

## WADENA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

JANUARY 21, 2020

The Wadena County Board of Commissioners' Meeting was held on January 21, 2020 in the Small Courtroom, Wadena County Courthouse, 415 South Jefferson Street, Wadena, Minnesota. The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am by Commissioner Horsager and all present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Also present were: Commissioners Bill Stearns, Sheldon Monson, Jim Hofer, Jon Kangas, County Coordinator/Engineer Ryan Odden, Auditor/Treasurer Heather Olson, County Attorney Kyra Ladd, Sheriff Mike Carr, Chief Deputy Joe Schoon, Human Services Amie Gendron, Planning & Zoning Deanna Malone, Emergency Management Tyler Wheeler, Elections Coordinator Joy Weyer, Minnesota State Representative Steve Green, *Review Messenger* reporter Matthew Johnson, *Wadena Pioneer Journal* reporter Michael Johnson, *Independent News Herald/Verndale Sun* reporter Trinity Gruenberg, Joel Beiswinger, Jane Uselman, Muriel Juers, Jerry Grewing, Bradley Snyder, Carol Waaraniemi, Elizabeth Olson, Marlene Synder, Robyn Keranen, Duane Hillikka, Steve Green, Danny Graba, Rich Graba, Brian Roth and Nathen Roth.

**Amend/Approve the Day's Agenda:** One addition to the agenda was made by the Emergency Management Director, Tyler Wheeler, of a Resolution Authorizing Execution of Agreement to Enter into Agreement with the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management & Resolution Authorizing Participation in Planning Process and Execution of Agreement which was placed in as 10A. Moved by Commissioner Hofer, seconded by Commissioner Monson to approve the day's agenda as presented and with the addition. Motion carried unanimously.

**Recognize Interested Citizens:** Brad Snyder, from Menahga, handed out a paper about concerns regarding refugees in the United States. The statement Snyder voiced for the crowd of people that came with him was that he wasn't against legal immigration, but with Wadena County being one of the poorest counties in Minnesota it would be a financial burden to take on refugees. Jerry Grewing spoke that thousands of immigrants had already moved into Minnesota and it was hitting the state hard. He didn't want Minnesota to end up like California because he was passionate about the state.

Minnesota Representative Steve Green agreed on the refugee issue. Representative Green stated that he has many poor counties in his district and didn't want to see this happening to these areas. He also brought up other concerns of the interested citizens including gun control, which he added that he felt gun control was holding strong. Commissioner Stearns asked Representative Green if a county takes no action on the refugee issue is that automatically is saying that they are not accepting refugees. Representative Green stated that was the way he understood it.

Commissioner Kangas expressed that constituents in his district had been speaking with him about the refugee topic. He wanted everyone to know it was brought up at past Commissioner Board

Meetings as Commissioner comments, but was not yet added as an item to the agenda. The topic was on all of the Commissioner's minds and was not something they were not addressing.

Duane Hillikka fully supported legal immigration, but felt that refugees is the opposite of what our ancestors worked for when coming to the United States. Elizabeth Olson mentioned that in Wadena County with the taxes that everyone pays we should take care of our own first. Commissioner Stearns explained that the Commissioners can only take action on laws/issues that the state government says they can take care of and that the City government reports to its citizens of the City.

Commissioner Kangas made a motion to have the refugee topic at a near future meeting. Commissioner Horsager asked for a second with the topic dying for a lack of a second. Commissioner Monson voiced that if it did come up for an agenda item in the future he would not support the topic.

#### CONSENT AGENDA:

Moved by Commissioner Kangas, seconded by Commissioner Hofer to approve the following consent agenda items:

- Approve the minutes from the 1-14-20 meeting.
- Approve the Auditor warrants from 12-20-19, 12-27-19, 1-3-20, 1-10-20, US Bank 1-10-20 and 1-17-20 for a total of \$1,272,833.17.
- Approve the Human Service warrants from 12-20-19, 1-3-20, 1-10-20 and 1-17-20 for a total of \$128,428.67.
- Approve the 2020 annual service agreement for Allan Lynk.
- Approve the 2020 annual Bell Hill Recovery Center purchase of service agreement.
- Approve the 2020 annual service agreement for Karen Crandall.
- Approve the donation of \$100.00 from T.W.O. Education MN Retired Teachers for school supplies, cap and mittens for school children in Wadena County.
- Approve the 2020 annual Wadena City Police Department and Human Services Plan of Cooperation service agreement for welfare fraud investigative services.
- Approve the 2020 annual Thomas Allen Consulting Inc. service agreement.
- Approve the 2020 annual Woodview Support Services/Oakridge Homes Inc. services agreement.
- Approve the 2020 court appointed legal services contract to Malcolm Whynott of Whynott Law Office.
- Approve the Human Services – Replacement Hire (Former Employee – FKA Britne Weiher). Britne Haasch, Social Services Supervisor, \$31.76 per hour, Start Date February 10, 2020, Grade: 56, Step: 3. Yearly Gross Salary: \$66,060.80, Total Salary and Employer Contributions (Taxes & Benefits): \$76,035.00.
- Approve the Human Services – Replacement Hire (Former Intern). Sarah Harshman, Child Support Officer, \$22.28 per hour, Start Date January 2, 2020, Grade 54, Step: 1. Yearly Gross Salary: \$46,342.40, Total Salary and Employer Contributions (Taxes & Benefits): \$53,379.00.
- Approve the Wadena County Board Operating Rules 2020.
- Approve the Resolution of Appointing Members to Counties Providing Technology.
- Approve the 2020 Commissioner and Liaison Assignments.

Motion carried unanimously.

REGULAR AGENDA:

**Resolution Supporting Change to the State of Minnesota Irrigation Well Permit Process:** Brian Roth spoke in front of the County Commissioners about the process that someone has to go through to get an irrigation permit in the state of Minnesota. After the permit is filed with a regional DNR there is a time period of 30 days for the public to openly discuss or form a petition to ask for certain stipulations. Roth feels that there was an incident in Wadena County where a petition process seemed to be “weaponized.”

Roth cited that in Wadena County, last summer, there was an environmental study called due to a particular petition. Petitions need 100 signatures sent to the regional DNR for them to see if there is value to a petition. Roth said many of the signatures were from outside of Wadena County and the Pineland Sands Aquifer was shut down for the summer. This led to no permits for the growing season of 2019. Roth was looking for a resolution to be signed so if an irrigation well permit was submitted in Wadena County, only Wadena County residents could sign a petition since they are the people that would be impacted by the irrigation well.

Commissioner Horsager questioned what would happen if someone signed the petition that lived within a mile of the county. Roth stated that the resolution would be for inside Wadena County residents only. Commissioner Stearns wanted to know how lands are protected, that need to be, if there is no petition submitted to the DNR? Roth said that the laws are much stricter than it used to be to submit a permit and that test samples have to be sent to the DNR. County Attorney Kyra Ladd had concerns with the term “residents,” noting that some property owners are not all residents. Commissioner Kangas had issues with shallow wells, but could see both sides of the irrigation well permit process.

In the end a move was made by Commissioner Monson, seconded by Commissioner Hofer for the Resolution Supporting Changes to the State of Minnesota Irrigation Well Permit Process. Commissioner Kangas-Nay, Commissioner Hofer-Aye, Commissioner Stearns-Aye, Commissioner Monson- Aye, Commissioner Horsager-Aye. Motion carried 4-1.

**Human Services Statistical Reports:** The Human Services Statistical Reports were presented by Amie Gendron. The first report she featured was the Income Maintenance Caseload Statistics from November – December of 2019. The Maxis cases (included support programs of Diversionary Work, General Assistance, MN Supplemental Aid, Group Residential Housing, Medical Assistance and totals account for unduplicated cases) were up and the Mets cases (include Medical Assistance and MN Care cases managed in the MN Eligibility Technology System) were down. Next she showed all of the programs across the board; MFIP Cases (Cash Assistance) was up, SNAP (Food Support) was up, Diversionary Work Program was slightly up, General Assistance (Cash Program) was up, GRH went up and MA went slightly up.

Then was the Children in Out of Home Placement from November – December 2019 with five children leaving placement which slightly went down. Following was Intakes that went down from 124 in November to 116 in December. Open Workgroups is all programs on the services side, not just Children in Out of Home Placement and from November – December it fell from 1134 to 1124. The balance at the end of December 2019 was \$2,282,436 which included the transfer out.

Gendron delivered the Monthly Budget Summary with Salary & Benefits at 99%, Administrative Overhead Costs at 86% and Program Costs coming in at 101%. The overall fund came in at 106% Spending Level which included the Budget Amendment from December.

A break was taken at 10:02 am. The meeting reconvened at 10:09 am.

**Tri-County Health Care Proposed Realignment of County Road 169:** President/CEO of Tri-County Health Care Joel Beiswenger and County Coordinator/Engineer Ryan Odden submitted information in regards to Tri-County Health Care (TCHC) proposing a realignment of County Road 169 in conjunction with the building of their new facility. Odden, MnDOT, Otter Tail County, a Consulting Engineer and a Project Manager had a meeting to discuss how the proposed road intersection was going to work and what MnDOT would allow. Currently there is a traffic count of 600 cars per day that travel on County Road 169 between the transfer station and residents. With the new TCHC facility being a destination on the route, the traffic could triple or quadruple. The proposal is to move the intersection to help with safety improvements.

Odden stated that the next phase is to get the respective County Boards involved. It is Wadena County's road segment on the border with both counties. Wadena County would have to accept the road segment moving into Otter Tail County. Otter Tail County would have to agree to be the road authority. Then there would be a cooperative agreement between Wadena County and Otter Tail County pertaining to County Road 169. Wadena County would still perform the maintenance and snow plowing on the road, given the rest of County Road 169 would be in Wadena County.

Another consideration that Odden cited was making County Road 169 into County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 169. To become a CSAH a County Road would need to either; terminate on a State Road, terminate onto a trunk Highway or terminate onto another CSAH. Currently County Road 169 meets the definition ending on State Highway 10 and CSAH 20. Aid is provided through the CSAH fund which is administered by MnDOT for these types of roads. Overall construction costs would go to TCHC though for the road since they are proposing the changes to the intersection.

Beiswenger and Odden were looking for the County Commissioner Board to add direction and thoughts to this proposal. The idea of the proposal was moved by Commissioner Monson, seconded by Commissioner Stearns. Motion carried unanimously.

**Election Equipment Grant Application and Resolution:** Election Coordinator Joy Weyer requested to apply for a grant from the State of Minnesota for the replacement of the County's aging election equipment. The current grant is for \$2 million, since the last grant that was passed by was for \$7 million. There is a need to replace the voter assistive machines (AutoMarks) and purchase some additional Poll Pads. The grant application would ask to replace the AutoMark machines with 15 State certified Omniballot machines and purchase an additional 9 Poll Pads for use in the County.

With the grant, this would come to 50% of the cost going to the State of Minnesota and 50% to Wadena County for the Omniballot machines and 75% of the cost going to the State of Minnesota and 25% to Wadena County for the Poll Pads. By putting in for the additional equipment, this would allow 2 new Poll Pads at every voting precinct that didn't get Poll Pads the last time around. Wadena County will no longer have paper roosters for anybody if they receive the additional Poll Pads.

Commissioner Hofer questioned Weyer about the timeline for the grant application that needs to be turned in to the State of Minnesota. Weyer returned with next week. She continued with the State would let the County know before May if they were to receive the funds and the amount. If every county in the state were to request grant money, Wadena County would only be allowed \$486.26 per precinct with a total of \$12,000.00. This would be a cost to the County of \$60,000.00 if Wadena opted to purchase the election equipment needed. Weyer did voice though that she spoke with someone from the Secretary of State's office and they said that the majority of the counties applied for grants when

the \$7 million was open, so they feel there will be less applying this time around. But there is no guarantee how much money the State will offer Wadena County from this grant. Wadena County is not required to purchase anything with the money if they are awarded something from the grant. If the grant money comes in low and the County cannot afford the rest of the portion of the equipment, the money can be returned to the State. Funds have to be expended by December 31, 2020.

Auditor/Treasurer Heather Olson stated that there was \$25,000.00 for election equipment in the 2020 budget and \$12,500.00 for election equipment remaining in the 2019 budget if it could be rolled over. This would be close to the \$38,000.00 the County would need if they would be approved for the whole grant. Commissioner Hofer asked if a Resolution could be brought to the next meeting. Commissioner Stearns asked if the County had to spend all of the money from the grant if it was awarded or if a portion of the grant could be used and some returned if the County couldn't fully match what was needed. Weyer said that it could be used in portions and returned what was left if it couldn't be matched.

Moved by Commissioner Monson, and seconded by Commissioner Stearns for submitting the Resolution and the grant at the next meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

**Resolution Authorizing Execution of Agreement to Enter into Agreement with the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management & Resolution Authorizing Participation in Planning Process and Execution of Agreement:** Emergency Management Director Tyler Wheeler spoke about the Hazard Mitigation Plan expiring this year. He received an email from the State Hazard Mitigation Officer earlier this month working on a current grant. Basically the County works with the population in the number of cities in Wadena County and it would come down to a cost of \$33,000.00 to complete a new updated Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Federal share of the plan is \$24,750.00 and the local match is \$8,250.00. In the email Wheeler received it stated that there is no cash match required by the jurisdiction. The value of the match is equal to the time worked by Wheeler, any other county employee and the County Board that is allowed for planning.

Wheeler shared that the County needs to enter into an Agreement with the State. He would be the liaison to complete the update to the Hazard Mitigation Plan. The grant approval date is early 2020, with the final award being mid-late 2020. The State would keep the County posted on the process as things move through FEMA.

Commissioner Stearns questioned if there was any costs involved in the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Wheeler said his time and anybody else time that goes into the planning and the meetings with townships, environmental services and GIS. Commissioner Stearns asked if the County was providing the \$8,250.00 in kind. Wheeler stated that in the application to the State he would have to put in his hourly wage and how many hours he anticipated in planning along with his deputy director's hours. He believed that the \$8,250.00 would be covered quite quickly. Hubbard County had received the grant last year and Wheeler mentioned that they met their \$8,250.00 in the first couple months. The total \$33,000.00 (the Federal share and the local planning information) goes to FEMA and the State of Minnesota.

Moved by Commissioner Stearns, and seconded by Commissioner Monson for applying for the grant. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Reports:

Commissioner Stearns: 1/16/2020 RTCC Council Board.

Commissioner Hofer: 1/16/2020 Kitchigami Joint Powers Board.

Commissioner Kangas: 1/14/2020 Regular Commissioners Board Meeting, 1/15/2020 Lake Country Associates Open House in Menahga, 1/16/2020 WCRJC quarterly meeting, 1/17/2020 Solid Waste Tour with Chris McConn.

Commissioner Horsager: 1/14/2020 Wadena Historical Society, 1/15/2020 Lake Country Association Open House in Menahga, 1/16/2020 Coordinator Meeting, 1/17/2020 Rural Meeting in Fergus Falls, 1/21/2020 Soil and Water Meeting.

Commissioner Monson, seconded by Commissioner Kangas moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:46 am. Motion carried unanimously.

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Ryan Odden,  
Wadena County Coordinator/Engineer

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Charles Horsager, Chairperson  
Wadena County Commissioners