

SPECIAL VILLAGE BOARD MEETING – January 22nd, 2025, PAGE 1

President Tony Sindelar called a Special Village Board meeting to order and roll call was taken. Present were Trustees Brad Oberbeck, Ernie Klicko, Jerry Sonnenberg, Melvin Waller, Bob Berry, and President Sindelar. Also present were Clerk/Treasurer Sandy Shawback, and Deputy Clerk/Treasurer Rebecca Reuter. Jason Pierce was absent.

INTERVIEWS WITH FIRMS FOR VILLAGE ATTORNEY SERVICES

4:30 PM – Firm 1 – ABTS, GRUBOFSKI & VRUWINK, LLC

Aaron T. Vruwink introduced himself. He stated that he grew up in Rudolf, Wisconsin, just north of Wisconsin Rapids. Also, a small town. Last he looked it was a population of 423. He went to school in Wisconsin Rapids, then undergraduate in LaCross, and law school in Madison. After law school he moved home right away. He wanted to move back to a small town. He started working for the now Judge Tim Ebert in Wood County. He worked for him for about 2 years, and then when he ran for judge, he formed a partnership with two other attorneys Abts & Grubofski. Grubofski does primarily criminal law, with a little bit of family law. Abts does probate and municipal law. He represents the City of Nekoosa, and the Village of Port Edwards, and does some representation for Biron. Vruwink represents the Village of Vesper. The Village of Vesper has a population of about 500-600, a small community as well. Vruwink became interested in municipal law because in undergraduate he worked for the City of Lacross's mayor. He was there for about a year and a half. He was at the mayor's office every day, he also studied public administration. So, local government is something he has been interested in for a long time. If we were to be interested in their services, he would be the primary council.

Berry asked Vruwink if he had any issues with being here the first Monday of the month for the board meetings?

Vruwink replied that it wouldn't be a problem.

Sonnenberg asked if he has helped municipalities in the courtroom?

Vruwink stated that he hasn't had to go to court with any municipalities. Often it seems that municipalities have their own council, and they seek outside council. But that's something he's comfortable doing because most of his time is spent in the courtroom.

Klicko asked him how comfortable he feels doing revisions of ordinances?

Sindelar stated that we have been updating our ordinances and when we are done with that, we will be starting on our other book of building ordinances that we will have to start reviewing and updating if necessary.

Vruwink stated that we would need to make sure we are in statutory compliance. We could look at what we are doing versus the communities around us. Look at what we've been doing, and what they've been doing and the kinds of success they've been having and adopting that into our community and the goals that we have. He has prosecuted trials for ordinance violations for those who don't follow the ordinances. He is happy to see that the Villages ordinances are on our website.

Sonnenberg asked if Vruwink could explain the "Binding Effect" that is listed on page four of the legal services agreement?

Vruwink stated that if his firm were to be sold to another firm, then the new firm would be bound to represent the Village and still hold up the agreement. If they wanted to change anything you would both have to mutually agree to the change in a new agreement.

The Board thanked Vruwink for coming down and meeting with them.

5:00 pm – Firm 2 – MILLER, SPANKOWSKI & WALDINGER, LLC

Joe Hasler introduced himself. He stated that he's from Reedsburg. He is currently with a Madison law firm that is fading out of the business of local government representation. He wasn't ready to stop doing that and so he hooked up starting on February 1st with Miller, Spankowski & Waldinger, LLC in Portage. He is currently the City Attorney for Wisconsin

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Dells, and for Reedsburg. He gave the Board a copy of the resolution that was passed in Wisconsin Dells that reaffirms him as the city attorney, and his association with Miller, Spankowski & Waldinger. That resolution outlines what service they are prepared to provide as directed by the Village Board President, the Village board, and the staff as well. They would provide clear concise and timely legal advice and consultation. They would represent us in municipal prosecution services to the extent that we have any of those. They will do whatever they are directed to do by the elected and the Board. You ask why it would be a good idea to hire somebody who is the City Attorney for the City of Wisconsin Dell, and Reedsburg? The simple answer is that he doesn't have to reinvent the wheel. If you have issues, then he's probably seen them. He was going through a list of things that he has done just in the last year with some of his municipal clients. He's done annexations, raise and removal, ordinances, street and ally vacations, short-term rentals, easements, real estate transactions, & property maintenance.

Tracy Waldinger then introduced herself. She stated that as you can see from the letter they sent over that they do represent a series of municipalities. She understands that we would like our representative at all our meetings, and Joe would be that attorney if we were to hire their office. She would do any of our ordinance violation type enforcement, because that is where she does most of her work. She does more of the prosecution end of things. In general Miller, Spankowski & Waldinger will be a four-person law firm as of February 1st. Between the four attorneys at their firm they have years of municipal experience behind them. The good thing about that is when issues pop up there's a good chance that somebody in the office has already had to deal with it. She grew up on a farm in Sauk County. She still helps with the beef cattle. She's been in Portage for 10 years.

Hasler stated that he took a look at the minutes from the last two board meetings to get a feel for things that we're dealing with. He saw the kayak rental program at Friendship Lake beach, and he has some dealings with privet use of public property in the City of Wisconsin Dells. He feels he can help the Village out with NR- 117 and helping with nuisance properties.

Oberbeck stated that we are working on our ordinance packets, revising and trying to get rid of the redundance, and repetitiveness. The main goal is to update, revise, adopt, amend and then have them available for the general public for them to search out the information that they want.

Hasler stated that he just went through that with the Town of Delton. By having your ordinances online, and up to date it really takes pressure off the office staff. It really makes their job a lot easier because people don't have to pick up the phone and call to ask about what they can do on their property. It's a lot easier if they can look online.

Berry stated that one of our biggest challenges has been a few of the nuisance properties that we have been dealing with. And also, the Shoreline ordinance. The lake covers three different municipalities.

Sonnenberg asked in the letter that we received you noted that you would be charging for travel time, what will that be consisting of?

Waldinger stated that it is a 45-minute drive from Portage to Friendship, and from Reedsburg to Friendship. We would charge the hourly rate at \$200.00 for 45 minutes. The Board thanked Waldinger & Hasler for coming up and meeting with them.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING VILLAGE ATTORNEY SERVICES SELECTION

Berry stated that he really liked Miller, Spankowski & Waldinger. They seem to have a lot more knowledge and experience than the first one did.

Sonnenberg stated that he was impressed that Hasler looked up and reviewed some of the

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minutes from past meetings, and on our website. That goes a long way for him because that means even beforehand, he was putting effort into it. To find out who we are and what we're about.

Berry stated that reading over their letter compared to the other law firm it seems like what they do most is municipal law. And he feels that they are better suited for us. The first firm seemed like they were trying to get their feet in this area but haven't done a lot of municipal work. He feels like we would be better off with someone who has years of experience helping deal with some of the issues that we have right now.

Sindelar stated that they also represent a lot of the townships from the area. And moving forward they might represent more in the county.

Oberbeck stated aside from that if you look at both of these it's a no brainer in his mind. The contrast between both firms was vast in his opinion. He stated that he is right there with Berry. He feels that the second firm represented themselves clearly tonight.

MOTION by Berry, second by Sonnenberg to approve the hiring of Miller, Spankowski & Waldinger, motion carried.

THE VILLAGE BOARD MAY GO INTO CLOSED SESSION PURSUANT TO WIS. STAT. SECTION 19.85 (1)(c) CONSIDERING EMPLOYMENT, PROMOTION, COMPENSATION OR PERFORMANCE EVALUATION DATA OF ANY PUBLIC EMPLOYEE OVER WHICH THE GOVERNMENTAL BODY HAS JURISDICTION OR EXERCISES RESPONSIBILITY – VILLAGE CLERK/TREASURER POSITION REVIEW AND POSSIBLE TRAINING NEEDS

MOTION by Berry, Second by Klocko to go into closed session, roll call vote was passed at 5:39 P.M.

THE VILLAGE BOARD RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ENTER INTO OPEN SESSION AUTHORIZED BY WIS. STAT. SECTION 19.85(2) TO POSSIBLY TAKE ACTION FROM THE CLOSED SESSION AND CONTINUE WITH THE AGENDA

MOTION by Sonnenberg, second by Klicko to offer Lori a contract that would be in line for two months with the option of an additional month required for all additional training to be at the current Clerk/Treasurer rate, motion carried.

Being no further business to come before the board,

MOTION by Berry, second by Oberbeck to adjourn, motion carried. 5:48

Rebecca Reuter
Deputy Clerk