

BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 17, 2019

The Benton County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on September 17, 2019 in the Benton County Board Room in Foley, MN with Commissioners Spencer Buerkle, Jake Bauerly, Ed Popp and Warren Peschl present and Commissioner Steve Heinen absent (excused). Call to order by Chair Bauerly was at 9:00 AM followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Popp/Peschl unanimous to approve the amended agenda—add item: presentation of retirement award to Kim Woolery.

A retirement award was presented to Kim Woolery, Detention Officer in the jail, in appreciation for 21 years of loyal and distinguished service to Benton County; her retirement is effective September 27, 2019.

No one was present to speak under Open Forum.

Peschl/Buerkle unanimous to approve the Consent Agenda: 1) approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of September 3, 2019 as written; 2) accept and file Committee of the Whole Minutes of September 4, 2019 as written; 3) accept and file VSO Quarterly Report as presented; 4) accept and file Administrator's Report/ Monthly Financial Report as presented; and 5) issue \$24,996.62 in funds from the AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species) Fund to the Little Rock Lake Association for costs related to planting during the Little Rock Lake drawdown.

Nancy Silesky and Steve Novak, Government Relations representatives with the Minnesota Inter-County Association (MICA), provided an overview of the 2019 legislative session and outlook for the future; topics included Transportation, Public Health and Human Services.

Doug Host from *CliftonLarsonAllen*, the County's independent auditor, appeared before the Board to provide a summary of the results of Benton County's 2018 audit; an unmodified or "clean" opinion was issued on the financial statements.

The Regular County Board meeting was recessed at 9:46 AM to conduct a Human Services Board meeting.

The Regular County Board meeting was reconvened at 10:08 AM.

Heather Bondhus, Auditor-Treasurer's Office, explained that Parcel 12.00969.00, 9170 Indian Road NW, Rice, became tax-forfeited on May 13, 2019; prior owners of record, Leroy & Nancy Theisen, are requesting to repurchase the property for the amount of tax, special assessments, penalties, and fees owing in the amount of \$2,072.36. Buerkle/Popp unanimous to adopt Resolution 2019-#31, approving the request of Leroy & Nancy Theisen to repurchase Parcel 12.00969.00, 9170 Indian Road NW, Rice, and authorize the Chair to sign.

Nadean Inman, Auditor-Treasurer, explained that, on August 1, 2019, the License Center began collecting an additional \$1.00 filing fee for each DMV transaction; this additional fee will generate approximately \$5,200.00 in additional revenue for the county in 2019. She requested Board approval to

hire the new part-time DMV employee prior to the start of the 2020 budget year; the estimated salary for a part-time DMV employee from October 15<sup>th</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup> would be \$4,000.00, which would be offset by the additional filing fee revenue. Inman noted the importance of training the new DMV employee prior to January since that is the start of the busy season for the DMV; in addition, the staff within the office that currently serve as back-up for the DMV will be busy assisting with election tasks. Peschl/Popp unanimous to approve hiring the new part-time DMV employee to start in October 2019.

Inman requested Board approval to utilize the MNLARS reimbursement funds in 2019 to enhance the DMV services prior to the start of the 2020 budget year. She pointed out that, by implementing these improvements now, the DMV staff will have sufficient time to be trained in the operation of the new queue system prior to January and February, the busiest months for the DMV. Inman added that restructuring of the office now will save the county money as the prices of the queue system and restructuring are expected to increase in 2020. She noted that the MNLARS reimbursement funds were received from the State of MN in August 2019. Peschl/Popp to approve beginning the DMV office restructure in 2019 since the MNLARS reimbursement funds were already received. Motion carried with Popp, Bauerly and Peschl voting aye and Buerkle voting nay.

Roxanne Achman, Department of Development Director, explained that the plat of “Thousand Oaks 1<sup>st</sup> Addition” is located in Sauk Rapids Township; Steven & Patricia Posch have requested to combine two platted lots into one lot. She indicated that the City of Sartell has no issues with the project and Sauk Rapids Township has signed off on the preliminary plat. Popp/Buerkle unanimous to approve the final plat of “Thousand Oaks 1<sup>st</sup> Addition” as recommended by the Planning Commission, and authorize the Chair to sign the final plat.

Achman reported that the plat of “Virgils Pasture” is located in Mayhew Lake Township; property owner, Bonita Skuza, and applicant, Aaron Storkamp, are requesting to split two single family lots off of approximately 137.44 acres—one lot will be 6.70 acres and the other 13.43 acres. She noted that Mayhew Lake Township has signed the preliminary plat. Peschl/Popp unanimous to approve the final plat of “Virgils Pasture” as recommended by the Planning Commission, and authorize the Chair to sign the final plat.

Chris Byrd, County Engineer, explained that, at the last Board meeting, there was some discussion about a couple of projects in the five-year road construction program; there was some concern that we are doing projects too early in the life of the project and that we should wait. He stated his plan to provide additional information about those projects and the design behind them.

- CSAH 2 (River to TH 25), mill and overlay slated in construction year 2020, actual traffic counts are in line with traffic counts projected in 2001; Byrd feels the need to capitalize on the fact that a hot mix ready plant is coming into this location next year for the CR 78 project—should result in a competitive bid
- CSAH 12 (CSAH 21 to TH 25), mill and overlay slated in construction year 2020; in 1999, this roadway was a 7-ton design—mill and overlay will add structure to the roadway to extend its life and add slight safety improvements; will “shoot for” a 10-ton roadway, but should accomplish a 9-ton roadway at minimum
- CSAH 5 (Gilman to Mille Lacs County Line), mill and overlay slated for construction year 2021, split into three projects, have consumed the life of that pavement in ten years—cracking and rutting; was designed as a 9-ton road in 2008, but will be a 10-ton road after the 2021 project

- CSAH 8 (TH 23 to CR 47), reclaim slated in construction year 2020, traffic volumes are high enough that this roadway may be paved before winter
- CSAH 2 (in conjunction with Little Rock Lake drawdown), was paved before the rain, guardrail is up, need to complete some grading in the ditches and some striping, could open the road on the Friday completion date

Byrd reported that, recently, the Public Works Department installed driver feedback signs (speed limit, radar signs) on CR 55 near Gordon’s Bridge; there have been numerous complaints about speeders in the area—the road is posted at 35 MPH. He stated his belief that driver feedback signs may change driver behavior; the location of the 35 MPH speed zone is comprised of closely-spaced residential lots with numerous driveways and the roadway is somewhat winding with limited visibility. Byrd pointed out that these signs have connectivity to the “cloud”, allowing him to access and retrieve data collected by the sign, i.e. traffic counts/speed violations in “real time”. He added that the signs contain GPS chips; Byrd has the ability to change settings on the signs per computer and data can be sent via email or text.

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

No Committees of the Whole were set.

Monty Headley, County Administrator, explained that September 30<sup>th</sup> is the statutory deadline for certification of the County’s proposed 2020 property tax levy and budget to the Auditor-Treasurer; the proposed resolutions reflect board consensus from recent Committee of the Whole meetings. Headley provided a summary of the major factors in the proposed 2020 budget and levy:

- The proposed 2020 levy increases 1.99%, or \$392,835 from 2019, to a total of \$20,119,369
- With this proposed change for 2020, the 10-year average levy change for Benton County is a 0.87% increase (the proposed 2020 levy is \$169,000 higher than it was 10 years ago)
- The proposed levy keeps the increase below the 7.8% expected growth in the County’s payable 2020 tax capacity, which translates into a reduced County tax rate in 2020; the estimated 2020 County tax rate will fall from 61.5% to 58.16% of tax capacity (down from a peak of 77.74% in 2013)
- The proposed 2020 operating budget totals \$45,067,381, a decrease of \$624,878, or a 1.4% reduction from 2019
- The proposed levy increase is comprised of the following major elements:
 

○ Employee compensation and benefits	\$551,053
○ Additional County Program Aid	(245,061)
○ Funded “Policy Issues” (new funding)	271,943
○ All other operating and capital budget changes	<u>(185,100)</u>
<b>Total Levy Change for 2020</b>	<b>\$392,835</b>
- The proposed budget includes the following “Policy Issues”:
  - An additional Supervisor position in Human Services, based on a Human Services study recommendation to reduce the number of direct reports for current supervisors (\$93,387)
  - Abolishing a vacant Community Health Specialist position to help fund the new Supervisor position (\$81,082 in savings)
  - A Deputy Director position for Human Services as recommended by the Human Services study (\$114,048/\$81,599 net levy after revenue offsets)
  - A part-time position for the License Center to address increased customer volume at the DMV counter (\$18,552)
  - Adding \$35,000 to Auditor-Treasurer for increased election year expenses

- Funding a new payroll and Human Resources information management system (\$17,612)
- Using \$36,875 in reserves for an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (Drone) for the Sheriff's Office
- Using the County Board's contingency account in 2020 to fund a new leadership training program for County managers
- The 2019 State Legislature increased County Program Aid (local government aid) by \$27 million statewide; this increase plus the County Program Aid formula provides Benton County with an additional \$245,061 in Aid for 2020; the County's total certified County Program Aid for 2020 is \$2.7 million; without this additional County Program Aid, the County's proposed levy increase would be 3.2%

Headley referenced the "Funding to Outside Agencies" handout, noting the County Board's agreement to increase the SWCD funding by \$40,000 for 2020 (a 20.1% Increase); he explained that this amount could potentially be reduced prior to final budget adoption in December should the SWCD receive additional grant funding. Peschl/Buerkle unanimous to adopt Resolution 2019-#32, a Resolution setting the proposed 2020 levy at \$20,119,369, and authorize the Chair to sign. Popp/Buerkle unanimous to adopt Resolution 2019-#33, a Resolution establishing the proposed 2020 Benton County budget as presented, and authorize the Chair to sign.

Chair Bauerly announced that the Benton County Board of Commissioners will conduct a Truth in Taxation public meeting on Tuesday, December 3, 2019 at 7:00 PM in the Benton County Board Room.

Amy Diedrich from Marsh & McLennan Agency (MMA) appeared before the Board to present their recommendation for employee health insurance funding (premium rates) for 2020. She stated "...self-funded employee health insurance continues to perform very well...when we look at premium settings, we look at several different factors...fixed costs...stop loss in place...fees...actual claims... number of high cases...see where the reserves are...strive for stability in costs...MMA recommendations are to increase the funding factor by 2% and increase stop loss to \$60,000 (potentially increase to \$70,000 for 2021)..." Buerkle/Peschl unanimous to approve the 2020 health insurance renewal as recommended by the County's broker, including a 2% premium increase and increasing stop-loss coverage to \$60,000 per event.

Popp/Buerkle unanimous to conduct a closed meeting of the County Board (at 11:15 AM), pursuant to MN Statutes §13D.03, Subdivision 1, to consider strategy for labor negotiations.

The Regular County Board meeting was reconvened at 12:31 PM.

Chair Bauerly adjourned the meeting at 12:32 PM.

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A. Jake Bauerly, Chair  
Benton County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

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Montgomery Headley  
Benton County Administrator

