

April 1, 2020
Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners
Special Meeting
Minutes

The Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners met in special session on Wednesday, April 1, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. at the Cottonwood County Courthouse in Windom, MN. Present in person or via teleconference for all or portions of the meeting were: Commissioners Kevin Stevens, Tom Appel, Donna Gravley, Norm Holmen, Larry Anderson; County Attorney Nick Anderson, County Coordinator Kelly Thongvivong, Auditor/Treasurer Donna Torkelson, Nick Klisch, Kelsey Andrews, Joel Alvstad, Glenn Johnson, Gale Bondhus, Paul Johnson, Mark Schenk and Jed Rhubee.

Chairman Stevens called the meeting to order. The purpose of this special meeting was to discuss further information that may be available to the board regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Chairman Stevens reported that a Joint Government Meeting was held on Monday and discussion was held regarding the possibility of state aid dollars being reduced. Stevens wants the board to begin thinking about ways to save money to avoid possible layoffs in the future if the COVID-19 pandemic continues for an extended period of time. As part of this discussion, there were questions as to whether or not the county should proceed with some of their upcoming projects or if the discretionary projects could be put on hold for the time being. Some of the projects that were discussed were: Cell 8 construction at the landfill, the Jeffers Highway Shop and tuckpointing of the Courthouse, which includes the dome. The board seemed to agree that the Cell 8 construction at the landfill needs to move forward as does the tuckpointing at the Courthouse, specifically the dome area. The tuckpointing of the lower level of the Courthouse could possibly be put on hold. Additional discussion regarding the Jeffers Highway Shop will be held at the April 7th board meeting since the contract has already been awarded and some of the materials for the project have already been ordered.

Brief discussion was held in regards to the possibility of not moving forward with any new hires at this point, which would include the HEO position out of the Jeffers shop and the seasonal positions. The board would like to keep from laying off as many employees as possible.

Commissioner Holmen discussed the possibility of contacting Senator Bill Weber and Representative Hamilton to see if they have any insight as to what might end up happening with the funding levels such as State Aid/Program Aid.

Some other things to consider during this pandemic are health insurance premiums, potential cost savings in other areas such as gasoline prices, park closures, etc.

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Kelsey Andrews, DVHHS Public Health Director, provided an update on behalf of Cottonwood and Jackson counties. Cottonwood County now has its third positive case of COVID-19. The individual is a 19-year old who is recovering at home.

Discussion was also held regarding upcoming Boards of Review. Gale Bondhus, County Assessor, plans to hold meetings via conference call. Bondhus was asked to send out further information to the commissioners clarifying how the process is going to be handled and to get the word out to the Township Clerks sooner rather than later as to how meetings will be handled. Bondhus was also asked to get in contact with the *Citizen* to discuss this further.

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Brief discussion was held in regards to an e-mail that was received from the *Citizen* in regards to the possibility of the county participating in an ad, which will be placed in the upcoming Shopper over the next few weeks. The board definitely supports the concept but did not want to participate in placing an ad at this point.

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There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:41 a.m.

Donna Torkelson, Auditor/Treasurer

Kevin Stevens, Board Chair

Kelly Thongvivong, County Coordinator