

WADENA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL MEETING
April 23, 2009/8:00 p.m.

The Special Meeting of the Wadena County Board of Commissioners was held on Thursday, April 23, 2009, at the Sebeka American Legion Club, 100 Frontage Rd., Sebeka, MN, 56477. The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Dave Schermerhorn, Commissioners William Stearns, Ralph Miller, Rodney Bounds and Lane Waldahl, Social Services Director Paul Sailer, Public Health Director Karen Nelson, County Sheriff Mike Carr, Chief Deputy Sheriff Bill Cross, EMS Director Scott McKellep, Assistant Highway Engineer Jeff Adolphson, County Attorney Kyra Ladd, Auditor/Treasurer Char West, Wadena County Township Chairman Ray Heidemann, Wadena County Township Secretary Wendy London, MN Association of Townships District 8 Representative Barb Welty and Wadena County Township Board Members.

The purpose of the meeting was to receive information and provide County information during the Semi-Annual Wadena County Township Meeting.

Lee Miller, Region 5 Development Commission Economic Developer, provided regional economic information.

Chairman Schermerhorn introduced the Wadena County representatives in attendance.

Mr. McKellep updated the group on the recent flooding along the Crow Wing River. He also reviewed the process the County and Townships would have to follow in applying for FEMA funding. Mr. McKellep reminded the Township Clerks to return their completed forms and photos to him as soon as possible.

Ms. West presented County budget information and the County's use of Special Levies, as provided by the legislature. She stated that Wadena County had a steady average of 150 employees over the past seven years; approximately 85% of the General Fund budget reflected personnel costs with the percentage being much lower for the Highway Fund due to the Funds large expenses for projects and equipment.

Commissioner Stearns further explained the County's process in using the Special Levies, which allowed the County to levy over the 3.9% levy limit for the loss of County Program Aid.

Questions were presented to the Commissioners regarding the proposed turn back of County roads to the Townships.

Commissioner Stearns responded that Wadena County currently had 228 miles of County roads, which was much higher than the majority of Minnesota counties. He added that a county road should have an average daily traffic count of 50 or 100 cars per day to be

considered a county road.

Mr. Adolphson distributed County maps indicating the upcoming highway construction projects, which he reviewed. He also pointed out that, due to the recent flood damage to CSAH 30, the repair and upgrade of the road would be done in 2009 with the CSAH 21 Project being moved back.

Sheriff Carr informed the group of the services provided by the Wadena County Sheriff's Department as well as the 2009 budget.

Ms. Nelson informed the group that only 12.2% of the Public Health Department budget was paid for through County levy as the remaining funds were received through state and federal grants. She also stated that she would be contacting Township officials to request their assistance in planning for public health emergencies such as a pandemic.

Ms. Sailer, Social Services Director, distributed a fact sheet reflecting the number of Wadena County households receiving food stamps, health programs and child support as well as the current unemployment rate for Wadena County.

Ms. Welty stated that in 2010 Townships, with registered voters over 500, would be required to use handicap accessible voting machines for their Township elections and that the Association was working on changing this legislation. She also present information regarding Township Hall road signs; scholarships that were available through the Association; new Green Acres legislation, local gas tax levy and fire contracts.

Commissioner Miller stated that the Otter Tail-Wadena Community Action Council had funds available for heating fuel costs and weatherization.

Bill Kern, North Germany Township Supervisor, informed the Commissioners that he had received many phone calls from residents regarding their financial stress. He requested that the Commissioners meet with the Township Officials to discuss the matter.

Commissioner Waldahl informed the group that Wadena County employees had agreed to a zero percent wage increase and no step increase for 2009, which saved Wadena County a large budget increase. He pointed out that the employees should be commended for their action.

The Semi-Annual Township Meeting was adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

Charleen West, Auditor/Treasurer

David Schermerhorn, Chairman