

Princeton Township Board Meeting

August 18, 2026

Opening and Agenda

Meeting called to order at 7 pm; Pledge of Allegiance; and agenda was reviewed adding Election Judges Gross Pay and Reimbursement and Comprehensive Plan Review. Motion to approve the agenda by Supervisor Patten; Second by Supervisor Knutson, Carried 4-0.

Approve the Minutes

The minutes from July 21st Town Board meeting were reviewed. Motion to approve the minutes by Supervisor Patten; Second by Supervisor Whitcomb, Carried 4-0.

Open Forum

1. Dan Hiller raised concerns about the quality of fill material used in the 50th Avenue grading project, noting it contained large rocks, concrete chunks with rebar, and debris. He mentioned getting three flat tires since work began and questioned the approval process. The grading was done by DW under a contract with Knife River, which holds responsibility for material sourcing. Supervisors acknowledged the issue and committed to follow-up.
2. Brittany Jirik requested appointment to the Planning Commission, citing 16 years of legal and project management experience as paralegal. She emphasized her ability to analyze laws, engage in open discussion, and contribute to fair decision-making.
3. Jim Orton expressed concern about an unresolved property line dispute with Richard Reiman, noting that land was subdivided and a building permit issued despite the ongoing civil issue.

Clerk-Treasurer Report

4. As of July 31, 2026, total Township funds amounted to \$1,631,100.98, distributed as follows: General Fund \$28,592.30; Roads and Bridges \$1,394,810.14; Fire Department Services \$38,334.13; Park Dedication \$4,800; CD \$101,564.41; Park Dedication CD \$63,000
5. August 18, 2026, Gross Pay for Supervisors and Staff is \$7,315.88, General \$6,743 and Roads \$572.88

6. August 18, 2026, Claims for Approval are \$43,902.49, General \$8,508.79 and Roads \$35,393.70
7. August 18, 2026 Election Judges Gross Pay and Reimbursement, \$2,459.82

Motion to approve the Clerk-Treasurer reports by Supervisor Whitcomb; Second by Supervisor Patten; Carried 4-0.

Old Business

8. Roughly 1.8-acre parcel as “UNIDENTIFIED” in this area of Long Siding is in fact assigned a PID, with the State of Minnesota. No further information or action was taken at this time.
9. The current website costs **\$912/year** but lacks ADA compliance required for **absentee ballot access** and accessibility at this time. Supervisors reviewed two options: MuniBit: **\$2,268/year**, mobile-responsive and ADA-compliant GoGov **app**: **\$3,600/year**, functions as a mobile app with broader accessibility. Compliance is required by June 2028. Discussion included potential solutions from MAT (Minnesota Association of Townships), rising costs, and concerns about eliminating the website entirely. The discussion will continue in future meetings.
10. Annexation Funds from the City of Princeton were invoiced for a total of \$3,900.22. Pursuant to Minn. Stat. 414.036: 16-021-2301; 16-021-4800; 16-515-0010; 16-519-0020 \$2,744.28 and Pursuant to Minn. Stat. 414.036:: OAH71-0331-40187 \$1,155.94
 - Motion to invoice for accrued interest at the rate of 18% per year or 1.5% per month by Supervisor Whitcomb; Second by Supervisor Patten; Carried 4-0.
11. Traffic Fine Revenue is currently pending paperwork from the Mille Lacs County Attorney’s Office.

New Business

Planning Commission Appointment

12. Brittany Jirik’s letter of interest was received by the Town Board Supervisors. Motion to appoint Brittany Jirik by Supervisor and Board Chair Stoeckel; Second by Supervisor Knutson; Carried 4-0.

Scott Richards Retirement

13. Scott Richards announced his retirement after six years of service. He highlighted accomplishments including zoning ordinance updates and emphasized the need to complete the comprehensive plan. Ben Wikstrom will succeed him.

Google Workspace, Access for Scott Richards and Ben Wikstrom

14. A shared folder was created in the Township's Google Workspace for the zoning documents. Access initially granted to Scott, Ben, and the Clerk. Security and organization protocols will be refined.

Meeting Room Audio and Office Security

Residents and Supervisors reported difficulty hearing during meetings. A future budget item for audio amplification is under consideration, as well as encouraging speaking a bit louder and attendees with hearing struggle to sit closer to the front of the room. Security concerns were raised after an incident in the office. The prior camera system was unsecured and dismantled by IT assistance with Lucas Chapman.

Recommendations include:

15. Installing secure internal/external cameras
16. Exploring panic button integration
17. Consideration of appointments be made for office visits until upgrades are completed
18. Discussed security and audio upgrades for the meeting room and township office.

Park Dedication Deposit

The Park Dedication CD balance is **\$63,806.34**. Motion to renew the current balance in full at the best rate the Bank is offering by Supervisor Patten; Second by Supervisor Knutson; Carried 4-0.

Vendor Payment Deadlines

To ensure timely payments, vendors must submit bills by the 10th of each month for inclusion in the third Tuesday meeting (fourth Tuesday in March). This policy will be formalized in a letter to all vendors following delays that affected payment timelines.

Comprehensive Plan Committee

Supervisor Patten expressed the need to begin the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan for the Township. The initiative is prompted by outdated planning documents and increased development pressure, especially following Baldwin's City status change and the new Zimmerman overpass. Discussion of a committee would include 2 Town Board members, 2 Planning Commission members, and 3 At-Large members of the Township took place.

Motion to form a seven-member committee to lead the comprehensive plan update by Supervisor Patten; Second Supervisor Knutson; Carried 4-0.

Public notice will be drafted with applications due by September 11; appointments are expected at the October Town Board meeting on October 20.

Zoning

Serenity Meadows Senior Housing

A request to reduce units from 22 to 11 and allow individual ownership under and HOA and restrictive covenant was continued to the next meeting. The Planning Commission recommended denial due to:

19. Unreviewed HOA and restrictive covenant documents (received at 5 PM the day of the meeting)
20. Concerns over 11 new wells and septic systems in a 35-acre area
21. Uncertainty about long-term road maintenance by HOA
22. Unpaid taxes with the 2 PIDs presently
23. Inappropriateness of individually owned homes in a commercial-industrial zone

Attorney review is required before a decision. The project has a deadline of September 29, 2026.

Motion to continue the discussion at the next Town Board meeting on September 15, 2026, by Supervisor Patten; Second by Supervisor Whitcomb.

A motion to amend by adding the words after review from the Planning Commission the HOA and restrictive covenant by Supervisor Whitcomb; Second by Supervisor Patten; Carried 4-0.

Motion to approve the amendment by Supervisor Whitcomb; Second Supervisor Patten; Carried 4-0. Motion as amended; Carried 4-0.

East Central Energy Substation

The new ECE substation, located south of the existing one in a commercial-industrial zone, will meet growing demand and allow decommissioning of the old site.

Key features:

- 24. 45–50 ft tall components, most structures 15–20 ft
- 25. 9-foot fence
- 26. Drainage plans reviewed and approved by Loucks

The applicant may be open to discussions about selling the decommissioned substation land to the Township for potential park use.

Motion to approve Resolution 2026-12 as approval for this new substation by Supervisor Whitcomb; Second by Supervisor Patten; Carried by Roll Call 4-0.

Supervisor Reports

Roads

- 27. Gravel and chloride applications ongoing
- 28. Tree removal continues; larger trees near roads may require contracted services
- 29. 50th Avenue project about two weeks behind schedule, with completion expected in early September 2026.
- 30. Contractor faces **\$2,000/day** penalties for delays
- 31. Demolition of Long Siding home at 10094 55th Street will be finalized soon

Weeds

A wild parsnip complaint on County Road 1 was noted. It does need proper treatment to stop the spread as this is a noxious weed. Supervisor Knutson will contact Keenan Hayes for follow-up.

In Closing, Data Center Moratorium Discussion

Supervisor and Board Chair Stoeckel suggested to ban or restrict data centers via a zoning amendment.

Concerns include:

- 32. Minimal community benefit (few jobs, mostly security)
- 33. Large industrial footprint
- 34. Potential future targets for cyber or physical attacks
- 35. Precedents in Elk River, MN and north of Fargo, ND

No formal action taken; topic referred for inclusion in Comprehensive Plan discussions.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 pm by Supervisor Whitcomb; Second by Supervisor Patten; Carried 4-0.