

WADENA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

January 10, 2023

The Wadena County Board of Commissioners' Meeting was held on January 10, 2023 in the Wadena County Courthouse, 415 Jefferson Street S, Wadena, Minnesota lower level Multi-Purpose Room. The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am by Chairperson Weyer and all present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present were: Mike Weyer, Bill Stearns, Jon Kangas, Murlyn Kreklau, Ron Noon, County Coordinator Ryan Odden, County Attorney Kyra Ladd, County Engineer Darin Fellbaum, Hwy Maintenance Foreman Jason Miller, Chris McConn, *Review Messenger* reporter Matt Johnson, *Independent News Herald/Verndale Sun* reporter Trinity Gruenberg.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss topics and no formal board actions will be taken.

Recognition of Interested Citizens: None present today

Installation and Maintenance of Mailbox Supports Policy Review: County Engineer, Darin Fellbaum led a discussion regarding The Wadena County Highway Department policy on the Installation and Maintenance of Mailbox Supports along County Roads. This policy was last updated in 2007. Darin brought this to the board for discussion of reviewing and updating the policy. Part of the policy reads: When there is an accumulation of snow, the location of mailboxes close to the highway makes the plowing operations of the County difficult and renders the boxes quite susceptible to damage as a result of such activity. Separate newspaper holders, supports and paraphernalia may result in damage to mailbox supports. Newspaper boxes should be installed adjacent to mailboxes (typically on the left side) and not below them as they can be more easily damaged by snow plowing. It is the County's policy to use special care and consideration when plowing snow in their vicinity. Despite this care and consideration, some mailboxes may be knocked down or destroyed during the snow removal season. In the vast majority of cases it is the weight of snow coming off the snowplow or wing which destroys a mailbox not the actual plow blade or wing. Wadena County will not be responsible for damage to mailboxes from flying snow and ice that occurs during snow plowing operations. It is believed most mailbox damage which occurs during a typical winter would be minimized if postal patrons would install a mailbox support that swings away when hit by snow or snowplow equipment. Attached is a drawing of a steel post mailbox support system which has been approved for use in Wadena County. This mailbox configuration has been crash tested and is acceptable in terms of nationally tested safety criteria. The use of this approved mailbox support provides a much safer environment for all motorists. It also makes the job of snow removal much easier while reducing the cost and irritation to the mail patrons. Consequently, Wadena County's policy encourages the use of this recommended support. Weyer wanted to know how much to

replace a mailbox. The cost is approximately \$80 to \$100. The Highway Department replaced about 50 boxes last year. Commissioner Kreklau wanted to see more communication with the public about this policy such as a mailing or a notice in the newspaper. Commissioner Kangas said that regardless of the policy it has been common to replace mailboxes. Said it would be difficult for the elderly to replace the mailbox. He feels it is an important service that the county provides and everyone pays high property taxes. Are there other options, can the snowplow slow down. Kangas said if our snowplow is responsible for damaging the mailbox, he feels it is the counties responsibility to replace the mailbox. Darin felt that this could get out of hand with no burden of proof. Kreklau said we need some type of policy or guidelines. Darin said that to replace a mailbox it may take 2 or 3 weeks because they are busy snow plowing. Kangas said they may need to have temporaries available. There is a standard box the county uses to replace damaged boxes. It comes with a swing arm. Commissioner Noon also feels the homeowner needs to take some responsibility. The Highway Department is replacing more mailboxes than 5 years ago.

Question and answer Session Regarding Solid Waste Department and Program: Chris McConn was present to have a discussion and question and answer session to answer any questions the Board may have about the County's solid waste programs, regulations, rules and purpose; including the Perham Resource Recovery Facility (PRRF). Wadena County became a member county and part owner of the Perham Resource Recovery Facility (PRRF) in 2010. Currently, Wadena County is a 10% owner and delivers approximately 5,400 tons of Municipal Solid Waste per year to the PRRF. Commissioner Stearns said the hazardous household waste pickup day is important and the county needs to get the word out either by a newsletter, ads in the paper or website. He feels last year's pickup up day was successful. McConn also said the transfer station does accept those items currently. McConn was able to answer numerous questions the board had regarding the programs, regulations, etc. Commissioner Kangas feels our waste designation ordinance is probably illegal or unconstitutional and there are a few issues with it. He would like to see if we can get out of the contract with Perham. Kangas said the residents in his district usually go to Hubbard County and feels the Prairie Lakes facility is a money pit. In 2021 the income from steam sales came to about 1.9 million dollars. To operate that facility is about 8.5 million dollars. Our income is about 25% of the cost, to subsidize that cost we charge tipping fees. And these fees are rather high. He feels we created a monopoly by saying that all waste has to be brought to Wadena Transfer stations or Perham. We license the haulers, but we don't require them to service the whole county. Kangas again said he would like to see the county get out of the contract with Perham. He feels it is a liability and would like to see if someone else would take over our share. McConn said that the revenue so far is 2.2 million. Landfills are not the guarantee either and we don't know the future and each board has to make their best guesses.

Moved by Commissioner Kreklau, seconded by Commissioner Kangas to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 a.m. Motion carried unanimously.



Ryan Odden
Wadena County Coordinator



Mike Weyer, Chairperson
Wadena County Commissioner