

May 15, 2020
Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners
Special Meeting
Minutes

The Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners met in special session on Friday, May 15, 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, Kathy Marsh, Mark Schenk, Glenn Johnson, Paul Johnson, Gale Bondhus, Kathy Kretsch, Jason Purrington, Kay Gross, Todd Dibble, Nick Klisch, Jed Rhubee, and Joel Alvstad.

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.

* * * *

Paul Johnson, Emergency Management Director, updated the board on COVID related items. Johnson reiterated that Governor Walz is allowing the stay-at-home order to expire and is replacing it with Minnesota Stay Safe.

Johnson then led discussion regarding the opening of county offices. Kathy Kretsch, County Recorder, stated that she will be able to open for business as of May 18, but would like approval to go ahead with the No Wait Inside appointment software. The fee of \$29.00 per month will cover any county office that would want to use the software. Kretsch stated that the County Attorney has okay'd the screening questions and that the questions can be asked but the data received should not be written down. The screening questions are separate from the software at this time but may become part of the program at a later date. Kretsch stated that the software can be purchased on a month by month basis. Motion by Holmen, second by Gravley, unanimous roll call vote to purchase the No Wait Inside appointment software for the county.

Johnson presented the draft ad for the opening of county offices. Commissioner Appel asked that the Veteran's office, Attorney's office, and SWCD/Environmental office be added to the listing of offices and that the 4th bullet be revised to specify where the door bell is. After more discussion, motion by Holmen, second by Anderson, unanimous roll call vote to open county offices on May 18 by appointment only and comply with Executive Order 20-56 and MDH and DH Guidelines.

Johnson presented resolution 20-05-15 for approval. Motion by Gravley, second by Holmen, unanimous roll call vote to approve resolution 20-05-15 with revisions as follows:

Resolution 20-05-15

Supporting Cottonwood County Businesses and Urging Governor Tim Walz to Expedite the Reopening of Minnesota's Economy in a Manner that Better Balances Economic and Public Health Needs

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 Virus poses a serious public health and safety risk and has mushroomed into a worldwide pandemic; and

WHEREAS, Due to the pandemic, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz has issued a variety of executive orders that have required a number of businesses to cease or significantly reduce operations, along with issuing “Stay at Home” and “Stay Safe Minnesota” orders for Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, the closure of some businesses and the reduction in operations of other businesses has created economic hardship in Cottonwood County, its cities, and throughout Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, on April 30th, Governor Tim Walz signed Executive Order 20-48, extending the “Stay At Home Order” and closure of restaurants, bars, hair salons, and other places of accommodation through May 18th; and

WHEREAS, on May 13th, Governor Tim Walz signed Executive Order 20-56, letting the “Stay at Home” order expire and replacing it with “Stay Safe Minnesota”, which still has closures in place for bars, restaurants, and other places of public accommodation through June 1st; and

WHEREAS, the economic harm caused by these orders may result in the permanent closure of many businesses and cause irrevocable harm to the local economy and livelihood of many Cottonwood County residents; and

WHEREAS, the closure and reduced operations of many Cottonwood County businesses has resulted in lost economic activity in Cottonwood County and encouraged residents to do their business in neighboring states where businesses are re-opening faster; and

WHEREAS, the Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners understands the need to protect public health, and urges those who are sick, have weakened immune systems, or who otherwise do not feel comfortable going out to stay home; and

WHEREAS, the Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners urges residents to continue practicing social distancing and follow other guidelines by the Center for Disease Control and Minnesota Department of Public Health; and,

WHEREAS, the Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners urges Governor Tim Walz and other State leaders to balance the overall public health and economic health needs in making future decisions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners urges Governor Tim Walz and other State leaders to reopen the State’s economy in the fastest way possible while balancing the need to protect public health.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners is urging Governor Tim Walz and other State Leaders to allow restaurants, bars, hair salons, other places of public accommodation, and any other businesses that were required to close as a result of the Executive Orders to reopen before the Memorial Day Weekend while following strict public health and safety protocols; and

Adopted by the Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners this 15th day of May 2020.

S/Kevin Stevens, Board Chairman

S/Donna Torkelson, Auditor/Treasurer

Commissioner Holmen asked that the resolution be sent to Representative Hamilton, Congressman Weber, Governor Walz, Julie Ring at AMC, and Dan at MRC.

Johnson reminded the board that the State of Emergency expires on May 16. Johnson doesn’t believe at this time it needs to be extended but if the board does want to continue, it can be brought up at the May 19th meeting.

*

*

*

*

Motion by Appel, second by Holmen, unanimous roll call vote to set special meetings for Friday, May 22 at 9:00 a.m., and Friday, May 29 at 9:00 a.m. Commissioner Appel asked that the Law Enforcement Center (LEC) meeting room calendar be checked to see if it is available for future board meetings and tentatively booked.

* * * *

Chairman Stevens led discussion regarding the new outside drop box and whether it was to be used by the whole courthouse or just the Auditor/Treasurer office. After much discussion, the drop box is to be used for all county business with the Auditor/Treasurers office responsible for checking it.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:22 a.m.

Donna Torkelson, Auditor/Treasurer

Kevin Stevens, Board Chair

Kelly Thongvivong, County Coordinator