

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF WALSH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
January 2, 2024

January 2, 2024– 9:00 a.m.

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

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

The meeting was called to order and bills were reviewed.

Commissioner Brintnell moved to approve the December 19, 2023 minutes and monthly bills, seconded by Suda. All voted in favor.

Commissioner Suda reported that an interview for the County Agent was held in December but no offer was presented. Suda stated that Katie Thompson will continue to serve as the interim County Agent until they can find a fit for the position.

Auditor Quibell asked for a motion to approve 2024 payments on demand which would give her permission to pay bills without approval prior to the commissioner meetings. This will give Quibell permission to pay bills as she sees fit between meeting. After a discussion **Skorheim made a motion to allow the auditor to pay bills without prior approval when needed, seconded by Barta.** All voted in favor; motion carried.

Commissioner Brintnell reported that there were some questions concerning how the special assessments were listed on the tax statements. The new system did not give a detailed listing on the specials and combined them into one figure. Brintnell reported that the county will be working with the new system to try come up with a solution for next year.

Ed Sevigny, Tax Director, appeared for the following:

- Ed presented the first abatement application to the commissioners for Christian Unity Hospital Corporation on their property at 147 13th St W, Grafton, ND. Ed informed the commissioners that the applicant was asking that the property be exempt from taxation pursuant to N.D.C.C 57-02-08(8)(a) as the residence belongs to a nonprofit hospital. Ed explained that this property was being used as office space and sleeping rooms for hospital on-call staff and traveling nurses. Ed stated that the century code does not exempt a property solely on it being owned by a nonprofit institution but instead on the use of the property. It was the recommendation of the Tax Director and States Attorney that the application be denied. Ed also stated that the City of Grafton denied the application for all three years based on the guidance from their attorney. **Barta made a motion to deny the abatement application for all 3 years for the property at 147 13th St W, Grafton, ND, seconded by Brintnell.** All voted in favor; motion carried.
- Ed presented the second abatement application for Christian Unity Hospital Corporation on their property at 49 W 14th St, Grafton, ND. Ed explained that the second application was also a residential property that was purchased to house traveling staff. Ed stated that the applications for this property was similar to the first one with the exception that their 2021 application did state that the garage was used to store lawn care and snow removal equipment. Ed informed the

commissioners that he felt that would be considered use for the hospital so he recommends that portion of the parcel's value for the 2021 tax be granted the abatement. Ed stated that the City of Grafton did deny the 2022 and 2023 application for this property, but they did approve a partial exemption for the garage located on the property. It was the recommendation of the Tax Director that the application for the 2022 and 2023 tax year be denied, and approve a partial exception for the 2021 tax year reducing the value from \$229,000 down to a total true and full value of \$208,900. **Suda made a motion to deny the abatement application for 2022, 2023, and the 2021 with the exception of the garage value for the property at 49 W 14th St, Grafton, ND, seconded by Skorheim.** All voted in favor; motion carried.

Stacie Sevigny joined the meeting to discuss the JDA board appointments for 2024. Stacie went over in detail with the commissioners the requirements set forth by North Dakota Century Code for the JDA board. Stacie informed the commissioners that there is one vacant seat representing cities under 500, with one year remaining on that term, as well as township seat that is vacant after the member stepped down at the end of the year. Stacie stated that there were 3 terms that expired at the end of 2023, with each of those members looking to be reappointed. Stacie stated that JDA was seeking the Walsh County Commission's approval to reappoint Julie Gemmill and Terri Gorder to represent At Large, Kyle Halvorson representing Cities Above 500 – Park River, and appoint Evan Koenig for the one-year remaining term representing Cities Below 500, and appoint Dennis Markusen to represent a Township Officer. **Brintnell made a motion to appoint Julie Gemmill, Terri Gorder, Kyle Halvorson, Evan Koenig, and Dennis Markusen to the JDA Board, seconded by Barta.** All voted in favor; motion carried.

Brent Nelson appeared for the following:

- Brent reported that the Weed Board had two terms expire at the end of 2023 and the members were not interested in being reappointed. Brent stated that the board currently consists of 5 areas, but has been unable to fill the open position for quite some time. Brent stated that due to the fact that the board is having a hard time filling the seats within the designated areas the board would be interested in either changing to a 5- or 3-member board with all members at large. A discussion was had on the size of the board and the difficulties in filling vacancies. **Skorheim made a motion to approve the Weed Board to go down to a 3-member board with all positions being At Large, seconded by Suda.** All voted in favor; motion carried. **Suda made a motion to reappoint Louis Kadlec and Ed Sevigny to the Weed Board, seconded by Brintnell.** All voted in favor; motion carried.
- Brent and the commissioners had a discussion regarding the Emergency Management pickup. Brent stated that the current pickup has over 150,000 miles and it does not get used a lot. A discussion was had on if the county should upgrade the pickup or pay mileage to Brent to drive his own pickup. Barta was concerned about the liability that could cause and suggested that Brent look into a used pickup due to the limited use that it gets currently. A discussion was held on what the expectations are for Brent during emergency situations. In the past, he would respond to emergency situations but if it was decided to not replace the pickup, he would not be interested in using his own vehicle for that. No decisions were made and Brent will look into used options and report back.

- Brent informed the commissioners that he conducted 3 interviews for the open dispatch position and he hired Angie Scherer, who was working in the Auditors Office. There is one open position and he will be posting that in the near future.

David Silewski joined the meeting to discuss the Texas crossing in St. Andrews Township. David explained that after a large rain, a beaver hut broke loose and damaged the Texas crossing. David stated that he felt that the crossing should have lasted for more years than it did. He stated that he was concerned that the county had not contacted the contractor after the damage happened. Jason Johnston stated that the crossing was funded through FEMA and it was decided by the county that they would not spend additional money to maintain the crossing in the future. A lengthy discussion was had on who the responsibility lies on due to it being a township road. It was the recommendation of the commissioners that David contacts the township officers.

Jason Johnston appeared for the following:

- Jason presented a cost share with the commissioners for a bridge west of Ardoch in the amount of \$1,700.00. Jason informed the commissioners that the cost share was not required and if the county would not have participated the bill would have been over \$13,000. **Barta made a motion to pay the bill as presented, seconded by Suda.** All voted in favor; motion carried.
- Jason updated the commissioners on the 3 bridges that were replaced in 2023. Due to the increases in the bid prices the county's share came in higher than originally expected but DOT moved money around internally and the county's cost share will be around \$200,000, not the \$1.2 million originally expected.
- Jason presented the commissioners with a map of the 13 projects that were submitted for the 2024 Flex Fund, totaling \$18 million. Jason does not anticipate receiving funds for all of the projects but he submitted them anyway.
- Jason presented the commissioners with a Utility Permit for Nodak Electric Cooperative to relocate a powerline. The powerline is located near a bridge that was washed out in the 2022 flood and this permit will allow them to move the powerline so the bridge can be realigned and completed. **Brintnell made a motion to approve Nodak Electric Cooperative's Utility Permit, seconded by Skorheim.** All voted in favor; motion carried.
- Jason informed the commissioners that the bridge truck is still out of commission.
- Jason reported that he has not heard back from Elevatus on the jail project. Chairwoman Anderson asked that either Jason or Ron reach out to Elevatus for an update.
- Jason reported that there was a shower leak in the jail and plumbers had to be called.
- Commissioner Brintnell reported that she received complaints about 12B after the recent rain. Jason stated that the rain and ice caused issues everywhere and they tried to salt as much as they could.

Auditor Quibell reported that her Deputy I new hire will start tomorrow, but her Deputy II position is now vacant. She stated that she would not be filling that position at this time. Quibell reported that she will be looking into getting on-site training from Tyler and also consulting from Stutsman County. She stated that she felt she would benefit from one-on-one assistance to speed up the process. Quibell stated that Tami Mecham and Christine Ferguson have offered their assistance during the transition. Quibell informed the commissioners that there

is a retired auditor that is moving to the area in April and would be willing to do consulting with the county. The retired auditor is a CPA and left a county that used Tyler. Quibell will continue to keep the commissioners informed on the progress.

Chairwoman Anderson reported that she spoke with Kelley Cole regarding Planning & Zoning. Kelley informed Anderson that she has been working on updating the plan but she will need direction from the committee on how to proceed. Skorheim will look into lining up a meeting that will work for the gravel pit issue and Kelley Cole.

The assignment of the 2024 portfolios for the commissioners was then discussed. Chairwoman Anderson reported that the Carnegie Library Board will have to be added to the portfolios. Suda stated that she would be willing to take the library board and Barta agreed to take the fair board. There was a discussion on the obligations associated with the different committees. A discussion was had on the portfolios and it was decided that there would be no other changes made for 2024. **Barta made a motion to approve the changes made to the portfolios for 2024, seconded by Skorheim.** All voted in favor; motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 am

Karen Anderson, Chair

Attest:

Kristi Quibell
Auditor