

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS  
PENNINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
JUSTICE CENTER BOARD ROOM  
JULY 25<sup>TH</sup>, 2023 – 10:00 A.M.**

Pursuant to adjournment, the Pennington County Board of Commissioners met in the Pennington County Justice Center Board Room in Thief River Falls, MN, on Tuesday, July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. Members Present: Seth Nelson, Bruce Lawrence, Dave Sorenson, Roy Sourdif, and Neil Peterson. Members absent: None.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Peterson and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The Chairman asked if there were any amendments to the agenda. Hearing none, Commissioner Nelson motioned, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, to approve the Board agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Recognition of Citizens: None.

Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to approve the Board minutes of July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, as presented. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, to approve the Human Services warrants totaling \$232,149.53 and the following Commissioner warrants. Motion carried.

County Revenue	\$34,149.25
Road & Bridge	\$41,276.92
Ditch Funds	\$ 600.00

Human Services Director Julie Sjostrand presented the consent agenda from the July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Human Service Committee meeting. On a motion by Commissioner Sorenson and seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, the following recommendations of the Pennington County Human Service Committee for July 18, 2023 (detailed minutes on record) are hereby adopted:

SECTION A

- I. To approve the June 20, 2023, Human Service Committee meeting minutes.
- II. To approve the agency's personnel action as presented.
- III. A. To approve the "Every Student Succeeds Act" (ESSA) Service Agreement between Goodridge Public Schools and Pennington County Human Services as presented.

SECTION B

- I. To approve payment of the Agency's bills.

NW Regional Library Director Jim Trojanowski presented the budget request for 2024. They are requesting an increase of 3%, for a total request of \$126,666. It was noted that the Pennington County library location accounts for 25% of total circulation, 21% of total weekly hours, and 39% of staffing hours. Hearing no questions, the Board took the budget request under advisement.

Ag Services/Solid Waste Coordinator Grant Nelson discussed a Noxious Weed Appeal Committee that would take noxious weed complaints and review noxious weed removal order appeals. The committee would consist of three members – one county board member, one landowner, and the TRF City Forester. Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to approve the appointments of Commissioner Neil Peterson, landowner Gabe Carlson, and TRF City Forester Louis Brown to the Noxious Weed Appeal Committee. Motion carried.

MN Department of Corrections District Supervisor Cody Underdahl presented an update on local programming and the legislative changes that will affect the district. He noted that Pennington and Marshall counties are served by seven agents and three support staff. Pennington County currently has 191 adults on probation, 24 adults on supervised release, 20 juveniles on probation, and 31 adults with predatory offender registration. He noted the recent retirement of agent Wayne Nomeland and said the position will likely be filled internally. The Pennington/Marshall DWI Court currently has 19 participants, and the Pennington County Drug Court currently has 12 participants. Cognitive behavioral programming is expanding and has been shown to reduce recidivism by up to 30%. Legislative changes include the MN Rehab and Reinvestment Act, supervised release Board for life sentences, sentence review for juveniles with life or long sentences, Restore the Vote, legalization of cannabis, and murder resentencing. Legislative funding changes include base funding for each county and per capita distribution changes, which should both result in more reimbursement for the counties. Work is also in progress to renew the probation lease in the Justice Center. Commissioner Lawrence questioned the results of the DWI and Drug Courts, and if he agreed with the early release program. Mr. Underdahl stated that the two programs are yielding positive results, as its beneficial to have a committee review and allow more time and attention to each client/case, versus just one agent. Regarding early release, he believes in public safety first and is in favor of early release only if specific criteria and goals for each client are met. The Board thanked him for his report.

County Engineer Mike Flaagan noted that following bids for the CSAH#7 project were opened on July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023, as duly advertised. He noted that this is a federal project, so the low bidder will have to submit bid documents to MnDOT for approval, so at this time the four bids received are information only and require no action by the Board at this time. The original Engineer's Estimate was \$2.1M but was found to include an error, so the estimate has been revised to \$1,235,752.50. Construction is expected to start in late August and continue into mid-October. Mr. Flaagan noted that federal funding can cover up to 80% of the project, so he will provide the revised Engineer's Estimate to the State.

R.J. Zavoral and Son's Inc.	\$1,245,911.19
Knife River Materials-Northern MN	\$1,297,845.26

Agassiz Asphalt, LLC	\$1,343,803.87
Mark Sand & Gravel Co.	\$1,406,348.32

Mr. Flaagan provided an update on local projects: The CSAH#3/T.H.#59 roundabout is open on the north, south and west legs, with the east leg to be completed in approximately 3 weeks. A detour for access to the east has been set up. The bridge rehab projects are going good with Long's bridge work in process now. He reminded the Board that the SWCD project tour is this afternoon with a meal to follow later.

Kayla Jore – Penn/Red Lake County Public Health & Home Care, Julie Sjostrand – Human Services Director, Sara Olson – ISD 564 Director of Teaching, Learning & Technology, and Miranda Solem – Sanford Health Director of Community and Residential Services and Chemical Dependency, presented an opioid settlement funding update. Ms. Jore noted that over an 18-year period the county is set to receive \$1.15 million, but it is front-loaded and to date we have received over \$130,000. The Opioid Committee has been meeting for about a year to discuss what areas we can use the funding. An epidemiologist has met with the opioid committee to discuss the region and its needs. It was noted that women of child-bearing age are the highest opioid users in the region. A workplan was discussed and includes utilizing our community partners. Services will be billed as able and opioid funds will be used where needed. The Board questioned how far the opioid funds would go. Ms. Solem noted that grants may be available in the future to help once the settlement funds are depleted. A public meeting will be held on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. in Meeting Room A of the Government Center and will include the other cities within the county. The Board thanked the group for their report.

Constituent Faye Auchenpaugh met with the Board regarding the recent decision to investigate demolition costs of the Old Auditorium, and questioned what problem the Board is trying to solve. Commissioner Lawrence stated that parking for the Government Center will be a major issue for staff and the public once Human Services moves into the building. Other Board members cited the costs for electricity, heating/cooling, and the larger upcoming costs such as roof and boiler replacement. Costs to renovate the building to make it ADA-compliant, asbestos-free, and usable are estimated to be in the millions of dollars. Human Services Director Julie Sjostrand noted that the needs of the disabled population must also be considered in regard to the Government Center. Ms. Auchenpaugh noted the historical registration of the building, presented a map of area parking lots, and stated that legacy funds are available and could be used for renovation. The Board noted that while such funds may be available, they are limited, and their use can increase overall project costs. The Board noted that they appreciate and admire her desire to save the building, and as of now they have only taken action to address the costs of demolition, asbestos, etc.

Auditor-Treasurer Items:

The following resolution was introduced by Commissioner Sorenson, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, and upon vote was unanimously carried.

## RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF AGREEMENT

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that Pennington County enter in a grant agreement with the Minnesota Department of Public Safety for traffic safety projects during the period of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 through September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

The County Auditor-Treasurer is hereby authorized to execute such agreements and amendments as are necessary to implement the project on behalf of the County of Pennington and to be the fiscal agent and administer the grant.

County Coordinator Items:

County Coordinator Kevin Erickson provided an update on the Government Center 3<sup>rd</sup> floor remodel project, noting that priming of the walls is nearly complete with painting to follow soon, and the new HVAC units arrived and are being installed.

Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, to approve a quote by Bjorklund Compensation Consulting in the amount of \$5,000 to conduct a wage study for Pennington County employees. Discussion followed with it noted that the study will take about 5-7 weeks to complete, and it was noted that all the union contracts in the county expire on 12/31/23. Following discussion, the motion was carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Sourdif, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, to approve issuance of a duplicate warrant to Jordan Jagol in the amount of \$2.00 to replace lost warrant numbered 194553 dated June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022, without issuance of an indemnifying bond. Motion carried.

The Coordinator provided an update on the investigation into a temporary position for the County Assessor's office. In speaking with the local Workforce Center, the county is not alone in the search for temp workers as many local employers are seeking the same, thus few temp workers are available. The agency will reach out to NCTC to see if any students may be qualified and interested in a temp position here, or if any may be interested in the FT Deputy Assessor-Appraiser position.

The Coordinator provided an update on the county health insurance following a recent mid-year review held with North Risk Partners. From 2011-2023, the health insurance plans have averaged a 4.91% annual increase, and based on the claims experience since July 2021 we are expecting another low increase for 2024. Actual rates will be provided in mid-August. It was noted that participation in the HSA/VEBA health plans is up to 73% and large health claims (\$25k+) are down from 62% in 2021 to 31% in 2023.

County Attorney Items: None.

Committee Reports:

Commissioner Nelson noted that the Community Strong “Be The Voice” event and races are being held on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023. Registrations for the events can be completed online and via social media.

Commissioner Nelson provided an update on the TRF Airport hangar project. He believes all the outside work will be completed this fall and the project is moving along well.

Motioned by Commissioner Sourdif, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to adjourn the Board meeting to August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. Motion carried.

ATTEST:

Kevin Erickson, County Coordinator  
Pennington County

Neil Peterson, Chairman  
Board of Commissioners