

December 19, 2023
Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners
Regular Meeting
Minutes

The Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, December 19, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. at the Cottonwood County Courthouse in Windom, MN. Present for all or portions of the meeting were: Commissioners Larry Anderson, Tom Appel, Norm Holmen, Kevin Stevens, Donna Gravley, County Attorney Nick Anderson, Auditor/Treasurer Donna Torkelson, Kathy Marsh, Kathy Kretsch, Jason Purrington, Nick Klisch, Mike Meeks, David Grev, Larry Filippi, Dana Hlebichuk, Dylan Oeltjenbruns, and Joel Alvstad.

Chairman Anderson called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Motion by Gravley, second by Appel, unanimous vote to approve the agenda as amended. Motion by Holmen, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2023, regular meeting.

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Motion by Stevens, second by Gravley, unanimous vote to recess as the County Board and to convene as the Ditch Authority.

Oeltjenbruns presented information from H2Overviewers as to which counties they are working with for redetermination of benefits and also presented a buffer analysis. Oeltjenbruns also stated that it would take approximately three years to complete redetermination of benefits on the 55 ditches on the list presented. After discussion, the board would like a letter sent to all landowners on the ditch listing to see if any feedback is received; then a decision will be made if a county wide redetermination of benefits should be completed.

Motion by Gravley, second by Appel, unanimous vote to adjourn as the Ditch Authority and to reconvene as the County Board.

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Nick Anderson, County Attorney, read a statement regarding the setting of the Sheriff, Attorney, Auditor/Treasurer, and Recorder salaries. Anderson stated that salaries are to be set based on experience, qualifications, and performance, and that the four elected officials do not believe that the board placed on the record a sufficient basis for each salary. Anderson and the other three elected officials ask that the board rescind the motion the 2024 salary increases and take steps to set salaries pursuant to statutes at a future meeting. Motion by Holmen, second by Gravley, unanimous vote to rescind the motions setting the 2024 salaries of the County Attorney, Sheriff, Auditor/Treasurer, and Recorder as it has come to our attention that salaries of elected officials must be set by resolution rather than by motion.

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Norm Holmen, County Commissioner, presented a letter written regarding time trends on agricultural land as many comments were heard at both the June Board of Equalization and the December Truth in Taxation meetings. Holmen stated that he would like the letter to come from the whole board and not just himself. Holmen also stated that the letter should be sent to the following people: southern Minnesota County Boards, Minnesota Senators and Representatives, County Assessors, County Coordinators and Administrators, the MN Board of Assessors, and the MN Department of Revenue. Motion by Stevens, second by Appel,

unanimous vote to endorse the letter regarding time trends on agricultural land and send on behalf of the County Board.

Holmen also led discussion regarding cell phone reimbursement amounts. No action was taken.

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Nick Klisch, Public Works Director, met with the board to discuss a few items. Klisch stated Public Works would like to purchase a 2008 Sterling L8500 Plow Truck that is being auctioned on Minnbid. Motion by Gravley, second by Holmen, to allow the Public Works Department to bid up to \$53,000 on the 2008 Sterling L8500 Plow Truck on Minnbid. Voting Aye – Gravley, Stevens, Holmen, and Anderson. Voting Nay – Appel. Motion passed.

Klisch and Larry Filippi, Contegrity, presented the bids for the new Public Works building. Motion by Holmen, second by Appel, unanimous vote to award construction and material bids, recommended by Contegrity Group, for categories 2 through 23 and 25 through 29 except for category 20B; to approve project starting budget of \$12,662,190.29; to authorize the Public Works Director to approve changes for a value up to \$7,500; and to authorize the Public Works Director and Commissioners Holmen and Appel to authorize changes for a value of \$7,500 to \$500,000, which is the maximum of the contingency budget.

Klisch then informed the board that Cottonwood County won the bid on the 2008 Sterling L8500 Plow Truck in the amount of \$45,821. Klisch then asked for approval to sell the 1990 International truck on Minnbid. Motion by Gravley, second by Holmen, unanimous to sell the 1990 International truck on Minnbid.

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Kathy Marsh, Human Resources Technician, informed the board of the HEO interviews. Motion by Gravley, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to hire Wayne Turbes as full-time Heavy Equipment Operator on Range 10, Step 4 (\$24.08) pending successful completion of all hiring requirements.

Marsh also informed the board that Craig Taylor accepted the Heavy Equipment Operator position that was offered after the December 6 meeting. Taylor will start December 20, 2023.

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Donna Torkelson, Auditor/Treasurer, had discussion with the board regarding the 2024 tax levy and budget. Motion by Stevens, second by Gravley, unanimous vote to certify the levy for 2024 at \$12,802,550, which is a 6.75% increase from 2023; and the 2024 Revenues and Expenditures by Fund. The total revenues for 2024 are \$39,445,839 and total expenditures for 2024 are \$39,445,839.

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Motion by Appel, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to approve December warrants as follows:

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| County Revenue Fund | \$ 69,873.18 |
| Long Term Capital Outlay | \$ 1,098.00 |
| County Building Fund | \$ 745.25 |
| Ditch Fund | \$ 2,417.20 |
| Road and Bridge Fund | \$106,304.46 |

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|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Waste Abatement/SCORE | \$ 3,730.00 |
| Landfill Enterprise Fund | <u>\$ 83,674.64</u> |
| | \$267,842.73 |

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Commissioner Appel asked for clarification on Ditch Repair Financing, led a short discussion on building updates and priorities, and a short discussion on bonding.

Commissioner Holmen asked some questions regarding committee assignments for 2024.

Commissioner Gravley informed the board that the A.C.E. Director for Cottonwood County will be retiring in the near future.

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There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:58 a.m.

Donna Torkelson, Auditor/Treasurer

Larry Anderson, Board Chair

Kelly Thongvivong, County Coordinator