



MINUTES

STACY/ LENT INFORMATIONAL MEETING

July 25, 2022 7:00 PM

Location: Town Hall 33155 Hemingway Avenue, Stacy, MN 55079

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Pledge of Allegiance

R. Keller called the meeting to order at 7:10pm

Members present: Chairperson R. Keller, Vice Chair T. Nelson, Supervisor B. Seekon, Supervisor C. Cagle, Supervisor J. Eischens, Mayor M. Utecht, Councilmember T. Sawatzy

Others Present: Clerk K. Wood, Deputy Clerk T. Smolke, plus 122 members of the public signed in

R. Keller introduced P. Teide, the Township Attorney. He will explain where the township is at in the process of merging with the city of Stacy. The annexation conversation started in February and a letter was just recently sent to all residents. Lent township sent letters to the three surrounding cities requesting an updated non-annexation agreement, which was not signed. The agreement with the city of Stacy is set to expire next year but the others have expired. R. Keller said it makes sense to merge with Stacy as we do joint things with them, including Stacy Daze and SLFD. He wanted the whole township to go to Stacy but we will lose some to North Branch and Chisago. Chisago reached out and wants the southeast corner of Lent. Those residents have city sewer and water close to them. Minnesota State Statute 14.4 was quoted, specifically that townships are a holding ground for properties until cities want to take them over. Lent can negotiate with the city of Stacy because their way of life is similar. Taxes were discussed with an accompanying PowerPoint slide. It was said that Stacy is not in bad shape and Lent would not have to pay for the city's existing infrastructure. Freedoms and privileges associated with land use and living in Lent will remain. The city has no intention to extend sewer or water and is getting rid of their storm water charge of \$43 per year. If contiguous property owners would like to go to North Branch along 360th, they can petition to that city. The residents going to Chisago are all contiguous as well and there is sewer and water available on County Road 19. J. Pechman said it will cost around 1.2 million to upsize those for the future. P. Teide introduced himself. He is the attorney for Lent Township and has been reviewing this for quite a while. Lent has cities on all sides and there will eventually be some pressure. With the borders that Lent has, they will not be able to hold their own over time. If Lent wanted to incorporate itself, they could file a petition. Neighboring cities would have to agree that Lent should be their own city and would require services such as police. That would take 100K or so to plan. Lent could potentially spend a lot of money to try but it does not look like a viable option as they would like to keep continuity. The best option to preserve Lent is seeing this merger through. The documents are two thirds finished and if it was easily possible, Lent would have incorporated. R. Keller said that the township has negotiated a lot of things on their behalf such as land use and taxes. C. Cagle said she was excited to see the mayor here so he could explain. It is important to stay together as a community. She says it is in her and her family's best interest to merge with Stacy. J. Eischens let everyone know that questions are welcome at the end of the meeting and there is a sign-up sheet for them. She said they would really like to hear what the residents have to say. B. Seekon said that some were dead set against it but the more the merger was discussed, the more it made sense.

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His biggest concern was that taxes would go up. They probably will, but they always do. He believes this is a positive change besides the property owners that will go to the other cities. The remaining will stay together and have voting power. Mayor Utecht said if a development is close to sewer and water, the developer will pay for the majority of the task. For those that live far from current city and water, it will be a very long time until connecting is required. R. Keller said there was a community-lead group of sixteen people that shared their concerns. At the Annual Meeting, residents opposing the merger were encouraged to attend those merger meetings. Lent and Stacy have a lot of meetings and addresses will not change. J. Eischens requested that R. Keller explain the new city council to the crowd. R. Keller went on to say that once the judge signs, an election would take place within sixty days. The first cycle would be two from each area that would make up the new council, with a mayor at large. The next election would be entirely at large. J. Eischens explained that whoever gets the most votes will serve a four-year term and the others would serve two. R. Keller said he was hoping to answer most questions before they were asked. R. Davis stated for the record that she is okay with the merger as the city has a great history with Lent. She works in contracts for a living. Property taxes, improvements, and special assessments are some of the many things not in writing. Some items are stricken through which means there is no negotiation. She stated we need to be more concerned about these things. R. Keller said the anything stricken out is not included in the final contract. B. Seekon said some items, like taxes, are still in negotiations. M. Utecht says there is no money to extend sewer and water which is why that item has been stricken. R. Davis pointed out the stricken tax blurb and even if we hold for five years, at least we would have everything in the contract. J. Barrett said he agrees with R. Davis and wanted to know the next steps and when the vote will take place. R. Keller said the next step is to let the lawyers work everything out. M. Utecht said there is not going to be a vote because that took place at the annual meeting. C. Cagle said, to clarify, there was not a vote at the annual meeting. D. Denker asked if the contract can be viewed before it is a done deal. D. Chelberg said Chisago is going to take him and wanted to know if Lent is willing to fight for him as a resident of 48 years. R. Keller said with the existing infrastructure, a law judge would never approve it. D. Chelberg said there was a citizen group for the Stacy merger and asked why there was not one for Chisago. J. Eischens stated that Chisago is a hostile annexation so it is a financial issue. R. Keller said he would prefer not to lose anyone but he has no choice in the matter. R. Keller said this is a non-hostile annexation and he would rather see money spent on roads not lawyers. C. Cagle announced the letter inviting the residents to this informational meeting was sent because people commonly say they do not get information. Everything is posted online, on the public Facebook page, and notes from meetings are posted online after they are approved. Residents can also get notifications for special meetings by emailing the clerk. For those who do not use the internet, notices are posted in the paper and outside the town hall. B. Seekon said they should have sent a letter but did not in hopes to avoid a hostile annexation. This backfired as soon as Chisago figured it out anyway. He admitted he tried to keep it on the downlow but the intention was not to hide it from the citizens. S. Sinna said she hopes the Stacy Board will somehow recognize the Township of Lent. She said the sign for the Hall and the signs on the bike path could be changed to add the word historic. M. Utecht said they will and one example is keeping the name for the SLFD. P. Teide informed the audience that the first two contracts that will be signed are North Branch and Chisago. Stacy will be last. J. Eischens clarified that it was not their intention to have Chisago or North Branch annex anything. C. Vain asked if he would need to get sewer and water on Ivywood and J. Pechman said not as long as the system is functioning within guidelines. D. Milles said that at the annual meeting, a committee of citizens was formed and he volunteered to run the meetings. A lot of



residents showed up and there were a lot of discussions and subsequent meetings. Once the Township announced wanting to merge, Chisago sent a letter shortly after stating they want a part. R. Fry stated for the record, North Branch is not taking anything. Some residents that have a North Branch address and felt a better connection to the city. The council said they will take more if the citizens wanted to go to North Branch. R. Keller said he has been trying to make it clear that North Branch has been wonderful to work with. D. Denker asked who would come in case of a fire. R. Keller said we all work together. Just like the Carlos Avery fires, everyone shows up. Whoever gets there first is in charge. T. Nelson said that 911 does not change because of this merger or annexation. It is whoever 911 sends to resolve as boundaries are already in place. R. Keller said most of the current Lent residents will not see a difference except where to vote.

ADJOURN

R. Keller called the meeting at 8:34 pm.

Chair Signature

Clerk Signature

