

CLAY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
8:30 A.M., TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2022
Rooms A/B, 3rd Floor, Courthouse
MINUTES

The Clay County Board of Commissioners met in regular session with the following Commissioners present: Jenna Kahly, Jenny Mongeau, Kevin Campbell, David Ebinger, and Frank Gross. Others present: Assistant County Administrator Darren Brooke, County Attorney Brian Melton, and Sr. Administrative Asst. Colleen Eck

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mongeau called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On motion by Commissioner Gross, seconded by Commissioner Campbell, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the agenda.

APPLICATION FOR EXEMPT GAMBLING PERMIT AT THE PITCHFORK

By consent, the Board approved the application from Barnesville Thursday Nite Lions for an exempt gambling event at The Pitchfork on April 22, 2022.

RE-APPOINTMENT OF ANTHONY DILLARD TO HOUSING REDEVELOPMENT BOARD

By consent, the Board approved re-appointing Anthony Dillard to a five-year term on the Housing Redevelopment Authority Board.

TAX ABATEMENT FOR J/S GIESKE, MOORHEAD, DUE TO REDUCTION IN EVALUATION

By consent, the Board approved the \$270 tax abatement for Jeff & Sara Gieske due to a reduction in evaluation.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There were no citizens who wished to be heard.

APPROVAL OF PAYMENT OF BILLS AND VOUCHERS

On motion by Commissioner Gross, seconded by Commissioner Ebinger, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the payment of bills and vouchers totaling \$268,554 from 114 vendors. From that total, 88 warrants issued were under \$2,000 (\$40,984) and the following 26 were over \$2,000:

Gerit Hanson Contracting, Inc.	\$32,045	JT Lawn Service	\$6,580
TF Powers Construction Co.	\$30,200	Kris Engineering, Inc.	\$6,170
Prairie Lakes Municipal Solid Waste	\$24,124	Farmers Coop Oil Co	\$6,122
Central Specialties, Inc.	\$20,359	Otter Tail Co. Public Health	\$4,745
Performance Kennels, Inc.	\$16,500	Dacotah Paper	\$4,581
Rick Electric, Inc.	\$13,768	Medical Pharmacy	\$4,133
Lakes & Prairies Community Action	\$12,976	Moorhead Public Service	\$3,937
Bob Barker	\$ 7,433	Ehlers	\$3,800
Ramsey County Med Examiner	\$ 6,649	River Valley Forensic Services, PA	\$3,500

Thomson Reuters - West	\$2,900	Powerplan	\$2,405
Wild Rice Electric Co-op	\$2,876	Dean's Bulk Service	\$2,374
Galls, LLC, DBA Keepers	\$2,824	Thomson Reuters - West	\$2,054
T & T Tile, LLC	\$2,500	W Central Regional Juvenile Center	\$2,016

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 25 AND FEBRUARY 1, 2022

On motion by Commissioner Campbell, seconded by Commissioner Gross, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the minutes from January 25 and February 1, 2022.

ANNUAL UPDATE ON TREATMENT COURT

Judge Michelle Lawson and Clay/Becker Treatment Court Coordinator Don Kautzmann greeted the Commissioners and thanked them for their continued support of Treatment Court. Treatment Court consists of the Drug Court Program and Veterans Court Program. The participants have been meeting via Zoom Meetings rather than in-person. There are currently 26 participants, 15 in Clay County and 11 in Becker County, in the Drug Court Program. From the 110 graduates to date, 109 were employed at the time they graduated. All graduates were clean and sober for over one year at graduation and all had completed 50 hours of community service projects. Sixty-nine graduates were men and 41 were women. There have been 23 re-offenders since their graduations; however, 80% of the graduates are back to being productive in society. There is one current participant in veterans court and seven graduates to date in that program. The programs have done well during the challenges of COVID. They lost one source of funding but gained additional judicial funding. Overall, the programs are in good shape financially. The Commissioners shared favorable comments and many of them have been touched by the graduations they have attended.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW DIVERSITY AND ETHNIC COORDINATOR

HR Director Darren Brooke introduced Azad Berwari and shared some background data on this new staff person who was hired for the Diversity and Ethnic Coordinator position. His office is in the Government Center.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Kathy McKay, Director of Clay County Public Health (CCPH), and her staff presented the weekly COVID-19 update. New weekly cases in Clay County dropped from 399 to 154 (preliminary) in the past week; and from 23,234 to 8,687 (preliminary) throughout Mn. New cases in Cass County and ND also have significant declines. COVID re-infections in Clay County total 837, in MN 56,053, and in ND 12,399. The graph for weekly cases shows the highest spike earlier in January and the downward trend to date. The total cumulative cases in Clay County are at 18,940.

Becky Schmidt, CCPH Infectious Diseases, reiterated that the Clay County numbers are preliminary and last week they went up by 100 after the data was provided. The CDC provides the transmission graph which lists MN as high. Total deaths from COVID in Clay County climbed by one to 118. There were seven new admissions for Clay County residents reported last week. The local hospitalizations and patients in ICU with COVID are trending downward. The vaccine breakthrough cases throughout the state are at 9.846%. Hospitalizations and deaths among the vaccinated population are still under one percent. The timeframe for COVID boosters is down from six months to five months.

Jamie Hennen, CCPH Nursing Director, shared the latest vaccine and testing data. Over 74% of people in Mn over five years old have had at least one vaccine dose and nearly 70% have completed the series. CCPH has administered 19,241 vaccine doses with 99 of them last week. The majority were booster doses. This week they

are offering Moderna and Pfizer doses at the clinics that are posted on the website. The FDA is still reviewing vaccines for four and under. At the Moorhead Vault testing site, a total of 103,393 tests have been administered. The positivity rate has been trending downward the last couple weeks. The site will remain open until sometime this spring but the request for earlier hours was not fulfilled.

The subject of mask mandates in Clay County buildings resurfaced. Masks had been mandated for all employees and citizens in County buildings and that mandate ended late in December with an exception for those who were unvaccinated. As the numbers started climbing again the mandate was reinstated by the Board two weeks later. With the current recent downward trend, the 70% vaccination goal reached, and hospitals managing well, the Board discussed their options.

On motion by Commissioner Campbell, seconded by Commissioner Gross, and carried with two nay votes (Commissioners Kahly and Ebinger) the Board approved moving from a mask mandate to a mask recommendation for all Clay County buildings effective tomorrow.

ANNUAL DEPARTMENT UPDATE - ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

County Assessor Nancy Gunderson commented that her department is fully staffed with five FT employees. They just wrapped up their 2021 assessment in mid-January. They were able to conduct onsite visits in 2021 but did not view building interiors. They assessed the Cities of Sabin and Ulen as well as Eglon, Holy Cross, Kurtz, Morken and Ulen Townships and met their goal of 2,000 parcels. Nearly 500 permits were issued throughout the County (excluding Moorhead) in 2021. Roughly 55 new home permits were issued in areas that are in the two-year residential rebate program, excluding the City of Moorhead.

They are setting the rates for Assessment 2022 based on sales activity from Oct. 2020 thru Sept. 2021. The market trends are calculated by Mn Department of Revenue's Data and Analysis Department for every class of property: ag, apartments, commercial/industrial, and residential, based on those valid sales. In 2021, the housing market in Clay County, throughout Minnesota, and nationally increased dramatically. Mortgage rates have been historically low, construction cost historically high, and the demand for housing has outpaced the number of properties available. As a result, Clay County has a positive residential market trend of 8.98%. The City of Moorhead has their highest positive market trend of 9.33%. Most parcels will be seeing a change in their Estimated Market Value (EMV) for 2022. For residential/ag house/garage County-wide, the increases will be 10 to 20% depending on the area. The City of Moorhead is projecting 7 to 10%. Tillable valley land will have a large increase in assessed values close to 20%, Georgetown Township closer to 30%, and Eglon Township 16%. Industrial properties will increase 10 to 20% throughout the county. Ms. Gunderson noted that she would be willing to also speak to the Moorhead Clay County Joint Powers Authority also about these market trends. The County Board of Equalization is scheduled for June 14 at 6:30 p.m.

Ms. Gunderson listed the current tax court petitioners. She noted the total impacted market value is close to \$16 million. Three tax court cases were dismissed or stipulated in 2021.

ANNUAL DEPARTMENT UPDATE – INFORMATION SERVICES

Mark Sloan, Information Services Director, provided handouts for Information Services. Their two divisions are Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Communications (website and multi-media). The department consists of three FT staff and two part-time positions. They produce digital and paper maps for over 29,000

parcels in the County. They generate the 911 addresses and partner with the Highway Department for new address signs. The GIS staff also have an active role in the Emergency Operations Center and become very busy in times of flooding. They serve all departments and citizens of Clay County and work closely with the Assessor's Office and Planning and Zoning Department. They also assist the many cities and townships in Clay County. They will soon be busy with tasks and mapping related to redistricting. They continue work on the corner section monumentation project for the entire County.

REQUEST TO MOVE FORWARD WITH FSC DOOR AND HARDWARE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Joe Olson, Facilities Director, noted that the north and east entrance double-vestibule doors of the Family Service Center (FSC) need replacement to include handicapped openers. The two quotes received for the project are \$62,400 from Fargo Glass & Paint and \$47,025 from Red River Glazing. An additional \$2,500 was added for contingency. The Capital Improvement budget for the project was \$50,000. The Building Committee has approved this project.

On motion by Commissioner Gross, seconded by Commissioner Campbell, and unanimously carried, the Board approved moving forward with the FSC Door and Hardware Replacement Project with the \$47,025 quote from Red River Glazing and \$2,500 in contingency dollars for a total project Cost of \$49,525.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE/DISCUSSIONS

- Commissioner Campbell reported on a Highway Tracking meeting.
- Commissioner Gross attended Highway Tracking and Wild Rice Watershed Board meetings.
- Commissioner Mongeau attended a Wild Rice Watershed Board meeting.
- Assistant County Administrator Brooke attended meetings for contract negotiations; UKG Payroll System; Management; conducted a couple evaluations and interviews; and met with a couple department heads on personnel issues.

CLOSED SESSION - DISCUSS UNION CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

On motion by Commissioner Campbell, seconded by Commissioner Ebinger, and unanimously carried, the Board closed the public hearing and went into a closed session at 10:16 a.m.

On motion by Commissioner Campbell, seconded by Commissioner Ebinger, and unanimously carried, the Board reopened the public hearing at 10:36 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:37 a.m.

Jenny Mongeau, Chair
County Board of Commissioners

Stephen Larson, County Administrator