision. He mentioned the 169 Task Force who set the groundwork on how Baldwin Township will look once it became more developed. He explained Baldwin Townships committees and task force. This led Baldwin Township to taking over its own Planning and Zoning and building permits which has put Baldwin in the position for incorporation.

Mike Couri, the Town Attorney, went through a presentation regarding Baldwin Township and incorporation. Couri explained incorporation is nothing more than a change in the form of government, with different statutes and powers. Baldwin Township is the 3rd largest Township in Minnesota. The Town Board has been considering incorporating for more than 15 years. Baldwin Township took over Planning and Zoning authority and building inspection from Sherburne County in 2022. Notice of Intent was sent to surrounding communities on December 5th, 2023. Filing of incorporation petition is likely to occur in the first week of January. An administrative Law Judge will schedule a hearing. Baldwin Township will present its case for incorporation. Township residents will have a chance to comment to the judge regarding incorporation. The Judge will decide whether to grant or deny incorporation. If incorporated a Judge will order an election of four City Council members and a Mayor. If timing works out, the election would be in November of 2024. If the Judge denies the incorporation the Township will remain as a Township. Some changes to happen if Baldwin becomes a city are that the borders become more stable, there will no longer be an Annual Meeting or Township election. The City Council will approve the levy, not the electors. There would be no change in current personnel, road, fire, sewer, or other municipal services. Law enforcement services in Baldwin would remain the same. With incorporation the City would have greater economic development powers allowing the City to attract more industrial tax base and jobs. It will allow Baldwin to remain intact as a community and maintain the services that it currently provides.

A resident present asked if the residents have a choice in keeping current contracts and resolutions after becoming a city. Couri stated incorporation will not infringe on any contract terms.

A resident asked if Baldwin Township would create their own police force after incorporating. Couri explained cities do not require their own sheriff's department and does not know of any sheriff's departments that have refused service to newly incorporated cities. Chair Swanson stated that a contract may be needed if Baldwin ever requires to have a certain amount of police present in Baldwin at any given time. Couri further stated that sheriff departments are expensive, and many communities decide to contract with an agency near them if they offer a reasonable rate.

A resident questioned if the Township will still receive the 20% revenue from the police department for ticket/violations. Couri stated, whatever the current format is, will stay the same to the best of his knowledge.

A resident questioned why decisions on the levy made by the residents at the Annual Meeting only takes 15-20 minutes while a City Council typically takes 2 to 3 meetings for a decision. Couri explained that the difference is the Board members prepare the budget ahead of time but don't have authority to approve the levy. The budget is how much money the Town is going to spend versus the levy and how much the Town will receive.

A resident asked if Baldwin incorporates will the Council be able to approve and build a new fire station. Couri explained that whether Baldwin is a township or city either entity has the authority to approve and build a new fire station. Voter approval is not required if the township is considered an urban township which Baldwin is. Urban townships are decided by how many people are living on platted land. Lawrence stated Baldwin has been an urban township for many years.

A resident asked why incorporation cannot be a ballot question. Couri explained advisory elections, which is a question placed on the ballot by the Town Board to be answered by voters, is prohibited by state law.

Vice Chair Rush stated Baldwins current budget is 1.6 million dollars. Rush further stated by incorporating that could be raised up by \$500,000 to \$700,000.

A resident asked why the Township does not send out anything that promotes or states the importance of the Annual Meeting and important information that is happening in the township. Couri explained that discussions regarding certain subjects, such as the levy, occur at the regular Town Board meetings and eventually the Board decides what decisions they are going to make.

A resident questioned how the staff will transfer to a city since Townships usually only have part time employees and smaller maintenance departments. Couri explained that cities don't hire more employees because they became a city but rather the need for more resources than staff might increase. Vice Chair Rush explained the Township has a full-time clerk, a full-time deputy clerk, a part-time admin assistant and two full-time Public Works Employees.

A resident asked if Baldwin becomes a city, would the March election no longer happen. Chair Swanson stated yes, the March election would no longer happen. He further stated that the City Council will still hold a public meeting to hear the public regarding certain decisions.

A resident presented a question regarding the City having to contract for prosecution services and if the amount of \$20,000 annually is accurate. Couri explained that the exact dollar amount is different for each area.

A resident asked if the industrial park would bring in city sewer and water. Couri stated both Townships and Cities can have communal sewer and water services. This would be decided by the Town Board or City Council before undertaking. Chair Swanson discussed his hopes for maintaining Baldwin Townships rural nature when becoming a city.

A resident stated she is proud to live in Baldwin Township. She expressed her appreciation for the local government at Baldwin and their willingness to talk to residents.

A resident asked if there are any vacant industrial properties in Baldwin Township. Chair Swanson stated that there are vacant properties.

A resident asked if Baldwin is able to get the mobile home park back. Couri explained that the Town is not able to annex that property back.

Supervisor Holm explained that he supports the incorporation of Baldwin Township especially since taking over planning and zoning and building permits. Holm further explained his previous experiences in committees and what he has seen within governments near Baldwin. Holm stated if Baldwin moves to being a City, it will help shape the community into what the residents want it to be. Holm encouraged residents to become more involved and come to Town Board meetings.

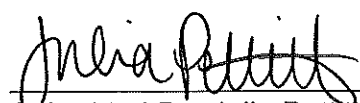
Supervisor Case explained the Public Safety Aid money that Baldwin Township did not receive because it was allocated for cities only. Supervisor Holm stated this is the people's tax dollars and it should have come back to our community. Couri explained annexation laws favor cities more than Townships traditionally.

A resident asked if cities are required to participate in low-income housing. Couri stated no, it is not in current legislation.

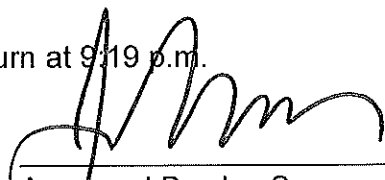
A resident asked if incorporating into a city will change the zip code or school district. Couri stated no, all of that remains the same.

Chair Swanson went onto explain the situation regarding the mobile home park and the annexation that has happened in the past. He stated as a City, Baldwin will be able to write its own destiny. Supervisor Case stated since the mobile home park went to Princeton, they charge for medical emergencies and residents receive bills for those services. Case stated the Township tried to keep the mobile home park in Baldwin Township so residents would not be charged for those services.

Adjourn - Holm/Lawrence unanimous to adjourn at 9:19 p.m.



Submitted By: Julia Pettitt
Deputy Clerk/Treasurer
Baldwin Township



Approved By: Jay Swanson
Chair, Board of Supervisors
Baldwin Township

1-8-2024

Date

Attendees: Carol Swanson, Ed Anderson, Phil Fadden, Andy and Nikki Walker, Mark Otis, Alan Walker, Matt Coons, Kevin Scroller, Silvada Dragonjic, Diane Bohn, Scott Bruce, Rich Harris, Dick Marshall, Teresa Barnes, Karen Kriech, Melissa Lynch, P. B., Mark Laspon, Jeremy Linder, Mark Nutt, Sarah Koste, Pam Moore, Kelly Moore, Eugene Boyle, Phyllis Boyle, Berkey Rodgers, Carla Mertz, Dan Roghair, Jim and Deb Tasa, Danielle Artmann, James Artmann, Mike Anderson, Brian Julson, Brian Torborg, James Lewis, Mary Larson, Richard Becker, Patty Hanon, Pay Skaraklid, Joss Jondahl, Sue Hix, Dean Kleinhans, Carroll Paana, Leanne Panna, Christopher Decker, Dan Patnode, Brad Christopher, Anna Sharpe, Rod Sanford, Cal Watson, Lisa Fobbe, Andy and Roxanne Schreider, Anita Schneider, Zac Good, J. Hamilton