

**PERCH LAKE TOWNSHIP
ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES
March 12, 2024, 7:00 p.m.
Perch Lake Town Hall**

1. **CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE**

Clerk Lora Eames called the Annual Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., on March 12, 2024, and led with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Perch Lake Electors: (Township Residents Eligible to Vote in Township Elections):

In-Person: 12

Kurt Besser	Keith Depre	Gary Harms	Steve Olson
Tom DeLovely	Lora Eames	Mae Nelson	Mark Wisneski
Cheri DeMenge	Tim Hafvenstein	Jeanette Olson	Nancy Wisneski

Guest:

Chief Jesse Buhs, Cloquet Area Fire District (CAFD)

2. **SELECTION OF MEETING MODERATOR**

Clerk Eames requested nominations for a meeting moderator, and residents nominated Kurt Besser. Besser agreed to be the meeting moderator, but asked if he could still speak on specific issues. Eames responded that the meeting moderator always has the right to speak as a resident.

MOTION (Depre/Wisneski & S Olson): To approve the nomination of Kurt Besser as the meeting moderator. Motion carried.

3. **APPROVAL OF 2024 ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA**

Kurt Besser, as meeting moderator, requested approval of the agenda.

MOTION (Wisneski/Nelson): To approve the March 12, 2024, Annual Meeting agenda as presented. Motion carried.

4. **STATEMENT OF YEAR-END BALANCES FROM BOARD OF AUDIT MEETING**

Clerk Lora Eames - Exhibit A

As required by Minn. Stat. 366.22, Eames read aloud the minutes and financial report from the February 12, 2024, Board of Audit meeting:

“Board members reviewed and compared the Clerk's and Treasurer's records and they found everything in order as presented.

Motion (Depre/Olson): To approve the 2023 records from the Clerk and Treasurer based on the Town Board's determination that:

- The Clerk's and Treasurer's records were in agreement; and
- Both sets of records can be reconciled with the standard Schedule 1: Statement of Receipts, Disbursements and Balances and monthly bank statements.

Motion carried.”

Financial Report (Schedule 1):

Beginning balance, January 1, 2023	\$389,288.93
Receipts	205,931.26
Sale of Investments	0.00
Transfers In	65,000.00
Disbursements	-311,794.76
Purchase of Investments	0.00
Transfers Out	-65,000.00
Ending balance, December 31, 2023	<u>\$283,425.43</u>

No further action was needed with the reading of this report.

5. **PRESENTATION OF REPORTS**

Besser turned this section over to individuals with reports.

a. **Cloquet Area Fire District (CAFD)**
CAFD Fire Chief Jesse Buhs- Exhibit B

(1) Overall Report

Buhs introduced himself and distributed a report.

Property tax levies were increased for 2024.

- Fire 2.99%
- Ambulance 2.83%.

(2) Year 2023

Buhs discussed the district's challenges in 2023:

- Closing Station 3 (Scanlon) for greater efficiency.
- Filling two firefighter positions.

(3) Year 2024 and Upcoming Challenge

Buhs noted that the district's biggest challenge is continuing to absorb increased costs of everything due to inflation – vehicles, ambulances, fire trucks, oxygen, specialized medication, supplies. He discussed challenges in (i) recruiting and retaining firefighters and paramedics; (ii) replacing ambulances more often at a higher cost; and (iii) having to build a new station or make significant investments in the current building.

At some point, the district may have to consider a bigger levy increase due to the lack of alternative funding sources. The district must also build a reserve.

(4) Overall Discussion

Buhs reported that he has engaged in political work – meeting with legislators and pursuing opportunities for bonding and grants. He discussed a variety of issues with residents and invited their feedback.

b. Big Lake Area Sanitary District (BLASD)

Supervisor Keith Depre

Depre reported that the BLASD remains intact but dormant. The BLAD Board is no longer making decisions. As a result, the County will enforce compliance – landowners with failing systems on Big Lake will have to replace them within the next two years.

c. Road and Bridge

Road Supervisor Steve Olson – Exhibit C

(1) Overall Report

Olson reported that the Township spent most of 2023 dealing with fallout from the storm of December 13-16, 2022:

- Tom DeLovely in brushing and mulching.
- Omar's Sand & Gravel in removing large trees.

Recovery work was done by the end of November 2023.

The Town Board had crackpatching done in 2023 - Bayview Drive, Bob's Drive, Brower Drive, Hardwood Lake Road, Homestead Road, Lake Drive, Lakeview Drive, Lyndhurst Bay Drive, Magney Drive, Maple Drive, Pine Grove Drive, Salmi Road. The Board will have other paved roads done in 2024.

Lakeview has had a slumping issue for years. So, the Township requested quotes; then, contracted with Omar's Sand & Gravel to do the work in 2024.

The financial report shows substantial savings in salt and snowplowing.

(2) Comments on Road & Bridge:

Besser spoke as a resident against the lack of funding and a long-term plan for roads. He recalled how the Township went for ten years without raising the levy. He concluded that If the Township had increased the levy each year, the Town Board would have more for roads now.

d. Recycling

Supervisor Gary Harms

Harms reported that the Recycling Shed is running "business as usual." He has seen no changes and activity over the years has been constant.

Recycling Center hours of operation:

Wednesday-Friday: 2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Saturday: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

6. DISCUSSION/VOTE ON PROPOSED LEVY FOR 2025

a. Discussion on Levy

Residents discussed two options before making a final motion:

- A recommendation of 5% from the Town Board.
- A recommendation of 10% from Kurt Besser.

Residents held a lively discussion. Besser continued to defend the need to raise the levy to fund the roads. Other residents, including Hafvenstein and Harms, countered that the township must consider the tax burden on residents.

Depre offered three comments:

- Paved roads can be as cost-effective as gravel roads (if not more so) in the long run.
- The Township can turn to assessments to finance road repairs.
- The Township has most of its funds earmarked for roads.

b. Motion.

After some discussion, Clerk Eames called for a formal motion.

Besser offered a formal motion for consideration - to increase the levy by 10%.

MOTION (Besser/S Olson): To approve a 10% increase (\$17,712) in the 2025 Perch Lake Township Levy, for a total levy amount of \$194,827. Hand count. Those in favor -7. Those opposed-4. Abstained-1. Motion carried.

Calculation			
	<u>2024 Levy</u>	<u>10% increase</u>	<u>2025 Levy</u>
General	\$76,776	\$7,678	\$84,454
Road and Bridge	100,339	10,034	110,373
Total	\$177,115	\$17,712	\$194,827

7. FARMERS MARKET/CRAFT FAIR

Treasurer Cheri DeMenge, Deputy Treasurer/Rental Manager Jeanette Olson

a. Discussion

DeMenge and Olson discussed the pros and cons of the farmers market/craft fair held in 2023 and the possibility of holding one in 2024. They reported that funds to pay for the event (up to \$1,000) would mostly come from the General Fund since only a small balance exists in the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Fund.

Residents asked questions. Mark Wisneski asked if the Township would bear the cost of advertising; and if so, would the Township receive income from this event? DeMenge responded that the Township would pay for advertising and that last year's event did not generate income since the Township did not charge vendors for tables. However, she and Olson could explore this option.

b. Resolution

At this point, Depre emphasized that the Town Board can hold the event only if residents approve Resolution 2024-001. If approved, the board may or may not hold the event. However, without approval, the board cannot hold the event.

Eames asked residents to consider Elector Resolution No. 2024-001, "Authorizing the Perch Lake Town Board to Conduct or Host Farmers Markets and Craft Fairs within the Township." (The maximum authorized was \$1,000.)

No one offered a motion. Besser declared the agenda item dead.

8. **SET TIME FOR MARCH 12, 2025, ANNUAL MEETING.**

Besser asked for a motion to set the time for the 2025 Annual Meeting. He did not ask residents to set the date or location since state law sets the date as the second Tuesday of each March, and the Town Board uses Perch Lake Town Hall for all public meetings.

MOTION: Residents offered/ seconded a motion to set the time for 2025 Annual Meeting at 7:00 p.m. Motion carried.

Arrangements for 2025 Annual Meeting:
Tuesday, March 11, 2025, 7:00 p.m.
Perch Lake Town Hall

9. **VOTER RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS**

None.

10. **ADJOURN 2024 ANNUAL MEETING.**

Besser called for a motion to adjourn. Residents passed a motion to adjourn the 2024 Annual Meeting at approximately 8:10. Motion carried.

SIGNATURES

Respectfully submitted,

Lora Eames, Clerk

Kurt Besser, Meeting Moderator

EXHIBITS

(Copies are available upon request.)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| ▪ Board of Audit Minutes | Exhibit A |
| ▪ CAFD Report | Exhibit B |
| ▪ 2023 Annual Road and Bridge Report | Exhibit C |

February 12, 2024

**PERCH LAKE TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF AUDIT MINUTES**

1. **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL.**

Chair Gary Harms called the Board of Audit meeting to order at approximately 7:45 p.m.

Members present: Chair Gary Harms, Supervisor Steve Olson, Supervisor Keith Depre, Treasurer Cheri DeMenge, and Clerk Lora Eames

2. **AGENDA**

MOTION (Depre/Olson): To approve the 2024 Board of Audit agenda as presented.
Motion carried.

3. **AUDIT**

Both the Clerk and the Treasurer use the Minnesota State Auditor's computerized town accounting system (CTAS); each officer keeps a separate set of records.

Board members reviewed and compared the Clerk's and Treasurer's records and found everything in order as presented.

MOTION (Depre/Olson): To approve the 2023 records from the Clerk and Treasurer based on the Town Board's determination that:

- The Clerk's and Treasurer's records are in agreement; and
- Both sets of records have been reconciled with the standard Schedule 1, "Statement of Receipts, Disbursements, and Balances," and monthly bank statements.

Motion carried.

December 31, 2023, Ending Balance \$283,425.43

4. **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Harms adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by Town Board

Lora Eames, Clerk

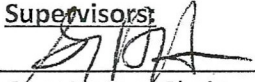
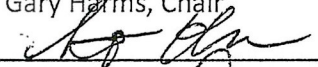
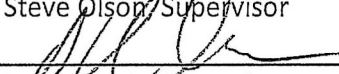
Gary Harms, Chair

As on 12/31/2023


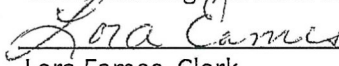
Fund	Beginning Balance	Receipts	Sale of Investments	Transfers In	Disbursements	Purchase of Investments	Transfers Out	Ending Balance	Investment Balance	Total Balance
General Fund	35,658.54	75,146.15	0.00	0.00	76,416.45	0.00	0.00	34,388.24	0.00	34,388.24
Road and Bridge	198,601.40	112,136.34	0.00	0.00	174,860.57	0.00	65,000.00	70,877.17	0.00	70,877.17
CARES/ARP Fund	34,066.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	32,623.32	0.00	0.00	1,443.35	0.00	1,443.35
Town Hall Fund	15,492.25	13,648.77	0.00	0.00	17,221.70	0.00	0.00	11,919.32	0.00	11,919.32
Recycling Shed Fund	6,393.89	5,000.00	0.00	0.00	10,672.72	0.00	0.00	721.17	0.00	721.17
Road and Bridge Capital Improvements (CI)	99,076.18	0.00	0.00	65,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	164,076.18	0.00	164,076.18
Total :	389,288.93	205,931.26	0.00	65,000.00	311,794.76	0.00	65,000.00	283,425.43	0.00	283,425.43

Signatures for Board of Audit

Supervisors:

 2/12/24
 Gary Harms, Chair Date
 2-12-24
 Steve Olson, Supervisor Date
 2-12-24
 Keith Depre, Supervisor Date

Preparers

 2-12-24
 Cheri DeMenge, Treasurer Date
 2-12-24
 Lora Eames, Clerk Date

Reconciliation as of 12/31/2023	
<u>Bank and Credit Union</u>	
Frandsen Bank & Trust:	
Balance	\$254,381.70
Minus Outstanding Checks	-\$60,002.00
	\$194,379.70
Members Cooperative Credit Union	
Share Savings	\$6.22
Business Money Market	\$2,504.97
Certificate of Deposit	\$86,534.54
	\$89,045.73
	<u>\$283,425.43</u>
<u>Township Records</u>	
Balance	\$283,425.43
	\$283,425.43
Town Total	<u>\$283,425.43</u>



Cloquet Area Fire District

508 Cloquet Avenue • Cloquet, MN 55720
Phone: (218) 499-4258 • Fax: (218) 499-4289

March 12th 2024

Perch Lake Township Residents,

2023 was a year in which the Cloquet Area Fire District enacted change focused on the district's long-term solvency. Closing the fire station in Scanlon, consolidating and selling some of our large apparatus, settling at appropriate staffing levels, and other, smaller changes have allowed the CAFD to stave off larger levy increases in 2024. Challenges we now face are the impacts of workforce concerns, inflationary influences on equipment, vehicles, and supplies, and the increased costs of items like utilities, insurance, and software programs necessary for our service. Looking forward, the greatest challenges our district faces are the need for new facilities/facilities improvements, increased wages to remain competitive in our region and state, and funding for capital expenditures like ambulance and fire apparatus. We also must ensure we have emergency reserve funds to remain functional in the event of a large-scale emergency or the failure of an expensive piece of equipment.

The only options we have to eliminate this increased cost being born by our taxpayers is to reduce the level of service and capability of the district or to obtain state public safety aid. I jumped into the political world with both feet in the past year or so. I have met with all local legislators both in my office and in St. Paul, as well as some who don't represent our area but can help further our legislative priorities. I am pushing for state bonding funds and annual public safety aid that is disseminated directly to our district. I sit on a statewide task force that is working to infuse money from the state into our struggling ambulance and EMS services, and we have supported a \$120M emergency funding bill that is currently being considered by the legislature. If passed, the CAFD should see a large amount of funds infused into our ambulance district to help offset workforce and capital costs. I am also in communication with our federal legislators working to increase ambulance transport reimbursements from Medicaid and Medicare, as well as requesting congressionally directed spending (earmarks) funds for our facility projects. CAFD's administrative staff continually applies for local, state, and federal grants, the latest being for our vehicle exhaust system, and a new ambulance through the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant. We will continue to seek opportunities to offset our costs to operate, effectively lowering the tax impact to the property owners in our district. Our board of directors has been steadfast in their support for our highly capable, quick, and effective emergency response capabilities. The Cloquet Area Fire District's residents and visitors truly have the best that can be offered in terms of advanced life support ambulance service and expert firefighting and rescue capabilities.

We have recently discovered that our career firefighter paramedics & EMTs are the lowest-paid in the state. We must adjust wages to remain competitive in the workforce and to recruit excellent candidates to fill vacancies. We have communicated for many years that it is difficult to find new paid-on-call firefighters, we are now seeing an alarming decrease in paramedic candidates, and firefighter/EMT candidates in general, and competitive wages will be a main component in attracting and retaining fire and EMS staff. Our need to more frequently replace aging and worn ambulances has become apparent when assessing the cost to repair, and out-of-service times of our fleet. We must speed up the replacement timeline to ensure a reliable, capable ambulance response. This change in service timelines for ambulances is driven by the ever-increasing ambulance response incident volume (frequency of use), coupled with a change in hospitals' capabilities that cause us to transport patients further away than our local option. Aging community members and many other factors along with the increased tendency to call 911 have caused a 30% increase in emergency ambulance responses for the district in the last 10 years. The total emergency responses the CAFD was called to in 2023 was over 3,400.

The primary response of staff and equipment to nearly all incidents in the district originates from a relatively centralized Station 1 in Cloquet. Multiple studies have been completed by the district, the City of Cloquet, and others that have recommended a new station 1 and administration building in a new location. We have delayed action on that recommendation for multiple reasons, but with many negative consequences. Inflation and construction costs continue to increase, meaning higher construction costs. We have added staff and service areas since the studies, increasing our space needs, and our building and grounds have only aged and deteriorated. We delayed improvements, modernization, and repairs (if not immediately necessary) with the intent of building a new facility. The district has reached a decision point in determining our future. We must invest in a new facility to ensure capable and effective delivery of service and to allow us to show an investment in this critical public safety service for our region that will allow us to remain viable for decades beyond today. I will continue to look for outside funding sources and will continue to work with your board representatives to find the best solution to maintaining our critical emergency response service to our communities!

I welcome feedback, it is helpful to know if the Cloquet Area Fire District is meeting your needs and expectations, and if you have any suggestions or questions, please reach out at your convenience.

Sincerely,

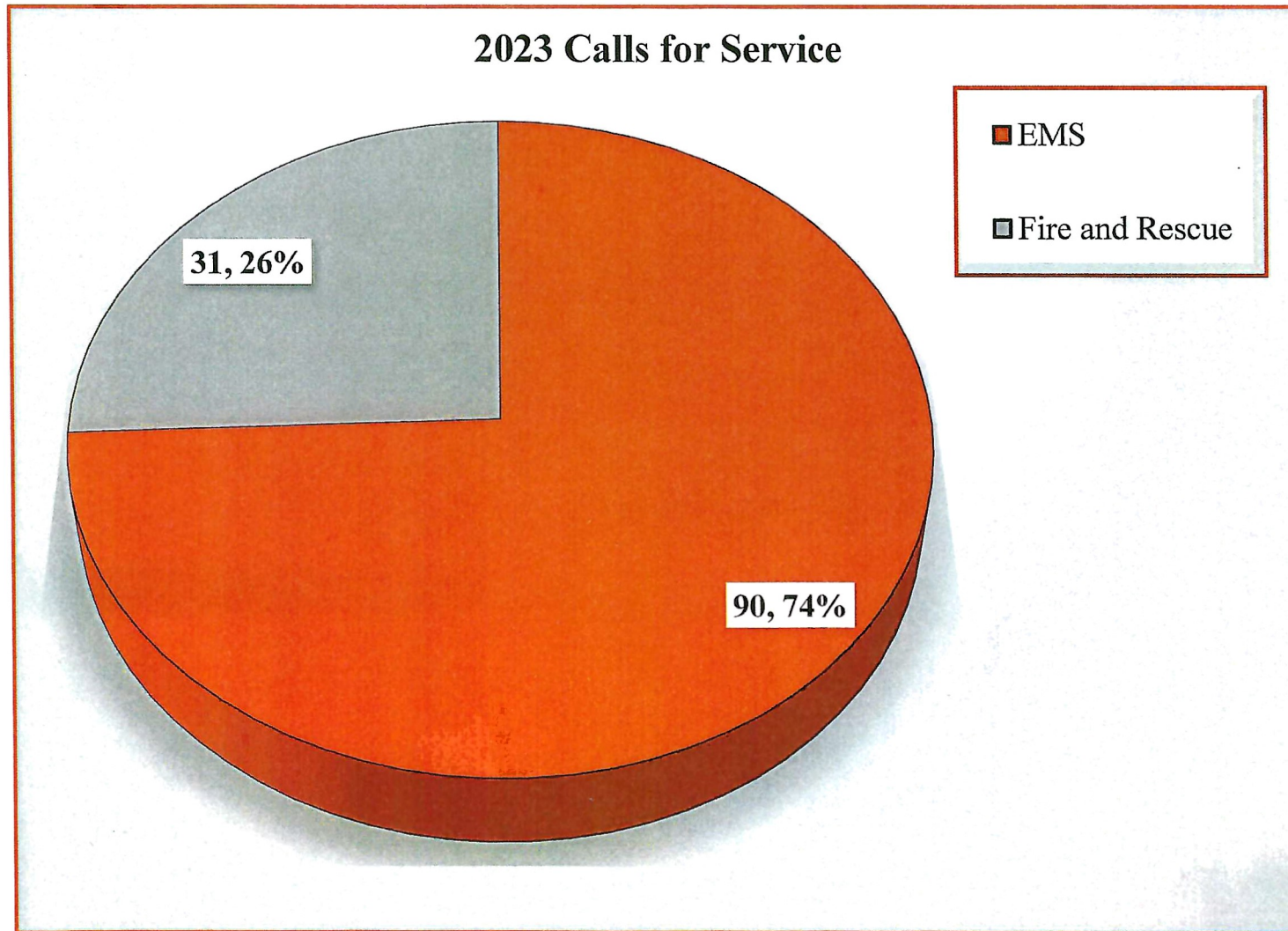
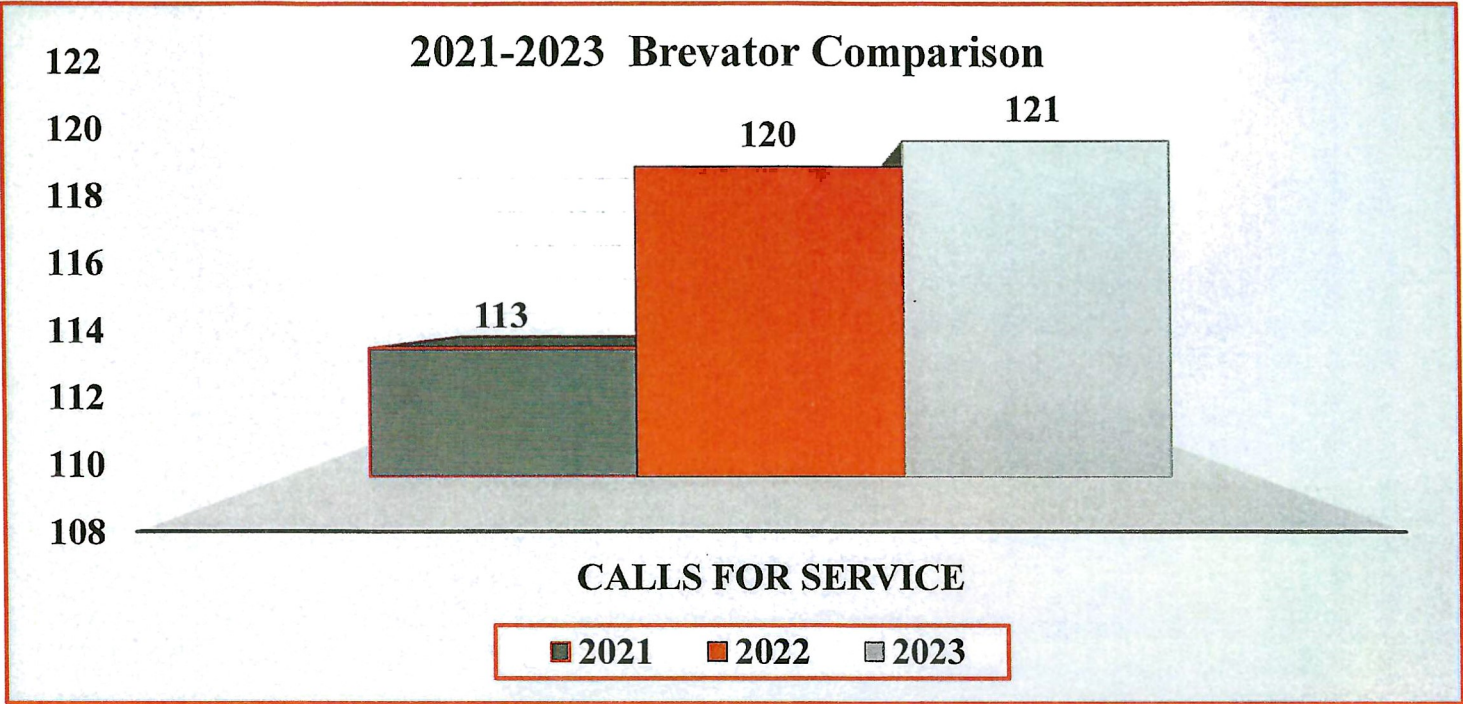


Jesse Buhs
Fire Chief
Cloquet Area Fire District

Mission Statement: The Cloquet Area Fire District is dedicated to protecting the people and property within our service area. Our commitment is to provide innovative responses and community risk reduction that will positively impact the health, safety, and wellness of those we serve.



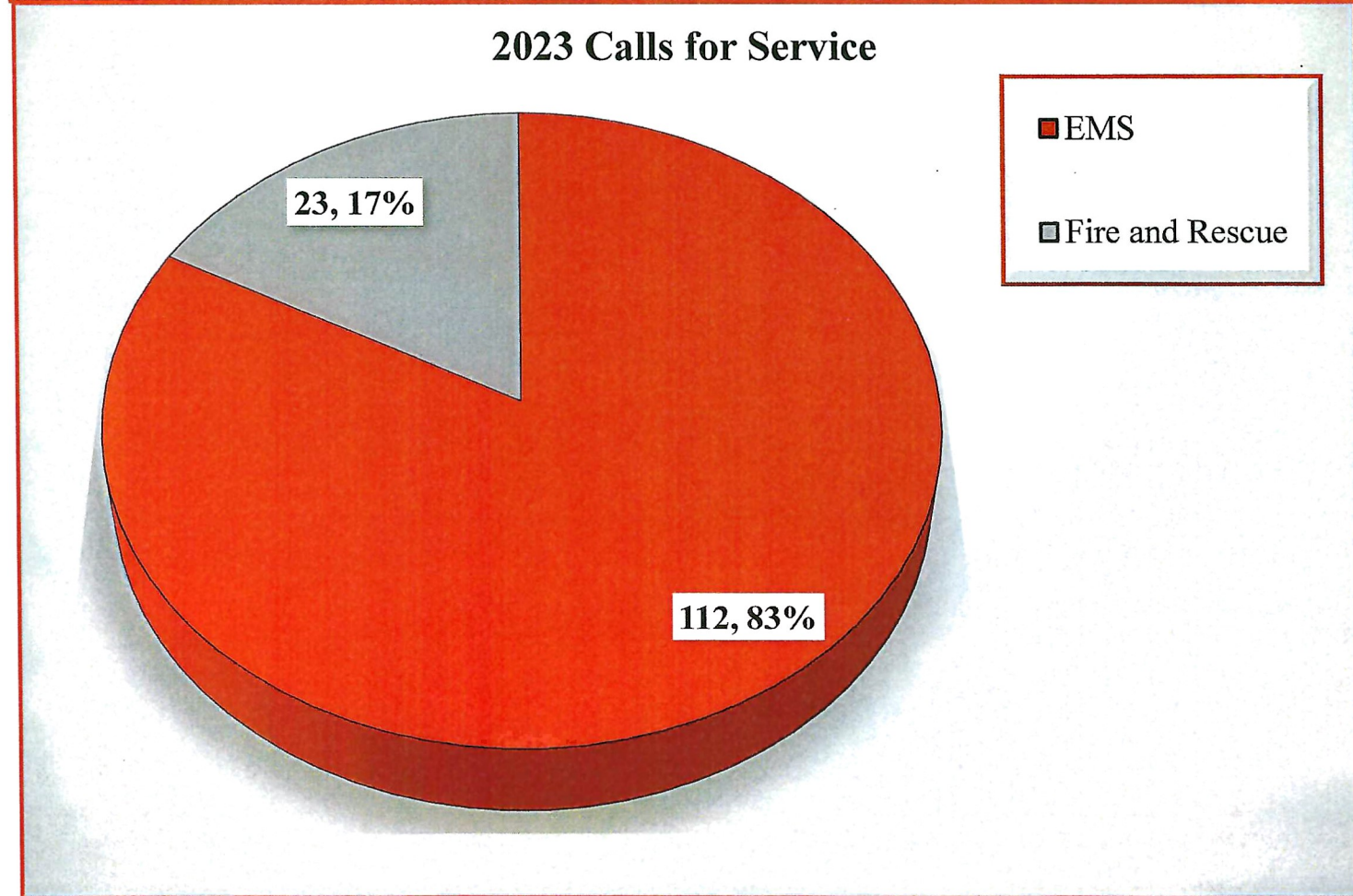
CLOQUET AREA FIRE DISTRICT CALL VOLUME STATISTICS: 2023





CLOQUET AREA FIRE DISTRICT CALL VOLUME STATISTICS: 2023

Perch Lake Township Call Statistics



Perch Lake Township 2023 Road Report

What a difference a year makes! Last year, it seemed like the snowplow was coming down the road at least twice per week. This year, my road has been plowed 3 or 4 times.

The biggest 2023 project was cleanup from the December 2022 storm. The storm resulted in quite a bit of trees and brush hanging over the roads. The state declared the December 2022 a disaster. That declaration opened the door for state emergency management funds to reimbursement local governments up to 75% of the costs.

The township cleared enough overhanging trees and brush to plow the roads in December of 2022. For the summer-Fall of 2023 we had the remaining overhanging trees and shrubs removed to prevent future interference with roads. The clearing was approached in two manners. Tom DeLovely had brushing in his contract. He completed the brushing of trees and shrubs 4 inches in diameter or less. Tom had a rotary brush cutter for his skid-steer. He also purchased a mulcher for his excavator. The excavator with mulcher allowed him to reach out for tree and brush removal. This was especially handy with the wetlands adjacent to roads. Brushing was completed along Jarvinen, Strand, Reponen, Maple, Simian Creek, Pine Grove, Cedar Lake, Lakeview, and Magney Roads.

Trees and brush greater than 4 inches in diameter were marked for removal. A request for proposals was completed and sent to area tree contractors. Adjacent landowners were also contacted about the proposed removal. The marked trees were changed in a few instances based on landowner input. Trees determined to be a hazard were marked in July of 2023. The summary and a map of proposed removed trees was used in the development of a Request for Quotes (RFQ). Roads designated for tree removal included Maple Drive, Pine Grove Drive, Lyndhurst Bay Drive, Brower Drive, Magney Drive, Homestead Road, Lake Drive, Lakeview Drive, Strand Road, Reponen Road, Ditchbank Road, Salmi Road, Cedar Lake Road, Bergman Road, Simian Creek Road, and Hardwood Lake Road. The Town Board approved sending out RFQ's to local tree removal contractors. At the August Town Board meeting, a contractor was selected - Omar's Sand and Gravel. Work began on tree clearing in September of 2023 and work was completed by the end of November 2023.

The record winter snows were followed by flooding. Township roads had standing water standing in 7 locations. One culvert was washed out. Otherwise, the flooding caused little permanent damage to township roads.

Other road maintenance completed included crack patching on paved roads, gravel hauling, and grading on gravel roads. Crack patching was completed on Bayview Dr., Bob's Dr., Brower Dr., Hardwood Lake Rd., Homestead Rd., Lyndhurst Bay Dr., Magney Dr., Maple Dr., Pine Grove Dr., and Salmi Rd. The remaining paved roads will be crack patched in 2024. Gravel was hauled on Reponen and Strand Roads.

Lakeview Drive has an area that is slumping near Lake Drive. A request for proposals was sent out to several contractors. The work was awarded to Omar's Sand and Gravel. The work will be completed in 2024.

Enbridge started the process of removal of lines 3 and 4 in December 2023. The work will continue throughout 2024. Roads effected include Ditchbank Road, T535, T536, Magney Dr, Strand, and Reponen Roads.

2023 Road and Bridge Accounting

I. ROAD & BRIDGE FUND BEGINNING BALANCE

Beginning Balance		\$198,601.40
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II. ROAD & BRIDGE RECEIPTS

a. Road Taxes Levied for 2023	\$95,561		
b. Amount Collected in 2023		\$96,043	\$96,043
c. Other Receipts			
State Gas Tax Roil Allotment	\$11,988		
State Payments in Lieu of Taxes	\$469		
Town Aid	\$305		
Access Permit (Driveway) Fees	\$0		
Utility Permit Fees	\$50		
Culverts	\$0		
Interest Earned	\$3,282		
Miscellaneous	\$0		
Transfer from Government Fund	\$0		
		\$16,094	\$16,094

TOTAL RECEIPTS		\$112,137
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III. ROAD & BRIDGE DISBURSEMENTS

a. Street Maintenance Materials, Culverts & Storage			
Calcium Chloride	\$16,698		
Miscellaneous, Sand & Salt	\$3,097		
Culverts	\$1,445		
DeCaigny - Storage of Class 5	\$500		
		\$21,740	\$21,740
b. Road Work			
Eric Carlson	\$1,400		
DeCaigney Excavating, Inc.	\$3,253		

Exhibit C

	DeLovely - General Roadwork	\$36,420	
	Sinnott Blacktop	\$27,350	
	Omar's Sand & Gravel, Inc.	\$59,973	
	Carlton County Transportation	\$2,800	
		<u>\$131,196</u>	\$131,196
c.	Signs		
	Carlton County - Signs & Related Repair Materials	\$1,406	\$1,406
d	Snow Removal on Township Roads		
	Carlton County Transportation	\$18,569	\$18,569
e	Professional Services		
	Straightline Survey, Inc.	\$900	\$900
f	Animal Control		
	Tom DeLovely	\$1,050	\$1,050
g	Transfer to Road & Bridge Capital Improvements	\$65,000	\$65,000
	TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS		<u>\$239,861</u>
IV.	<u>ROAD & BRIDGE ENDING BALANCE</u>		
	Ending Balance		<u>\$70,877</u>