

ROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF WALSH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
February 18, 2020

February 18, 2020 - 9:00 a.m.

Members present: Madam Chairman Anderson, Commissioners Barta, Burianek and Skorheim. Absent was Commissioner Wild.

Madam Chairman Anderson called the meeting to order and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion by Burianek to approve the February 4, 2020 regular meeting minutes, Walsh County Gun Club Gaming Permit and addition of zone update, Letter to TC Energy, jail issues and health insurance. Second by Skorheim. Motion carried.

Brad Brummond appeared for the following:

- Brummond has 1 bid to replace the light pole in the extension office parking lot that was damaged by a hit and run. He has reached out to 6 other electric companies for bids and no one has responded. It would be cheaper and easier to move the light pole and use a wood pole. The highway department could do some of the work. Commissioners will talk to Sharon when she comes into the meeting.
- There is a diagonal crack in the cinder blocks in the southeast side of the arena. It is not a safety issue. Options were discussed but nothing will be done until spring.
- Interviews have been set for March 13th and possibly the 10th for the FCS/4-H position.
- Nelson County will fill the ANR position. This will help reduce Brad's work load as he has covered 3 counties this past summer.
- The extension office is in need of help with the upcoming 4-H events. Susan Brummond, Brad's wife, would be cheaper help and is familiar with the program and leaders. **Motion by Barta to allow the hiring of Susan Brummond to assist with upcoming 4-H events.** Second by Burianek. Upon roll call vote all voted yes. Motion carried.

A Northern Valley Human Service Zone Meeting was held on February 10th in Cavalier County. A recommendation for a zone director has been sent to the state for approval. Zone meetings will rotate from county to county.

A thank you letter will be drafted and sent to TC Energy to express our thanks for working well with the public, county, area businesses and the county employees.

Motion by Barta to renew the EAP contract for 3 years. Second by Burianek. Upon roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Twila Novak, Interim Zone Director and Jill Trenda, Treasurer, appeared to discuss funds deposits from the Department of Human Services. Some funds have come into the County that should go to the Zone. **Motion by Barta to allow the treasurer to send funds received for social service to the Northern Valley Human Service Zone.** Second by Skorheim. Upon roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Donations to the local zone office were also discussed. The Legislature did not include donations in their zone plan, therefore Human Services would like counties to have a policy for donations. Commissioners feel that donations are meant to stay local and assist local needy people with gas cards and other miscellaneous expenses. **Motion by Skorheim to have a report prepared for commissioners when funds are distributed.** Second by Burianek. Upon roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Ed Sevigny, Tax Director, appeared to present the following abatements.

- The Bradley & Bette Nilson abatement was due to an error in the GIS maps which lead to an incorrect valuation. **Motion by Burianek to follow the recommendation of the tax director and approve the Nilson abatement for 2018 & 2019.** Second by Barta. Upon roll call voted all voted yes. Motion carried.
Bradley & Bette Nilson Glenwood Twp 16-4217 2018 RET \$41,912
Bradley & Bette Nilson Glenwood Twp 16-4217 2019 RET \$42,682
- **Motion by Barta to follow the recommendation of the City of Grafton and the tax director to approve the Loree Osowski abatement for 2019.** Second by Skorheim. Upon roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.
Loree Osowski Rentals LLC Grafton City 37-8550 2019 RET \$36,000
- The Tweten basement was flooded and has been gutted. **Motion by Skorheim to follow the recommendation of the City of Grafton and the tax director and approve the Tweten abatement for 2018 & 2019.** Second by Burianek. Upon roll call vote all voted yes. Motion carried.
Roch Tweten Grafton City 37-10731 2018 RET \$146,000
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- Discussed farm exemptions.

Brent Nelson, Emergency Manager, appeared for the following:

- **Motion by Barta to reappoint to the weed board Jim Tallackson, District 3 and Eugene Kachena, District 4.** Second by Skorheim. Upon roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.
- The Landowner Assistance Program for weed control has been increased to \$1,500.
- Presented the 911 Resolution which was reviewed by the state's attorney. Do we want to move forward with putting it on the ballot? **Motion by Burianek to put the 911 Resolution on the June ballot.** Second by Skorheim. Upon roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.
- **Motion by Burianek to sign the Mutual Aid Agreement with Grand Forks County.** Second by Barta. Upon roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.
- A dispatcher has resigned. **Motion by Barta to approve advertising and filling the dispatcher position.** Second by Skorheim. Upon roll call vote, all vote yes. Motion carried.
- The water board and JDA have separate phone lines and are not on the T-1. It would be cheaper to add them to the T-1 and would save them money. Their bill would go from \$40 a month to .35¢. Their long distance charges would appear on the county billing and they would be responsible for their long distance charges. **Motion by Barta to allow the water board and JDA on the T-1.** Second by Burianek. Upon roll call vote all vote yes. Motion carried. Currently we have 23

channels on the T-1. We are only using about 12. If we reduce the number to 16 it would reduce our monthly bill by about \$245. Additional lines could be added back in if needed.

Sharon Lipsh, Highway Superintendent, appeared for the following:

- **Motion by Barta to sign the agreement with KLJ for Bridge #124-02. This project is the bridge bundling grant and is bundled with GF County.** Second by Skorheim. Upon roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.
- Ideal Energy approached Sharon to do an energy audit on our lighting systems within the county campus. Discussed the savings and the cost. There is currently a grant available through North Dakota Department of Commerce. It is first come first serve which the County could apply for. **Motion by Barta to apply for grants and move forward on lighting project based on grant approval.** Second by Skorheim. Upon roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.
- The highway department received a bill from the water board for the cost share of culverts for Drain 30-2, by the airport. Sharon was not aware of the project so she did not budget for it. **Motion by Barta to pay the \$6,573.35 to the water board for culvert.** Second by Skorheim. Upon roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.
- A February 28th court date has been set for the Ferguson vs. Nodak case for the collapse of a county bridge. The state's attorney's office hopes to have the beet harvester bridge accident filed and served in a week or so.
- With social services moving to the zone and being Cavalier County employees Sharon would like to have the zone employees taken off Walsh County's Workforce Safety Policy and put on Cavalier County's policy since they are now Cavalier County employees. Karen will visit with Stanley Dick zone member and Cavalier County commissioners about it.
- Discussed replacing the light pole at the extension office. The highway department may have a pole to use and should be able to assist with replacing the light pole.

Ron Jurgens, Sheriff and Tanya Wieler, HR Director appeared to discuss issues within the jail. A new hire never reported for duty and has not returned any calls from the sheriff's office. With the ongoing DOCR inspections and staffing issues at the jail Sheriff Jurgens felt that this might be a good time to make some changes. It was mutually agreed on that the head jailer would step down and fill the vacant jailer position. Then they would like to advertise for a chief corrections officer for the jail. This new title would replace the head jailer position and would involve more administrative duties, working on policies and procedures and more responsibility. The salary will need to be adjusted to compensate for the added duties and responsibilities. **Motion by Barta to advertise and fill the position of chief corrections officer.** Second by Skorheim. Upon roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried. Ann Stroh, Administrative Assistant, has stepped up and has been working on the jail to do list and has played a key role in working on some of the policies and procedures required of the DOCR. Sheriff Jurgens would like Ann to be compensated for the additional work she is doing and will continue to do until a chief corrections officer is hired. **Motion by Skorheim to pay Ann Stroh an additional \$350 a month effective February 1st until the position is filled.** Second by Barta. Upon roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried. There will be no retirement on the \$350.

Tanya Wieler, HR Director and Sondra Richardson, Deputy Auditor were present to discuss health insurance. The auditor met with Don Kramer from Blue Cross Blue Shield to discuss the county's annual renewal and new rates. The annual increase for the county will be 22.6%. We were looking at a 16-18% increase anyway but also had a bad year with high claims. Tanya reached out to Al Berg from Premier Benefits to discuss what services they could provide to us and at what cost. We had a conference call with Al and discussed other health carriers, options within BC/BS, long term plan and additional services. Premiere Benefits requires signing a contract and fee of 2% of our health insurance premium for 3 years. John & Mike Guzman from Farmers Union Insurance had reached out to Sondra back in November and had asked for the opportunity to provide similar services as Premier Benefits. John Guzman, Mike Guzman and Renae Fayette from Farmers Union met with Tanya, Sondra and Kris to discuss what they had to offer. They also have many other options for health, dental and vision plans which are network driven and have plans for public agencies. Farmers Union does not require a contract and if we don't like anything they present and keep our old policy it costs the County nothing. Farmers Union is a commission based company. Working with either company would include a portal for access to 1 site for all employee benefits. Currently Sondra must go into 6 or 7 different sites to setup a new hire. Also discussed was grandfathered status and lack of preventive care or wellness options, maintaining a large group which required 50 fulltime employees and pay in lieu of. The commissioners expressed wanting to take care of the employees. Just for comparison, the old policy and one that was suggested by Don Kramer was presented. Keeping the old policy would cost the county approximately \$75,000 for the 8 months of increase for 2020. Switching to a different Blue Cross policy could potentially only cost the county approximately \$9,200. Commissioners recommended working with Farmers Union. Sondra will submit necessary information so that Farmers Union can begin process of looking for potentially other carriers and plans that would be suitable for the County.

Review a report with the revenue from the Keystone Pipeline.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Karen Anderson, Madam Chairman

Attest:

Kris Molde, Auditor