

TOWN OF BIG BEND

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December 2010 Newsletter

IT'S TAX TIME AGAIN

Enclosed with this newsletter you will find your tax bill. The first half payments are due by January 31, 2011.

Make checks payable to: **TOWN OF BIG BEND**
No Credit Card Payments are accepted by the town.

If you want a receipt for your payment, you must include a self-addressed stamped envelope with your payment or pay in person.

In-person Collection Dates & Times:
December 23, 31, 2010 and January 29, 2011: 8 a.m. – Noon
January 31, 2011: 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

A limited number of tax books will be available at \$3.00 each. (**DO NOT** include this amount in your tax payment. A separate payment is required.) **If you want the tax book mailed, the cost is \$3.85 to cover postage.**



No exceptions.

RUSK COUNTY PLAT BOOKS

The new plat books are being printed now. We will be selling them (\$25 each) at town board meetings and if possible, on tax collection days in January.

DOG LICENSES

Rusk County Ordinance requires that all dogs in Rusk County be licensed. If you have a dog on record, license forms are included with your tax bills. Fees are the same as last year. The town only sells licenses until February 1 after which you can register your dog at Rusk County Clerk's Office. If you fail to license your dog, you will be notified by the Animal Control Officer to register the dog or pay a fine. Check the form enclosed to see if you need to provide current Rabies Certification.

A separate payment is required for dog licenses. **Do not** include this amount in your tax payment.

TOWN WEBSITE

The Town of Big Bend now has its own website – www.townofbigbend.com. Suggestions are welcome to make this site better.

Currently, you can get an Absentee Ballot Request or a Voter Registration Form, the town Building Permit Form, agendas and minutes of town meetings. Newsletters will be posted.

If anyone has old pictures or history of the town, please contact the town clerk. We would like to borrow your paperwork and incorporate it into the website.

ROAD NAMING AND RURAL ADDRESSING ORDINANCE

Rusk County adopted a Road Naming and Rural Addressing Ordinance in November of 2009 to create county-wide uniformity in road names and fire numbers. This will be especially helpful for the Sheriff's Department, Emergency Medical Services and our own Local Emergency Committee. We all know that just a few extra minutes can make the difference between life and death.

As a result of this ordinance, if you live on a private road, you may notice that road now has a name. You may also notice that all fire numbers on the private road are listed at the entrance. Each property must also have a fire sign at its driveway. The sign must remain on the post where it is placed by the town maintenance staff—not moved to a tree, building or any other location. There is a fine of up to \$250 plus court costs for moving or defacing these and any other signs.

New fire number signs will be double sided for ease of viewing from any direction. If you do not have a fire number on your property, please contact the town clerk. It is your responsibility to keep the area around your fire number sign clear of any brush or other obstacles.

Copies of this ordinance can be obtained from the Rusk County Surveyor's Office.

GARBAGE RATE INCREASE

Effective January 1, 2011, there will be a 25 cent per bag charge increase in garbage collection fees (\$1.75 for bags up to 13 gallon kitchen size and \$3.25 for bags 14 to 32 gallon size). This increase is due to the increased cost of refuse collection by the hauler.

Drop-off Schedule:

2nd & 4th Saturday – November through February
Every Saturday – March through October
8 a.m. until Noon at the town hall. No collection on holidays.

Sand Salt Mix Available: Each town resident can obtain up to two buckets of salted sand per month, free of charge, from the recycling attendant during regular scheduled hours. Bring your own container.



Big Bend Helps Rusk County

Animal Shelter Building Fund

The Rusk County Animal Shelter is in dire need of a new building. Conditions for animals and workers are less than desirable. There have been several fundraisers to help defray costs of a new shelter. Cash donations can be made to Rusk County Animal Shelter Building Fund. On the local level, beginning January 8, you are encouraged to separate your aluminum cans from your other recyclables. These cans will be kept separate from rest of recyclables and be taken to a local recycling center. The town will then issue a check to the Animal Shelter fund.

SNOW PLOWING

Roads in the Town of Big Bend are plowed as needed. Our driver alternates starting on the north and south sides.

NOTICE: It is illegal to push snow into the roadway on town roads. (Wis. Stat. 346.95) A pile of snow left on the roadway creates a condition that could be injurious to others. The fine is \$50 plus court costs.

It is also extremely dangerous to charge across a road with your snow plow.



The Town of Big Bend is fortunate to have many helpful and caring people. The Town Board would like to thank the town staff: Pam Gunderson, Deputy Clerk-Treasurer; Gary Vetterkind, Maintenance; Bob Christenson, Truck Driver; Becky Fisher, Recycling Attendant; and Alyssa Brunner, previous Recycling Attendant who is now attending college.

In addition, special thanks are extended to: Richard Green for helping cut trees and clear roads during recent storms when the town was shorthanded; Morris Brumberg who donated a TV antenna for the town hall; Duane Reineke who donated a converter box for the TV; Tom Ostendorf who donated the TV and also to the Quilters from the Heart, our charity quilt guild.

Thanks to the great group of Election Staffers: Sandy Rassbach (Chief Inspector), Linda Grefsheim, Rosemary Huse, Janice Secaur, Jennie Green and Mark Schmitt. In addition to the time they work at the polls to ensure our elections run smoothly, they also attend regular training sessions.

The volunteers who help stuff tax bills and newsletters vary each year but they are a real asset: Kathy Christenson, Jan Secaur, Rosemary Huse, Jennie Green, and Peg DeVoe. If we missed anyone, we're sorry. As always, if you want to volunteer, let the town clerk know.

RIGHT OF WAY CLEARANCE BARRON ELECTRIC

Barron Electric Cooperative will be performing right of way maintenance in the Town of Big Bend in 2011. This includes mechanical chopping, hand cutting or side trimming but no chemicals. A minimum of 15' clearance is required around the top wire and 20' at ground line around the pole. The removal of dangerous and leaning trees will also be considered. This clearing will be done on primary overhead lines up to the transformer only. If you have questions or concerns, please call 1-800-322-1008. If your property is not serviced by Barron Electric, this will not affect you.

COUNTY BOARD NEWS

John Stencil, District 18

Rusk County's tax increase this year is 6.95%, or \$337,000 higher than what was actually needed to balance the budget. The increase in your taxes will be approximately \$50 for a \$100,000 home. I voted against this budget because the increase was unjustified.

Here are a couple of other issues the County Board is facing at this time:

FEMA FLOODPLAIN ISSUES

As many of you who live along the area lakes or rivers know, FEMA contracted with the DNR to update the floodplain maps in Rusk County. The resulting maps are totally inaccurate, placing many more properties in the floodplain, and therefore the maps were not adopted by the Rusk County Board.

This may not be a problem unless the owner of the property has a mortgage on the property or tries to sell the property. The lender may notify the owner that flood insurance is required.

The County Board has ordered that a LIDAR study be performed to create accurate elevations if this will be acceptable to FEMA. There has been no response to date.

COUNTY NURSING HOME ISSUE

How it works: Rusk County owns Rusk County Memorial Hospital and Nursing Home. The hospital needs major upgrades as required by Federal and State regulations. These needs cannot be met because profits from the hospital are currently used to support the nursing home. Back in 2009 the hospital and nursing home board recommended that the nursing home be closed because it was losing \$1.5 million annually (which comes from hospital profits).

Hospital Issues – RCMH needs to be replaced and there is some interest from other parties. They are also losing doctors because of the pay and location. Many do not want to raise a family in our county.

Nursing Home Issues – Cost of operation when compared to privately owned facilities in the State of Wisconsin is considerably higher than the State average. The current contract has a successor clause which will most likely not be acceptable to a potential buyer, thus no sale. The County's option is to not renew the contract and to close the nursing home. A private owner can then open a new facility or update the current building to meet State and Federal requirements. The current employees could apply for the jobs, probably with less pay and benefits, but the jobs would stay in Rusk County.

Proposal – A county-wide referendum will be placed on the April 2011 ballot asking voters to approve a tax increase of \$500,000 per year for up to three years in order to give time for a permanent solution to be worked out. If this passes, the resulting tax increase is estimated at \$40 for a \$100,000 home for at least three years.

Sources used in this article are Rusk County Board Minutes, Ladysmith News and Rusk County Finance Office.

Questions about County issues? Call me at 715-353-2897

TOWN INFORMATION

Town Board Members:

Chairman John Stencil
Supervisor Tom Meisner
Supervisor Jim Powers
Clerk-Treasurer Cecelia Stencil

Assessor:

Larry Pedersen
Watch for Board of Review Meeting in May

Building Inspector:

Lee Fox

Town Board Meetings: 1st Wednesday of each month unless posted otherwise. Notices are posted at the town hall and town businesses and on the town webpage.

2011 Election Dates: February 11 Primary Election (if necessary) and April 5 General Election. Polls are open from 7: 00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.



**Merry Christmas
&
Happy New Year**