

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF WALSH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MARCH 16, 2021**

March 16, 2021 – 8:30 a.m.

Members present: Chairman Skorheim, Commissioners Barta, Brintnell and Burianek.
Absent Commissioner Anderson.

The meeting was called to order and bills were reviewed until 8:50 a.m.

Chairman Skorheim called the meeting back to order at 9:00 a.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Commissioner Barta moved to approve the March 2, 2021 regular meeting minutes, monthly bills, Walsh County Gun Club gaming permit and additions of deputy tax director salary, lawn mowing bids and burning ban with drain tiles being removed from the agenda. Second by Burianek. Motion carried.

There is loose carpet in one of the Red River Regional Council offices in the Chase Building. The carpet can't be stretched as it is glued down. They would like the carpet fixed before the new employee starts. Provided a sample of the carpet and a bid for the one office as well as the lower level of the Chase Building. **Motion by Brintnell to accept the bid from B & D Flooring and replace the carpet in the one office for \$1,826.81.** Second by Burianek. Upon roll call vote Brintnell, Burianek and Skorheim voted yes. Barta abstained. Motion carried. Commissioners would like a second bid for the replacement of the rest of the carpet on the lower level of the Chase Building.

Kaitlin Atkinson, Vision Zero Outreach Coordinator, for the northeast region introduced herself to the board. This is a newly created position providing public awareness and education for the Vision Zero Program. She will work out of Grand Forks County and cover 14 counties. She is available for public events for awareness and has access to some great resources. Wanda Kratochvil, Public Health Administrator, expressed her excitement in working with Kaitlin and Vision Zero. Sheriff Ron Jurgens also looks forward to working with Kaitlin and possibly bringing Vision Zero to the county fair. Grand Forks Sheriff, Andy Schneider, who was also in attendance stated that Kaitlin is here for counties and cities and is not a Grand Forks employee. He encouraged Walsh County to utilize Kaitlin and all of her resources.

Jay Gudajtes representing John Gudajtes, Brad Narloch, Chris Bjerneby, and their attorney, Brett Boeddeker were present to discuss right of ways and possible resolution to avoid litigation. According to Mr. Boeddeker the easements were never recorded or notarized back in the 50's and 60's. They may be recorded now but previous deeds cancel them. The posts are in the way of farming operation. The County has allowed utility permits to be dug without contacting owners. Kelley Cole, Walsh County State's Attorney stated that this a state wide issue and that Aaron Birst from the Association of Counties is working on this issue and that right of ways affect federal funding for county projects. The group would like to see the post removed and returned to the original

location at the edge of the field. Currently the signs are a foot off the right of way. The commissioners will take under advisement.

Jill Denault, Northern Valley Human Service Zone Director, appeared via telephone to discuss a new phone system that could be utilized between the 3 counties. Calls would go to one automated phone and could be forwarded to any individual. Employees could keep their current phone numbers. Phones could be purchased for \$45 with a \$50 credit per phone essentially making the phones free. Walsh County would basically be paying the same rate. Thoughts are that it would save funds zone wide. Phones are an indirect expense that the county is responsible for. A concern for the county is if our county wide alert system would work with the new phone system in case of an emergency or lock down. Jill will meet with Cavalier County Commission at 10:00 and Pembina County at 10:30. She will call us back after those meeting and will let us know what action the other counties took.

Wanda Kratochvil, Public Health Administrator, appeared for the following:

- Informed the commissioners that Allen Anderson of Minto was hired as the new Public Health Administrator. He will start on June 1st.
- The mask mandate was lifted on March 9th at 11:59 p.m. however citizens and businesses are encouraged to continue to use masks and practice social distancing.
- Vaccinating is going well. They are currently working on Group 1B, under 65 with health conditions and 1C, essential workers and schools. The vaccine is considered effective two weeks after the second vaccine. The group of most concern that won't get vaccinated are the 18-40 year olds that feel that they are healthy. The state is working on campaigns targeted to that group.
- On November 8th Walsh County had 360 active cases today we are at 8.

Ed Sevigny, Tax Director, appeared for the following:

- Gave an update on SB2041 which he testified against last week in Bismarck. Barta thanked Ed for a job well done. There were a group of potato farmers in Bismarck last week lobbying for the bill. The chair of the committee seemed to be against the bill based upon his comments at the hearing.
- Judge Whelan gave an opinion on a potato warehouse case in Pembina County that could have an effect on the Gudajtes abatement. State's Attorney Kelley Cole is reviewing the case and we may ask for an attorney general opinions as well. The Gudajtes properties will be kept as residential for 2021.
- Tanya Wieler, HR Director, was unable to attend the meeting so Commissioner Barta informed the board that Deputy Tax Director, Val Dalbey, has recently completed the Class II Assessor certification which is a huge asset to the tax director's office. A 2 step salary adjustment is proposed effective for March payroll. Currently she is at a step 3, \$2888 per month and will move to a step 5, \$3,005 per month. **Motion by Burianek to approve the 2 step increase for Deputy Tax Director Val Dalbey.** Second by Brintnell. Upon roll call vote all voted yes. Motion carried.

Yvette Moe, Recorder, appeared to discuss purchasing 2 new scanners. The old scanners were purchased in 2007 and 2009 and are not compatible with their new computers. They are \$1,076.92 each and would be purchased with recorder funds. **Motion by Brintnell to approve the purchase of 2 new scanners for the recorder's office.** Second by Barta. Upon roll call vote all voted yes. Motion carried.

Sharon Lipsh appeared for the following:

- Presented gravel and hauling bids. Kilichowski Trucking is the low bid for hauling over 10 miles. **Motion by Barta to accept the bid sheet as presented.** Second by Brintnell. Upon roll call vote all voted yes. Motion carried. The estimated cost of the Forest River to Interstate I 29 project is 2.8 million. The 20% county share would be approximately \$550,000. **Motion by Barta to sign the Forest River to Interstate Project.** Second by Burianek. Upon roll call vote all voted yes. Motion carried.
- Ryan Kohler was hired as the assistant bridge foreman. She will bring him to the next meeting to introduce him.
- **Motion by Barta to approve KLJ for the engineering of Edinburg Bridge that was bundled with Grand Forks County Project #BRR-BRO-0094(050).** Second by Brintnell. Upon roll call vote all voted yes. Motion carried.
- Discussed getting lawn mowing bids for the county complex with options of per time or by the season. Contract could state every 7-10 days and could be a 3 year plan. We would sell equipment. Will move forward with advertising.

Brent Nelson, Emergency Manager, appeared for the following:

- Presented bids from Samson Electric and Rock's Electric for a generator that he received a grant for. **Motion by Barta to accept the bid from Samson Electric for \$40,949 which includes generator, electrical concrete pad and installation.** Second by Burianek. Upon roll call vote all voted yes. Motion carried.
- Presented a breakdown of the 911 accounts estimated expenses and revenue to help determine funds needed for the SORN Project. Also presented rates and penalty and interest if we were to borrow money from Bremer Bank to fund the project. The cost of the funds needed for the project are down to about \$200,000 so the County doesn't need to borrow funds. Commissioners will decide where the funds will come from at a later date.
- A department head meeting is scheduled for March 18th at 9:30 in the Farmers Room. This will be the first meeting in over a year due to Covid.
- A weed board meeting was held on March 11th. Ed Sevigny's term is up. He represents the City of Grafton. He is willing to serve another 3 year term. **Motion by Burianek to reappoint Ed Sevigny for another term to the Walsh County Weed Board.** Second by Brintnell. Upon roll call vote all voted yes. Motion carried. There is still an opening in the NE - Area 1, which is north of Hwy 17 and West of County Road 12B.
- J & J Spraying was awarded the 2 year weed spraying contract. He was the only bid that the county received.

- Would like to purchase 2 I-pads and a laptop with a Covid supplement grant. The cost would be between \$4,000 and \$4,500 with the county's share being 50%. **Motion by Barta to approve the purchase of 2 I-pads and a laptop through the grant with the county share of 50%.** Second by Buriemek. Upon roll call vote all vote yes. Motion carried.
- Discussed possible burning ban and the fire index.

Called Jill Denault, Zone Director back. Cavalier County did make a motion to move forward with the phone system. Pembina did not. They still have unanswered questions. Will ask Brent Nelson to get a quote for 8 speakers for the Chase Building in case the new phone system isn't compatible. The savings from the new phone systems could outweigh the cost of the speakers. Jill would like the new system in place by May 1st.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Dennis Skorheim, Chairman

Attest:

Kris Molde, Auditor