



Wabana Warbler

The Wabana Township Newsletter

Recreation Update:

By Pam Friesen

After 5 years of planning, fund raising, and building, this year will hopefully find the Wabana Recreation Project to come to a close.

The new recreation facility includes a new hockey rink with lighting, a 'kiddie' skating rink, new playground equipment, two pickleball courts, a tennis court with shadow lines for pickleball, a basketball court, new picnic tables in the pavilion, and a walking trail around the park area. New plantings will be the final phase of the project and begin this spring. (see article on page 2)



The recreation complex was built to be handicap accessible and will have a handicap accessible table in the pavilion, as well as a handicap accessible portable toilet near the park area. New playground pieces will be added at the end of July.

Its been great to see so many families out enjoying the perks of the park, even during the winter months. Hope you and your family get a chance to enjoy the park!

Note: the pickleball and tennis nets will go up as weather permits.

Township Meetings:

All meetings are held at the Wabana Town Hall unless noted.

The Wabana Township Meeting are the 1st Wed/month @ 7pm at the Town Hall. Everyone is welcome to attend. Board meetings are held in person at the Township Hall & via Zoom.

*Meetings via Zoom are open to the public.
MEETING ID: 841 1114 6136
PASSWORD: WabanaMtg2

Township Meeting Dates:

(Meets the 1st Wednesday/month)
April 1st, 2026 @ 7pm
May 6th, 2026 @ 7pm
June 3rd, 2026 @ 7pm
July 8th, 2026 @ 7pm

Planning Commission Meetings:

June 22nd, 2026 @ 7pm
Sept. 21st, 2026 @ 7pm
December 14th, 2026 @ 7pm

Community Fund Meetings:

May 2nd, 2026 @6:30pm
November 7th- Hunter Supper

WCOLA (Lake Association):

(Meets the 2nd Monday/month)
May 11th, 2026 @ 3pm
June 8th, 2026 @ 3pm
July 13th, 2026 @ 3pm
August 10th, 2026 @ 3pm

Note: Changes to meetings & events will be posted on the website.



Wabana Recreation Project – Volunteers Needed! *By Pam Friesen*



As the recreation project moves into the final phase, plans include a comprehensive landscaping plan, a few additional playground items and overall finishing of the grounds. Sitting benches will be added this summer to the pickleball and tennis courts, plus a couple benches for the playground as well. Lines will be put on the basketball court in May.

Spearheaded by township resident, Susan Lick, the landscaping plan includes 4 separate 'pocket woodland' plantings (roughly 15 feet x 20 feet) between the County Road 49 fence line and the walking trail. The pocket

woodlands will include a mixture of native trees, shrubs and plants. A central larger woodland pocket will be planted closer to the ice rinks. This larger area will offer community members an opportunity to support and enhance the woodland with plants, trees or benches in honor of or memorial to others. Two shade trees will be planted on the east side of the playground.

Instrumental to development of the landscaping plan has been the expertise of Matthew Picklo, and Austin Steere, with Itasca County Soil and Water Conservation District. It will take several years for landscaping plantings to take hold and mature. Care and watering will be crucial to the success of the plantings. Temporary fencing protection will be installed to prevent damage from browsing animals.



Education will be an important part of the landscaping plan including permanent signage for native species present. Information on how native plants support pollinator habitat, assist with water run-off, offer shade as well as aesthetics will be included. Local high school and college students will participate in the project on May 20th when planting takes place. Through a classroom component, students and interested community members will learn about ground preparation, proper use of herbicides,

planting techniques and maintenance of woodland gardens. Volunteer labor by community members will be needed.

The Wabana Township Recreational facility has seen significant use by township residents as well as people coming from across the county and state. Many thanks go out to the volunteers, donors, grantor, and committee members who have made this project possible!

Community volunteer labor will continue to be needed throughout the landscaping project and finishing of the playground.



***Please contact Susan Lick (218) 256-9346, or Pam Friesen (218) 343-8583, if interested in volunteering.**



Men's Fitness (SAIL)

A men's SAIL (Stay Active & Independent for Life) class will be starting on May 26th. The class will meet at the town hall on **Tuesdays & Fridays at 8:30am.** Wayne Speedling will be heading the group. The men's SAIL class will be based on the popular women's SAIL program that's already in place.

The class will focus on aerobics, balance, strength training, and stretching. Carol Speedling will lead the class until enough men are trained in to lead.

If you are interested in learning more about either the Men's or Women's SAIL classed, contact:

Wayne at (613) 790-6760, or Carol at (613) 518-8992.

Women's Fitness (SAIL)

Women's SAIL classes meets every **Tuesday & Friday from 10-11:30am** at the town hall.

Classes are lead by trained instructors and everyone is welcome to attend.

Cribbage

Meet for a game of cribbage at the town hall every **Tuesday at 1pm.**

Cribbage is open to anyone interested in competitive cribbage.

*Cost is \$3 for afternoon play.



Election Judges Needed

By Steve Melin



Did you know the Wabana Township is a polling place for elections? In 2026 the Primary Election is Tuesday, August 12th, and Election Day is Tuesday, November 4th.

To help with this effort the Township needs election judges. If you are interested in learning more about the election process and serving as a judge in 2026, contact Steve Melin at— wabanatownshipclerk@gmail.com

Please provide your name, phone number, and email address, and I will forward your name to Itasca County Election office. You will be contacted closer to the election process to learn more about the process.

Election Judges are responsible for the administration of the election procedures in the voting place. Election Judges help to guarantee that the rights of voters are protected on Election Day.

Planning Commission Update

By Tom Horton

There has been a lot of activity on the Wabana Township Planning Commission already this year. First, we would like to thank Kathy Gregerson for her participation and leadership on the Planning Commission. Kathy has been on the Planning Commission for several years and served as the Chairperson for the past 3 years. Her term ends on March 31, 2026, after which she will focus on other activities.

Second, effective April 1, 2026 Tom Horton will take over as the Chairperson with Kevin Costello continuing as the Secretary. Other members include Stuart Sage and Glenn Pearson. There is an active search for a volunteer to replace the vacated seat.

New orders of business include the required 5 year review of the Wabana Township Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission will be reviewing the document over the next few months and then making any recommendations to the Township Board for consideration.

Planning Commission meetings take place once per quarter and upon request by the Township. The calendar is posted on the Wabana Township website.

Comments and concerns can be sent to:

Tom Horton— PC.Chair.Wabana@gmail.com

Hunter's Supper

By Michelle Kone

The 2025 Hunter's Supper was held November 8, 2025 with the help of many wonderful volunteers! The pork dinner was a great success and enjoyed by many.

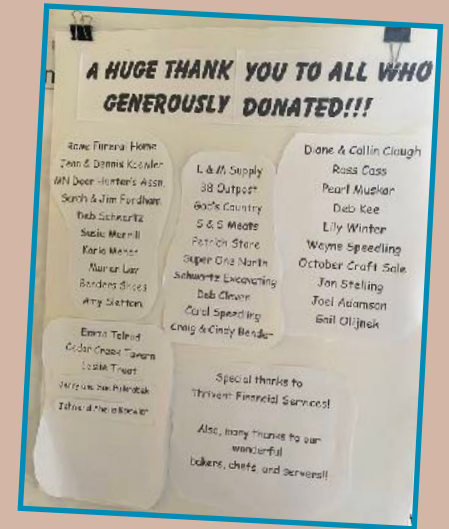
Thank you to everyone that donated their time and talent (silent auction items) and baked goods for the bake sale.

The net profit from the evening was over \$2,700 and will be used to fund our Wabana Post Secondary Scholarships and provide funeral luncheons when requested.

Wabana Township residents pursuing a post-secondary education can apply for a Community Fund Scholarship. Applicants must be a resident of Wabana Township. Information on the Community Fund Scholarship can be found on the Township website—<https://wabanatownship.com/affiliations/>

The next Community Fund meeting will be May 4th at 6:30pm at the Town Hall. Everyone is welcome to attend!

The 2026 Deer Hunter's Supper will be Saturday, November 7th.



Wabana Cemetery Update

Reminder that decorative items placed in the cemetery need to be elevated to simplify mowing and help with the upkeep of the cemetery. If flowers, or decorative items become unsightly they may be removed at the discretion of the Cemetery Sexton. Gardening will begin as soon as weather permits.

You are invited to the Lake Association (WCOLA) Spring Social:

When: May 16th, 2026

Where: Cedar Creek Tavern (34579 Hwy 38, Grand Rapids)

Time: 3:30pm- Social, 4pm- Speaker & 5pm- Dinner



Bill Grantges

Please join us for an evening of fun, education, and camaraderie!

Our speaker, Bill Grantges, Itasca County Aquatic Invasive Species Program Coordinator, will speak on what's new with Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) and treatments being done.

A dinner menu will be available at the WCOLA website store, so you can select your dinner ahead of time. You can find it at— wcola.org

*There will be door prizes and a silent auction with items available to bid on.

For more information contact Scott Hutter— president.wcola@gmail.com



SAVE THE DATE!

WCOLA's "Fun Raising" —Benefit Concert— Friday, August 7th

Grand Rapids' very own, "Adessa & the Beat" musical trio will perform live under the big top **Friday, August 7th from 5-9pm at Cedar Creek Tavern** for WCOLA's inaugural "Fun Raising" event.

Join us for an evening of dinner, dancing, and socializing while raising money for a great cause! Make sure to tell your Family & Friends to save the date!

***Tickets go on sale soon. Watch for more information!**

Join the FUN!

The Grand Rapids Herald Review rates "Adessa & the Beat" "as one of the top-three live bands in the area. "Adessa is a powerful lead vocalist, known for her wide brimmed hats and smashing stage fashion, she's every bit a mix of Crystal Gayle, Steve Nicks, and Joni Mitchell." Adessa & the Beat is known for belting out Americana. A classic singer/songwriter, strong on the 70's B-side titles that evoke memories from the days when vinyl was king."



By Lynne Pernsteiner

Many of us appreciate the beauty of a rare wildflower. We admire the flower's color, shape, and its diversity in nature. The Minnesota native Showy Lady's Slipper is one of these rare beauties that we love because of its delicate design and ability to thrive in challenging environments. Some people are lucky to have to have a lady's slipper plant growing naturally in their yard. Sally Wilbur is one of the lucky!

When Sally and her husband, George, moved to Wabana Township in 1994, they were surprised to find the Minnesota State Flower, the Showy Lady's Slipper, growing near their fish house. Sally knew the flowers were precious, but she didn't know what to do to care for them. Her first step was to surround the flowers with rocks. "When you have lady slippers growing, you become very protective of them. Everything becomes a threat— the lawn mower, playing dogs, and even wild animals. I was raising boys at the time, and it wasn't easy because they can be hard on things," Sally said. The second thing Sally did was research how to care for them. She listened to George Latimer's program on lady's slippers. She also read up on them. Sally was a gardener, but this was a new challenge for her.



The showy lady's slipper (*Cypripedium reginae*), also known as the "queen's lady slipper," or the "pink lady's slipper" is one of 43 orchid species that grows in Minnesota. The brightly colored orchid grows 1-2 feet tall and has 1, or occasionally 2, blooms on a single stem. White petals sit on top of a white pouch, known as the "slipper" and are streaked with pink. Hairy oval leaves clasp the stem. Each year the lady's slipper can produce a half-million seeds that are as fine as flour dust.



The showy lady slipper is usually found in spruce & tamarack bogs, swamps, cool damp wooded areas, ditches, and moisture-filled prairies where there is sufficient light. Lady slippers are part of the orchid family and can take up to 16 years to produce their first blooms. Lady slipper's flower in late June or early July and only bloom for 2 weeks. The plants can have a lifespan of 50 years or more.

In 1902 the showy lady's slipper was designated as Minnesota's State Flower and it became part of a protective class of plants by the state in 2025. The State of Minnesota regulates the plant's collection and commercial sales. Per Minnesota law it is illegal to pick, uproot, or unearth the lady slipper plant. While this plant isn't rare, it is vanishing from native areas due to habitat loss. Plant populations are being hurt by several things

including— wetland drainage, road construction, tree removal, and herbicide use.

Many gardeners would love to have lady slippers growing in their flower beds. The lady slipper plants are available on the market for purchase and can be expensive to buy. The plants are considered difficult to establish, as Lady Slippers require a micro-habitat unique to the plant. The Showy Lady's Slipper thrives in a cool, moist, well-drained, shaded area with a slightly acidic, and humus rich soil. The plants are slow growing and can be susceptible to a variety of insects, mammals, and pests, such, as slugs, racoons, and fungus.

For the past twenty some years Sally has cared for the lady slippers in her yard and the plants have continued to grow and multiply. At last count Sally had 140 lady slipper blooms! When the plants bloom each year, the Wilbur's enjoy sharing beautiful floral display with their friends and neighbors. "We are glad we've fostered the lady slippers all these years and appreciate the beauty they bring. We have a lady slipper sanctuary and are glad others can come and enjoy their beauty."



Note: To keep the Wilbur's lady's slippers safe, please ask permission before visiting them.

Reference: Minnesota DNR

The Ice Keeper

Spring 2026

By Lynne Pernsteiner

www.wabanatownship.com



Ken Aho

Every winter many hours of love, labor, and care go into creating sheets of ice for skaters to enjoy. Ken Aho, head of township maintenance, is the one who makes our ice so nice! Ken became the township ice manager in 2020. When he first began maintaining the ice, he didn't know much about it. Bob Moore, Wabana resident, cared for the Wabana ice for thirty plus years before him and was a huge mentor to Ken. "You learn a lot of tricks of the trade along the way and it's nice to be able to hand down the things you've learned," Bob Moore said.

Before Ken's able to flood the rinks, the weather needs to be below freezing for several days. Ken uses a thick hose with a spray nozzle to water the rinks. He stands in sub-freezing weather watering the ground until a base is set up. Once there is an ice base it holds water, Ken layers it with more water to thicken the ice. Water is self-leveling and needs to be added continually, until the ice is at least 4" thick.

According to Ken, "the ideal temperature to flood is below 20 degrees because the water freezes quickly creating a hard, smooth surface."

When Ken puts the ice in, he's at the rink several times a day. Ken spends about 5 hours in the morning watering the ice and then comes back for 3 more hours at night. Ken does this for several days to build it to the right thickness. After the ice is set-up, it is open to the public for skating. People come from all over the area to skate. There are a few groups that meet up weekly for open hockey and many families bring their kids out to enjoy the ice. "The goal is to have ice in by December 1st, but everything depends on the weather. The last 2 years it has been cold enough to flood before Thanksgiving, but the ice hasn't lasted much past mid-February," Ken said.

During ice season Ken is at the rink daily. He keeps his eye on the weather and continues to flood the ice to keep it in good shape. He also removes ice shavings and fills cracks. If the weather is warm, Ken repairs gouges in the soft ice, and if it snows, he's there to shovel. "You never know what Mother Nature is going to throw at you... this December I was at the rink almost every day shoveling," Ken said.

This year the rinks were closed earlier than usual due to a "fake spring" and warm weather. When the angle of the sun changes, it beats down on the ice shrinking the ice from the edges exposing the ground. "Closing the ice was a tough decision to make, but it was necessary because the ice couldn't be kept safe to skate on."

In 2024 the township hockey rink was upgraded as part of the Wabana Recreation Project improvements and the hockey rink was enlarged to 60 X 130' and new hockey boards were put in, along with upgraded lights. The family skating rink next to the hockey rink was also enlarged to accommodate more skaters. The money for the improvements came from grants, as well as from corporate and individual donors.

Many people from the community came together to install the hockey rink. Local resident, Wayne Speedling, headed-up the rink project and coordinated everything from ordering equipment to calling in volunteers to set the boards. Wayne was able to get most of the supplies at cost and Al Keller & Company donated their time to survey and set the poles. Residents volunteered to put the hockey boards up. "Most of these volunteers helped put the rink in, not because they wanted to use the ice themselves... they did it for the community and for all the future skaters," Wayne added.

Bob and Ken speak proudly of the work they've done to keep the ice in great shape for all the skaters. "There aren't many places' kids can go for an unstructured skate with an open warming house and rink lights that can be turned on at night," Ken said. The rink is open 24 hours a day so skaters can come when it works for them. The rink relies on self-policing. "When kids leave a mess, or write on the walls, other skaters let them know that that's not how things work here and the situation is usually taken care of without me stepping in... most know if they want to have the rink continue as it is, they need to take care of it," Ken said.

Some say Wabana Township has the best ice north of Grand Rapids, which is a great compliment to Ken. Skaters and their families appreciate having a fun, safe place to go in the winter. We are thankful for Ken's dedication and commitment to keeping our rinks so nice and are glad he's the keeper of our ice!



Bob Moore & Ken Aho



pickup hockey group



Patrick Moore & Grace

History of the Wabana Rink

Spring 2026

By Lynne Pernsteiner

www.wabanatownship.com



The Wabana hockey rink has been around for over 70 years and has quite a history that goes with it. The first ice rink residents can recall was put in in the late-60's. The rink then was located behind the Wabana Town Hall, where the playground is now located. Back then the rink was just a small, flat open area without hockey boards, lights, or a warming house. Many Wabana residents have fond memories of the rink and were happy to share them with me.

"Our moms would show up at the rink after putting us on the school bus and they'd take turns flooding the ice. The kids that used the rink were responsible for shoveling and maintaining it," Deb Keys told me. The moms that took care of the ice then were— Esther Wakeman, Myrna Lorenz, Marion Hughes, June Garner, Helen Heaton, and Dodie Deal. They knew how much the kids loved skating and did what they could to help.

Kim Rudolf Hoffman remembers going to the rink just about every night. "We'd eat our dinner as fast as we could so we could go play hockey. There wasn't much to do in the winter up here, but we could skate." Most kids didn't have hockey equipment back then. Many played boot hockey because they didn't own skates. If they had skates, the girls wore figure skates, and the boys wore hockey skates. We taped magazines to our shins so when we got hit by pucks it didn't hurt as much," Kim said, then added, "there was an amazing camaraderie on the ice. We had to figure things out with each other. We'd teach the younger kids to skate, and we'd take care of anyone that wasn't behaving on the ice."

"The ice then was not as nice as it is now... there's no comparison," said Scott Wakeman. "We didn't have hockey boards, so we watered the snowbanks to create make-shift boards to keep the pucks from flying off or sinking in the snow. The ice rink drew everyone together. We'd walk a mile or so to the rink to skate. Sometimes we'd build a fire so we wouldn't have to walk home with frozen toes and ice hanging from our hair. In the spring we'd go back to the rink looking for the pucks we'd lost during the winter."

Jim Brooks said, "The rink back then was where everyone went. It didn't matter the ages. We didn't have a league or anything like that, we all just played together— the boys and girls all on one team. It didn't matter if it was 40 below zero or not. Sometimes we'd snowmobile to the rink, and we stayed until our mom's said we had to go home."

Professional hockey player Bob Bennett was said to show up at the rink to skate, as well as other local skaters who went on to play at the high school, college, or professional level.

Numerous people helped flood and maintain the rink over the years. In the 1980's township employees and even township supervisors helped with the rink maintenance. That included supervisor Marv Ott. In the 1990's and early 2000's Bill McLaughlin and Dean Roberts were the main rink guys. They dealt with obstacles such as cold equipment storage, frozen hoses and water lines and extreme temperature swings. Bob Moore volunteered to help during that period as he had two young sons that loved to skate and play hockey.

He took over maintenance in the early 2000's. Bud Sage who was an active township board member led a planning effort to replace the warming house. Bud's efforts resulted in the construction of a new warming house and heated maintenance building. The building is dedicated to Bud Sage.

Bob continues to be a proponent of the rink and helped in the planning, designing and construction of the new rink. The rink is named after Bob as a tribute to his 30 plus years of involvement. Ken Aho has maintained the rink since 2020 and put in many cold hours since that time and has done an excellent job in keeping the ice in tip top shape for skaters.

The Wabana rink has contributed to many good memories for resident families and visitors. Many of the skaters that enjoyed the ice fifty years ago, now have kids and grandkids that come to the rink. We are fortunate to have a great place to go for some skating fun.

***If you have photos or memories from skating at the Wabana rink, send them—wabanacommunications@gmail.com**

Wabana Township Officers and Staff

Jane Moore, Chairperson (phone: 563-580-5253; email: jane.moore.wabana@gmail.com)
Mark Johnson, Supervisor (phone: 218-398-6959; email: mark.johnson.wabana@gmail.com)
Lloyd Adams, Supervisor (phone: 218-999-9749; email: lloyd.adams.wabana@gmail.com)
Deb Kee, Treasurer (phone: 218-326-2115; email: deb.kee.wabana@gmail.com)
Steve Melin, Clerk (phone: 218-256-5913; email: wabanatownshipclerk@gmail.com)
Carol Speedling, Deputy Clerk (text: 612-518-8992)
Ken Aho, Maintenance (phone: 218-256-7230)

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