

40
YEARS

OF

NDTOA

North Dakota Township Officers Association

HISTORY

1966-2006

This version of the North Dakota Township Association history book was assembled in 2006 by Past Presidents Ken Yantes (Brocket), Gene Gehrke (Aneta), Bryan Hoime (Grand Forks) and Chuck Thacker (Neche).

This follows the 1991 version as an update on this organization's activities from its inception in 1966 to 2006. The 25th anniversary history book had been prepared by Chester Larson (Enderlin) and Nolan Verwest (Finley).

Dedication

We would like to dedicate this 40th Anniversary book to the many township officers who spent many hours to organize our state organization. A special acknowledgement to Francis E. (Hank) Weber (Gill Township) and Ralph Cameron, both of Cass County, who initiated the original "push" to get things started. Francis was known as "*Mr. Township*" around the legislature.

Futhermore, we express special acknowledgement for our past presidents who have passed away. They include our first president, Ralph Cameron (Ayr), who passed away in 1983; fourth president, Richard (Dick) Bultema (Wimbeldon), who passed away in 1985 and fifth president, Leo Gray (Hankinson), who passed away in 1989.

We are indeed indebted to these men for their contributions to the North Dakota Township Officers Association.

25 Years of NDTOA

1966-1991

The North Dakota Township Officers Association (NDTOA) was organized in 1966. The association became very effective in its role in providing a voice for townships in the Legislature and helping to improve the effectiveness of township governments. Organized township governments have been active as local governments since early in this state's history.

North Dakota is one of 16 states, primarily in the Midwest, that have organized townships. Of the 1,800 Congressional Townships, approximately 1,360 are organized into what is termed Civil Townships which elect their own officers and run their own business.

The business of an unorganized township is run by the county commissioners of that county wherein the township is located.

A six-square mile township with 36 sections was initiated by Congress in 1885 as a method of measuring and identifying land in the developing western areas. The primary responsibilities of township government are road construction and maintenance as well as various other local services as dictated by the residents of the township at their annual meeting.

Townships in sparsely settled western North Dakota were never organized.

These local governments have been administered entirely by elected volunteer officers with no staff assistance. County organizations of townships have provided for coordination with county governments.

Until the NDTOA was organized, townships had no official voice in the Legislature nor opportunity for communication and coordination with townships in other counties across the state.

The Next 15 Years

1991-2006

Following the examples set by past leadership and the grassroots policies developed over the first 25 years, the NDTOA has continued to grow and mature. President Chet Larson of Enderlin left us with a list of organizational goals that has guided us into the future.

Chet became the first North Dakotan to serve as President of the National Association of Towns and Townships (NATAAT) and lead us in 1994 to the national level to be the Featured State Winner for 1995.

The NDTOA continued to serve its members in the legislative arena and grew from attending the legislature on a part time basis and staying in motel rooms to renting a 2- to 3-bedroom apartment which provided a constant place for officers to stay.

John Oxton (Hope), Gene Gehrke, Norm Andrus (Oakes), Bryan Hoime, and Ken Yantes all participated in the legislative effort as a team.

The growth in office equipment went from a single mechanical typewriter that sometimes worked, to an office/apartment equipped with a fax, copier, printer, two computers with State Capitol Bill Tracking service and Internet connections for members who had Internet service and a web site for 24-hour communications.

The NDTOA membership passed a special dues increase which funded a full time Executive Director/Director of Governmental Relations position in May of 2006. This gave NDTOA a full time employee to provide vigilance on a constant basis while the township members concentrated on making a living from their professions.

Ken Yantes established an office in his home in Brocket, ND and serves as the first full time Executive Secretary of NDTOA.

Original Organization of NDTOA

In 1965 Representative Francis E. (Hank) Weber was a township officer from Cass County and a freshman House member in the 39th Legislative Assembly. Based on his experience, he saw the need for a statewide township officers association.

During the Legislative session there were questions, remarks and comments relating to issues affecting townships, but no one from the townships was there to defend the township position in these issues. Other units of government, the counties, cities, and departments of state government had their lobbyists and influential people representing their causes.

Following the legislative session, Hank contacted Ralph Cameron who was at that time president of the Cass County Association. Hank was vice president of the same county association. Together, they began to work on the formation of a state township officers organization.

On May 17, 1966, township officers from Traill, Barnes and Ransom Counties were guests of the Cass County Township Officers Association. Talks began on forming a state association.

On July 11, 1966 a Cass County Township Officers meeting was held at the Vets Club in Casselton. Cass County officers attending were Ralph Cameron, Melvin Gangness, Francis Weber, and Joseph Woell. By invitation, representatives attending from nearby counties included Ed Monson and Herb Peterson (Barnes County), Ernest Fadness and county agent Earl Sulerud (Ransom County), Richland County Agent Vern Kasson.

A motion was made by Hank Weber and seconded by Ernest Fadness to setup a temporary North Dakota Township Officers Association. The motion carried and Ralph Cameron was named temporary chairman and Joseph Woell was named temporary secretary.

The official organization meeting was held later in 1966. Counties represented at this meeting held in Casselton were Cass, Barnes, LaMoure, Nelson, Ransom, Richland, and Traill.

Ralph Cameron (Ayr-Cass County) was elected president; Ernest Fadness (Lisbon-Ransom County) was elected vice president; and Joseph Woell (Casselton-Cass County) was elected secretary-treasurer.

The *Fargo Forum* reported, "*Ralph Cameron of Ayr, in Cass County, has been elected president of a newly formed North Dakota Township Officers Association.*"

The aims of the association, as set forth in the constitution adopted at the Casselton meeting, are to provide representation by townships before various groups, board and agencies; provide for joint action between townships; and to promote the best interest of township governments and citizens.

During the Casselton meeting those present authorized President Cameron to attend the 1967 session of the North Dakota Legislature to work in the interest of township needs.

History of NDTOA

The First 25 Years

The following history of the association is based on available association minutes and on the memories of those involved.

The association had some hard times during its formative years. A *Fargo Forum* editorial on December 23, 1967 stated, "*The township is actually too small a unit of government to function effectively,*" and went on to say this unit of government should "*form a consolidation of townships equivalent to the border lines of school districts serving the area.*"

The editor obviously did not know much about the border lines of school districts to make such a statement. His comments stirred some township officers into putting more energy into the organization.

Another episode that riled some township officers was a statement made by State Senator Esky Solberg, who was representing the Motor Carriers Association. Senator Solberg stated that the NDTOA was weak and ineffective; therefore should not be recognized in their lobbying efforts to gain a share in the Highway Users Funds.

History of NDTOA

The Next 15 Years

Lobbying efforts from the 1980s had successfully produced a funding source in the one cent per gallon gas tax. The ability to form multi-township districts (consolidating a maximum of five townships to form one multi-district unit) and to allow an increase the number of supervisors from three to five in others.

The 1991 December annual meeting held in Valley City produced a couple of grassroots developed organizational by-law changes. The first was to give NATaT director's seats and votes on the board of directors. The second change set up four districts from which four state directors were to be elected to serve on the State Executive Committee.

At the annual meeting President Ken Yantes reported of his work on the Consensus Council and the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR). He gave a review of a 76-page bill proposal called the *Tool Box For Local Governments*, which results in greater cooperation between units of government to create increased efficiency and effectiveness in local government. This tool box bill continued to move on to the 1993 legislative session and became a law which still stands today.

During a State Executive Board meeting in Bismarck on February 27, 1993, we lost a state board member from Mountain, ND—Ben Byron. Ben's straight forward defense of our policies at the Legislature and in our policy development sessions will long be remembered. His directorship was filled by Ralph Olson (Maddock) who was the Benson County Association president until the spring of 2006.

Accomplishments

The First 25 Years

In spite of the opposition from the North Dakota League of Cities, the NDTOA has had some major accomplishments. In 1969, the association lobbied for the repeal of the personal property tax. Again the legislature concurred.

In 1971, the association made its first attempt to achieve legislative action to gain a share of the highway users funds. The effort failed, but the seeds were sown. Modification of the original bill were proposed in the next four legislative sessions. The bill came close to passage but never quite made it.

The 1972 minutes of the association's annual meeting indicate that 11 county associations of townships were members of the state association. President Richard Bultema represented the association at the state constitutional convention in Bismarck. All of the recommendations of the NDTOA were adopted by the constitutional convention.

In 1972, Federal Revenue Sharing became an important source of revenue for townships; but, Federal Revenue Sharing was terminated by Congress in the mid 1980s.

At the 1973 annual meeting, a resolution was passed to have three representatives of the association attend the State Tax Equalization hearing on assessments for property taxes. The minutes reflect that the state association had 14 county associations as members then.

Present at the meetings were representatives from Traill, Ransom, Steele, Cass, Richland, Nelson, LaMoure, Renville, Bottineau, and Stutsman Counties. Absent were representatives from Benson, Grand Forks and Ward Counties.

A membership committee consisting of Chester Larson and Allen Braaten (Richland County) was formed to work toward getting more counties in the association.

At the annual meeting on December 10, 1975, Jay Kirkeide (Benson County) moved that our association join the National Association of Towns and Townships. The motion was seconded and adopted. Now the association was involved in county decisions as well as state and federal legislation.

Also at this meeting a controversial resolution opposing the construction of the proposed Kindred Dam was adopted. This resolution made the directors realize that there were people living on both sides of the dam—each with a different prospective on the project.

A resolution concerning the Garrison Diversion project a few years later did not receive support. The Kindred Dam proposal came back to the 1976 annual meeting and did not receive the support of the convention.

Annual membership dues were increased from \$5 to \$10 per township at the 1976 annual meeting to help finance the increased activity of the association. A newsletter, "The Grassroots Forum," was planned and negotiations with Prairie West Publications in Wahpeton, ND were conducted.

Seven issues were printed and mailed out. The cost of the publication far exceeded the revenues, so it was discontinued. The last issue was dated August 1, 1979.

In 1979, the financial report indicated dues were received from townships in 33 counties.

The present NDTOA newsletter was initiated in 1981. In 1990, the newsletter was renamed, "Grassroots Report" and sent to all township officers in North Dakota.

A resolution passed at the December 1980 annual meeting of the NDTOA, asking for a 1¢ state tax per gallon on motor fuels. The funds generated from this tax would be dedicated for the construction, reconstruction, and maintenance of township roads.

In 1981, the Legislature turned down the 1¢ per gallon tax increase, but did allocate a one-time \$8 million allocation for the biennium (\$4 million per year). The State Association of Township Officers finally had a big break.

During the 1983 legislative session, the 1¢ fuel tax was again proposed by the NDTOA. This time the legislature saw fit to enact permanent legislation dedicating the 1¢ of the motor fuel tax to township roads. NDTOA felt this action rectified the 1963 legislation which allowed cities in the state a share of the motor fuels taxes and registration fees. Motor fuels taxes now received by townships account for, on the average, over 30% of their total revenue.

Host for NATaT Meeting

The summer of 1986 June association meeting was hosted by NDTOA in Medora, ND. The new convention center offered a relaxed atmosphere and a quiet background for the productive board meeting. Several compliments were received from other state delegates who attended. A couple of NATaT board members found they needed to tighten their cinch straps if they were to stay on a horse.

Workshops and Handbooks

The First 25 Years

Officers of the state association felt the need for more information for member township officers on carrying out their responsibilities. In 1984, four educational workshops were held across the state.

In 1986, the first issue of the “North Dakota Township Officers Handbook” was printed as a loose leaf notebook. The handbook was written and edited by Lloyd Omdahl and Lyle Olson at the Bureau of Government Affairs, University of North Dakota, the NDTOA Handbook Committee, and Norbert Dorow, NDSU Extension Service, facilitated and coordinated its publication.

An update of the handbook was researched and written by Phil Harmenson, Bureau of Government Affairs, University of North Dakota in 1988. The 1990 handbook was revised by the NDTOA Handbook Committee with John Oxtan conducting the majority of research and writing. Tom Moe (Mayville) Legal Counsel for NDTOA, was the legal advisor.

The first workshops for township officers were held in 1984 and very well received by the membership. Subsequent workshops were held over the state in the even numbered years. Over 500 members per year attended these first workshops.

The handbooks biennial revisions were distributed and reviewed at all workshops. This gave the township officers a chance to discuss the most current legislative changes to their duties and responsibilities as officers.

The workshops were conducted largely by state officers of the NDTOA and its legal counsel. Norbert Dorow, NDSU Extension Service coordinated the first meetings.

Workshops and Handbooks

The Next 15 Years

The loose leaf notebook referred to in the first 25 years proved to be a great success. Every even year the manual is updated with the law changes from the previous year's legislative session.

On every fourth or fifth revision, it is necessary to print a completely revised book due to the costs of reprinting "outdated" update packages. These updates have been very costly and a source of funding was sought to reduce the drain of membership dues dollars.

The North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund (NDIRF) Executive Director Steve Spilde made a very generous offer. If we allowed the NDIRF to be total sponsor of the handbook, they would pay for all of the book costs. This offer was accepted with a great deal of gratitude by the leadership of NDTOA.

Bryan Hoime has been largely responsible for the typing and editing of the update packages. The NDTOA is very grateful for the long hours spent in serving us.

As the years pass and more and more use was made of this publication by the membership, we began to receive great feedback from differing areas. The most memorable was when an attorney called the NDTOA office and asked if he could buy one of those "*darn green*" township manuals. When asked why, he said he needed to be able to respond to a township officer when the officer (his customer) referred to a specific page in his manual.

The NDTOA workshop program continued from the original start of four day-long workshops to 18 half-day workshops. The workshop program was originally designed to bring the state organization leadership to the membership for an informational training session for both.

Updating of the township manuals and being able to hold an open forum of question and answers with our attorney were the main attractions of the program. John Oxton originated a skit that found many of the workshop presenters on stage acting out parts that helped the membership to better understand the new law changes.

North Dakota Attorney General Heidi Heitkamp, Head Supervisor of Taxation Barry Hasti and Mark Verke, Risk Management Expert for NDIRF joined in as active participants in the “not ready for prime time township players.”

After John retired from his play-writing in 1990, Tom Moe picked up the pen and continues to write plays. A great deal of thanks to both men.

Frequent characters appearing in the skits include Normal Township Treasurer, Lotta Bucks; Township Resident Landowner, Lonny; and the Township Troublemaker, Iver Askin (I.B. Askin) for short.

The workshops usually close with Tom discussing the new law changes portrayed in the skits. This open question and answer forum leads to dialogue between the officers present and their attorney on any and all topics.

The Grassroots Report

The Past 15 Years

The past leadership of the NDTOA has recognized the needs of regular communication with township members. This two-way street of communication seems to be well served by a quarterly newsletter.

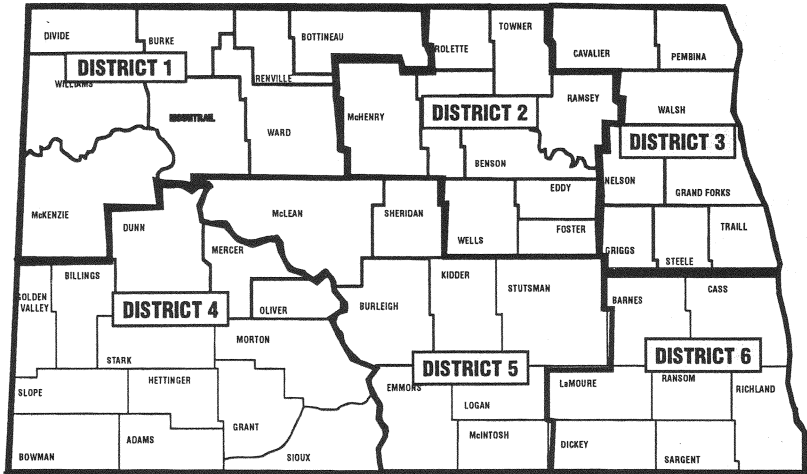
Since 1977 when the *Grassroots Forum* was published to the present day *Grassroots Report*, many changes have occurred. From 1989 to 1999, Bryan Hoime served as our editor and composer of the newsletter. The Farmers Union Insurance Co. was the sole financial sponsor of all printing costs and placed a half page ad in every issue.

In December of 2000, the state board of directors hired Ken Yantes to seek more advertising customers to defray the cost. LeAnn Harner was hired as the editor and a professional commercial printer did the quarterly printing job.

In 2002, Kathy Holte, who is an assessor for several townships and two cities including Lebanon Township in McHenry County, was hired to compose the *Grassroots Report*. She is also a graphic artist at Lowe's Printing, Inc. in Minot where the newsletter is currently printed.

The *Grassroots Report* continues to be a very useful communication tool, but it did use about \$14,000 of the dues money each year with printing and mailing costs to approximately 6,300 township officers statewide. Ken sold advertising to the NDIRF, Farmers Union Insurance Co., Johnston Fargo Culvert Co., and FHM Equipment Co. which brought in \$3,150 per year and partially offset the cost of printing. Please thank these advertisers for their support.

NDTOA Board Districts



DISTRICT 1:

Floyd Miller, Director
Williston, ND

Counties included are Divide, Burke, Renville, Bottineau, Williams, Mountrail, McKenzie, and Ward.

DISTRICT 2:

Ralph Olson, Director
Maddock, ND

Counties included are Rolette, Towner, Benson, Ramsey, Pierce, Eddy, Foster, McHenry, and Wells.

DISTRICT 3:

Larry Syverson, Director
Mayville, ND

Counties included are Cavalier, Pembina, Walsh, Nelson, Grand Forks, Griggs, Steele, and Traill.

DISTRICT 4:

Kerry Schorsch, Director
New England, ND

Counties included are Golden Valley, Billings, Slope, Bowman, Adams, Hettinger, Stark, Dunn, Morton, Sioux, Oliver, and Mercer.

DISTRICT 5:

Barb Knutson, Director
McKenzie, ND

Counties included are McLean, Sheridan, Burleigh, Kidder, Stutsman, Emmons, Logan, and McIntosh.

DISTRICT 6:

Robert Forward, Director
Oakes, ND

Counties included are Barnes, Cass, Ransom, LaMoure, Dickey, Richland, and Sargent.

Current NDTOA Officers



CHUCK THACKER, *President*
10269 140th Ave. NE
Neche, ND 58265
(701) 265-8981
cthacker@polarcomm.com
Cell: 265-2831

LARRY SYVERSON
District 3 Director
Rt. 2, Box 44
Mayville, ND 58257
(701) 786-2697
las@polarcomm.com



JOANNE ABEL, *Vice President*
2964 20th Ave. NE
Arvilla, ND 58214
(701) 594-9183
joanne4mom@aol.com

KERRY SCHORSCH
District 4 Director
Rt. 2, Box 15
New England, ND 58647
(701) 579-4703
kerry@globaladvertising.com



KENNETH YANTES
*Executive Secretary/Director of
Governmental Relations &
NATaT Director*
P.O. Box 104
Brocket, ND 58321-0104
(701) 655-3513
Fax: (701) 655-3513
(Please call before sending)
ndtoa@polarcomm.com
ken@ndtoa.com

BARB KNUTSON
District 5 Director
2600 236th St. NE
McKenzie, ND 58572
(701) 673-3198
knutsons@bektel.com

ROBERT FORWARD
District 6 Director
8933 134th Ave. SE
Oakes, ND 58474
(701) 742-2749



BARB KNUTSON, *Treasurer*
2600 236th St. NE
McKenzie, ND 58572
(701) 673-3198
knutsons@bektel.com

STEVE GINSBACH
Alternate NATaT Director
16290 91st St. SE
Hankinson, ND 58041
(701) 242-7291
ginsbach@cpinternet.com



FLOYD MILLER
District 1 Director
14954 57th St. NW
Williston, ND 58801
(701) 875-4280

DONNY L. MALCOMB
Past President
4000 338th St. SW
Berthold, ND 58718
(701) 453-3285



RALPH OLSON
District 2 Director
5054 47th St. NE
Maddock, ND 58348
(701) 438-2344

Legal Counsel
THOMAS R. MOE
Attorney-At-Law
39 1st Ave. NW
Mayville, ND 58257
(701) 786-2442
trmoe@polarcomm.com



Board Members Added

In less than a decade, (1975 to 1984), the state association membership grew quite rapidly; therefore the directors saw the need to make some changes in the makeup of the board.

The executive committee expanded membership beyond the president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and past president to include two elected executive committee members.

Don Defoe (Pembina County) and John Erickson (Burleigh County) gave the committee a better cross section of our state. With this addition, it was easier to have state representation at the county annual meetings.

During the 1985 director's meeting the "at large" executive committee members were further expanded to four. At this meeting Ben Byron (Pembina County) replaced Don Defoe and Ken Yantes (Ramsey County) and Jerome Knudson (Divide County) were elected to new positions.

This gave the executive committee representation from three corners of the state and a much broader view of what was happening statewide.

On December 11, 1987, Tom Moe was retained as NDTOA legal counsel. The dissolving of what was known as the 100 man board occurred in 1998.

The executive board was increased by two more directors which brought the total to six—each from a designated area of our state. Two NATaT directors were appointed and given votes on the board. The cost for two NATaT directors was deemed too high, so the positions were changed to NATaT Director and Alternate.

NDTOA Awards Program

In 1987, NDTOA established the *Mr. Township Award* which was dedicated to the founder of our organization—Hank Weber of Casselton, ND.

This award was presented to a township officer who, through his actions, had served his township, his community and/or his state with exceptional service.

The first recipient was Jim Braaten from Crary (Ramsey County) in 1987. Below listed are the following recipients:

- 1988 Leo Gray, Hankinson (Richland County)
- 1989 John Oxton, Hope (Steele County)
- 1990 Nolan Verwest, Finley (Steele County)
- 1991 Richard Leet, Starkweather (Ramsey County)
- 1992 Wilfred Jorgenson, Lisbon (Ransom County)
- 1993 Russell Haas, Tolna (Nelson County)
- 1994 Ken Yantes, Starkweather (Ramsey County)
- 1995 Henning Anderson
- 1996
- 1997 Roy Werner, Jamestown (Stutsman County)
- 1998 Chuck Thacker, Neche (Pembina County)
- 1999 Leo Mock, Braddock (Kidder County)
- 2000 John Steinberger (Renville County)
- 2001 Joel Storsteen, Churchs Ferry (Ramsey County)
- 2002 Richard Heuchert, St. Thomas (Pembina County)
- 2003 Helen Frichie (Benson County)
- 2004 Ralph Olson, Maddock (Benson County)
- 2005 Eugene Kubat, Brocket (Walsh County)

Legislator of the Year Award

Legislative success requires friends in the legislative arena. This award program was established to reward, on an annual basis, one of those legislators who have been of great help to the NDTOA.

These awards are given at the annual meeting awards banquet. Each winner has a chance to be recognized in the presence of as many township officers as are assembled. They are given a plaque and are invited to address the NDTOA membership.

The qualifications to receive this award depend on if they have been a repeated sponsor, co-sponsor or defended in committee or on the floor of their house, township endorsed bills.

Senator David O'Connell, a township officer from the Lansford area, was the first award winner. Below listed are those who have followed in his footsteps:

- 1997 Senator David O'Connell, Lansford
- 1998 Senator John Andrist, Crosby
- 1999 Senator Judy Lee, West Fargo
- 2000 Senator Jerome Kelsh, Fullerton
- 2001 Representative Bruce Eckre, Wahpeton
- 2002 Senator Elroy Lindaas, Mayville
- 2003 Representative Robin Weisz, Hurdsfield
- 2004 Senator Dwight Cooks, Mandan
- 2005 Representative Wesley Belter, Leonard
- 2006 Representative Gil Herbel, Grafton

1966-2006—State Officers of NDTOA

- 1966: President Ralph Cameron (Cass); Vice President Ernest Fadness (Ransom); Secretary/Treasurer Joseph Woell (Cass)
- 1967: President Ralph Cameron; Vice President Ernest Fadness; Secretary/Treasurer Joseph Woell (Cass)
- 1968: President Ernest Fadness; Vice President Lloyd Law (Steele); Secretary Earl Sulerud (Ransom); Treasurer Alvin Evanson (Ransom)
- 1969: President Ernest Fadness (6 mo.) and Lloyd Law (6 mo.); Vice President Lloyd Law (6 mo.) and Oscar Oeder (Ransom) (6 mo.); Secretary Earl Sulerud (Ransom); Treasurer Alvin Evanson (Ransom)
- 1970: President Lloyd Law; Vice President Oscar Oeder; Secretary LeRoy Odegaard (Steele); Treasurer Alvin Evanson
- 1971: President Lloyd Law; Vice President Oscar Oeder; Secretary LeRoy Odegaard (Steele) and Gerald LeClerc (Steele); Treasurer Alvin Evanson
- 1972: President Richard Bultema (Barnes); Vice President Leo Gray (Richland); Secretary Larry Iverson (Barnes); Treasurer Alvin Evanson
- 1973: President Richard Bultema; Vice President Leo Gray; Secretary Larry Iverson; Treasurer Alvin Evanson
- 1974: President Richard Bultema; Vice President Leo Gray; Secretary Lester Dekrey (Barnes); Treasurer Chester Larson (Ransom)
- 1975: President Richard Bultema; Vice President Leo Gray; Secretary Lester Dekrey; Treasurer Chester Larson
- 1976: President Leo Gray; Vice President Chester Larson; Secretary J.D. Latham (Richland); Treasurer Alden Cavett (Ransom); NATaT Director Leo Gray
- 1977: President Leo Gray; Vice President Chester Larson; Secretary J.D. Latham; Treasurer Alden Cavett; NATaT Director Leo Gray
- 1978: President Leo Gray; Vice President Chester Larson; Secretary J.D. Latham; Treasurer Alden Cavett; NATaT Director Leo Gray
- 1979: President Leo Gray; Vice President Chester Larson; Secretary J.D. Latham; Treasurer Alden Cavett; NATaT Director Leo Gray
- 1980: President John Oxton (Steele); Vice President Emil Burquist (Burleigh); Secretary Gerald LeClerc (Steele); Treasurer Nolan Verwest (Steele); NATaT Director John Oxton
- 1981: President John Oxton; Vice President Emil Burquist; Secretary Gerald LeClerc; Treasurer Nolan Verwest; NATaT Director John Oxton
- 1982: President John Oxton; Vice President Chester Larson; Secretary Gerald LeClerc; Treasurer Nolan Verwest; NATaT Director John Oxton
- 1983: President John Oxton; Vice President Chester Larson; Secretary Gerald LeClerc; Treasurer Nolan Verwest; NATaT Director John Oxton
- 1984: President Chester Larson; Vice President Oscar Erie (Pierce); Secretary Jack Armstrong (Ransom); Treasurer Nolan Verwest; NATaT Director Chester Larson
- 1985: President Chester Larson; Vice President Oscar Erie (Pierce); Secretary Jack Armstrong (Ransom); Treasurer Nolan Verwest; NATaT Director Chester Larson

1966-2006—State Officers of NDTOA

- 1986: President Chester Larson; Vice President Oscar Erie; Secretary Jack Armstrong; Treasurer Nolan Verwest; NATaT Director Chester Larson
- 1987: President Chester Larson; Vice President Oscar Erie; Secretary Jack Armstrong; Treasurer Nolan Verwest; NATaT Director Chester Larson
- 1988: President Ken Yantes; Vice President Jerome Knudson (Divide); Secretary Tom Moe (Trall); Treasurer Nolan Verwest; NATaT Director Chester Larson
- 1989: President Ken Yantes; Vice President Jerome Knudson; Secretary Tom Moe; Treasurer Nolan Verwest; NATaT Director Chester Larson
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- 1997: President Bryan Hoime; Vice President Ken Yantes; Secretary Tom Moe; Treasurer Nolan Verwest; NATaT Director Chester Larson
- 1998: President Chuck Thacker (Pembina); Vice President Steve Ginsbach (Richland); Secretary Tom Moe; Treasurer Nolan Verwest; NATaT Director Bryan Hoime and Chester Larson
- 1999: President Chuck Thacker (Pembina); Vice President Steve Ginsbach (Richland); Secretary Tom Moe; Treasurer Nolan Verwest; NATaT Director Bryan Hoime and Chester Larson
- 2000: President Bryan Hoime; Vice President Steve Ginsbach; Secretary Tom Moe; Treasurer Nolan Verwest; NATaT Director Bryan Hoime and Bea Wall
- 2001: President Bryan Hoime; Vice President Steve Ginsbach; Secretary Tom Moe; Treasurer Nolan Verwest; NATaT Director Bryan Hoime and Bea Wall
- 2002: President Don Malcomb (Ward); Vice President Steve Ginsbach; Secretary Ken Yantes; Treasurer Nolan Verwest; NATaT Director Bryan Hoime and Bea Wall
- 2003: President Don Malcomb (Ward); Vice President Steve Ginsbach; Secretary Ken Yantes; Treasurer Nolan Verwest; NATaT Director Bryan Hoime and Bea Wall
- 2004: President Don Malcomb (Ward); Vice President Steve Ginsbach; Secretary Ken Yantes; Treasurer Nolan Verwest
- 2005: President Don Malcomb (Ward); Vice President Steve Ginsbach; Secretary Ken Yantes; Treasurer Nolan Verwest
- 2006: President Chuck Thacker; Vice President Joanne Abel (Grand Forks); Secretary Ken Yantes; Treasurer Nolan Verwest (7 mo.) Barb Knudson (2 mo.); NATaT Director Ken Yantes; NATaT Alternate Director Steve Ginsbach

The Gehrke Years

1991-1995

Gene Gehrke, Aneta, a township officer of Rugh Township of Nelson County, was elected president of NDTOA on December 6, 1991 and served until December 8, 1995.

During this period the township backed 76 page toolbox bill gathered strength for introduction and final passage as North Dakota law. This urged cooperation between governmental entities to create efficiency and effectivity in North Dakota.

Legislation to give townships the authority to decide the height and width of grass and weed cutting on township roadsides. Clarification of trees being obstructions on section lines and how to settle section line disputes between township residents were some of the legislative accomplishments of this period.

A long time board member, Ben Byron (Mountain), passed away during a state board meeting in Bismarck. He was a great board member and was known for his straightforward solutions to complex issues.

The workshop program was extended to eight meetings per year and the Workman's Comp premiums increased from \$25 per year to \$125. The NDIRF started to pay conferment checks to all townships for business done.

The NDTOA was "Featured State" at the September NATaT meeting. North Dakota's own Ransom County, Liberty Township officer Chet Larson, was elected president of the NATaT. Chet was presented the National Leadership Award by Governor Schafer during the National Conference in Washington, D.C. NDTOA had 28 representatives present.

The Hoime Years

1996-1997 and 2000-2001

Bryan Hoime, Edmore, ND in Ramsey County, served two terms as president of the NDTOA. Jerome Knudson served as vice president for the first two years and Ken Yantes served the last two years.

Bryan was appointed NATaT Director in 1998 and served for five years in that office. He was elected to the presidency of the National Center for Small Communities.

He brought home to NDTOA many of the national issues that would be affecting North Dakota townships in the future. His work on the establishment of North Dakota Confined Animal Feeding Operation's (CAFO) laws was outstanding.

Bryan served with Ken Yantes as NDTOA's lobbying team in the legislative halls in Bismarck from 1990 until the close of the 2001 session. He attended all the workshops during that same period. He served as NDTOA's secretary from 1990 until 1995 and editor of the newsletter from 1989 to 1999.

Bryan's presidency can be credited with many legislative accomplishments including the township officer wages allowable were increased from \$15 per day to \$20 with an increase of a maximum of \$450 per year to \$600.

Officers could also charge a mileage rate of the allowable IRS rate. The passage of a bill that allowed townships to create their own special assessment districts was also accomplished.

The total rewriting of the township pound and pound master's section of the North Dakota Century Code sparked comments from legislators saying, "*The townships have at least one doggie bill.*"

The First Thacker Years

1998-1999

Chuck Thacker, Neche, ND, a Felson Township officer from Pembina County was elected president of the NDTOA on December 5, 1997.

The workshop program was expanded to 16 different localities in North Dakota under Thacker's presidency. The open meetings open records laws were of great importance and it took a lot of time and effort to inform township officers on how to deal with these new laws.

One of the highlights of the 1998 NDTOA annual meeting was the dissolving of the traditional 100 man board and the establishment of a six director system for the executive board which was made up of one director from six different statewide districts.

A NDTOA supported bill was passed that allowed township officers to act in emergency situations without the three day waiting period. North Dakota Municipal Bond Bank offered to provide emergency funding to those townships that are in financial need.

Wal-Mart presented Chuck with the Hometown Leadership Award in recognition of the highest standards of dedication, ability, creativity and leadership in local government service. He donated his funds to the Cavalier Ambulance Service.

The cost to update the NDTOA handbook in 2000 was in excess of \$12,000. Chuck and Ken Yantes asked the North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund (NDIRF) to help fund it. They agreed to sponsor this project totally and special thanks was extended to Steve Spilde, NDIRF CEO.

Sam Walton Community Leader Awards

WAL★MART

American Hometown Leadership Award

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Charles Thacker

is presented with the 1998 American Hometown Leadership Award.

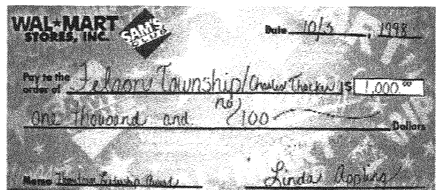


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SMALL COMMUNITIES

Tom Halicki
Tom Halicki, Executive Director
National Center for Small Communities

Donna M. Gaudin
Donna M. Gaudin, Director
Member's Association

Wal-Mart Store Manager



The Malcomb Years

2001-2005

Don Malcomb, a Ward County township officer was elected NDTOA president on December 4, 2001. He was instrumental in securing a Gubernatorial Proclamation to proclaim March 19, 2002 as Township Officers Day.

The NDTOA newsletter took on a new look and Kathy Holte, at Lowe's Printing, Inc. in Minot, is the editor. A motion was made to ask Kerry Schorsch to establish a web site for NDTOA and was passed unanimously. We are now in the computer age with our membership communication. To visit the website: www.ndtoa.com

Ken Yantes was appointed lobbyist for the 2003 legislative session. Bryan Hoime was not able to assist Ken during this session due to business interests and was sincerely missed. Ken's wife, Darleen, then helped during this time. NDTOA was successful in getting 58 out of 60 bills handled in accordance with our policies.

Ken reported at the executive board meeting on September 18, 2006 that he could not devote as much time to the legislative effort as he did in the past unless he was employed full time for the NDTOA. Plan B was executed and a professional lobbyist was hired. Not one bill was introduced in the 2005 session on behalf of our policies.

President Malcomb set up a committee to study the feasibility of a full time executive secretary, explaining in great detail to the membership at the annual meeting the need to establish this position. The motion was carried, but was not implemented until the following year.

Gubernatorial Proclamation

Whereas, North Dakota has 1344 townships under the supervision of approximately 6500 individuals from all walks of life in our rural areas. Many of these individuals have served their townships faithfully for ten to fifty years; and

Whereas, township officers do their jobs with few complaints and much pride in their community and rural way of life, doing in most areas what no one else would do. Many serve in areas of declining population where there is no one else to take their place; and

Whereas, township officers' pay ranges from several hundred dollars per year, to no compensation, to digging in their own pockets or volunteering their time and equipment to get the jobs done that are necessary; and

Whereas, township officers are responsible for approximately 56,000 miles of country roads that are necessary for school buses, emergency equipment, farm to market products, recreation, and economic development, as residents use these roads for related transportation to and from jobs; and

Whereas, township officers replace washed out culverts, provide snow removal, graveling, signing, mowing, zoning, paving districts and special tax assessments with little thanks, rewards or recognition; and

Now, therefore, as the Governor of the State of North Dakota, I do hereby proclaim March 19, 2002 as Township Officers' Day in the State of North Dakota.

39th Annual Meeting 2006

History Maker

Pembina County moved a motion which was seconded by Grand Forks County to direct the executive board to establish a full time position of full time Executive Secretary/Director of Governmental Relations and directed the executive board to find a way to fund this position. The motion was carried unanimously.

Trail County moved a motion which was seconded by Sargent County to propose a dues increase of \$50 per member township to fund the full time Executive Secretary/Director of Governmental Relations position. Motion carried unanimously.

Grand Forks County moved and Pembina County seconded a motion that set the year's salary and health insurance contributions to the position in the budget. Motion carried.

This action set the stage for NDTOA's next positive step towards the future.

Chuck Thacker's Second Term

2006-Present

At the onset of Chuck Thacker's second term he appointed Vice President Joanne Abel to chair a committee to set up the criteria of the full time Executive Secretary/Director of Governmental Relations position. Chuck's comment was that the direction from the membership at the annual meeting was very clear.

After six months of deliberation and careful consideration, the committee came in with a clear set of recommendations for the position, which the board accepted.

The first paid full time employee of the NDTOA would be Ken Yantes, a past state president, past vice president and current secretary of NDTOA. The most apparent duties of this office would be secretary to the executive board, president, and the membership at the annual meetings, lobbyist in the ND legislature, NATaT Director, and a presence for all members to contact during working hours.

Chuck and Ken traveled to all Finance and Taxation Interim Committee meetings and worked to represent the NDTOA on all levels on behalf of the membership.

Chuck was adamant that improved communication with NATaT be developed, authorizing travel expenses for Ken to attend a four-state conference in Red Wing, MN and a Washington, D.C. legislative conference which laid the ground work for implementation of resolutions that take federal congressional effort.

At this time, President Thacker has not completed a full term and has accomplished much.

Thank You

As a last note it seems fitting to give tribute to those in our membership who have given their time and efforts to get the North Dakota Township Officers Association started and for continually strengthening the organization. We also wish to thank the following:

Richard Konzak (Ramsey County) for his efforts in organizational structure of our policies, by-laws, and constitution. His words will live on in our organization forever.

John Oxtan (Steele County) for his many years of dedicated work in the legislature, for the training he has given, and by his example—future leadership knows what a state president should do.

Arvid Winkler (Barnes County) for years of testifying at the legislature on behalf of your township. The legislators need your reminder that township deadlines and tax implementation procedures as your testimony always reminds them to make it possible for us to comply with the new proposed law changes.

Allen Braaten (Richland County) for years of vigilance in the taxing area of the North Dakota Legislature and his input at annual meeting policy development sessions.

We also want to thank all township officers who take the time to attend the educational sessions held during the year and the annual meetings.

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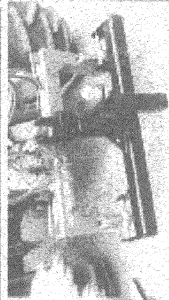
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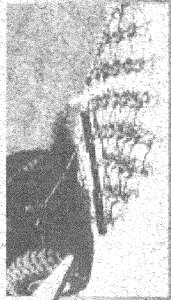
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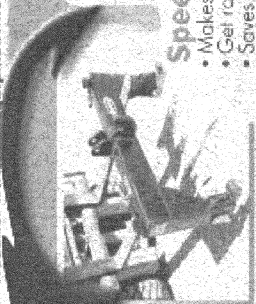
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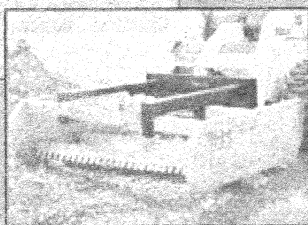
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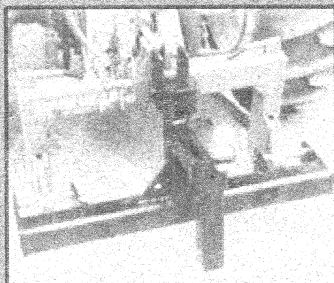


We thank Fred for sponsoring the publication of
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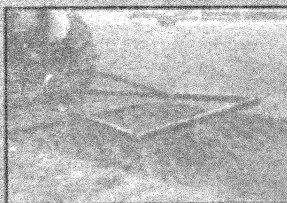
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