



GRASS ROOTS REPORT

FALL 2024

58th Annual Convention and Meeting

The 2024 Convention and Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Township Officers Association will be held on December 2nd and 3rd at the Ramada Inn, 1400 E Interchange Ave in Bismarck, ND. Not all items on the agenda have been finalized or confirmed. The agenda will be posted on the website NDTOA.COM as it is completed. Here is the timeline we will be following.

Monday December 2nd, Registration will begin at 7:30 AM in the Heritage Ballroom, the convention will be opened by President Brandvold at 8:30 AM. The morning program will continue until the luncheon at 11:30 AM. The annual business meeting will be called to order at 12:30 PM. The business meeting will include the reports of officers, adoption of the budget, consideration of resolutions, and the election of 3 district directors. At 4:30 PM the legislative social will begin and run until 6:30 PM, (see the article on the legislative social in this issue). The banquet will begin at 7:00 PM to finish out the day.

Tuesday December 3rd, Registration will begin at 7:30 AM in the Heritage Ballroom, the session will start at 8:30 AM and continue until 12:00 PM then adjourn.

Plans include several speakers to develop an interesting program, including the Governor-Elect, Kelly Armstrong; NDDOT Director, Ron Henke; Public

Service Commissioner, Randy Christman; ND Agriculture Commissioner, Doug Goehring; and the new CEO of the North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund, Keith Pic. There will be short educational programs, a mock “Normal Township” Annual Meeting; the finer points of writing a grant application; basic legislative engagement; how to navigate the legislative website; and NDLTAP – Roadway Foundations.

The exhibitors, refreshments, and food will be in the Judicial Room, which is across the hall. Check out the exhibits when you are there for a cup and cookie. There will scheduled exhibitor breaks each session to give attendees time to visit with the exhibitors. The exhibitors will be handing out the door prize tickets to those that stop by their booths.

There will be \$100 bills awarded to five pre-registered township officers, drawing to be held Tuesday morning, winner must be present at the time of drawing.

The convention will be streamed on Zoom and recorded; however, this will be to watch only, there will be no provision to participate remotely. If you wish to participate in the meeting, you will need to attend in person.

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First Legislative Social, as part of the NDTOA Convention

This year there will be a new feature of the 58th Annual Convention. Late Monday afternoon, December 2nd, the entire legislature and many other state officials are invited to join us for a social. This will be a chance for township officers to meet and greet legislators and key officials.

The social will start at 4:30 PM and run until 6:30 PM, listen for announcements on Monday.

It is part of the NDTOA Strategic Plan to be more engaged with the legislators and other state officials. You will also notice in this issue, a “Save the Date” for the Local Government Capitol Connection, which will also include the counties, cities, school and park districts, we are all working to increase our contact with the legislators. With the competition for state funding, it is very important to build relationships with as many legislators as possible, so hopefully they will consider township needs when they are deciding funding priorities.

So please attend these events, seek out your legislators and discuss the needs of your township with them.

NDTOA Officers

LEE BRANDVOLD, President
20100 317th Ave. SW, Ryder ND 58779
(701) 720-5457
ljbranch@restel.com

TODD WEBER, Vice President
14996 40th St. SE, Wheatland ND 58079
(701) 347-4123/(218) 790-3123
TWFarms@live.com

LARRY SYVERSON, Executive Director,
Director of Governmental Relations
465 150th Ave. NE, Mayville ND 58257
(701) 430-1735
larry.ndtoa@gmail.com

BARB KNUTSON, Treasurer/Mail List
2600 236th St. NE, McKenzie ND 58572
(701) 673-3198/(701) 391-6767
gbknutson@bektel.com

ROGER OLAFSON, Past President
12945 84th St. NE, Edinburg ND 58227
(701) 993-8765
rlolaf@polarcomm.com

MARK VERKE, Safety Coordinator
701-220-0495
markverke@gmail.com

TOM WHEELER, District I Director
6561 115th Ave. NW, Ray ND 58849
701-641-1073
wheelert@nccray.com

RICHARD LYNNE, District 2 Director
4951 28th St. NE, Maddock ND 58348
(701) 438-2747/(701) 202-6067 cell
rrlynne@gondtc.com

ROD MEYER, District 3 Director
PO Box 100, Niagara, ND 58272
701-739-1716
meyerr6@gmail.com

LEON MONKE, District 4 Director
5645 B 106th Ave. SW, Regent ND 58650
(701) 563-4498

GERALD (Jerry) MILLER, Dist. 5 Director
6455 Tj Lane, Bismarck ND 58503
(701) 381-0113
geraldmiller2013@yahoo.com

TIM GEINERT, District 6 Director
509 2nd St., Nortonville ND 58454
(701) 685-2493 (701) 320-6120 cell
geinert@drtel.net

LEGAL COUNSEL

THOMAS R. MOE, Attorney-at-Law
39 1st Ave. NW, Mayville ND 58257



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BY LEE BRANDVOLD

Greetings Township Officers,

As you read this, the votes on Measure #4 will have been cast, and the results will be known. Regardless of the outcome, I want to assure you that the NDTOA remains committed to working in the best interests of all its members. We need to stay united and work together to assure that our voice is heard. Together, we can protect the strong reputation that the NDTOA has worked tirelessly to build over the years.

It is hard to believe that summer has ended, and that we are already well into fall, with winter just around the corner. December certainly can be an unpredictable month as far as the weather, however, one event that township officers should look forward to every year is the NDTOA Annual Convention. This year the convention will be held on December 2nd and 3rd at the Bismarck Ramada. Please plan to attend "your" annual meeting! It's a valuable opportunity to gain important information to manage your township effectively. You'll receive updates on what your NDTOA has accomplished over the past year, including the benefits of the recent dues increase that has strengthened our financial position. By attending it gives you the opportunity to engage in discussions and give input on township issues that have occurred throughout the year.

We Need Your Help! We are actively seeking nominations for the Grassroots Leadership Award. This award is given at the annual meeting to a township officer whose community service exemplifies the highest standards of dedication, ability, and service. If you know an extraordinary officer that deserves this recognition, please submit a nomination. Applications can be found on our website at www.ndtoa.com under 'Convention.' Fill out the PDF form and email or mail to Executive Director Larry Syverson.

As we approach 2025, the North Dakota Legislative Session will be in full swing. Once again, NDTOA will send Executive Director Larry Syverson, and Assistant Lobbyist Scott Meske to the Capitol to monitor all bills that could impact townships. Larry and Scott are always there to watch and ensure the bills being introduced are in the best interests of our townships. As township residents, we hopefully will always be able to have our local control. Remember, township government is the simplest and most efficient form of government – something we must work to protect.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at the annual convention in Bismarck.

Sincerely,

President Lee Brandvold

NDTOA 2024 58th Annual Meeting Registration Form

December 2 and 3, 2024 Ramada, Bismarck ND

Name(s),and Title(s)	FIRST	LAST	TITLE
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip _____

Township _____ County _____

Total No. Attending _____ @ \$ 40 per person **PRE-REGISTRATION before 11/22/24 (\$60 at the door)**
 _____ @ \$ 12 per spouse attending the Monday night banquet
 _____ @ \$ 10 per spouse attending the Monday luncheon **Total Amount Due \$ _____**

Please complete and send this registration form, along with your check payable to NDTOA by November 22, 2024, to Barb Knutson, 2600 236th St NE, McKenzie, ND 58572.

NOTE: Townships may pay from their general fund for officer's registration fees and expenses.

For hotel reservations call the Ramada Inn 701-258-7000 by Nov. 18th

NDTOA Elections To Be Held

District Directorships to be filled this annual meeting are as follows:

District 2 consists of the following counties: Benson, Eddy, Foster, McHenry, Pierce, Ramsey, Rolette, Towner and Wells. *Directorship currently held by Richard Lynne, Maddock.*

District 4 consists of the following counties: Adams, Bowman, Billings, Dunn, Golden Valley, Grant, Hettinger, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sioux, Slope and Stark. *Directorship currently held by Leon Monke, Regent.*

District 6 consists of the following counties: Barnes, Cass, Dickey, LaMoure, Ransom, Richland and Sargent. *Directorship currently held by, Tim Geinert, Nortonville.*

At the time of election a candidate to be an officer or director of NDTOA must be a currently elected township officer of a township that is a dues paying member of NDTOA.

Anyone interested serving on the NDTOA Board of Directors for those districts should contact a nominating committee member: District 1 Director - Tom Wheeler; District 3 Director - Rod Meyer; or District 5 Director - Gerald Miller. (Contact information can be found on page 2.)

Submitting Resolutions To The NDTOA Annual Meeting

If your county has a resolution to be addressed by NDTOA, it should be submitted as a written resolution, either a paper copy or an email.

All resolutions should be sent to the NDTOA office: NDTOA, 465 150th AVE NE, Mayville ND 58257 or given to your District Director no later than Saturday , Nov. 23, 2024.

They may also be emailed to the office at: larry.ndtoa@gmail.com by Friday Nov. 29th.

The Resolutions Committee will meet on Sunday evening December 1, 2024, after the close of the Board of Directors Meeting.

Richard Lynne is the Committee Chairman.

Grassroots Government Leadership Award

To recognize the leadership, creativity, and dedication of township officials, the NDTOA has established a leadership award to pay tribute every year to an individual whose community service exhibits the highest standard of dedication, ability and service.

ELIGIBILITY

The award will be presented to an individual, locally elected official, currently in office. It will recognize him or her for their outstanding contributions on a sustained basis or from a single performance.

Nominees should have responsibility for accomplishing or causing to be accomplished significant programs or projects within their area of responsibility, to the ultimate benefit of the general public.

Examples of such professional accomplishments include local government cost-cutting, coordination of a major local volunteer effort, and promoting townships at the national level, establishing new local services or programs, and success in securing public or private funding for local projects.

SELECTING CRITERIA

Nomination should include as much information as possible, such as:

- **Complexity of the problem(s) addressed.**
- **Measurable improvements resulting from nominee's accomplishments.**
- **Use of original, innovative or creative approaches and solutions in difficult situations.**
- **Long-term or lasting benefit of the nominee's accomplishments.**

NOMINATING PROCEDURE

Nominations may be submitted by member townships and counties of the NDTOA. A nomination form is below for your convenience. Just complete and mail (or e-mail larry.ndtoa@gmail.com). **Nominations must be received by November 20th.**

North Dakota Township Officers Grassroots Government Leadership Award

NOMINATION FORM

NOMINEE: Name, office, Township, County, address and phone numbers.

Your name, office, address and phone numbers.

Other objective references: name, office, address, phone numbers.

Please attach a summary of the major accomplishments for which the Township official is being nominated. Also attach as much information as you can, such as a brief biography of the nominee summarizing positions held, civic and professional affiliations, and other relevant personal data. The more information you can provide the better chance your candidate will be selected.

The award will be presented at the NDTOA Annual Convention in December.

Mail (or email) the completed form to: NDTOA; 465-150th Ave NE; Mayville ND 58257-9011

For questions or for copies of this form please phone 701-430-1735 or email larry.ndtoa@gmail.com.

This form is available as a fillable PDF on NDTOA.COM under Resources / Forms.



TREASURER'S REPORT

BY BARB KNUTSON

Kind of a dreary morning, but we will take the moisture! Hope all are getting the fall work done in good time, whether it is fields or yards.

I want to thank County Auditors for their continued help in getting officers' name lists updated and available. I would also like to thank county association members for their help in getting the dues paid and oh so thankful for those that include a list of the townships that have paid! That is important as that determines

whether or not they are eligible to vote at the annual convention. There have been individuals that have reached out to correct board listings. Thanks so much!

Anyone that has not paid dues for the year can still do that. The end of year was October 31st but I will still accept dues for that period! Thanks to those that have paid on time. That is what makes it possible for us to serve you!

Annual convention coming up on

December 2nd and 3rd at Ramada in Bismarck. Look for more information in this issue, or go to www.ndtoa.com to keep up to speed on events.

We will be looking forward to seeing you at the convention. This is a good place to learn and exchange ideas. It is a cost that can be paid by the township. What could be better? Get your reservations in.

Here's to a good year ahead!

Save the Date: Local Government Capitol Connection Event

On February 18-19, 2025, a Local Government Capitol Connection Event will be co-hosted by the North Dakota Association of Counties, North Dakota League of Cities, North Dakota Recreation and Park Association, and North Dakota Township Officers Association at the Bismarck Event Center and the Capitol. This event will provide political subdivision members with the opportunity to learn about the legislative process, the latest legislative developments, network with other elected officials, and meet with legislators.

Education sessions, presentations from legislative leaders and a legislative social are on the tentative agenda. The complete event program, registration, and hotel information

will be available in late November. The Local Government Capitol Connection will be a valuable event for political subdivision members and a great opportunity to learn, network, and advocate for your community.

There is a \$60 registration cost to participate in the full event including the legislative social and activities at the Bismarck Event Center, however those that don't wish to participate in those events can still be part of the event at the Capitol without cost.

For more information, please reach out to larry.ndtoa@gmail.com 701-430-1735

We hope to see you there.





THE COUNTRY LAWYER

BY THOMAS R. MOE, ATTORNEY AT LAW

Greetings! I write this as the election results are in and some folks are happy and some are not—welcome to democracy! Measure #4 appears to have failed, and I know a lot of township officers are breathing a sigh of relief as the potential loss of those tax dollars seemingly posed problems for local governments and the needs of their constituents. The membership of the ND Legislature for the next session is now set as well, so it might be good for township officers to attempt to meet with your local legislator, whether they are new to the legislature or not, whether they are Republican or Democrat, whether they are urban or rural—just to let them know that the townships in our State need their assistance. Our state legislators are generally a pretty good lot, but I always have to laugh at humorist Will Rogers who in the 1930's said "Senators are a never-ending source of amusement, amazement, and discouragement."!

Seems like everyone had a good harvest, with few weather problems interfering. In our end of the state, I didn't note lots of mud on our gravel roads, as the sugar beet and potato farmers were able to harvest fairly cleanly. I know there were some weather delays in the western part of the State, but roads didn't suffer much heavy truck damage needing repair. Plan on getting a road and sign survey accomplished yet this fall—seeing if there are traffic signs that should be slotted on a replacement schedule, or if certain roads could use some maintenance before freeze-up. Document your trip so you have a record of your actions.

NDTOA's state convention is soon upon us, and a proposed schedule is elsewhere in this issue. We're planning on an interesting agenda, with some good presenters and speakers, and also including a question/answer period with me. Additionally, we are planning on presenting a mock annual township meeting—we did this several years ago, and most observers at that time were puzzled how a meeting held 'by the book' differed with the way most meetings are actually run! Please make plans to attend your annual convention in Bismarck this year. Expenses for attending should be paid by your township, and I can guarantee that all will learn at least something to take back home! And, important items such as election of State officers and approval of NDTOA's annual budget is also on the docket at that meeting.

I've heard from several folks concerning zoning concerns. If townships are thinking about updating ordinances or getting started with the zoning process, it's a good winter project—getting reading for approval(s) by the residents at the annual meeting next March.

Have a safe/happy holiday season—and see you in Bismarck in December! Following are a few questions

received and my answers. TRM

Q: A farmer plowed up a field road which is on a section line—he's the renter, not the owner—and now the operator on the far side of the section can't get to his land. There's a slough on the other end and this field road was the best route for all to use. What should we do?

A: Tell the operator to 'knock it off' and explain/educate him as to the rules in our State regarding section line right of ways regardless of whether there is a road there or not. "Field" roads probably don't need or use the entire 66 feet of ROW, but they must be open for public use. The landowner probably needs to be notified, and if the damage is extensive requiring some repair, landowner could be charge for that expense; either by billing him or by putting the charges against the owner's land taxes. By the way, most renters don't like it when the township notifies their landlord about charging the landlord for expenses the tenant caused!

Q: The owner of a farmstead dumped some gravel on the road in front of his place, then smoothed out the pile somewhat, effectively creating a speed bump. I imagine the township will be liable for any damages that occur to passing vehicles which hit the speed bump, but is there a way for us to hand off the liability to the homeowner?

A: You are correct in that the township will bear the responsibility for damages that may occur due to the hazard that has been created on 'your' road. And, any agreement that you may have with the homeowner about transferring liability will be unenforceable. Notify the homeowner in writing demanding that the hazard be removed, and if not, the township will effect the removal and charge the expense to the homeowner.

Q: One of our elderly supervisors who is a widower moves into town during the winter and stays with his daughter and her family. He goes out to the farm most days, and moves back to the country during the Summer. Is he still eligible to be on the Township Board?

A: Probably. Moving to town for the winter doesn't sound like a permanent move, and wouldn't qualify for a change of residence for voting purposes.

Q: We have always levied at the 18 mill maximum for the last several years, but I noticed that the amount of tax dollars we received last year were less than what 18 mills should have provided. Why is that?

A: My guess is that your township hasn't taken into account the increase in taxable value of your entire township over the lapse of time. A mill levy is nothing more than a percentage—18 mills equals 1.8 percent, or .018. Taxes

are computed by multiplying the .018 times the value of the land. As land values increase, by asking for the exact same amount of money every year means that now a smaller percentage is used –less than 18 mills—to arrive at your requested dollar amount. This is why one needs to keep track of increased assessed valuations and do the computations each and every year if you want to max out your total requested.

Q: We no longer have a county newspaper. How do we abide by the rule that says township notices are supposed to be published.

A: The loss of many of our weekly local newspapers has hit our rural communities hard—not only for official notice purposes, but also for community news items as

well. However, all counties have selected a newspaper as their ‘official’ newspaper—which may be in a neighboring county. That’s the paper which your township should use for your official notices. p.s. It doesn’t matter if not very many of your local people get that paper—it’s your obligation to place/publish the notice—it’s the obligation of the public to find/get that notification.

Q: We had an open records request for copies of the e-mails between the supervisors of our townships. I understand that we have to provide copies of our minutes, etc., but do we also have to provide copies of our e-mail messages too?

A: Yes.

Township Officers’ Association of North Dakota with Rail/Hwy Crossings

The North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) is requesting your assistance to identify locations within your jurisdiction where rail/highway crossing safety could be improved. The information provided should contain the location of the grade crossing by street or road name and the distance and direction to the nearest town(s). Please be specific about your concern or suggestion for improvement.

NDDOT has annual federal funds available for safety enhancement projects at rail/highway at-grade crossings. These funds are used for the installation of active warning devices (e.g. flashing light signals with gates), crossing

signs, and crossing surface improvements.

Please remit your concerns or suggestions before December 31, 2024, so they can be included in the annual review process. Be assured past concerns have been incorporated in the statewide pool of prioritized crossings.

Crossing concerns or suggestions can be forwarded via email to: jstyron@nd.gov

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and supporting rail/hwy crossing safety.

JIM STYRON – HWY/RAIL CROSSING SAFETY MANAGER

Township Tuesday

The Township Tuesday program is continuing, so far we have had 3 virtual meetings with varying topics, these are Zoom meetings for all township officers and they are held

each month on the second Tuesday at 8:00 PM. The Zoom link will be found on the NDTOA.COM calendar.

NDTOA Needs Help With Addresses

In some counties we are just now getting the updated officer lists and addresses from the elections last March and we are five months away from the next round of annual meetings. What will help?

Township Clerks, please complete the Report of Elections and send it to your county auditor as soon as possible after the annual meeting. Check to make sure the address listed for each officer is their correct mailing address, not 911 address.

County Auditors, we certainly appreciate your assistance,

if your office has a list of officers on an Excel spreadsheet, could you just email us that list? That would be a lot better than picking each officer and address from the website one by one.

We are trying to educate 6,000 township officers so they can be better and more effective officers. Keeping the address list is increasingly difficult.

Including email addresses would help us get information to township officers in a timelier manner, please include email addresses in your submitted list.



Grass Roots Report

North Dakota Township Officers Association
2600 236th St. NE
McKenzie, ND 58572



PRSRD STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT 256
BISMARCK, ND

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Check Out The New NDTOA.COM Website!

New look! The site is also mobile friendly so check it out on your phone. Resources, important township information is added frequently – check back often.

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www.ndirf.com

ANNOUNCING - TOWNSHIP TUESDAY - November 12th

NDTOA is beginning a new program—well, it's new to us anyway. The Minnesota Association of Townships has been conducting Township Tuesday for some time. What is a Township Tuesday? Township Tuesday is a time set up for a virtual (Zoom) conference for Township Officers to connect with their state association. Minnesota holds two of these virtual meetings a month, but we are going to give it a try doing one meeting a month.

What will it involve? Each session will begin with a 5 or 10-minute presentation on various topics. Group discussions will follow this; as time allows, questions and answers will fill out the one-hour session. NDTOA Attorney Tom Moe and NDTOA Safety Consultant Mark Verke will often be in attendance, as will the officers, directors, and staff of NDTOA. There will also be guest presenters from NDLTAP, NDDOT, and others.

To take part, just follow the link provided to join the meeting; if you would rather not be on camera, that is your choice. If you don't have a question to ask, that is okay, too; listeners are welcome. We ask people to leave their mic muted except for the time they are speaking.

We will be holding Township Tuesday on the second Tuesday of each month at 8:00 PM Central. Each month, you can find the link on the website NDTOA.COM under Calendar and if there are any changes to the program, they will also be noted there. The link will also be sent to all the email addresses we have on file. If you don't receive an email by the Monday before the meeting, please email [larry.ndtoa@gmail](mailto:larry.ndtoa@gmail.com) to get on the list.

Topics for the November 12th session include road-side mowing requirements and liability and how to build a township budget.

Township Tuesday Link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82899220829?pwd=hm2UFuZxt4rsaPdDzunZahA6zX66fh.1>