

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF WALSH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
September 5, 2023

September 5, 2023 – 9:00 a.m.

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

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

The meeting was called to order and bills were reviewed.

Commissioner Suda moved to approve the corrected August 15, 2023 minutes and monthly bills, seconded by Barta. Roll call vote – Commissioner Suda – Yes, Commissioner Brintnell – Yes, Commissioner Barta – Yes, Chairman Skorheim – Yes; motion approved. Commissioner Anderson – absent

Sheriff Ron Jurgens introduced Douglas Hill, Walsh County Task Force Officer, and Tristyn Bair, Deputy Sheriff – Park River to the commissioners. Ron Jurgens reported that it was their first day on the job and with these two new hires the Sheriff's Department is fully staffed. It was reported that the Correctional Center has two vacancies at this time.

Sheriff Ron Jurgens recently met with Sig and Scott from Samuels Group and gave the commissioners an update on the new jail project. Scott presented Ron with the size of the new jail, which is comparable to the square footage of the current jail with the basement. They went over what would be needed in the new Sheriff's Office but due to miscommunication with Tom, there was no update on the jail at this time. There will be another meeting in a few weeks to go over the architectural sketches.

Sheriff Ron Jurgens informed the commissioners that he has received several complaints from the general public on Veseleyville and Nash. The States Attorney Office and the Grand Forks Health Department will be involved. Nash is a township issue and Veseleyville is a county issue. Commissioner Anderson joined the meeting.

Brad Brummond, Cale Monson, Luke Lillehaugen, and Katie Thompson came before the board to discuss the fair building. Brad informed the board that it was discovered that the alley behind the existing fair building is considered a city street and is not owned by the county. If the fair board decides to repair the existing fair building the street would have to be closed by the city and the facility will be unavailable for a year. Brad informed the commissioners that the board has been doing some research on the county-owned undeveloped land west of the extension office. Brad reported that bringing utilities to the potential site is possible and the dirt work would be minimal. The commissioners were presented with a blueprint and cost of the project. A lengthy discussion was had on the potential site and the costs associated with it. With the support from the commissioners, the fair board will continue to explore the possibility of building at the location. Commissioner Barta left the meeting. There was a

discussion on fundraising, operating costs, and additional uses the building would provide the county.

Tanya Weiler appeared for the following:

- Tanya brought before the commissioners an updated Social Media Policy that she has been working on for the county. Tanya reported that there are many county departments that have their own social media page. The current policy addresses the use of social media as a county employee and does not address the formal use of social media from the county's standpoint. Tanya will share a presentation on county best practices for social media. A discussion was had on yearly training for employees going forward. Tanya asked for a motion to approve the initial reading on this updated policy. **Commissioner Anderson made a motion to approve the initial reading on the updated Social Media Policy, seconded by Commissioner Brintnell. Commissioner Barta joined the meeting. It was noted that it is at the discretion of each department on who posts on behalf of the county, but is traceable through the admin group. Tanya informed the commissioners that Kelley Cole is looking into additional information on social media and open records. Roll call vote –Commissioner Brintnell – Yes, Commissioner Barta – abstained not present for discussion, Commissioner Anderson – Yes, Commissioner Suda – Yes, Chairman Skorheim – Yes; motion approved.** Tanya stated that this is the first reading and a second reading will be presented in 30 days before the change takes place.
- Tanya presented a few options to consider to curb the abuse of sick leave. She reported that some departments have had issues with it and it has been discussed at department head meetings in the past. Tanya gave some examples of what she has seen in other policies. Commissioner Suda stated that she would favor the option to allow the employee to convert sick time into vacation time. Commissioner Brintnell mentioned that allowing sick employees to text their department head could be looked at and a phone call be required instead. Commissioner Brintnell added that another option that was discussed at the department head meeting was to update the current policy so a doctor's note can be requested right away if abuse is suspected. The policy currently states that after three days a note can be requested. A discussion was had on the doctors note requirement. **Commissioner Brintnell made a motion to approve the revision to the sick leave note to allow department heads to ask for a doctor's note at their discretion, seconded by Commissioner Suda. All voted in favor; motion approved.**

Jason Johnston, Highway Superintendent, appeared for the following:

- Jason informed the commissioners that after doing his research he felt that \$550.00 per month would be an appropriate rate to charge the Probation and Parole office for the office space they are interested in renting on the second floor of the courthouse. Jason stated that before a contract is signed with Probation and Parole the States Attorney's office will review it. **Commissioner Brintnell made a motion to approve the \$550.00 per month based on rent for other office space in the city; seconded by Commissioner Barta. All voted in favor; motion approved.**

- Jason updated the commissioners on some current projects. He reported that the bridge by the Voss piler site should be completed within the week. He also reported that the concrete piers for the Fordville bridge should be completed this week also. He reported that work on the bridge on County Road 8 should get started soon so the road will be closed until the box culverts are installed. He reported that there are two additional bridges that are down. The first one was to replace some planks and he felt that they would finish that project within the week. The second one was a bridge that was damaged when a semi hit the bridge and flipped over on it. That bridge will be replaced with a culvert and it will increase the approach from an 18' to a 30' approach. Commissioner Brintnell inquired if the damage will be covered by the owner of the semi. Jason reported that it did go through the Sheriff's Office and they are waiting to hear. Commissioner Barta asked if the semi had insurance and Jason had not heard either way at the time of the meeting. Jason stated that this same bridge was hit seven years ago and that was why they decided to put a culvert there instead. Commissioner Brintnell asked if Jason could provide the commissioners with a map so that they can keep track of the bridges easier. Chairman Skorheim asked for an update on the soft spots on County Rd 19. Jason reported that they are not firming up so they will have to dig them up and fix them, possibly with tiling, and it should be completed this fall. Commissioner Suda asked if the road by the Dusek's is open and Jason confirmed that it was completed and the dirt pile should be removed next week. Commissioner Brintnell mentioned that she has received a lot of comments about how narrow the bypass by the Fordville bridge is. The concern is that there is large equipment and semis using the bypass and there could be an accident if equipment met on it due to no lights. Wade Thompson from KLJ Engineering LLC stated that the bypass was built wide enough that lights were not required but he will look at the site again.
- Wade Thompson invited the commissioners to supper at Jack's in Bismarck during the annual convention in October.
- Jason then presented the commissioners with a bid to replace carpeting in the admin building. He reported that Mickey reached out to three different companies a few times and the only one that submitted a bid was Ray Gourde in the amount of \$8,968.00. Jason asked for a motion to approve the bid for the carpeting, which will be for the hallways and the lobby by the health district. Chairman Skorheim asked where the funds would come from. Jason informed the commissioners that he can use the capital outlay fund if ARPA funds are not available. **Commissioner Anderson made a motion to approve the hiring of Ray Gourde to do the carpeting in the admin building and take it out of the capital outlay account; seconded by Commissioner Suda. All voted in favor; motion approved.**
- Jason then presented the commissioners with bids for two motor graders, one bid from John Deere and the other from Butler CAT. Representatives from both companies were present. Jason went over each bid in detail with the commissioners. The John Deere bid came in at \$730,000 for the premium circle and CAT came in at \$713,874.00. Jason stated that the CAT is a smaller model than what they are currently running and after visiting with his crew, he felt that they should move forward with the premium circle John Deere motor graders. A lengthy discussion was had on the benefits of both pieces of equipment and how they compared to each other. Jason did feel that even though the CAT was a smaller model it was comparable to the John Deere model.

Commissioner Barta made a motion to approve the bids for two motor graders from John Deere; seconded by Commissioner Brintnell. Commissioner Anderson confirmed that any issues with the machine would be covered under warranty, excluding any operator mistakes. Commissioner Barta stated that his motion was based on what the highway crew preferred. Chairman Skorheim voiced that he felt that a bid is a bid and the lowest should be accepted. **Roll call vote – Commissioner Anderson – No, Commissioner Suda – Yes, – Commissioner Brintnell – Yes, – Commissioner Barta – Yes, Chairman Skorheim – No; motion approved.**

- Jason then brought before the commissioners a utility permit for Nodak Electric Cooperative on County Rd 15. Commissioner Barta pointed out that at the top of the permit it stated it was Ops Township but at the bottom of the permit it gives the location as Eden Township. Jason confirmed that the top should be Eden Township and the permit will be corrected before it is signed. The next utility permit presented was for Polar Communications to bury fiber optics lines to Phil Jallo's property on County Rd 19A. Jason stated that he would make sure they stay in the right of way that they talked about. **Commissioner Barta made a motion to approve both utility permits once the correction is made to the township on the Nodak Electric permit; seconded by Commissioner Anderson. All voted in favor; motion approved.**
- Jason then presented the commissioners with a billing for the DOT bridge inspections that have been completed. He stated that it is the April billing in the amount of \$4,525.53 for 6 bridge inspections. **Commissioner Brintnell made a motion to approve the bill for the DOT inspections; seconded by Commissioner Suda. All voted in favor; motion approved.**
- Jason presented the commissioners with a drainage permit for Craig Skorheim to clean out the ditch near Adams. He informed the commissioners that the water board approved the permit at their meeting this morning and Jason does not have an issue with it either. **Commissioner Anderson made a motion to approve the drainage permit; seconded by Commissioner Brintnell. All voted in favor; motion approved.**
- Commissioner Barta asked for the commissioners blessing to work with Jason to try and get more state funding for the eastern side of the state for roads. He would like to reach out to the county association because the equipment is getting heavier and larger loads are being hauled and the roads on this side of the state needs additional funding like the oil producing counties received. Jason stated that it has not been finalized but all non-oil producing counties should be getting an additional check in the future. He informed the commissioners that he submitted the final township application to the DOT. He stated that the participation from the townships was low with only 11 participating at this time. A lengthy discussion was had on the timing of the deadline and the miscommunication about the required mills. Commissioner Barta excused himself from the meeting. Commissioner Anderson stated that she would look into the timing.
- Commissioner Brintnell asked for an update on County Road 12B. Jason stated that the gravel was going into the clay layer and he was waiting for a tote of product from Base One. A discussion was had on if the product should be applied again or if there was a better solution. Jason would check with other counties to see if they are having luck with other options. Commissioner Brintnell asked if Jason had had a chance to

look into paving the curves. Jason stated that he thought that the Texas seal and armor coating would be a possibility but he is concerned that if he can not keep the base from coming up it would break that up also. He is looking into a way to get the top layer to be secured before he puts the Texas seal and armor coat on top of it. Commissioner Barta returned to the meeting.

- Commissioner Brintnell asked for an update on the number of miles of crack sealing that was completed this year. Jason stated that they got 6 miles of crack sealing done because they have been doing the mastic, which takes longer. Commissioner Brintnell stated that she was concerned because the goal was always to get 1/3 of the county done each year but this year only 6 miles was done. A discussion was had on the need for a new plan because there would be no way to get caught up. Jason stated that with the new roads that have been completed in the county there will be less to seal in the future. Commissioner Brintnell asked for Jason to come up with a plan and present it at the next meeting.
- Commissioner Brintnell asked for an update on the conversation that they had at the last meeting in regards to hiring the additional employee for the highway crew. Jason reported that Jeremy Praska accepted the position as the Tech II and will start next week.
- Commissioner Brintnell asked for an update on Homme Dam. Jason informed the commissioners that the wood chip pile is no longer there, they are doing additional mowing, barriers will be moved to make it easier to get around areas to mow, and he has asked them to notated where they mowed on the timesheets. He has been in contact with them regarding the commissioners concerns. A lengthy discussion was had on the concerns that they are still having with the county park. Commissioner Anderson stated that they should have a stipulation that the park is taken care of before the end of the summer. A discussion was had on what the expectations are going forward. Commissioner Anderson stated that she felt that social media helps to draw people to the park but there have not been any posts this year and would like that changed.

Kristi Quibell, Auditor, appeared for the following:

- Kristi gave an update on the hours that she is putting in. She updated the commissioners on the issues they are experiencing with the new system. She stated that is taking up the majority of her time right now. Due to the issues that they have discovered, it is Kristi's recommendation to start entering all activity into the old system to have data to verify to ensure the new system data is correct froward.
- Kristi reported that the election department from Secretary of State office invited her to come and help certify the election equipment next week. She is hoping to fit some of that into her schedule to get exposure with the election equipment.
- Kristi asked the commissioners to approve the hiring of the third position in the auditor's office. She stated that she would like to work with Tanya Weiler to rewrite the job descriptions before she advertises the position. A discussion was had on the needs of the office and the workload. **Commissioner Brintnell made a motion to allow Kristi to hire a full-time deputy auditor to fill the vacant position when she is ready; seconded by Commissioner Anderson. Commissioner Brintnell stated that once the vacant position is filled Kris Molde's unlimited hours, which was approved**

at the last meeting, will have to be reduced. Tanya Weiler stated that the position that is currently vacant would be cross trained in payroll but she would like to see the job descriptions updated to try and fill some gaps with payroll related experience. All voted in favor; motion carried.

Kelley Cole, States Attorney, appeared for the following:

- Kelley Cole discussed the Oslo Region Joint Powers Board agreement that was presented to her recently. Kelley stated that without a lot of background knowledge on this agreement she is concerned with the financial obligation and some provisions on trying to get out of the agreement if needed. She also understands there would be beneficial aspects of being at the table and was present to see what the thoughts of the commissioners was. There was a discussion on the need to explore the option for the county to ensure that the best decision is made. Commissioner Anderson stated that she felt it would be beneficial if the Oslo Region Joint Powers Board could meet with Kelley Cole and she will schedule a meeting. The topic will be discussed at a later date.

Meeting adjourned at 11:45 am

Dennis Skorheim, Chair

Attest:

Kristi Quibell
Auditor