



Photos by Pete Mohs

Left: The Fairview Township Town Hall is located on the west side of Gull Lake. Right: Jim Weizenegger is the Fairview Township board chair.

FEATURE

# Township 'gets no respect'

## *Fairview Township struggles with its identity*

BY PETE MOHS

Many citizens in Fairview Township, located in Cass County along the west shore of Gull Lake, have something in common with the late comedian Rodney Dangerfield as they both have made claims of "getting no respect."

For many years, Fairview Township's name has almost been forgotten to the point that township officials put up road signs identifying the Fairview name. That lack of recognition is often frustrating, said township clerk Marla Yoho.

"Nobody ever says 'Fairview Township,'" Yoho said. "It's always been that way. We even once had the billing paperwork for our published legals sent to us as 'Fairfield Township.' After a while, it became kind of a running joke."

Although the name may be unfamiliar, the township does have numerous familiar landmarks - like Pillsbury State Forest, the Department of Natural Resource's Rock Lake Campground and the famous painted rock, popular attractions like Mount Ski Gull and the Lakeshore Conservation Club, and

famous resorts or restaurants over the years like Quarterdeck, Birch Bay Golf Course and Resort, and Jake's City Grille.

"Two-third of our township is Pillsbury Forest, which is 10,000 acres," Yoho said. "Pillsbury, as well as most of our township, suffered extensive tree damage from the storm that went through our area last year."

"We also have a fire department (Pillager Fire Association building No. 2) connected to our town hall that was originally built in the 1960s," Yoho said.

Yoho adds that Fairview Township is home of a young celebrity.

"Rebecca Yeh, who was Miss Minnesota in 2013, is from Fairview. But Brainerd usually gets credit for Rebecca," she said.

Nearby communities like Brainerd, Nisswa and Lake Shore are often references instead of Fairview Township.

"We joke about it, but at the same time it's a little irritating," said Jim Weizenegger, township board chair. "We're in between a couple cities, so people forget that we exist. We're not a city, but we do have some nice

assets."

Weizenegger, who is starting his 21st year on the township board, and Yoho, starting her 23rd year as clerk, are typical members of the Fairview Township board. Other members are Walt Richmond, who has served as a supervisor since 1994; Sharon Owen, starting as treasurer before switching to deputy clerk/treasurer since 1993; and Tom Dechmann, who has served as a supervisor since 2007.

"Two of our three township supervisors are up for election this year, but we do have a lot of continuity in how our township is run," Yoho said. "We also have a low-keyed board. Maybe that's why nobody knows that we are here."

Road signs were recently put up to let motorists know they're driving into Fairview Township.

"We thought the signs would let people know where Fairview starts, but they didn't make any difference," Yoho joked. "For the most part, I think all townships are ignored."

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*Photo by Pete Mohs*

Road signs border the Fairview Township area.

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Some people know about Sylvan Township because of its large population and location near the busy Highway 210 (west of Brainerd)."

Yoho adds that Fairview is one of 50 townships in Cass County and one of 1,788 townships in Minnesota, which is more than twice the number of cities around the state.

"Most townships are 36 square miles," she said. "We have a few more miles in Fairview because we cover the west coastline of Gull Lake."

Fairview Township's most recent population total was 850 people with around 2,000 homes, although 52 percent of the evaluation is second (seasonal) homes.

"Cass County has a total population of 28,559, with 75 percent of that population living in townships," said Yoho, who is also a board member for the Cass County Association of Townships. "Actually, 80 percent of the total market value in Cass County lies in the townships."

Fairview Township was formed in March 1922. In November 1924, a portion of the original township that lies to the east and south of Gull Lake was "detached" and became East Gull Lake.

"That was primarily because travel was still quite difficult in those days and it was too hard to connect with the population and maintain the road system as it existed at that time," Yoho said. ♦

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