

February 6, 2024  
Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners  
Regular Meeting  
Minutes

The Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, February 6, 2024, 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, Donna Gravley, Norm Holmen, Kevin Stevens; County Coordinator Kelly Thongvivong, County Attorney Nick Anderson, Senator Bill Weber, Representative Marj Fogelman, Ray Salzwedel, Deb Salzwedel, Alex Schultz, George Eilertson, Nick Klisch, Jed Rhubee, Kathy Kretsch, Jenny Quade, Michael Mueller, Jamie Frank, Steve Nasby, Craig Myers, Rod Hamilton, Mike Meeks, Jason Purrington, Tim Evers, Dylan Oeltjenbruns, and Joel Alvstad.

Chairman Holmen called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Motion by Stevens, second by Appel, unanimous vote to approve the agenda as amended. Motion by Anderson, second by Appel, unanimous vote to approve the minutes of the January 16, 2024, regular meeting.

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Senator Bill Weber and Representative Marj Fogelman were present to meet with the board to discuss the upcoming legislative session and to listen to comments and concerns of those in attendance.

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Ray Salzwedel met with the board to discuss his ditch assessment and the way it was handled. The board will make a decision at the next board meeting as to whether or not to allow for extra time to get the assessment paid.

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Alex Schultz, Planning & Zoning Technician, met with the board to give an update on the January 25<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission meeting regarding the Red Rock Quarry amendment to their permit. Motion by Appel, second by Gravley, unanimous vote to make a change to condition #4 of the conditional use permit granted to the Red Rock Quarry, which would restrict all traffic to 270<sup>th</sup> and 280<sup>th</sup> Street west of the quarry entrance to Highway 71.

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Kevin Stevens, Commissioner, presented a resolution and engagement letter for the board's consideration on behalf of the Auditor/Treasurer. Motion by Anderson, second by Stevens, unanimous roll call vote to adopt resolution (on file in Coordinator's Office) appointing the staff of the Auditor/Treasurer's Office to the ballot board.

Motion by Gravley, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to sign the engagement letter for the FY2023 audit services.

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Nick Anderson, County Attorney, presented information regarding a Victim Witness Person that he may be interested in sharing with Jackson County. Jackson County would employ this individual 3 days/week and Cottonwood County would employ this individual 2 days/week. Motion by Anderson, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to have Nick Anderson and Commissioner Gravley to begin discussions with Jackson County.

Much discussion was had regarding the Assistant County Attorney position as the Assistant has recently resigned and Anderson does not feel that our existing pay matrix is adequate to attract applicants. The board decided not to make any adjustments to the matrix at this time.

Motion by Gravley, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to accept resignation from Casey Mork-Schofield as Assistant County Attorney effective March 4, 2024 with appropriate payout of benefits.

Motion by Appel, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to advertise to fill the position of Assistant County Attorney.

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George Eilertson, Northland Securities, met with the board to talk through the bonding of the new Public Works facility and to walk through the next steps. The consensus of the board is to go forward with a 20-year bond. A resolution to set the sale of the bonds will be presented at the April 16<sup>th</sup> board meeting.

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Nick Klisch, Public Works Director, met with the board to discuss several items. Klisch gave an update on pavement preservation fixes on CSAH 3 (Project 017-603-021) and presented bids for the project as follows: Knife River - \$1,863,641.40, Central Specialties Inc. - \$1,838,337.80, OMG Midwest Inc. dba Minnesota Paving - \$1,852,821.84 and Duininck, Inc. - \$1,885,781.00. Motion by Appel, second by Anderson, unanimous vote to award low base bid to Central Specialties Inc. in the amount of \$1,838,337.80 for overlays this upcoming year. Additive Alternative 1 will not be awarded.

Klisch presented a Title VI plan for the board's consideration. Agencies receiving federal funds must comply with Title VI obligations. MnDOT Civil Rights is responsible for ensuring that MnDOT and local agencies are compliant with this federal regulation. Motion by Gravley, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to adopt Title VI plan and designate Nick Klisch as the Title VI Coordinator.

Klisch and Jed Rhubee, Public Works Superintendent, presented a proposed Snow & Ice Removal Policy for the board's consideration. Motion by Stevens, second by Gravley, unanimous vote to approve the Snow & Ice Removal Policy as presented.

Rhubee reported that South Dutch Charley Park was inspected by the DNR in 2021. The inspection noted that the restroom is not accessible to persons with disabilities. Brown-Nicollet Health has also stated that since the park has camping that a means to dispose of septic waste as well as a shower facility should be provided. The DNR recommended applying for a grant through the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program. Motion by Anderson, second by Gravley, unanimous vote to approve Public Works applying for DNR Outdoor Recreation Grant up to \$150,000 (\$300,000 total project amount).

Klisch reported that he budgeted for a replacement of Unit 80 (1990 CASE 821G loader) this year. This purchase has been in the 5-year equipment replacement plan for several years. Four quotes were received as follows: RDO - \$321,684.68 w/trade, Ziegler - \$273,958.92 w/trade, Titan Machinery - \$272,336.00 w/trade, and RMS - \$262,771.74 w/out trade. Motion by Appel, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to approve purchase of CASE 821G from Titan Machinery in the amount of \$272,336.00 as quoted with JRB hitch and trade-in of Unit 80.

Rhubee reported that in 2019 the Public Works Department took bids for the rights to mow Schoper Bush reservoir for hay. Ethan Quade was the high bidder at that time and has done a great job. Rhubee direct negotiated with Ethan Quade for another 5-year contract. Motion by Gravley, second by Appel, unanimous vote to approve contract with Ethan Quade for \$950 per year for the next 5 years (2024-2028).

Rhubee reported that the last two contractors we have hired for parks mowing have not worked out for a variety of reasons. He decided to direct negotiate with the two contractors that did all of the county mowing from 2016-2021 as they did a good job and there were never any complaints. Motion by Anderson, second by Gravley, unanimous vote to approve contracts with Cory Ulferts in the amount of \$9,660/year for 2024, 2025 and 2026 for mowing Mountain Park, Red Rock Park, Schoper Bush, Westbrook highway shop, Jeffers highway shop and Mt. Lake highway shop and Russ Janssen in the amount of \$3,270/year for 2024, 2025 and 2026 for mowing both N. 71 properties, DVHHS building and Pat's Grove.

Talcot Park chooses a camp host every year to greet campers, pass out information, clean the park and help out where needed. One application was received from Bekah Saffert. Motion by Stevens, second by Appel, unanimous vote to approve Bekah Saffert as the camp host for 2024.

Discussion was held regarding the state aid increase of approximately \$800,000 this year and how this money might be used. Klisch also reported that he intends to apply for a grant to re-establish section monuments, which has a \$300,000 max.

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Kelly Thongvivong, County Coordinator, met with the board to discuss several items. It was reported that the County Assessor is not on the existing cell phone listing for receiving a cell phone allowance and would like to get this added. Motion by Gravley, second by Anderson, unanimous vote to add the County Assessor to the listing of cell phone allowance users at the rate of \$60/month.

Interviews were conducted on January 25<sup>th</sup> with two applicants for the vacant position in Mt. Lake. Motion by Anderson, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to hire Tammy Baerg as HEO for the Mt. Lake shop on Range 10 Step 4 (\$24.08/hour) contingent upon successful completion of all hiring requirements with start date yet to be determined.

The board has had discussions regarding the possibility of approving a resolution similar to the one that Crow Wing County adopted regarding their opposition to redesigning the state flag and seal. Motion by Appel, second by Stevens, unanimous roll call vote to adopt resolution (on file in Coordinator's Office) in opposition to redesigning the state flag and seal.

It was reported that Commissioner Anderson was serving as a liaison to the SW MN EMS Board but has a conflict with his schedule. Chairman Holmen appointed Commissioner Stevens to serve as the liaison to the SW MN EMS Board to replace Commissioner Anderson.

Thongvivong reported that the county currently contracts with Apprize BenefitsConnect to provide our Open Enrollment services but recently found out that Integrity also offers these services and decided to compare costs between the two. Motion by Anderson, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to opt to go with Integrity for our Open Enrollment for the 2025 benefit year and to terminate services with Apprize after Integrity has a chance to build our site.

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Motion by Gravley, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to approve February warrants as follows:

County Revenue Fund	\$ 59,652.17
Ditch Fund	\$ 15,756.72
Road and Bridge Fund	\$ 43,490.00
Waste Abatement/SCORE	\$ 19,141.50
Landfill Enterprise Fund	<u>\$ 51,089.75</u>
	\$189,130.14

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It was reported that there would be no pay-out of any benefits to the Auditor/Treasurer per Minnesota State Statute 471.656 Subd. 3 Elected Officials.

Much discussion was held regarding the Auditor/Treasurer's office and what might happen after February 16<sup>th</sup> when the Auditor/Treasurer position becomes vacant due to resignation. Motion by Gravley, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to contract with Donna Torkelson for up to 32 hours/month at the rate of \$125/hour based on office needs. County Attorney Nick Anderson will draw up a contract and a short out clause will be included in the contract.

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Commissioner Appel reported that he received a quote from Borsgard Construction for the HR office remodel, which has been discussed in recent weeks. Motion by Anderson, second by Appel, unanimous vote to accept a quote in the amount of \$23,000 - \$28,000 from Borsgard Construction for the remodel.

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Commissioner Anderson gave a brief update regarding broadband and reported that a meeting has been scheduled with the committee on February 29<sup>th</sup>. The plan is for Federated Broadband to present further information at the March 5<sup>th</sup> board meeting.

An update was given regarding the DVHHS reorganization and what the board's thoughts were moving forward.

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Commissioner Gravley reported that no applications have yet been received for the ACE Director position. She also reported that someone from UCAP will be coming to a future meeting to discuss the Affordable Housing Grant.

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The board discussed an e-mail that was received from the County Recorder regarding the land records process in light of the recent resignation of the Auditor/Treasurer. Motion by Gravley, second by Stevens, unanimous vote to allow the Chief Deputy Auditor/Treasurer to sign documents that need to be signed in the Auditor/Treasurer's absence.

Motion by Holmen, second by Anderson, unanimous vote to approve a \$500/month stipend to the Chief Deputy Auditor/Treasurer while helping out in the absence of an Auditor/Treasurer.

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There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:16 p.m.

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Carolyn Rempel  
Chief Deputy Auditor/Treasurer

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Norman Holmen, Board Chair

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Kelly Thongvivong, County Coordinator