

TOWN OF SYLVESTER

NEWSLETTER

May 2024 Edition

Reminders

- Meeting agendas are posted at Moe's Barbershop, Rufer & Son Excavating, the town hall, and the township website (<https://townofsylvesterwi.com/>).
- Monthly board meetings are generally held on the third Tuesday of each month at 6:30pm at the town hall. Special meetings and changed dates will be posted on our website and at the designated posting locations.
- To have notices of monthly agendas and/or minutes sent to your email address, you can go to "Subscribe Now for Updates" on our website (<https://townofsylvesterwi.com/subscribe-to-updates/>) or email our clerk/treasurer at sylvestertownship@gmail.com to request them.
- The newsletters will be available at <https://townofsylvesterwi.com/newsletter/>. If you do not want the newsletters mailed to you, please email or call our clerk/treasurer at sylvestertownship@gmail.com or 608-329-3662.
- All three board members welcome your emails and phone calls.

Chair Anna Anderson
608-325-7682
sylvesterchair@outlook.com

1st Supervisor Terry Reed
608-934-5646

2nd Supervisor Dale Howarth
608-325-8103
2ndsupervisor@townofsylvesterwi.gov

Town of Sylvester
PO Box 763
Monroe, WI 53566

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Change to Election Process

At the annual meeting of the electorate that was held on 04/16/24, a small group of town residents forced a vote on the Town of Sylvester's election process. The result of this is that the long-held procedure of selecting town board candidates by caucus was changed to nomination papers. While the organizers of this had time to have a representative from another municipality research this through the Wisconsin Towns Association and also had time to recruit people to attend the meeting to vote to make the change, they did not take the time to contact any of the town board members or the clerk/treasurer to have this topic placed on the meeting agenda. As a result, the majority of the town electorate was not aware that this vote would be taken and did not have an opportunity to have their voice heard on this issue.

When the current town board members took office, we promised town residents transparency. We have made a point of keeping the electorate well informed and provided opportunities for you to bring your comments and concerns to us. Having this vote forced without the majority of the electorate receiving proper notification, goes against the ethics of the current town board members. With all the concerns in our country about election integrity these days, the town board wants to ensure election integrity is maintained in the Town of Sylvester. Consequently, the topic of whether to use the caucus process or nomination papers procedure for town elections will be revisited and voted upon again at the annual budget meeting in the fall so that the entire town electorate has the opportunity to vote on this important issue. Please watch for the posting of the annual budget meeting agenda this fall so you can attend and make your voice heard on this issue.

Road Improvement Grant Awarded to Town of Sylvester

There has been a very significant increase in the amount of heavy farm/commercial traffic on Prien Road in recent years. There are times when manure tankers and/or grain trucks line the entire length of Prien Road from County SS to the curve. Other farmers use this road as well with their large and heavy equipment. As a result of this increased traffic count and the weight of the vehicles using it, Prien Road is deteriorating rapidly and has become a safety concern. It is in need of major road repairs. Consequently, Chair Anderson applied for a road improvement grant through the state to repair Prien Road. These are very competitive grants with 72 counties and 1,253 townships being eligible to apply. We were notified recently that we were one of 47 municipalities that has been awarded this grant, which is in the amount of \$162,022.00. It is a matching grant so the town board will be budgeting for this in the 2025 road budget.

Additional Road Grant Applications

The State of Wisconsin is offering a new type of road improvement grant this year that is specifically for town and county roads that impact agricultural producers. They are offering a 90/10 split. There are two application and award cycles for this grant, one in the spring and one in the fall of 2024. Again, these are very competitive grants with 72 counties and 1,253 townships being eligible to apply. Chair Anderson applied for this grant for Ladwig Road in the amount of \$359,157.00. If awarded, the township's portion should only be \$35,915.70. We have not been given a date for when the award notice will be made but is expected before the fall application cycle. Monroe Township approached Chair Anderson to request that the Town of Sylvester partner with them on a joint grant application for Monroe/Sylvester Road in the fall cycle.

Thank you!

The Town officials would like to thank everyone who volunteered to serve as poll workers/election inspectors for the Town of Sylvester's elections. We now have 16 approved pollworkers/election inspectors, five of whom trained up to become Chief Election Inspectors.

Roadside Brush & Ditch Clean-up Day

We had a great response to our roadside clean-up day in 2023. Twenty-three people volunteered their time and 15 people donated their trucks, trailers, dump truck, bobcats and skid loaders, chain saws, small tractor, log chains, snacks, lunch, and beverages. The Town board would like to thank everyone who participated in any way. We took approximately 50 dump truck loads and large trailer loads of wood and debris to 2nd Supervisor Howarth’s and Ron Albright’s burn pits, just that day. Plus, there were many loads of good fire wood that were taken to private properties. In addition, a number of people worked evenings to clean up even more of our roadsides.

Roadside clean-up will look a little different this year. Instead of designating a day, we will pick up wood and debris over the course of a week. We are asking town residents to stack the debris and wood from their ditches in one spot near the roadside prior to May 11th. No yard waste/debris should be stacked with this. We are only cleaning up the ditches. Once you have stacked the wood and debris from your ditches, please contact Clerk/Treasurer Catrina Bennett (608-329-3662) to request that we pick up your stack(s) during the week of May 12 - 18.

Road Repair, Maintenance, and Replacement

In 2023, the Town Board upgraded 18 town roads. By addressing road concerns from the standpoints of longevity and fiscal responsibility, 12 more roads were upgraded than were previously designated for upgrades by the previous board.

On 03/14/24, Chair Anderson and 2nd Supervisor Reed attended the annual Government Day meeting during which there was a presentation on the Principles of Road Maintenance. There are basically two schools of thought on road maintenance – no maintenance until major maintenance is required or early intervention maintenance. The current town board subscribes to the early intervention approach. The presentation reinforced this as the most cost effective way of maintaining our roads. Early intervention maintenance extends the life expectancy of a road from 30 years to 52 years.

All three town board members and a representative from the County Highway Department toured the town roads on 03/26/24 and developed a plan for 2024 road maintenance. The following road improvements and expenditures will be happening in 2024. Additional projects may be selected later in the year, depending upon the budget.

Road	What to be done	Bid Amount
Rechsteiner	Sealcoat	\$29,210
Speich	Paver Patch and Sealcoat	\$9,218
Greenbush - W Town Line to Balls Mill	Paver Patch, Dura Patch weak areas, & Sealcoat	\$119,378
Woodridge/Stauffacher Subdivision	Dura Patch weak areas and Sealcoat	\$14,728
Balls Mill – Hwy 59 to Cty FF	Paver Patch, Dura Patch weak areas, & Sealcoat	\$43,588
Balls Mill – Greenbush to Hwy 11	Dura Patch weak areas	\$25,316
High School Road	Paver Patch, Dura Patch weak areas, & Sealcoat	\$38,291
Hartwig Road	Paver Patch and Seal Coat	\$8,156
Total		\$287,885

Did you know...

The referendum to designate town roads for ATV/UTV use passed overwhelmingly. As a result, the Sylvester Town Board adopted an ATV/UTV Ordinance designating all town roads for ATV/UTV use, unless otherwise marked. The ordinance is in compliance with the County’s ordinance and can be found on the town website at: <https://townofsylvesterwi.com/ordinances-resolutions/>.



The caretaker for Dutch Hollow cemetery requested that the rules of the cemetery, as outlined in the 03-17-10 Town ordinance, be posted. You will now see this sign posted at the Dutch Hollow Cemetery.

Fiscal Responsibility

The Town Board and Clerk/Treasurer have the responsibility of managing and investing town funds. With the significant increase in interest rates in 2023, the Town Board and Clerk/Treasurer Bennett made the decision to transfer \$100,000 from the equipment fund to a CD that is earning 5.6% interest. The equipment fund is used to purchase and/or refurbish fire trucks for the fire departments that service our township.

For many years, upon the recommendation of former Clerk/Treasurer Alice Ladwig, \$25,000 was put into the equipment fund annually in preparation for the purchase or refurbishing of fire trucks so the tax levy would not have to be raised and/or a loan taken out when a new truck was needed. Some former town officials discontinued this practice when they were in office. Their philosophy was that they would borrow the money and raise the tax levy to cover it when a new fire truck was needed. The current Town Board, realizing that it is fiscally responsible to save for future purchases rather than to raise the tax levy and/or take out a loan, reinstated this practice of putting \$25,000 annually into the equipment fund beginning with the 2024 budget.

Public Safety

The Juda & Community Fire District provides fire protection and first response service to multiple townships, including a significant portion of the Town of Sylvester. The partner townships purchase and pay for the refurbishing of the fire trucks, when needed, with each township contributing the percentage that corresponds to their percentage of the fire district. For example, Sylvester Township comprises 42.5% of the district’s territory. Consequently, when fire trucks are purchased or refurbished, the Town of Sylvester is responsible for 42.5% of the cost.

The next fire truck/main engine purchase or refurbish for the Juda & Community Fire District is scheduled for 2025. After careful consideration of the options, it was determined that the purchase of a main engine, which is needed by the Juda & Community Fire District, is too costly for the partner townships. Consequently, the fire truck that was to be replaced will instead be refurbished. The estimate for refurbishing this truck is \$230,000 to \$260,000, which is a huge cost savings compared to the estimated purchase price of approximately \$1 million. For Sylvester Township, this means an outlay of \$97,750-\$110,500 instead of \$425,000. With the \$100,000 CD and the remainder of the equipment fund, Sylvester Township has the funds needed to cover the cost of refurbishing the main engine without taking out a loan or raising the tax levy.

Class B Ordinance & Signage

You might have noticed that there is new signage on our town roads designating all Town of Sylvester roads as Class B roads. With the limited funding for road repairs and maintenance in our township, it is imperative that we protect our roads from damage whenever possible. The Town Board received a number of complaints from residents that semi trucks were damaging town roads and using town roads that were not designated for truck traffic. The Sheriff’s Department said without a Class B Roads Ordinance in the Township, they could not enforce state statutes regarding overweight vehicles because the Class B Roads Ordinance is what establishes the weight limits for each road based upon the state code.

Consequently, the Town Board passed a Class B Roads Ordinance that designates all town roads as Class B roads. The ordinance can be found on the Town’s website at <https://townofsylvesterwi.com/ordinances-resolutions/>. Basically, what this ordinance accomplishes is enforcement preventing overweight vehicles from using town roads as cut throughs or shortcuts when County and State highways are available. **It does not prevent farmers or delivery companies from using the town roads to access a specific property but that property must be located on the road that is being used.**

Clerk’s Corner...Due to the amount of time Clerk/Treasurer Bennett was spending honoring open records requests, it was decided that we will charge a minimum of \$8.25 for all open records requests. The billing per hour after that will be \$16.50. This will be billed and paid for in advance of the records being released.

On 06/20/23, the Town Board, at the request of Clerk/Treasurer Bennett, adopted the “Ordinance to Adopt the Wisconsin Municipal Records Schedule” which provides guidelines for maintaining town documents. (<https://townofsylvesterwi.com/ordinances-resolutions/>)

It is a legal mandate that any township, with a combined position of clerk/treasurer, have an annual audit by an accountant. This was not done for three years so the board hired an accountant to do forensic audits for those years to bring the town back into compliance. Clerk/Treasurer Bennett is currently gathering the needed documentation.