

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
PENNINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JUSTICE CENTER BOARD ROOM
AUGUST 23rd, 2022 – 3:00 P.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, August 23rd, 2022, at 3:00 p.m. Members Present: Seth Nelson, Bruce Lawrence, Neil Peterson, Dave Sorenson, and Darryl Tveitbakk. Members absent: None.

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

Chairman Lawrence asked if there were any amendments to the agenda. County Coordinator Kevin Erickson noted that Mike Flaagan can be removed from the agenda. Hearing no further changes, Commissioner Nelson motioned, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, to approve the Board agenda with the change presented. Motion carried.

Recognition of Citizens:

Constituent David Rist posed several questions to the Board about their meetings, including why they aren't on the county website and why today's meeting time was changed from 5:00 p.m. He presented an edition of The Northern Watch and said there is nothing in there about Board meetings or times. Times Reporter April Scheinoha asked to comment, stating that Board meeting reports and minutes are printed in The Times and include meeting dates and times. The Board stated that today's meeting time was changed to allow the members to attend the mental health awareness event being held at 6:00 p.m. It was also noted that the last Board meeting of August 9th, 2022, was adjourned to 3:00 p.m. today. In closing, Mr. Rist asked the Board for more public transparency regarding their meetings and actions. The Board thanked Mr. Rist for his comments and took them under advisement.

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to approve the Board of minutes of August 9th, 2022, as written. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, to approve the Auditor and Manual warrants for July 2022 totaling \$3,370,453.36, the Human Services warrants totaling \$201,689.14, and the following Commissioner warrants, to include a payment to Jodi Flaagan in the amount of \$1,662.50 for TZD program services. Motion carried.

County Revenue	\$64,750.26
Road & Bridge	\$94,899.13
Ditch Funds	\$ 9,330.98

Per diems and meal reimbursements in the amount of \$900.00 were also approved.

Human Services Director Julie Sjostrand presented the consent agenda from the August 16th, 2022, Human Services Committee meeting. On a motion by Commissioner Peterson and seconded by Commissioner Tveitbakk, the following recommendations of the Pennington County Human Service Committee for August 16th, 2022 (detailed minutes on record) are hereby adopted:

SECTION A

- I. To approve the July 19, 2022, 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.

Other: Permission to advertise for the budgeted and vacant position of Social Worker - Disability Waiver Case Manager.

NW Regional Library Director Jim Trojanowski presented their 2023 budget request, requesting an increase of 3%. He noted that the local library accounts for 30% of the total NWRL circulation and 40% of total staffing hours. Also discussed were new digital services, services provided during the COVID-19 pandemic, and library attendance. The Board thanked him for his report and took his budget request under advisement.

Michelle Landsverk and Brian Carlson of Advance Thief River discussed their initiatives and their 2023 budget, which includes a county request of \$25,000. They noted that 2022 has been a rebound of economics and businesses in the area, and 70% plan to invest more in their business and 56% are seeking additional staff. They are working on a new resident and recruitment platform, modeled after the 218 Relocate program in Bemidji, and they are in consideration for grant funding from the Blandin Foundation. Also discussed was a strategic supply plan for childcare in the area. Ms. Landsverk noted that they have held 6 workshops/trainings in 2022 and assisted multiple new businesses in the community. Mr. Carlson spoke to what the organization has done for the community and commended the work of Ms. Landsverk. Commissioners Tveitbakk and Peterson commended Ms. Landsverk for her participation in the CARES Act grants that resulted in financial support to many local businesses during the pandemic. Mr. Lawrence questioned if the workforce shortage is stopping businesses from coming to TRF. She noted that the staffing problem is nationwide, and the workforce is changing and bringing many challenges. Commissioner Nelson questioned if Advance TR is able to name some local businesses they have assisted. She noted that business consultations are private but ensured that the Advance TR Board of Directors closely watches her work. The Board thanked them for their report and took their budget request under advisement.

MN DNR Area Wildlife Supervisor Doug Franke discussed a possible land acquisition by the state, a 330-acre tract owned by Loren McCullough that borders the Pembina Trail WMA. He noted that land is often acquired by organizations such as Pheasants Forever and then are gifted to the State. He presented a handout regarding Payments in Lieu of Tax, noting that the PILT payment for this property would be higher than the current property taxes on it.

Peter Nelson and Larissa Fitzgerald of the Pennington County SWCD presented their 2023 proposed budget, discussing all revenues and expenses. They plan to employ three new staff – one engineer and two engineering techs. They are also seeking new office space as they have outgrown their current space. They are requesting an appropriation of \$126,568 for 2023, up from \$121,700 in 2022. The Board took the budget request under consideration.

Mr. Nelson and Ms. Fitzgerald presented a MN Wetland Conservation Act decision regarding fairway 18 at the TRF Golf Course. The total area impacted is .45 acres, and a replacement ratio of 2:1 requires a purchase of .90 of approved wetland credits. Motioned by Commissioner Neil, seconded by Commissioner Tveitbakk, to approve the Notice of Decision by the MN Wetland Conservation Act. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to approve the sale of .9 acres of approved wetland credits to the TRF Golf Course at a total cost of \$16,200. Motion carried.

Mr. Nelson provided an update on local projects, including streambank stabilization projects near the Greenwood bridge and near Oakland Park. The CD#96 project has begun and the water testing clinic is ongoing. Chairman Lawrence questioned the building space they are looking for, to which Mr. Nelson replied that they are looking into all options, including new construction.

Emergency Management Director Erik Beitel provided an update to the Board. State Emergency Management and FEMA stated that the four homes threatened by streambank erosion near Hartz Park should be bought out. Mr. Beitel also noted that the County didn't meet individual thresholds for reimbursement for damage caused by the spring flooding and weather events. FEMA briefings were held on August 16th and a 30-day application period following is now in process. 13 applications have been made to date by the county, cities, and townships. County Engineer Mike Flaagan commented that the County has completed the FEMA work, with some larger culvert projects remaining but those are not FEMA-eligible.

Mr. Beitel noted that the committee designated to research drones will meet next week. He noted that an area county paid approximately \$25,000 for a drone and training for the drone pilots is about \$900 each, but cost will vary greatly based on capabilities of the drone.

County Engineer Mike Flaagan noted that the larger culverts affected by 2022 flooding were mostly older and due for replacement and did not qualify for FEMA reimbursement.

Mr. Flaagan recently met with Houston Engineering regarding river slope issues at four local bridges – Smiley, River Valley, Highlanding, and one at the TRF Golf Course. These are older bridges and the rip rap used for slopes in the past was different and often moves over time.

County Sheriff Ray Kuznia presented the following LEC item:

Motioned by Commissioner Tveitbakk, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, to approve the hire of Tara Harstad as Full-Time Corrections Officer effective August 24th, 2022. Discussion followed with Mr. Kuznia noting that Ms. Harstad has completed the required background check. Following discussion, the motion was carried.

Constituents Sharon Piche and Myles Koop met with the Board to discuss the handling of mental health in the county and community. They questioned how a person suffering from mental disease can get help, noting that law enforcement can incarcerate but no longer declare a 72-hour hold, etc. Discussion followed with the Board noting that the laws and rules have indeed changed on mental health, limiting the county on what they can do. Federal and state legislation is needed to make the changes needed. Mr. Kuznia noted some of the law changes and stated they can only confine a person in certain circumstances. The Board thanked them for their concerns and presentation.

Auditor-Treasurer Items:

Auditor-Treasurer Jennifer Herzberg provided an update on new tax system, noting that the current system won't be supported after 2023. The County Technology Committee has been researching tax systems and are recommending software from vendor Tyler Technologies. Commissioner Lawrence further discussed the issue and related timelines, noting that even if approved now implementation won't begin until late 2023. Ms. Herzberg noted a base cost of approximately \$256,000 and the total cost, with all options needed and three years of maintenance, is estimated at \$500,000. She stated that the project is fully eligible for ARPA funding. Following discussion, Commissioner Tveitbakk motioned, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, to enter into a contract with Tyler Technologies for a new property tax and CAMA software system. Motion carried.

County Coordinator Items:

County Coordinator Kevin Erickson provided an update on the 1st floor remodel of the Government Center. Motioned by Commissioner Tveitbakk, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, to approve a quote by Hudson Electric, LLC in the amount of \$9,200 for electrical work related to the 1st floor remodel project of the Government Center. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to approve issuance of a duplicate warrant to Riverwalk Public House in the amount of \$48.00 to replace lost warrant number 190129 issued on November 6th, 2020, without issuance of an indemnifying bond. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Tveitbakk, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, to approve issuance of a duplicate warrant to Hunter Roller in the amount of \$55.45 to replace lost warrant number 193827 issued on March 11th, 2022, without issuance of an indemnifying bond. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, to approve the issuance and cancellation of duplicate warrants to: Precise MRM in the amount of \$214.00 to replace lost warrant number 191069 issued February 26, 2021; Precise MRM in the amount of \$155.82 to replace lost warrant 180662 issued July 28, 2017; Quick Print Center in the amount of \$98.01 to replace lost warrant 189161 issued June 26, 2020; without issuance of indemnifying bonds. Motion carried.

Coordinator Erickson presented the 2023 renewal for county health insurance plans, noting an overall 0% increase. Medica, claims administrator for the plans, did calculate a rate realignment for 2023 which resulted in plan premiums slightly increasing or decreasing from 2022 levels. Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to approve the 2023 renewal of our health plans with no plan alternates for 2023. Motion carried.

County Attorney Items:

County Attorney Seamus Duffy noted that a hearing will be held Labor Day week to finalize details of the State vs. Reinbold trial. At this time the county covid rating still dictates that the trial will be held in person as normal.

Committee Reports/Commissioner Updates:

Commissioner Tveitbakk attended an AMC strategic planning initiative. He noted that election security was discussed at the meeting.

The Chairman reminded the Board that a joint county, city, and school meeting is scheduled for August 29th, 2022, at 5:30 p.m. in the Imperial Room of the Ralph Engelstad Arena.

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to adjourn the Board meeting to September 13th, 2022, at 10:00 a.m. Motion carried.

ATTEST:

Kevin Erickson, County Coordinator
Pennington County

Bruce Lawrence, Chairman
Board of Commissioners