



BOARD MINUTES

BOARD OF WRIGHT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2022

DATE APPROVED: NOVEMBER 1, 2022

Christine Husom	District 1
Darek Vetsch	District 2
Mark Daleiden	District 3
Mary Wetter	District 4
Michael Kaczmarek	District 5

The Wright County Board met in regular session at 9:00 A.M. with Husom, Vetsch, Daleiden, Wetter, and Kaczmarek present.

COUNTY BOARD MINUTES 10/18/2022

Commissioner Michael Kaczmarek said that at the top of Page 3 after “regarding,” the sentence should continue “the Wright County-owned printer in the old Government Center for which the county was paying \$1,400 a year for maintenance contract on.” Administrator Lee Kelly did not have a response from MARCO at the time but had since heard from them. Kaczmarek asked if he would share what MARCO decided. Kelly said that MARCO agreed to refund the charges made after the county moved.

Kaczmarek moved to approve the County Board minutes from Tuesday, October 18, 2022 with the corrections. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mark Daleiden. The motion carried 5-0.

AGENDA

Commissioner Darek Vetsch moved to approve the Agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mary Wetter. The motion carried 5-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

Daleiden moved to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Wetter. The motion carried 5-0.

A. ADMINISTRATION

1. Approve Highway Department Staff To Submit On Behalf Of The County Board Of Commissioners A Project Support Letter for The Corridors Of Commerce Program Through MNDOT For The I94 Gap.

B. ADMINISTRATION - FINANCE

1. Acknowledge Warrants Issued Between October 12, 2022, And October 18, 2022.

C. ADMINISTRATION - HUMAN RESOURCES

1. Request Approval Of The 2023 Wright County Non-Union Benefit Contributions.

ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

TIMED AGENDA ITEMS

CHAD HAUSMANN - HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

Approve Resolution of Final Acceptance for Contract No. 2101 And Authorize Final Payment to Knife River Corp. In the Amount of \$74,676.31.

Assistant Highway Engineer Chad Hausmann presented the resolution for final payment of Contract No. 2101. He said the work was done in 2021, the reason for the delay in authorizing final payment was corrective actions needed to be completed by Knife River Corp. first.

Vetsch moved to approve the Resolution of Final Acceptance for Contract No. 2101 and authorize final payment to Knife River Corp. in the amount of \$74,676.31. The motion was seconded by Daleiden. The roll call vote was unanimous and the motion carried 5-0.

Recognition of Wright County Receiving an Asphalt Paving Merit Award for The County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 14 Pavement Preservation Project That Was Constructed in 2021.

Hausmann presented the award recognizing staff and contractors for outstanding performance in Rural Resurfacing for work completed on CSAH 14 from Highway 55 to Highway 12. The award is based on how the road rides, the road density, and lack of issues during the construction. Hausmann wanted to recognize county staff and Knife River for their consistent work.

The contractor received the award at the Minnesota Asphalt Paving Association awards banquet.

Daleiden asked about ongoing projects in St. Michael and Albertville. Hausmann gave a project update, noting the work on at least one project was due to be completed Tuesday, November 1.

MATTHEW DETJEN - PARKS & RECREATION

Approve Assessments to be Levied Against Benefited Landowners for Expenses Incurred in October 2021 Through September 2022.

Ag and Drainage Coordinator Matthew Detjen introduced assessments to be levied against benefited landowners for expenses incurred from October 2021 through September 2022. He said the assessment balance for Ditch 10 is \$495,089. The county assessed Ditch 10 last year and the cut-off dates for assessments under drainage law is September. He said the county is still finishing repairs as there is a Keats Avenue culvert and some punch list items that need to be completed. He recommended holding off the assessment until 2023 as work is not complete and it would avoid assessing landowners three years in a row. Ditch 13 had a public hearing on the redetermination of benefits scheduled 11 a.m. Tuesday, October 25. There would be a new list of benefited landowners completed after the public hearing. He recommended holding off assessing Ditch 13 until 2023 when the county would be able to do needed repairs. Assessments for Ditches 4, 24, 30, and 39 are being recommended for approval without delay.

Kaczmarek requested an update on the Keats Avenue culvert. Detjen discussed where the project was at with contractor ISG. Kaczmarek asked about Ditch 10's assessment costs, if the county is holding the contractors with incomplete work to the prices originally agreed on. Detjen said the Keats Avenue culvert was the last item to finish. The county is holding onto about \$21,000 plus 10 percent of the contract for contingencies to ensure the contractor finishes the project. He said the final payout would be coming in the next couple weeks when the project was completed. He said the punch list items are not billable to the county.

Vetsch asked about \$740,000 assessed in 2021 for Ditch 10. Did delaying the 2022 assessment for Ditch 10 change how the county invested money in the long-term? Finance Director Lindsey Meyer said the money received is being invested, it is one of the funds that is being monitored for balance and interest is being allocated to it. Vetsch was concerned that by delaying ditch assessments the county is losing money it could be investing for future use.

Daleiden moved to approve assessments to be levied against benefited landowners for expenses incurred from October 2021 through September 2022 on County Ditches 4, 24, 30 and 39. The motion was seconded by Vetsch. The motion carried 5-0.

Approval Of the Assessment Tiers and Interest Rates For 2022 Assessments.

Detjen said the Drainage Authority approved assessment tiers are not standard in drainage law. Based, in part, on polling done with other counties, he recommended making small changes to the assessment tiers. Detjen noted the current assessment tier for the board. He recommended the five-year and 10-year options be removed in favor of one-year, three-year, and 20-year options. Additionally, the 20-year option would change to anything more than \$10,000. He said the dollar amounts were not per parcel, but per landowner as there were landowners who owned multiple parcels. He said landowners want the opportunity to pay at a rate that makes sense to them. Vetsch recommended changing the three-year option to five-year. He asked if the tiers would have tiered interest rates to reflect the yields the county received on investing the money. Commissioner Christine Husom said in the past there had been a discussion to have tiered interest rates. Detjen said his understanding was that the 2.5 percent interest rate per year was locked regardless of tier. Vetsch asked if the payment plan was considered payment without penalty, meaning landowners would not be penalized by paying early. Detjen said it was payment without penalty as the county is acting as the bank, funding the loan up front. If a landowner received an inheritance and paid off the loan early there would be no penalty attached. Vetsch said that is where the trouble is with a tiered interest rate structure. He said it would be simplest to have a single interest rate across the tiers. Detjen pointed out that when a survey of other counties rates was taken Wright County had the lowest interest rate at 2.5 percent.

Kaczmarek said he hadn't heard anything about the payment plan being too much for the residents. He was in favor of leaving the rate unchanged. He said the reason for the assessments is partly due to the county's lack of maintenance. Husom said it was the Drainage Authority's job to ensure the ditches are repaired as needed but not to pay for the work. Vetsch said it was in the best interest of the Drainage Authority to keep the interest rate as palatable as possible. He moved to increase the interest rate across a one-year, five-year, and 20-year loan to 3.25 percent. Daleiden seconded the motion.

Kaczmarek asked Meyer if changing the interest rate is necessary to the county. Meyer said as interest rates have changed over

the last year on long-term investments there has been a 3 percent increase. She encouraged the board to adopt a higher interest rate as the county is able to get 5 percent back. Kaczmarek asked if there was a concern if the county did not change the interest rate. Meyer said the ditch fund is segregated from the remainder of county operating funds. Any earnings on the cash set aside for ditches stays there. The money cannot be used to supplement the county anywhere else. Vetsch said it is general fund money being loaned to the ditch fund, so it is lost revenue to the general fund from an investment perspective. He said that .75 percent of a point from 2.5 percent to 3.25 percent on what will be more than \$1 million being cash flowed over a 10-month time period is more than \$10,000 to \$12,000. He said this is money lost to the taxpayers that is being given at a low interest rate to ditch owners. 3.25 percent is lower than what would come with a consumer loan, which would be around 5 percent.

Payroll Specialist Janice Edmonson said the assessments approved in 2022 are minimal compared to past years. The assessments outstanding are locked at 2.5 percent interest. Vetsch asked if the loans are a rolling interest rate. Edmonson said these loans are locked in at the 2.5 percent interest rate and not variable. Vetsch said what he wanted to avoid was landowners taking advantage of the low interest rate the county was offering and invest their money to get a higher return than paying back the loan to the county. Kaczmarek asked if a landowner already agreed to a loan with a specific length of time for payback and an interest rate what can the county do going forward? Edmonson said she was not sure how to change an interest rate on an existing loan as there have been payments made on the loans. Kaczmarek said he did not understand how the county could go back and change the interest rate when landowners had planned on the original interest rate. Daleiden said the difference in current interest rate and proposed interest rate amounted to only \$10,000 which he said was not enough money to be discussing at length. There was further discussion about the original rate offered and the ability of the county to change rates going forward.

Vetsch moved to approve the assessment tiers and interest rates at 3.25 percent for 2023 assessments. The motion was seconded by Daleiden. The motion carried 5-0.

PUBLIC HEARING

Public Hearing for The Adoption of Ordinance Number 22-2 And Resolution Approving Summary Language For Publication Amending The Wright County Code Of Ordinances Chapter 156 Solid Waste

Husom opened the public hearing to adopt Ordinance Number 22-2 at 9:34 a.m.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Barry Rhineberger said the original Solid Waste Ordinance is from 1970 and outdated. He looked at Sherburne County's Solid Waste Ordinance, pared it down and applied it to what the county was looking at doing. He said much of the document are definitions. He said the ordinance is complete and ready to go for licensing solid waste haulers. A fee structure is being set up to cover the licensing component. He said there was some language added primarily because most of the enforcement is outside city limits and it is not the county's intention to change or challenge cities existing regulations and relationships with their solid waste companies. He said the change was inspired in part by the Energy Policy and Conservation Act (EPCA) which requires all haulers be licensed. He said if the county did not abide by the EPCA it would lose its Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment (SCORE) funding.

Kaczmarek asked what the citizens of Wright County and haulers could see as an improvement with this ordinance change. Rhineberger said the benefits come down to reporting. All solid waste numbers need to be reported to the state each year. Enforcing Ordinance 22-2 would provide the most accurate numbers required by the state. There are goals for recycling and waste in the plan that will allow the county to better track and reduce in time the solid waste dumped. Environmental Health Supervisor Jacob Wagaman said SCORE wants accurate recycling and numbers, there is a goal for the state to have 50 percent recycled. Some townships are at 34 percent.

Kaczmarek asked about tracking staff time spent on the implementation of the new ordinance. He wanted to be able to go back to the state and tell the state what the county was spending on compliance. Daleiden said a fee was being charged to the solid waste companies to cover the cost of the program to the county. Employee time would be tracked to determine the cost to haulers and whether the fee was adequate or not. The fee to haulers will be discussed in 2024 when the fee schedule would be updated for the next year.

Kaczmarek asked about the notification of cities and haulers. Rhineberger said letters would go out to all haulers. Included in the letter is a list informing the companies on what is required for compliance. Wetter said some haulers are already in compliance because they are required to be licensed in other counties. She asked if the fees would change. Rhineberger said it would change from year to year and there would be a sticker made up to track compliance.

Public comments closed at 9:47.

Daleiden moved to approve the adoption of Ordinance Number 22-2 and resolution approving summary language for publication amending the Wright County Code of Ordinances Chapter 156 Solid Waste. The motion was seconded by Wetter. On unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

ADMINISTRATION

Request to Set Date and Time For a Public Hearing Related to Changes in the Fees For Service Schedule.

Kelly said a public hearing for the annual fee schedule needed to be scheduled. He recommended 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, November 29. Husom said there was already an event that morning and more time would be needed. Kelly recommended 10 a.m. Daleiden amended the motion. Kaczmarek asked about the fee schedule. Kelly said the old fee schedule with current changes would be sent to the board members prior to the meeting. Assistant County Administrator Marc Mattice said the fee schedule is ready and would be sent the afternoon of Tuesday, October 25.

Daleiden moved to approve the request to set date and time for a public hearing related to changes in the Fees for Service Schedule. The motion was seconded by Kaczmarek. The motion carried 5-0.

COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee Of The Whole (10/17/2022)

Kaczmarek summarized the Committee of the Whole Election Integrity Work Group meeting. The board discussed some of the details surrounding ballot counting concerns that had been raised. Meyer and Elections Manager Tyler Webster directed the conversation to another time as the deadline for action had passed and it would take a resolution to change the county's procedures.

Kaczmarek moved to approve the Committee of the Whole minutes. The motion was seconded by Daleiden. The motion carried 5-0.

I. Review Staff Report from Election Integrity Work Group

Commissioner Christine Husom said that this Committee of the Whole (COTW) meeting was not a public hearing. She said it was to discuss the results of a work group assembled to review election integrity in Wright County. Four groups accepted the county's invitation and attended two meetings. Each entity would be given up to three minutes at the end of the commissioners' report to comment. The four groups were Midwest Swamp Watch, Wright County Indivisible, the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor party (DFL), and the Republican Party (IR).

Commissioner Darek Vetsch discussed the importance of local government heeding the voices of its constituents. He said no matter which political party someone belongs to, each opinion represents others who had not attended and needed to be heard to have true and accurate elections. Representatives of the four groups invited to participate submitted questions and concerns to county staff. Vetsch said that some of the issues and questions regarding elections were held at the State level, but staff addressed many of the concerns. The State has mandates that dictate how each county is to run its elections. The Secretary of State set the tone for elections and its mandates are mostly clearly understood. Sometimes mandates were not clear and required some interpretation with the aid of the Secretary of State until a court of law intervenes to provide legal precedent.

Vetsch said the topics discussed were a balanced ballot board, Pollbooks and its software updates including certification requirements. He said drop boxes were discussed though only two municipalities utilized these, Howard Lake and Otsego. Voter registration issues were also discussed. Vetsch said that Wright County receives a variety of updates from various partners to help maintain the Statewide Voter Registration System. After the meetings the county was alerted to possible commercial addresses being used in the voter rolls. These were investigated and appropriate action was taken. Discussions were also had about voter histories, past vote records, post-election review standards and election security.

Vetsch discussed hand counting ballots versus machine counting. All groups agreed there was a margin of error no matter how the vote was counted. He said the recount standard was 0.5 percent. One area of concern with ballots has to do with whether or not the voter fills the ballot out correctly. He said this situation introduced the group to a discussion on how to interpret the voter's intent. Throughout his explanation Vetsch cited known examples of election issues from the state's past

and the country's past. He said this would always be a discussion topic.

Vetsch said there was discussion about what the county could do. One recurring request from the representative groups was to rerun all ballots through a Digital Scan (DS) 450, a faster version of the DS200 vote tabulation machines currently utilized by Wright County, at the end of Election Day. The argument for rerunning all ballots through the DS450 was to ensure the accuracy of the DS200 thereby ensuring the accuracy of the vote tabulation and the DS450 was able to run more ballots than the DS200.

Husom called for the four groups representatives to speak.

Midwest Swamp Watch

Linda Carlson, Buffalo

Carlson thanked the county and the staff for participating in this discussion. She said Wright County does have a balanced party ballot board. She said the Election leadership was amazing to work with and hard working. She said she wanted the best for Wright County. She said Wright County resident and member of Midwest Swamp Watch who was unable to attend, Dustin Lozinski, had proposed running all ballots through the DS450 with the Cast Vote Record turned on to compare counts with the DS200s that are used in the precincts. Lozinski believes election integrity hinges on this happening.

Vetsch thanked Carlson for her group's questions and said the questions have led to training opportunities within the county.

Lisa Hendrickson, Linwood Township

Hendrickson read Minnesota statute 206.58 subdivisions 1 and 3:

Subdivision 1. Municipalities.

The governing body of a municipality, at a regular meeting or at a special meeting called for the purpose, may provide for the use of an electronic voting system in one or more precincts and at all elections in the precincts, subject to approval by the county auditor. The governing body shall disseminate information to the public about the use of a new voting system at least 60 days prior to the election and shall provide for instruction of voters with a demonstration voting system in a public place for the six weeks immediately prior to the first election at which the new voting system will be used.

No system may be adopted or used unless it has been approved by the Secretary of State pursuant to section 206.57

Subd. 3. Counties.

The governing body of a county may provide for the use of an electronic voting system in one or more precincts of the county at all elections. The governing body of the municipality shall give approval before an electronic voting system may be adopted or used in the municipality under the authority of this section. No system may be adopted or used unless it has been approved by the Secretary of State pursuant to section 206.57.

Vetsch said questions and concerns regarding this statute were covered in the report.

Democratic Farmer Labor Party (DFL)

Simone Pryor, Voter Protection Director

Pryor thanked election and county staff for being included along with the Minnesota GOP in the elections integrity group. She said the DFL had no commentary or negative discrepancies to report about the report sent out by the group. She said the DFL trusted the Secretary of State and Wright County to run elections smoothly. The DFL is always happy to hear from other groups to discuss any issues.

Minnesota Republican Party (IR)

Dale Witherington, St. Michael

Witherington thanked all county and election staff for their dedication on the committee. He said it was a grueling process that started from a quote off the Secretary of State website that said Minnesota's elections are the "envy of the nation". He said after traveling the state and discussing past elections with voters he saw that quote and countered it with Minnesota's elections are the "scum of the nation". The purpose of making this negative statement was not to create an argument, which it did not. Rather the purpose of making that statement was to show that elections are emotional. He said there are

many who believe that evidence is showing in election integrity networks across the country that there are some places where they need to better challenge and look at how elections are being done. He said this group attempted to push aside the emotional aspect of elections to look at what the truth and data indicated. He thanked all those involved. He said he believed the county did everything within its power to ensure this was done. He said election issues would not go away. People still don't trust the system and if the Republican party will continue to be upset about whether elections were stolen or counts wrong then they will need to get more involved in election protection. As a result of past issues the Minnesota Election Protection Team did get established and there are a number of people around the state who will be better involved so that they can better represent Minnesota citizens and rely on what the data tells them so that there are free, fair, safe, and secure elections in the state of Minnesota. His hope was that the standards of Wright County would continue to remain high and set the standard for the rest of the state to reduce the number of election mistakes to have the freest elections possible.

Vetsch said he appreciated Witherington's statement and said much would have to happen at the state and federal level in order to make definitive changes to establish more trust and integrity that will heal the nation. Husom said she appreciated the desire of the voting integrity groups to see fair elections.

County Commissioner Michael Kaczmarek said the county staff was in a tough spot. He said commissioners were looking for county specific issues. There were no specific accusations of collusion or conspiracy specific to the county staff. He was grateful for mystery addresses getting taken off the voting rolls. He thanked the Sheriff's Office for its help with investigating the mystery addresses. He had asked the group if there was anything specific to Wright County that needed to be looked at and changed. He never got anything specific to indicate there was probable cause or reasonable suspicion indicating Wright County had the intent to compromise voter integrity. He said this would be necessary to spend money to address any direct requests.

Vetsch said board action needed to be taken regarding two of the questions asked by the group. The first was the possibility of running the absentee ballots on the DS450 at the close of the polls on Election Day. The second question was whether the board had the authority to dictate to the ballot board the use of equipment to verify accuracy in the post-election review. He said that both of these questions were intended to ensure accuracy and not to address specific issues within Wright County. Husom said that while these questions could not be voted on, the committee could make a recommendation to the board.

Elections Manager Tyler Webster said in regard to the first question of counting absentee ballots after the close of polls on Election Night. He said it was not feasible. Webster said the elections staff typically is working an 18-hour day on Election Day and to delay the count until 8 p.m. would push the election results being released back to sometime in the afternoon of the next day. He said from an expectation point of view, specifically a Minnesotan expectation point of view, this was not an option. Voters want election results the night of the election. He said to delay counting the votes could cause logistical issues with candidates believing they won an election only to wake up and see they lost. Webster said logistically, perception-wise, and integrity-wise this is not an option Wright County should pursue. He encouraged the board to let the election staff continue the process and count seven days ahead of time.

Webster asked Assistant County Attorney Greg Kryzer to speak to the canvassing board and post-election review. Kryzer said it was within the jurisdiction of the canvassing board to randomly draw by lot three precincts to perform a post-election review process. Based on the population of the county three random precincts will be selected to have all ballots in two races, this year the Governor's race and the Congressional race, to be rechecked by hand. He said it did not make sense to send all ballots through the DS450 in addition to the post-election review. Webster said the intent of the post-election review was to verify the results produced by the machine by counting all votes cast in specific races. He said this covers the county's need to audit and verify the voting machines. He recommended continuing that practice.

Vetsch said this was where meeting expectations versus trying to create trust and integrity was difficult. He said if Wright County chose to rerun all votes through the DS450 subsequently not releasing vote results until the following day it would raise questions in the eyes of all outside the county as to the integrity and trustworthiness of the election count. The public could see a delay positively as the county was being extra careful in ensuring the accuracy of the count. He said this needed to be dealt with at the state level as elections needed to be done uniformly across the counties. If every county did something different there would be more of a perception of impropriety. He said that it was also important to ensure the county did not have its election staff working longer hours than usual as tired staff make mistakes, and the state statute says results must be turned in within 24 hours.

Kaczmarek said certain staff are required to stay in building until the count was done. Working those long shifts can lead to mental errors due to exhaustion. Vetsch said in order to count starting on Election Day there would have to be changes done at the state level. Webster said staff do not see results from machines ahead of the end of the election. Husom said she was comfortable with the process regarding absentee ballots. Webster said the results are locked on the machine. No one sees the results until after the election closes and tapes are run. Webster said the elections team directs precincts to not look at results and in fact is able to lock the functions to view results on every ballot counting machine so it is not possible to view any counts early. Vetsch and Webster discussed the logistics of having non leadership election staff counting absentee ballots on Election Day as opposed to counting them seven days in advance. The discussion covered statutory laws versus the idea of having votes counted on Election Day as opposed to prior. Webster said the election team on Election Day was providing direct support to precincts and voters. He said there are more pressing concerns at polling places that require the attention of the election staff. Some of the temporary election staff are overseeing polling places on Election Day. Webster said the elections staff have statutory authority through Direct Balloting which begins seven days before Election Day where voters come in and vote then feed that ballot directly into the ballot box. He said that box remains locked and while the vote was tabulated it was not cast until the count was made. He said the voters are grateful this process is available.

Vetsch voiced concern that having an election stretched over multiple days opens the election up to the perception of corruption. He recommended utilizing a lock box to hold all absentee voting until Election Day when they would be counted. Vetsch said the county should do everything possible to mitigate the perception that elections are fraudulent. He said elections should happen on Election Day. Husom said that absentee votes are currently fed into the voting machine where they are held until tabulation on Election Day. She said this was the same as a lock box. Commissioner Mark Daleiden said that when a person submits a vote into a voting machine, it indicates immediately whether the vote was filled out correctly as opposed to just putting a ballot in a lock box and risking the voting machine not being able to read who was voted for thus leaving the vote up to someone's interpretation of the intent. Daleiden said the election team has his complete faith. He said if discrepancies in the process were to be changed it would have to be on a state level.

Commissioner Mary Wetter said she didn't believe in drop boxes. She said there was concern over illegal ballot harvesting and ballot box stuffing occurring as there was no one to watch the boxes. Vetsch said he agreed with Wetter. He said it used to be that votes were cast on Election Day and if someone didn't vote on Election Day those votes did not count. It used to be that people made voting on Election Day a priority because it was their civic duty. Vetsch said that too often third world countries do elections better than the U.S.A. does by "inking" voters and ensuring they have proper identification. Husom said there are different circumstances, the military are allowed its mail-in ballots and disabled citizens have mitigating circumstances as well.

Finance Director Lindsey Meyer said that absentee balloting was tabulated no differently than direct balloting. When voters put their ballots through the tabulator the vote is counted but is not compiled. This was the same process that occurs when entering absentee ballots up to seven days prior. It was not relevant to hold off running the ballots through the voting machine because the statutes currently allow it. Vetsch understood and agreed changes needed to go through the state level. He said that, while the county had the authority to demand votes go through a second machine, he understood it was not practical to pull election workers off their assigned duties and put more pressure on leadership. Meyer said she encouraged this conversation to occur at the state level.

Tim Zbaracki, Buffalo

Zbaracki said he had been involved in the initial voting integrity meeting. He said that under Minnesota state statute 203.121 Subdivision 5:

- (a) On a day on which absentee ballots are inserted into a ballot box, two members of the ballot board must:
 - (1) remove the ballots from the ballot box at the end of the day;
 - (2) without inspecting the ballots, ensure that the number of ballots removed from the ballot box is equal to the number of voters whose absentee ballots were accepted that day; and
 - (3) seal and secure all voted and unvoted ballots present in that location at the end of the day.
- (b) After the polls have closed on Election Day, two members of the ballot board must count the ballots, tabulating the vote in a manner that indicates each vote of the voter and the total votes cast for each candidate or question. In

state primary and state general elections, the results must indicate the total votes cast for each candidate or question in each precinct and report the vote totals tabulated for each precinct. The count must be recorded on a summary statement in substantially the same format as provided in section 204C.26. The ballot board shall submit at least one completed summary statement to the county auditor or municipal clerk. The county auditor or municipal clerk may require the ballot board to submit a sufficient number of completed summary statements to comply with the provisions of section 204C.27, or the county auditor or municipal clerk may certify reports containing the details of the ballot board summary statement to the recipients of the summary statements designated in section 204C.27.

He said that statute is current law and does not speak to a seven-day counting period. He said anyone who says otherwise is speaking in error. He said the practice of counting absentee ballots seven days prior to Election Day was an emergency law put into place due to the COVID-19 emergency.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE / ADVISORY BOARD UPDATES

County Administrator Lee Kelly

Kelly attended the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) District 5 meeting. They discussed the 2023 legislative priorities. He said several counties were in the midst of labor discussions. AMC prepared some materials that were of value regarding elections that he would share with the board. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) is going live Monday, November 7. ERP training is scheduled for the board the week of October 31. The contract for Oracle is still being worked on and hopefully will be brought to the board in November.

Commissioner Christine Husom

The Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee met for its second meeting. The committee had taken a survey to look at funding prioritization and discussed how to be more user-friendly for residents who wanted to share their thoughts. They looked at John Hopkins guiding principles for deciding where and how to spend money. The guiding principles are spend money to save lives, use evidence to guide spending, invest in youth prevention, focus on racial equality, and develop a fair and transparent process. Areas they are looking to fund are treatment, recovery, criminal justice, prevention, and harm reduction. She also attended the Great River Regional Library Board meeting. They discussed assessments of existing libraries, and which needed to have work done. She enjoyed the AMC District 5 meetings. She was on KRWC Radio last week for the last visit as a Wright County Commissioner where she discussed county events and updates.

Commissioner Mary Wetter

Wetter attended the AMC District 5 meeting and was surprised at the \$1.5 billion given for public lands to the counties. She said Wright received \$50,000 both this year and next. She said it was not to be used for any lobbying purposes. Kelly said the money distribution was not communicated well from the federal government. He said the funds were received Monday, October 24. This will be a future discussion to determine how it is used. Husom said the determining factor on which counties received the money was the amount of public and tribal lands. Wetter met with the Wright County Historical Society (WCHS). They were looking for volunteers for the upcoming Festival of Trees which opens Thursday, December 1 and runs through Friday, January 6. She said the WCHS will also soon be on the county phone system. The WCHS was getting ready for the music in Wright County display that opens in February. Husom said the WCHS had put instruments on display in the hallway outside the board room. Wetter is on the search committee for the Extension Educator for Crops in cooperation with McLeod and Meeker counties. She said the position is posted online. She said she was at a meeting with Senior Community Services, which had recently received American Rescue Plan (ARP) money to teach seniors about technology. She said that after Wright County gave them ARP money it inspired Sherburne and Hennepin counties and the state to give them ARP funds as well.

The meeting adjourned at 10:22 a.m.

County Board Minutes submitted by Philip Hodges, Administrative Specialist.