

BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
JULY 7, 2020

The Benton County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on July 7, 2020 in the Benton County Board Room in Foley, MN with Commissioners Warren Peschl, Jake Bauerly, Steve Heinen, Ed Popp and Spencer Buerkle present. Call to order by Chair Buerkle was at 9:00 AM followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Peschl/Heinen unanimous to approve the agenda as written.

No one spoke under Open Forum.

Bauerly/Popp unanimous to approve the Consent Agenda: 1) approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of June 16, 2020 as written; 2) approve Purchase Money Security Agreement for S.C.O.R.E. Grant—*Tri-County Organics*—for the purchase of one Bobcat RG72 72-inch root grapple, and authorize the Chair to sign; and 3) approve 2020-2021 State of MN Department of Corrections Work Release Agreement, and authorize the Chair to sign.

Employee recognition awards were presented to Chris Goebel and David Michels from the I.T. department for providing outstanding customer service and commitment to county staff during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. Board members thanked Goebel and Michels for their dedication and service to Benton County, with Chair Buerkle commenting “...I want to personally thank all of you in your department...I think you’ve all done a great job over and above the call of duty...you are a real credit to our county...”

The next item on the agenda was a public hearing to consider a minor final plat entitled “*Benton Bluff*”, located in Granite Ledge Township, submitted by Trilogy Properties of MN, LLC. Roxanne Achman, Department of Development Director, explained that the request is to plat four single family lots with each lot being approximately 9.7 acres in size; one of the lots has an existing home on it and there will be two access points for the four lots. Achman noted that she has received several comments from property owners in that area—concerns with that development at that intensity of a use and with the additional traffic on that road (these concerns were presented at the Planning Commission meeting). She pointed out that Granite Ledge Township is allowed eight houses per 40 acres, so this request is only half of the permitted density; Granite Ledge Township has approved the preliminary plat. Speaking in support of the request was Craig Wensmann from Bogart Pederson & Associates, Inc. (13076 – 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Becker), the surveyor representing the landowner. The public hearing was opened at 9:11 AM. With no one wishing to address the County Board, the public hearing was closed at 9:12 AM. Peschl reported on several comments received by the Planning Commission; the Planning Commission has recommended approval of the preliminary plat. Bauerly questioned the distance between these homes and the potential granite quarry; he also inquired if well testing has been done to determine if there could be issues. Popp stated his belief that this request for development is not unusual to this area. Popp/Peschl unanimous to approve the final plat of “*Benton Bluff*” and authorize the Chair to sign the final plat.

Department of Development Update: 1) Permit numbers—January through June 2020 as compared to last year—general building permits up by 20; houses up by 10; accessory structures up by 12; additions up by 14; ag buildings remain steady; home values have increased by about \$25,000. 2) June 27<sup>th</sup>

Amnesty Day--about 550 vehicles participated; the processing of items was slow due to the pandemic plan in place for the hauler and staff. 3) Census numbers—MN is at a 71.3% response rate; Benton County is at a 73.5% response rate. 4) Boundary Commission—judge has approved the boundary commission plat for Watab Township; surveyor must now finalize the plat, set judicial landmarks, judge must approve the final order on the plat; about another 30-day process; November 30, 2020 is the deadline to finalize and certify special assessments; and 5) Geronimo Energy—project just south of Royalton; are making some design changes to move a substation three miles to the northwest due to the potential “flicker” that might be at the Langola substation; looking at spring 2021 approval with late summer build.

Troy Heck, County Sheriff, explained that, on June 17<sup>th</sup>, the Minnesota Department of Corrections inspected the Benton County Jail for compliance with DOC rules; Benton County’s facility earned a 100% compliance rating following the inspection (as they have many times in the past). He commented “...I can’t say enough about how much I appreciate all the work that staff do and what an excellent job they do for Benton County to keep Benton County safe...” Heck stated that the inspector did take note of the fact that the intake unit could use some redesign and recommended that Benton County begin planning for needed upgrades to the facility. He reported that the current inmate count is between 30-40 inmates per day; he anticipates slowly increasing inmate numbers in a “controlled” manner due to COVID-19.

The Regular County Board meeting was recessed at 9:27 AM to conduct a Human Services Board meeting.

The Regular County Board meeting was reconvened at 9:30 AM.

George Fiedler, Veteran Service Officer, explained that the grant program through the MN Department of Veteran Affairs, now provides an annual base grant to all 87 counties of \$7,500; in addition to the base grant, each county gets additional money based on the veteran population in their county—for Benton County, the veteran population is cited as 2,924 so Benton County will get an additional \$2,500. Fiedler stated his recommendation to use the grant funds for a new veterans’ information management system; other potential uses are marketing, travel expenses, and training. Bauerly/Heinen unanimous to approve Resolution 2020-#26, accepting \$10,000 in grant funding from the State of Minnesota, to be used on veteran services activities, and authorize the Chair to sign.

The next item on the agenda was Board consideration of a project contract with *McDowall Company* for replacement of the roof over the Annex and Administration areas of the Government Center and the lower roof covering the office and lobby portions of the Sheriff’s Office and Jail. Jim Whitcomb, Property Management Director, explained that Benton County received a bid from *McDowall Company* through *Sourcewell*; this is a multi-year project and funding is budgeted in the capital improvement plan. Whitcomb referenced the memo from the County Attorney indicating contract deficiencies to be considered; the contractor has \$1 million in liability coverage while the county would like the statutory maximum liability amount of \$1.5 million—however; the contractor does have \$2 million of general coverage under their “commercial general liability” to cover deficiencies. Peschl/Popp unanimous to approve the project contract with *McDowall Company* and authorize the Chair to sign.

Monty Headley, County Administrator, requested Board consideration of a Memorandum of Understanding with Stearns County regarding the operation and development of the Mississippi River Park Complex. He stated that the MOU was drafted by Stearns County upon the request of the Greater

MN Parks and Trails Commission, as part of the Commission's consideration of the application for regional park designation. Headley explained that the MOU states that the counties will cooperatively develop and manage their respective parks; it does not commit Benton County to making improvements, nor does it require the approval of Stearns County to make (or not make) improvements. Popp inquired what the future will look like in terms of grant applications; Headley will research that issue. Popp/Bauerly unanimous to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with Stearns County, and authorize the Chair to sign.

Board members reported on recent meetings they attended on behalf of the county.

No Commissioner Concerns were noted.

Peschl/Popp unanimous to set Committees of the Whole: July 13, Federal CARES Funding/Human Services Organizational Staffing Issues; July 14, Benton SWCD One Watershed One Plan; August 4, Employee Years of Service Award Recognition; and August 10-12, Budget Presentations.

Bauerly/Heinen unanimous to adjourn at 9:58 AM.

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Spencer C. Buerkle, Chair  
Benton County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

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Montgomery Headley  
Benton County Administrator