BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 18, 2020

The Benton County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on August 18, 2020 in the Benton County Board Room in Foley, MN with Commissioners Ed Popp, Spencer Buerkle, Warren Peschl, Jake Bauerly and Steve Heinen 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 amended agenda—add items: Resolution Establishing a Benton County CARES Business Assistance Program; 2020 CARES Election Grant and Resolution; and Consider Purchase of High-Throughput Scanner and Tabulator from *Election Systems and Software LLC*.

No one was present to speak under Open Forum.

Bauerly/Popp unanimous to approve the Consent Agenda: 1) approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of August 4, 2020 as written; 2) accept and file Committee of the Whole Minutes of July 28, 2020 as written; 3) approve Management Representation Letter related to the Audit of the Benton County Financial Statements for the Year Ending December 31, 2019, and authorize the Chair to sign; and 4) re-approve contract with *CentraCare* for 2021 Jail Medical Services, and authorize the Chair to sign.

Chris Byrd, County Engineer, presented a summary of maintenance costs for calendar year 2019. Report highlights:
- Size of Road System
    - 451 total centerline miles in Benton County (225 miles are CSAH—209.65 miles are "Regular CSAH" and 15.55 miles are "Municipal CSAH", and 226 miles are County Roads--of which 105 miles are gravel surfaced)
    - Additional 307 miles of Township Roads
    - Byrd commented "…that's 758 miles in rural Benton County that's all taxpayer burden…" (does not include public miles in the cities or on State highways within Benton County)
- 2019 Regular CSAH Maintenance, $1,435,637.57 (average per mile, $6,847.78)
- 2019 Municipal CSAH Maintenance, $15,725.51 (average per mile, $7,442.15)
- 2019 County Road Maintenance, $1,857,402.08 (average per mile, $8,211.33)
- 2019 County Road Maintenance—Gravel, $469,390.96 (average per mile, $4,474.65)

Byrd commented "…our paved county roads are costing us the most per mile…our county roads are in tough shape…that's why we adopted the sales tax…try to identify some additional resources…I think we've got a heavy lift in our county of what we have to maintain compared to our ability to pay for it…" Bauerly stated "…that's why I voted for the sales tax…38% of that revenue comes from outside the county and people outside the county use our roads…another analogy you should do are miles of road per capita… we've got way more miles per capita than Stearns and Sherburne…the gravel roads show quite a lot less maintenance than the paved roads but…there's a lower level of service there…you don't plow them every time…"

Monty Headley, County Administrator, explained that the purpose of the proposed CARES Business Assistance Grant Program Guidelines is to establish broad criteria for a BEP (Benton Economic Partnership) Business Assistance Program using the County's allocation of Federal CARES funding. He noted that the proposed guidelines contain several changes as recommended by the BEP CARES

Committee and will be used by the BEP to create a grant application and will be followed as the BEP reviews grant applications and makes funding decisions. Headley confirmed that the proposed criteria clearly show a bias toward small businesses, locally owned and operated. He added that the criteria which best embodies the Federal directive for CARES funding is "can demonstrate an adverse economic impact directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic". Peschl/Popp unanimous to approve the Benton County CARES Business Assistance Grant Program Guidelines as presented.

Headley presented a proposed resolution allocating Federal CARES funding to a business assistance grant program; it also establishes that the County's program will be administered by the Benton Economic Partnership (BEP). He stated that the resolution should also include a dollar amount dedicated to business assistance and a percentage (or dollar amount) that BEP may use for its administrative costs. Headley noted that the County Attorney's Office is drafting an agreement between the County and BEP that establishes this relationship. He explained that Benton County's total CARES allocation is about $4.9 million; of that amount, it appears that Benton County could claim about $3 million through the end of November (i.e. salaries and benefits, PPE, Service Master, Security)—leaving about $1.9 million remaining to spend. Headley referenced a listing of project submittals received to date from departments for possible use of the CARES funding balance; a Committee of the Whole will be scheduled in the near future for Board review of these submittals in greater detail. Following brief discussion, there was Board consensus to allocate $735,000 of Benton County's CARE funding for the Benton County CARES Business Assistance Program; further, that the Benton Economic Partnership be allowed to expend up to 8.0% of the CARES Business Assistance allocation for its costs to administer the program, including staff time and marketing (with the possibility that additional funds could be provided to BEP at a later date). Headley noted that he has also received a number of emails and phone calls from non-profits inquiring about CARES funding; perhaps Human Services could manage those dollars if the Board desired to dedicate dollars to non-profits. Bauerly/Heinen unanimous to adopt Resolution 2020-#28, a Resolution Establishing a CARES Business Assistance Program in Cooperation with the Benton Economic Partnership, and authorize the Chair to sign.

Nadean Inman, Auditor-Treasurer, explained that Benton County's CARES Election Grant Allocation is $12,405.87; the required match for this grant is 20% or $2,481.17 (match is eligible for CARES funding). Peschl/Popp unanimous to adopt Resolution 2020-#29, authorizing the Auditor-Treasurer to submit an election grant application to the Office of the Secretary of State and appropriating the required match amount, and authorize the Chair to sign.

Inman reported that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Auditor-Treasurer's Office is anticipating an unprecedented volume of absentee/mail in ballots for the November general election. She explained that, during the primary election, staff found the process of tabulating the high volume of absentee/mail in ballots to be time-consuming; many of the ballots were not easily read by the DS200 tabulator. Inman stated that the DS450 central scanner and tabulator could process 72 ballots per minute and would read the ballots easier; the cost of $55,320.00 would be eligible for CARES funding. Upon questioning by Heinen, Inman stated that no option exists for leasing or renting this equipment; she also sees purchasing of this equipment as an investment going forward for the expected increase in absentee/mail balloting. Bauerly inquired if other counties are purchasing this equipment; Inman reported that there has been a high demand from counties. Peschl commented "…this is a unique situation…we probably would never do this if we didn't have COVID dollars…if some of the townships don't use up all their money…this would be a good place to use some of that money if townships turn money back…" Buerkle noted the Board's plan to schedule a Committee of the Whole soon to review all requests for CARES funds. Popp stated "…I think we have to make a decision on this today…because of

the short timeline…I think we are going to see more mail in ballots from the townships…this will be something we can keep…I think maybe the opportunity is now…as long as we can use the COVID money…I think we are going to have a hard time getting rid of all that COVID money…why would we want to give that money back to the state…" Buerkle stated "…this is money that could be going out to businesses too…I just thought we had time to add that to the list…we are going to have a meeting on it…we have other requests to consider too…" Heinen asked "…if all the townships are going to go to mail-in ballots, do we get refunded from the townships for that…" Inman explained that there are certain expenses that can be charged back to the townships and those expenses would be charged back to them. Bauerly commented "…I think that's the next step…they are saving all this money…we could ask them to send it to us to help us pay for this…" Following brief discussion, motion by Popp to approve the purchase of the DS450 high-throughput scanner and tabulator from *Election Systems and Software* at a cost of $55,320.00, funding to come from Federal CARES funding (no County dollars). Second by Bauerly. Motion carried unanimously.

The Regular County Board meeting was recessed at 10:07 AM to conduct a Human Services Board meeting.

The Regular County Board meeting was reconvened at 10:12 AM.

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

Peschl/Bauerly unanimous to set Committees of the Whole: August 25, Federal CARES Funding Discussion/County Security Training; and September 2, Budget Discussion/Road Ditch Cleaning Discussion.

Popp/Heinen unanimous to adjourn at 10:26 AM.

_____
Spencer C. Buerkle, Chair
Benton County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

_____
Montgomery Headley
Benton County Administrator