

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF WALSH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
August 1, 2023

August 1, 2023 – 9:00 a.m.

Members present: Chairman Skorheim, Commissioners Anderson, Barta, Brintnell, and Suda

At 9:00 am the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The meeting was called to order and bills were reviewed.

Commissioner Barta moved to approve the July 18, 2023 minutes and monthly bills, seconded by Anderson. All voted in favor; motion approved

Gary Babinski, James Bergman, Craig Jones, Curtis Hagen, and Derek Gowan joined the meeting to update the Commissioners on the progress with BTAG over the past year. Gary reported to the commissioners that they have been busy gaining support from legislators in both North Dakota and Minnesota, as well as many of the townships that are affected by the Red River flooding near Oslo, MN. Gary informed the commissioners that they are now working with a law firm out of Fargo, ND that has experience with the Fargo Division Project. A taxable entity was required to be formed to receive funding and they created Oslo Region Joint Powers Board. The group came before the commissioners in hopes that Walsh County would join the board so there are more people at the table as the project gains momentum. The Walsh County Water Board has not joined forces but were present at the meeting. Daryl Campbell, representing the water board, stated that they were approached during the beginning stages but would be willing to schedule a meeting to discuss it further. The Army Corp of Engineers is involved and will be setting up a scope for the project. James Bergman stated that they have been approved for Federal Funding through FEMA. They are required to get matching local funding for the project and are working to secure state funding, which is what they consider local. At this time, they are not looking to pass this onto the counties, townships, or cities. Commissioner Suda expressed her interest in supporting the Oslo Region Joint Powers Board. Commissioner Anderson also stated that she would be in favor of supporting it, especially since there are no financial commitments required. Commissioner Barta stated that he was encouraged and would encourage the Walsh County Water Board to join but is unable to make that decision for them. A discussion was then had on the study that was conducted and the lack of it including the area north of Oslo. Gary stated that the study ended about 3 miles north of Highway 317 but with this new funding the scope will include the river to the Canadian border. Commissioner Brintnell stated that until all of the Walsh County townships are on board she has concerns about the county joining. James Bergman mentioned that with the Army Corp involved he feels that it is very important to have as much local representation as possible to make sure that the common sight of what should happen doesn't get lost along the way. Chairman Skorheim stated that this is a big project and since it will affect Walsh County and all of the area around, he would encourage the Walsh County Water Board to look into getting involved. He felt that the more local representation early on would be a benefit.

Sherry O'Toole, Walsh County Treasurer appeared for the following:

- Sherry asked the Commissioners to make a motion to add Kristi Quibell to sign checks on the county's Choice account. **Commissioner Suda made a motion to add Kristi Quibell to sign checks on the county's Choice bank accounts; seconded by Commissioner Barta. All voted in favor; motion approved.**
- Sherry reviewed the Treasurer checks for the 2nd quarter of 2023 with the commissioners. Sherry informed the commissioners that it was strongly suggested by Tyler Software to no longer use Treasurer checks. Previously the system would have two separate check sequences, one for Treasurer checks and another for the warrants. Sherry asked the commissioners if they would be ok with that change, and if not, she would have to open up a second bank account for Treasurer checks. Commissioner Brintnell recommended that Sherry reach out to other counties that are using Tyler Software to see how they handle Treasurer checks before a decision is made. Sheriff Jurgens inquired on if there are no longer Treasurer checks would it affect the Sheriffs Department getting checks the same day. Sherry said that there would be no change in that process and the treasurer office would be creating warrants going forward. A discussion was had on the funds that are collected for bonds and the changes that were made. A new fund account had to be created due to the new system and since it is an in and out account, it was Auditor Quibell's recommendation that a special fund sequence number is used. Sherry stated that she would like to see one sequence of check numbers and only one bank account would simplify reconciling the account going forward. **Commissioner Barta made a motion to allow all checks to be run out of the one account, using only one sequence of check numbers, seconded by Commissioner Anderson. Commissioner Brintnell encouraged Sherry to check with another county to see how they are handling it. Sherry stated that there is never any uniformity between the counties on handling this kind of stuff. Commissioner Barta clarified that he was making a motion to move forward to see if it will work to combine the checks. All voted in favor; motion approved.**
- Sherry then reviewed the 2nd Quarter Financial Statement with the commissioners. She went over the balances in detail in comparisons to the previous year. She stated that the large increase in the May non-tax receipts was due to 2022 spring flood money that was received and has been paid to the townships. **Commissioner Brintnell made a motion to approve the 2nd Quarter Financial Statement and Treasurer checks; seconded by Commissioner Suda. All voted in favor; motion approved.**

Sheriff Ron Jurgens appeared for the following:

- Sheriff Jurgens presented the board with documentation regarding the possibility of implementing a new jail management system, Guardian RFID. Sheriff Jurgens explained that this system would be a tracking device that would allow a paperless way to track activities within the jail. Joelle Schmuck shared with the commissioners that this system would be very beneficial to her for administering medication. She feels that this program would not only make it more efficient for the administering of drugs while she is off site, it also tracks the inventory as well. A discussion was had on how much this system will simplify and track many different areas of the jail. Sheriff Jurgens went over the costs with the commissioners and stated that he would have funds in his budget to cover it. **Commissioner Suda made a motion**

to approve the Guardian RFID, seconded by Commissioner Anderson. All voted in favor; motion approved

- Correctional Officer Adam Trahan stated that all of the information has been collected for Samuels Group.

Jason Johnston, Highway Superintendent, appeared for the following:

- Jason reviewed the six drain permits that were approved by Walsh County Water Resource. He went into detail with the following permits: Polar Communications, Kevin Zikmund, Terry Novak, Myrdal Brothers, K Bro Farms, and Jay Skorheim. K Bro Farms has a utility permit attached because it involves drain tiling. **Commissioner Anderson made a motion to approve the drain permits, seconded by Commissioner Brintnell. All voted in favor; motion approved**
- Jason reviewed the ND DOT Bridge Inspection bills with the commissioners. Jason asked for a motion to approve the payment of each bill, the first in the amount of \$300.43 and the second for \$6,020.80. **Commissioner Anderson made a motion to approve the payment of the bills, seconded by Commissioner Suda. Roll call vote – Commissioner Barta – No, Commissioner Brintnell – Yes, Commissioner Anderson – Yes, Commissioner Suda – Yes, Chairman Skorheim – Yes; motion approved.** Commissioner Barta stated that he does not think that the county is getting their money worth on the bridge inspections. Jason stated that his crew is being proactive before the inspections are performed, as time allows.
- Jason gave an update on #9 between Edinburg and Hoople. He informed the commissioners that all that is left on this project is to do some clean up and striping of the road. Jason asked for a motion to pay the contractor for the completed job. **Commissioner Brintnell made a motion to approve the first payment, seconded by Commissioner Anderson. All voted in favor; motion approved.**
- Jason gave an update on the bridge on County 6, which is under 20 tons and not inspected by the DOT but his crew have been watching for the past year. The bridge crew took the deck off and made the necessary repairs to fix it.
- Julie Gemmill from JDA joined the meeting. A discussion was had on the probation office moving from the jail building to the courthouse now that JDA will no longer need the office. Sheriff Jurgens said that the probation office is interested in the old JDA office space and would like to sign a contract with the county. Julie informed the commissioners that she is hoping to get the contract signed with Red River Regional Council later in the day and is confident that it will get signed. She stated that JDA would be willing to give up that office space but would need time to vacate it. She stated that they would like until mid-September and Sheriff Jurgens stated that the probation office would not be interested in moving into the office space until October 1st. Julie also stated that JDA would be interested in selling the existing desk that is in the office, but would like time to research the value. Julie also informed the commissioners that there is a storage area within the office space that is being used by another group that will need to be cleaned out as well. Jason stated that he would look into what the current rate for office space is to discuss at the next meeting.
- Jason gave an update on the Grafton Township Bridge, which was closed during harvest last year. Jason informed the commissioners that the bridge has been removed, the culverts are in place, and the road is almost put together to be opened. With the completion of this project, it will take care of one bridge within the county and inspections will no longer be needed going forward.

- Jason updated the commissioners on the County 19 bridge. Swingen Construction is now on site and demolished the old bridge. He stated that the condition of the bridge was worse than expected and he was very happy that they were proactive.
- Jason discussed the verification of Walsh County's 150 bridges under 20' that is required for the state survey. The data must be submitted this fall.
- Jason updated the commissioners on the Olson bridge. His crew planned on removing only the north span but halfway through they found that the whole deck will have to be replaced. Once they are finished this bridge will be an unposted bridge again due to the limit increasing to over 31 tons. They anticipate the project will be finished in 3-4 weeks.
- Jason updated the commissioners on the bridge on #9. They might have found two culverts that are in the area that will allow the bridge to reopen before harvest. There is hope that the culverts will provide a permanent fix to that area.
- Jason updated commissioners on the FEMA 2023, or DR4717 as it is called now. The information will be required during the busiest time for the township officers. Jason has been in contact with the township officers and they should be collecting the required data before the meeting. They will have a 60-day window after the initial meeting is held so there is a quick turnaround to apply.
- Jason informed the commissioners that there is a township assistance program that was announced. The highway department will have to submit all of the information for the townships. It was announced that in order to be eligible for this the township must be levying 18 mills. Walsh County has 14 townships that are levying the 18 mills.
- Chairman Skorheim commented that there have been several complaints about the condition at Homme Dam. There was a discussion on the major issues that have been brought before the commissioners and how they would like to see it resolved. Jason will be in contact with the staff.
- Chairman Skorheim asked for an update on the crack sealing that has been done this season. Jason reported that he would estimate that 5 miles of crack sealing has been completed, along with 8 miles of mastics. Typically, they are able to complete 20 miles of crack sealing in a season but because the mastic takes longer, they will not be able to complete as much. The mastic lasts longer so Jason feels that it is more beneficial than doing the crack sealing. He will work to get more staff at the beginning of spring to try and complete more miles next year.
- Jason stated that the potholes are not firming up this year and he might have to dig up the road and put rock or tile in to get the moisture away from the area. Jason stated that he would have to take equipment away from other projects to address the potholes. Chairman Skorheim asked if a third party should come in and take care of them. Jason will look into the numbers and see if there is room in the budget to do so. Commissioner Brintnell asked for better signage at the troubled area because the small flags are not adequate. Jason will have Chad put an actual sign up within the week.
- Jason informed the commissioners that he has two interviews scheduled for Friday for his open position.

Kelley Cole, States Attorney, appeared for the following:

- Kelley discussed the Walsh County Comprehensive Plan in regards to planning and zoning in Walsh County. The plan has been in place since 1994 and it is Kelley's recommendation that the planning and zoning committee reviews it and update it. Kelley was unable to find a zoning map that was referenced in the plan so there is no

clear indication of what the land is zoned as. A discussion was had on the properties that the commissioners have had complaints on. The plan states that the penalty is a misdemeanor violation with a \$100 fine for every day in violation of it and Kelley feels that this should be clarified. At this time, Walsh County does not have a junk ordinance on file. Kelley gave examples of a few of the century codes regarding junk properties. She has also reached out to the health department in Grand Forks, who the county is contracted with. Kelley explained how the Grand Forks ordinance works and shared a portion of it with the commissioners. Kelley will be available to attend the Planning & Zoning meeting that is scheduled for August 17th.

- Kelley then reviewed the Rural Attorney Recruitment Program that JR Steele is currently participating in with the commissioners. A discussion was had on the current job market in North Dakota for rural attorneys. Counties are having trouble filling their vacant positions so they are approving significant pay increases to get the positions filled. A discussion was had on what kind of an asset JR Steele is to Walsh County and Kelley was hoping that the commissioners would review the previous arrangements that were approved at a previous meeting. Each month JR's salary is being reduced because of this program and Kelley asked for a motion to approve that the county pays the \$3,150 annual fee to participate in the program for the remaining 4-year term. **Commissioner Brintnell made a motion to approve that the county will pay the annual fee, seconded by Commissioner Suda. Commissioner Anderson stated that this would be a great way to show appreciation to JR. All voted in favor; motion approved.**

Kristi Quibell shared with the commissioners a letter that she received from USDA regarding an Intergovernmental Review Consultation. The proposed project includes a tie in from Walsh Rural Water District into Northeast Regional Water District existing system near the City of Adams. Commissioner Anderson felt that this should be tabled until it is discussed with the WRWD. Kristi Quibell will contact Brian Reilly and report back at the next meeting.

The Commissioners then discussed the CARES fund balance. Kristi Quibell provided the commissioners with a detailed list of expenses paid. She stated that there are two rebates that have not been received yet. She also informed the board that the transfer from the technology fund to cover the Tyler Software annual maintenance fee, that was approved at the last meeting, has been completed. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) fund was also reviewed. There has been minimal activity in that account as the majority of the expenses have been paid with CARES money.

The Commissioners then discussed the preliminary budget. Initially the County General expenses came to \$6,248,334 but after further review the commissioners were able to decrease that amount to \$5,809,900 (-\$438,434) and also decrease other funding accounts by \$287,182, making the total amount decreased by \$725,616. There was a Capital Improvements account created this year with 10 mills levied for it. This fund will be used for future repairs and upgrades to the county buildings. The mill value was figured using the previous year centrally assessed values and it came in at \$64,274 per mill. Once the new centrally assessed values are computed the value of each mill might change. There was a discussion on allowing budget amendments next year if needed. Commissioner Anderson stated that she felt that the commissioners reduced the budgets as much as possible, without cutting salaries, but if there are department heads that could cut their budgets even more that would be great. A discussion was then had on the importance of watching excessive spending

to ensure that COLA's are able to be offered at budget time because that would be an easy way to cut more off the budget. Commissioner Brintnell stated that she hopes that the public will understand that the 10 additional mills that are being requested this year is specifically for capital improvements on the building and grounds. Commissioner Suda mentioned that there are some fund accounts where cutting funds isn't an option, like the highway department and sheriff's department. With the county being maxed at the 60 mills and everything costing more, spending will have to be watched closely. A discussion was had about rolling out a six-year capital project form with the department heads and they would submit a forecast with their budget each year. **After a lengthy discussion Commissioner Barta made a motion to approve the preliminary budget as presented, seconded by Commissioner Brintnell. All voted in favor; motion approved.** Commissioner Barta excused himself from the meeting.

The commissioners then discussed the single audit requirement with the NDDOT. Kristi Quibell informed the commissioners that after reviewing last year's numbers, Walsh County is not required to have a single audit for the 2022 calendar year. She stated that with all of the FEMA flood money coming in this year she anticipates that it will be required for the 2023 calendar year. NDDOT received the single audit for 2021 calendar year 6 months late so they are requiring a letter stating the reasoning behind the delay. Once prepared it will be presented to the commissioners before it is submitted to the NDDOT.

The commissioners then reviewed the Federal Aviation Administration aeronautical studies that were presented. It appears that this is relating to a wind turbine in Niagara, ND. Commissioner Anderson recommended that Kelley Cole reviews it to ensure that Walsh County does not have to act on it.

Chairman Skorheim ended the meeting by giving his gratitude to the commissioners and auditor for the time that was spent on the budget.

Meeting adjourned at 12:15 pm

Dennis Skorheim, Chair

Attest:

Kristi Quibell
Auditor