

# TOWN OF DRAPER NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2023

Greetings! Here is an update on what's going on in the Town, from A to Z!

**BROADBAND:** Our \$4.5M PSC Broadband Grant Project is breaking ground October 9! Look for GigFire (formerly LTD) in the Frontage Rd. right of way for the next few weeks as they install the fiber trunk that will carry state of the art fiber high speed internet to customers throughout Loretta, Draper and Oxbo. You will be receiving an advertising flier in the mail soon- the speeds are great, the price is great, and there is a low-income option to help pay for those who qualify. The system will go live in summer of 2024.

**CAMPGROUND:** Draper Campground improvements continued in 2023. We have received lots of favorable feedback from campers. Look for our new ad in the forthcoming Winter Area Chamber Guide. The reservation program has been a success, with many happy campers and returning guests who can relax knowing they have a spot reserved after a long drive. In addition, we now offer a weekly and seasonal rate to long-term guests.

**CEMETERY:** Legion Post #394 has placed a beautiful engraved bench honoring local veterans in their Veterans' Memorial area by the flag pole. The board would like to thank Dave Zett for organizing this tribute to our service members. Christmas wreaths may be placed in the cemetery- please remove by April 15th. For questions about the cemetery consult the [2021 Cemetery Bylaws April 20, 2021](#) or request a printed copy from the clerk.

**DUMP:** After several months of tracking weekly use, the garbage drop off site hours have been reduced to Saturday 9-12, saving \$4,000.00 per year in wages. Bags may be purchased for \$1.50 and \$2.50 at the drop off site. The site will be closed on major holidays and when the temperature is below -20° F. Please make sure you are recycling the proper items by checking the fliers we have been handing out or the website links provided on the town website. The town provides a cabin cleanout dumpster in July where you can drop off larger items such as furniture and appliances for a fee.

**ELECTIONS:** The town board will appoint election inspectors in December 2023 for the next two year term. Works are paid hourly and election days are split into two shifts. If you are interested in serving as a poll worker in town elections, please contact the clerk.

**FIRE DEPARTMENT:** The town board registered the Draper Fire Department with DSPS in June, bringing operations and finances under the oversight of the municipal government. There are currently seven members. Two new members completed Driver/Operator certification and are awaiting Entry Level training. Two members are currently enrolled in Fire Officer training. The building has been repaired and renovated and equipment is being updated for maximum efficiency and effectiveness. A Fire Prevention Open House brat fry was held on Saturday, October 28<sup>th</sup> paid for with the state 2% fire dues money. Smoke detectors and chimney fire extinguisher sticks were handed out to over 30 town residents. The department is always looking for new volunteers- stop by if you see the flag out!

**HELIPAD:** The Dave Heath Memorial Helipad is nearly finished after years of planning and fundraising. A big thank you to Chris Klein for designing, coordinating contractors and volunteering over 200 hours to see the project through. The town board would also like to thank Sawyer County for subsidizing \$40,000.00 of the project with ARPA funds, Brenda Adler and the Draper Community Club for fundraising \$7,500.00 and every citizen and club who donated to the project for a total of over \$14,000.00 in individual contributions. It is our hope that this landing zone will save lives, as Dave believed it would do. The project will be complete by early November.

**HYDRANTS:** Another thank you to Chris Klein for his volunteer work designing and installing a hydrant at the Lake Loretta dam and rebuilding the one on Blaisdell Lake road during the drawdown of Lake Loretta. Thank you to all who pitched in to help as well. These hydrants are in deeper water and are designed to work in the winter. Let's hope they do, because that will be a big advantage over drafting through lake ice!

**LAKE LORETTA:** The \$1M dam project is complete and residents were able to enjoy the summer with water instead of mud flats. We wish to thank the Sawyer County Zoning and Conservation officials who worked with us to save our dam, and also the county board members who voted in favor of increasing the funding to get it done. We were very close to losing the lake!

We recently learned that DNR has decided it is not necessary to restock the lake this fall because their sampling showed an adequate amount of juvenile fish already in the lake. Many are understandably disappointed in the decision, but the dam had to be repaired or removed and that is a separate issue from the fishery. The town has no influence over the DNR, but it is our hope that their assessment is correct and the lake fish are rebounding nicely on their own.

The town added new gravel to both public boat launches on the lake this summer.

**PLAN COMMISSION:** The town has a five-member plan commission who evaluates zoning changes, land use, housing, signs and monuments, and commercial and economic development for the town based on the town's Comprehensive Plan. They are appointed by the town board for a three-year term and receive a \$25.00 per diem four times a year, sometimes more if there is an in-depth issue to resolve. Occasionally a position opens upon this board- if you are interested in a seat you can fill out the application found on the town website and you will be considered if there is a vacancy!

**PROPERTY ASSESSMENT:** Property values continue to rise and Department of Revenue requires town assessments to stay within equalized value compliance. The 2024 tax year will be a maintenance year for assessments but the town is due for revaluation in 2025.

**PROPERTY TAXES:** The annual budget hearing and levy meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 15 at 6:00 p.m. at the town hall. Property tax bills go out in early December. You can now update your own address on the county website, and you may examine your tax bill and property records online when they become available at [Land Record Portal | Sawyer County, WI \(sawyercountygov.org\)](https://www.sawyercounty.gov/land-record-portal)

Tax payments (checks or money-orders) must be mailed to Town of Draper Treasurer, PO Box 73, Winter WI 54896. *(If you are splitting your payment, remember that the July payment goes to the Sawyer County Treasurer, not Draper.)*

2024 dog licenses will also be available with a current rabies certificate. For questions about your tax bill or to arrange purchase of a dog license, please call Treasurer Dee Dobilas at (715) 266-2524.

**PUBLISHING:** Some residents have asked about publishing the agendas and minutes in the newspaper. The town is not required to publish those items in a printed newspaper, rather Wis. stat 985.02(a) states that we may publish most meeting notices, agendas, resolutions and ordinances on our website and post in one public place OR post in three public places likely to receive notice. We publish on our website, post on two town hall bulletin boards, and usually add the park and dump bulletin boards also. This issue has been brought before each town board since 2018 and they have all chosen to save the money and only publish required notices in the paper. It adds up to several thousand dollars of savings per year.

**ROAD EQUIPMENT:** The town purchased a new Chevy 5500 truck this year to replace the 2013 pickup truck. The need to replace this truck was identified by the past two town boards. The final cost of this truck is about \$110,000.00 and will be spread out on the tax levy over the next 3 years. The Ford pickup is currently for sale.

The new Western Star Dump Truck ordered by the previous board in 2021 (delayed due to supply chain issues) has arrived at the dealer and is at Monroe for final outfitting! The town is expecting to receive delivery in December. At the time of this writing, the total cost of the truck is closer to \$400,00.00 and any loan surplus will be paid back immediately, with the balance to be spread out over five years on the tax levy starting next year. The orange International truck will be sold.

The grader and front-end loader are holding up with occasional repairs. The RSM (roadside mower) tractor needs to be replaced soon. Two previous boards have identified the need for a skid steer and the board is looking for a used one to purchase.

**ROAD ISSUES:** We had a difficult winter last year, with a county-declared ice disaster emergency in December- most of the town roads were impassable and power was out for up to five days around town. We recovered over \$7,300.00 from FEMA for clean up expenses. In the spring we had a flood disaster emergency: several gravel roads were washed out requiring us to use up most of our remaining gravel.

**ROAD GRAVEL:** Over half the town's 81 miles of roads are gravel. The \$81,000.00 gravel pile purchased in 2018 is depleted and there is no gravel left in town-owned pits. The pit on County M has been reclaimed. The board has been working to source gravel for the town roads. People have inquired about the Bear Lake and Hanson Lake Pits- the gravel in those pits may only be used within the federal and state forest lands. The town will have to purchase trucked in gravel at a high cost, or find land with gravel within the town in 2024. This is a priority. The unallocated \$16,458.00 of ARPA funds the town has set aside will be allocated by resolution for the purchase of gravel and/or gravel crushing in 2024.

**ROAD PAVEMENT:** Many of the town's paved roads were put in over swamp with no proper road base. Over the years of freezing, thawing, beaver dams, and logging wear and tear, our paved road surfaces have severely deteriorated. The cost of replacing pavement is hundreds of thousands per mile now, and the current opinion of experts who do town road training seminars is to move away from paved roads and go back to gravel "up north," especially where there is logging.

As a result, a project to replace a portion of N. Clover Road up near the top end was abandoned after spending \$21,000.00 in engineering to find out that the projected cost was \$548,000.00 for a 1.6 mile segment, putting the cost-per-mile at \$342,500.00 for a typical section of a Draper paved road through swamp. This expense is not sustainable. A long term plan must be made for how to handle the town's paved roads. In the meantime, paved roads will be cold patched and repaired as needed. Those that deteriorate beyond repair will be reverted to gravel like Uncle Tom's Road, when gravel becomes available.

**ROAD WORK:** You may have noticed some rough gravel roads over the summer: the town purchased a ditch reclaimer disc and Pat, an experienced former county highway employee, spent the summer intensively grading, widening, ditching and crowning all of our forest roads and most of our town gravel roads. There is a lot of usable road gravel accumulated in the ditches over the years and this was reclaimed back up onto the roadway. This process results in some roads being rough at times with rocks and sod pulled up- it takes several passes with the grader and some rain and drying time for this to settle back down. We appreciate your caution and patience while this is in progress. In addition, Ken hauled hundreds of yards of gravel from the Bear Lake Pit and the Hanson Lake Pit for the federal and state roads this summer. The new FT employee Jake is currently being trained as a grader operator and that is going very well. Mike is a new resident who has been a valuable addition to the crew with his mechanical skills and good ideas. The crew has been very productive and lots of projects are being finished.

**SNOW:** It's time to think about snow- a list of plowing contractors can be found on the town website. Please remember: it is against state law to plow your snow across a town road! The town plows cannot handle the mountains of excess snow piled up across from driveways- by the end of winter there is nowhere for it to go. Help us keep the roads wide and the banks pushed back this year by not placing your driveway snow out into the right of way.

**TOWN HALL:** Overdue maintenance and improvement projects include painting the walls, sprucing up the floor, and making one or both bathrooms ADA compliant. The exterior will need extensive work and fundraising. The board is looking into how to best use the town hall as an emergency shelter and warming center after recognizing the need for such a purpose during the 2022 Ice Emergency. The clerk is attending a 2-day disaster recovery class in November to learn more about how to best serve the citizens using available local, county, state and federal resources.

*Have you checked out our website? [www.townofdraperwi.gov](http://www.townofdraperwi.gov) is the place to go for news & notices, meeting agendas and minutes, board contact information, and other town information. We are also on Facebook at Town of Draper Wisconsin.*