

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF WALSH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
MARCH 17, 2020**

March 17, 2020 - 9:00 a.m.

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

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

**Motion by Wild to approve the March 3, 2020 regular meeting minutes, and additions of legal notices, property tax, census and candidate update.** Second by Burianek. Motion carried.

Ron Jurgens, Sheriff, appeared during employee time for the following:

- Informed the commissioners that all on-site visitation has been suspended as recommended by the ND Department of Corrections during this epidemic. All non-essential services including fingerprinting will also be suspended until further notice. All new intakes are being screened utilizing the COVID-19 screening form from the ND Public Health Services.
- The jail has a \$27,000 hospital bill for a prisoner being held for us. The original bill was \$56,000 but Jurgens was able to negotiate it down.

Wanda Kratochvil, Health District Administrator, presented a health emergency declaration due to the Coronavirus which is a respiratory illness and is a threat to the community. The health department reports that there is a shortage of testing supplies and other personal protective supplies are limited. If needed, the health officer Dr. Marquardt has the authority to close businesses if it is determined it poses a threat to the public. Funding from the CDC is anticipated to come to the state health department who will reimburse expenses of local health facilities including the health department. FEMA also may have money available according to Emergency Manager, Brent Nelson. **Motion by Barta to sign Walsh County, North Dakota Health Emergency Declaration as presented.** Second by Wild. Upon roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

WALSH COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA  
HEALTH EMERGENCY DECLARATION

WHEREAS, COVID-19 is a severe respiratory illness, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, a new strain of coronavirus that is spread from person to person, posing a threat to the health and safety of the residents of Walsh County; and

WHEREAS, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex M. Azar II declared a public health emergency for the entire United States to aid the nation's healthcare community in responding to 2019 novel coronavirus retroactive to January 27, 2020; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, President Donald Trump issued a Declaration of a National Emergency due to the growing COVID-19 crisis in the United States; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, Governor Doug Burgum, North Dakota issued a Declaration of State Emergency in response to the public health crisis resulting from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19); and

WHEREAS, the impact of COVID-19 and the cascading events resulting from, threatens the health, well-being, and safety of the citizens in Walsh County; and

WHEREAS, preparedness, response and recovery from COVID-19 virus will require a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach; and

WHEREAS, the mitigation and response efforts may have a serious financial effect in excess of Walsh County resources due to the unknown impact and duration of COVID-19.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Walsh County Board of Commissioners declares a state of health emergency exists in Walsh County, North Dakota.

Further discussed was the closing of the buildings to the public, the court system and the Administrative Order 25, jury trails, and the effects on the social service zone. The Chase Building no longer houses any county employees and their offices already have many barriers for protection. Other occupants rent from the county. How long would we close? **Motion by Barta to have employees continue to come to work but to close the following buildings to the public: courthouse, administrative building, extension office, fair building, and shops for 30 days effective 8:00 AM March 18, 2020.** Second by Skorheim. Upon roll call vote all voted yes. Motion carried. The emergency health declaration is county-wide and could include First Health Care.

Attending department heads were going to meet to further discuss how to handle people missing work, possibly using sick leave for staying home with kids, working remotely and other potential ideas and options.

Brent Nelson, Emergency Manager, appeared to discuss flooding. We are the only county along the Red River that hasn't signed a flooding declaration. There is a lot of water in the ditches and a threat along the Red River. **Motion by Wild to sign the Walsh County Emergency Declaration for Spring Flood 2020 as presented.** Second by Burianek. Upon roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

WALSH COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA  
EMERGENCY DECLARATION

WHEREAS, Walsh County was impacted in the fall of 2019 by record precipitation, followed by record Fall Flooding, which left rivers at elevated levels, saturated soils and standing water going into winter freeze up.

WHEREAS, Walsh County has the high potential this spring for damage to roads, bridges, culvers, farmlands, homes, businesses and other public facilities from overland flooding and flooding of its rivers as they reach or exceed flood stage; and

WHEREAS, the National Weather Service (NWS) flood outlooks indicate the potential for significant river. with a greater than 95% probability of major flooding along the Red River, and significant overland spring flooding within the county, and

WHEREAS, the potential for additional precipitation during the melt will significantly increase the threat within the watersheds and will increase the risk throughout the county; and

WHEREAS, the impact of these damages threaten the health, well-being and public safety of the citizens of Walsh County; and

WHEREAS, the cost of preparedness, clean-up, repair, and replacement of such damaged facilities is far in excess of County resources.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Walsh County Board of Commissioners declares an emergency and orders the activation and utilization of the Emergency Operations Plan, its procedures, attachments and appendices to monitor the situation, develop a detailed damage assessment, alleviate hardship and initiate appropriate relief actions and mitigation measures by departments and agencies of local government to limit the hardships and impact of the emergency upon the citizens of Walsh County.

Ed Sevigny, Tax Director, presented an abatement for Bradley Schanilec. **Motion by Wild to follow the recommendation of Ops Township and the tax director and approve the Schanilec abatement for 2019.** Second by Barta. Upon roll call vote all voted yes. Motion carried.

Sharon Lipsh, Highway Superintendent, appeared for the following:

- Presented final certification for local match. Project HLC-5000-(014). **Motion by Wild to sign Local Match Certification for Project HLC-5000-(014).** Second by Barta. Upon roll call vote all voted yes. Motion carried.
- Polar Communications is placing fiber optic cables along and across county roads and submitted 8 utility permits. **Motion by Burianek to approve the Polar Communications utility permits as presented.** Second by Skorheim. Upon roll call vote all voted yes. Motion carried.
- A zone employee requested a new chair through the safety funds. They are not county employees and the safety funds will not pay for it. Chairs are considered an indirect cost and the responsibility of the county. Other options will be explored.
- Cavalier County is not willing to put the zone employees on their workers comp. Many counties have already began this practice.

John Guzman, Farmers Union Benefits Specialist, introduced himself and briefly talked about Farmers Union Insurance Company which has access to exclusive products. The policies he presented are stronger policies with lower premiums and better benefits, comparing apples to apples. He could save employees 15% on dental insurance with the same company and with no waiting periods. Vision would be a 30% reduction in premiums. They offer many of the same voluntary benefits as well as others that would be available to employees. It would improve payroll for the county allowing combined billing, administrative and enrollment services and innovative technology. He is still working on health insurance options but due to time constraints was looking for guidance on moving forward with the voluntary benefits based on department head approval. There is no cost to the county. **Motion by Barta to accept the voluntary benefits effective May 1<sup>st</sup> with departmental approval.** Second by Wild. Upon roll call all voted yes. Motion carried.

Wanda Kratochvil returned to the meeting to inform the commissioners that with the Corona Pandemic things are constantly changing. Recent changes include anyone who has traveled, domestics or international should take the survey on the CDC website. Gatherings have been reduced from 50 people to 10.

Auditor, Kris Molde, informed the commissions that Walsh County will continue to have 1 polling place and that is the Farmers Room in the Courthouse. Election hours will remain the same also, 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM.

Molde also asked for permission to hire a full time employee. The position was budgeted for and the office continues to fall behind. It is also an election year which takes a great amount of time away from our everyday duties. Molde has visited with HR and discussed big picture/long term changes as they evolve on our floor. **Motion by Skorheim to fill the position.** Second by Barta. Upon roll call vote Skorheim, Barta and Anderson voted yes. Burianek and Wild voted no. Motion carried.

The size of legal notices in the newspaper are mandated by Century Code.

The importance of the Census was mentioned and financial impact it has on the county. Everyone needs to participate in the census survey.

At this time no one has submitted paperwork to run for county commissioner.

Meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

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Karen Anderson, Madam Chairman

Attest:

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Kris Molde, Auditor