

January 10, 2023  
Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners  
Special Meeting  
Minutes

The Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners met in special session on Tuesday, January 10, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. at the Cottonwood County Courthouse in Windom, MN. Present for all or portions of the meeting, via in-person or phone, were: Commissioners Tom Appel, Kevin Stevens, Donna Gravley, Norm Holmen, Larry Anderson; County Attorney Nick Anderson, County Coordinator Kelly Thongvivong, Auditor/Treasurer Donna Torkelson, Kathy Marsh, Mike Meeks, Gale Bondhus, Nick Klisch, Kathy Kretsch, Jim Schmidt, Jared Schmidt, and Joel Alvstad.

Chairman Anderson called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Motion by Holmen, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to approve the agenda as amended.

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Motion by Gravley, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to approve signing a 2-year agreement between Cottonwood County and AFSCME Local Union #578, which will be effective January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2024.

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Commissioner Appel led discussion regarding county buildings and the priority of what needs to be done. Consensus of the board is that the main priorities are the new highway shop and Courthouse windows and roof.

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Jim Schmidt and Jared Schmidt were asked to give an update on the timeline of what is happening with the Courthouse window grant. Jared stated that the grant is being reviewed by a person at the Minnesota Historical Society that will give feedback to himself and Engen Architects. The first round of large grant applications are due to the Minnesota Historical Society by July 21, with final applications due the end of September.

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A short discussion was held regarding ditches and the sinking ditch fund repayment. Donna Torkelson, Auditor/Treasurer, stated that any motion needed for the sinking ditch fund for 2023 can be done when the 2023 ditch levies are finalized.

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Commissioner Appel led discussion on salaries. Appel stated that the three union contracts have been settled and non-union wages have been set for 2023, except for three non-union employees whose wages are over the top of the new matrix. After much discussion, motion by Appel, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to grant a 3% COLA to the Public Works Director, County Coordinator, and the County Assessor for 2023.

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Donna Torkelson, Auditor/Treasurer, informed the board that there is a tax forfeiture property that a neighbor to the property is parking vehicles on. Torkelson was wondering if she should increase the liability on the property. After discussion, consensus of the board is for the County Attorney to send a letter to the neighbor of the tax forfeiture property.

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Commissioner Appel asked if anyone would be attending the Pipeline Safety meeting.

Appel also stated that the county’s financials should be reviewed. Appel would like to review the final 2022 ending budget and the 2023 budget with changes for wages at a meeting in the near future.

Appel led a short discussion on how comp time is handled with non-union compared to union. Consensus of the board is to change the policy to be worded as the unions have it. Thongvivong stated that the reviewed policies, with changes, will be brought to a board meeting in the near future.

Commissioner Stevens informed the board that the Veteran’s Service Officer would like to adjust his working hours. After a short discussion, Stevens will get more clarification on what his hours would be.

Commissioner Anderson gave the board an update on the MRC meeting he attended on January 9.

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There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:09 a.m.

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Donna Torkelson, Auditor/Treasurer

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Larry Anderson, Board Chair

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Kelly Thongvivong, County Coordinator