



BOARD WORKSHOP MINUTES

BOARD OF WRIGHT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

JANUARY 9, 2024

DATE APPROVED: JANUARY 16, 2024

Tina Diedrick	District 1
Darek Vetsch	District 2
Jeanne Holland	District 3
Nadine Schoen	District 4
Michael Kaczmarek	District 5

Members Present:	Darek Vetsch, Jeanne Holland, Nadine Schoen, Michael Kaczmarek, Tina Diedrick
Others Present:	Alan Wilczek, Heather Lemieux, Jolene Foss, Clay Wilfahrt, Jim O'Dell, Lindsey Meyer, Elizabeth Karels, Jacob Wagaman, Barry Rhineberger Greg Kryzer, Brian Lutes, Lee Kelly, Marc Mattice, Caitlin Chovan, Jami Goodrum, Sarah Grosshuesch, Ryan Ferguson, Matt Treichler, Lee Martie, Mark Kellogg

Commissioner Darek Vetsch opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

1. Schedule Meetings as Needed

No meetings scheduled.

2. Commissioner Updates

Michael Kaczmarek

Kaczmarek stated that he met with the Fair Board on January 8, 2024, and coordinated with staff for additional items left over at the old Government Center for 4-H and the Fair Board.

Darek Vetsch

Vetsch said that he would like to discuss and look for board direction regarding the new state flag and state seal and asked if the board is interested in collecting data on the cost associated. Consensus was to draft a letter detailing the cost and impact on local taxpayers that can be sent into the legislature and the governor's office on behalf of the county board.

There is going to be a story in the local paper regarding elections. Vetsch said that Wright County did submit a response that will be shared with the board. Commissioner Tina Diedrick asked if there would be any recommendations. Vetsch said that there would be no recommendations and that the response was sent to the newspaper.

a. Safe Communities of Wright County

County Attorney Brian Lutes stated that Safe Communities has lost its director. Allina has been acting as the fiscal agent and has also decided not to continue this service. The Safe Communities Executive Committee is looking for an Executive Director and discussing options for continued operations. The committee is exploring different avenues and one is an outside organization, possibly a consulting firm, to take over and run Safe Communities. Some consulting firms have been contacted, but the committee does not think they would be a good fit to fill the void of an Executive Director.

Another option is to have a county staff member fill the role of Executive Director, similar to Mentorship, Education and Drug Awareness Coalition of Wright County (MEADA). Safe Communities is a grant-funded program and there is also an option to explore a three-quarters-time position. Lutes said that he talked with CentraCare and has not heard back. Vetsch asked about Central Minnesota Mental Health. Health and Human Services (HHS) Director Jami Goodrum stated that Minnesota Mental Health has had a lot of staffing issues. Vetsch asked what the bulk is for a caseload of Safe Communities. Lutes said that they do WrightROAD classes for adults and teens who will need to attend court. There are parent and teen presentations that are put on. Safe Communities also does mock crashes, sober cabs, crash cars, and community events. Commissioner

Jeanne Holland asked if Wright Tech Center could be a potential fiscal host or possibly Buffalo School District as she feels both could be a good fit. Commissioner Nadine Schoen agreed with Holland.

RECOMMENDATION: Informational Only

3. SCORE Fund Distribution to Cities and Townships - - Program Changes

Environmental Health Supervisor Jacob Wagaman said that there was no legal statute for making direct payments to the cities and townships for recyclables. The way Wright County allocates these payments is not considered best practice. Planning & Zoning is recommending lowering SCORE payments to cities and townships from the current \$30 or \$20 per ton to \$25 – \$15 per ton in 2024 and eliminating the program in 2025. Planning & Zoning is also recommending conducting a feasibility study for a potential grant program and centralized recycling.

Vetsch said that looking at numbers in 2022 – 2023, they ebb and flow. Wagaman said that last year was lower with less recycling. Planning & Zoning Administrator Barry Rhineberger said that cities are adding residents with an increase in housing numbers. If the SCORE program works like it should the numbers should not be decreasing but should be increasing. Wagaman said that the numbers from 2023 are only three-quarters reported with quarter four numbers coming in mid-late January. Diedrick said that the county is trying to reach that 35 percent goal that the state mandates for the recycling program. The cities and townships have already set budgets for 2024. Diedrick suggested considering moving the changes to this program to start in 2025, and still move forward with steps for facilities and programming for Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) and recycling.

Wagaman said that the additional money that would be generated would be enough to get one full-time employee. Schoen agrees with Diedrick to keep the program as is until 2025 and develop a new program for 2025. Due to the budgetary impact to the cities and townships, some of the townships get impacted more than the cities as their budgets are lower.

Assistant County Attorney Greg Kryzer said that staff is recommending feasibility studies. There are 12 months to conduct the study, develop a program, and let the cities and townships know the current program is being eliminated. Kryzer said that the county would need to look at centralized recycling administration to eliminate multiple contracts. Kaczmarek asked when the process of giving the money to cities and townships began. Kryzer said it's been close to 30 years and when the program was first started, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) said that Wright County's program was innovative. Kaczmarek asked when the current program was no longer eligible for expenses. Rhineberger said that it might have been procedural with MPCA. Wagaman said that he has gone to meetings with other local government units and has been mentioned that Wright County's current procedures are not best practice. Kaczmarek said that he is in favor of discontinuing the program immediately and developing a new plan. Vetsch said that there is concern with not having a feasibility study. Holland said she is in favor of keeping the plan in place this year and next year going with a new plan.

RECOMMENDATION: Continue the current program as is through 2024, work with cities and townships, conduct a feasibility study that will guide the creation of a new program to be implemented in 2025. Finance will work with Planning & Zoning and Administration to reconcile the shortfall of the budget to complete the feasibility study, develop a new program, and offset additional staffing needs.

4. Economic Development Partnership (EDP) Presentation

Assistant County Administrator Clay Wilfahrt provided a summary of EDP and Historical Society funding discussed at the last board meeting. Wilfahrt shared that Administration has worked with EDP to get a list of performance measures to share with the board. EDP Executive Director Jolene Foss provided a presentation that included annual events, growth from 2022 to 2023 in the number of new businesses requesting information from EDP, partnership with Wright Technical Center and the Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) program. Foss stated the EDP target is to increase and maintain support across Wright County from the county board to private business partnerships.

Foss stated the Career and Workforce Community Education target is participation in 12 annual events to provide information to citizens and opportunities for existing business to fill employment needs. Foss stated an additional goal of building seminars, chamber summits, and City Administrator Economic Development Staff (CAEDS) that would include all 16 cities. EDP has planned communication efforts that includes emails, newsletters, videos, and social media. Foss noted that the EDP has been a non-profit for more than 30 years and allowed to raise revenue to fund operations and compensate those in paid positions. The EDP is seeking to earn revenues that cover costs so that grant funding is not needed to cover operational expenses. Foss noted a new website has been created and highlighted the improvements to the site for end users. Discussions included grant funding, operational costs, and EDP challenges when applying for state grants. Discussions also included city and township visits, meeting with city administrators, business site visits, workforce development partnership with schools, building of relationships with businesses, funding used for business development, labor force availability, housing opportunities, childcare resources, DEED contacts and resources. The purpose of the EDA report, reviews, and installments scheduled for April, August, and November were discussed.

RECOMMENDATION: Consensus is to take the allocation of the EDP and split into thirds, review and approve of allocation on the calendar of April, August and November. Performance measures will be revised after interviewing county board members with their metrics they would like included into performance measures.

5. Commissioner Reception Area Furniture and Commissioner Area Access

Holland said that when constituents come to the Government Center to meet, she would like there to be more comfortable setting available. Schoen said the current office layout creates privacy issues and she would like to utilize the reception space to meet with community members and leaders. Kaczmarek said that commissioners are not in the office enough to use the waiting room. Kaczmarek does not agree with the proposed furniture plan and Diedrick agreed saying there other priorities and this could possibly be a future project. Facilities Director Alan Wilczek said that there are other furniture options at old Government Center, but a lot of the better items are taken.

Wilczek said that originally the commissioner office area was not open to all employees, and that was changed at request of the board to open to all county employees. Holland, Schoen and Diedrick agreed that they would prefer less access to their office area. Kaczmarek said to possibly get a staff list to all commissioners and check boxes who to allow back in the commissioner area.

RECOMMENDATION: Revise the proposal to have a budget under \$3,000 for furniture and bring back to board. Gather a list of all staff members for commissioners to check off on who is allowed in commissioner area.

6. Confirm Appointment Process to Advisory Boards and Committees

Wilfahrt said there was a conversation had at a workshop on how to appoint advisory board and committee positions. Particularly regarding Great River Regional Library (GRRL), there was an outlined process to go through that Administration will continue to follow for future appointments. For at-large vacancies versus district-specific vacancies there will be a little different process. For the at-large vacancies, the process would be similar to what was done with GRRL where the positions are advertised on websites, social media, potentially to newspapers.

The members on the committee would be involved in the interviewing and selection process. For district-specific vacancies, the member who is representing that district will have the ability to work with staff and design the process they would like to see. Holland said that when it comes to representing the whole board, she liked the process for GRRL. Vetsch said that he is not interested in interviewing all those on advisory board. Goodrum said that they would ask what district they are in and would go to that commissioner.

Goodrum said the appointments that are directly to the board meeting are open all year round and are not solicited to a specific district. Twice a year, HHS looks at any terms expiring in the next six months and lets the commissioner know where they are expiring from and then fills from same district when possible. Diedrick said that being notified two times per year would give the commissioner enough time and likes more people to be involved.

Kaczmarek said that he would like supporting documents after a decision has been made such as the application and a few sentences as to why the person would be a good fit. Wilfahrt said it will be added into the document when applications go in for board approval in the future. Vetsch agreed with Kaczmarek and said the application can include

city or township of residence, why you want to be on the advisory or board committee, experience and a supporting statement by the interviewers as to why they are recommending the person for the appointment. Wilfahrt confirmed that information will be added into packets about approvals and making sure that information is on the website. Diedrick asked if there was an ability to get website alerts on when there is an appointment that opens.

RECOMMENDATION: Differentiate between advisory and decision-making boards and have a centralized committee advisory/ commissioner location on the county web site. Create a sign-up for alerts when appointments become available. District appointments by commissioner are left up to individual commissioner districts on how they want to move forward in interviewing and advertising. Applications and information will be added to the agenda packets regarding the appointments for at-large positions.

7. Commissioner Expense Reimbursement Process

Vetsch said that this is regarding mileage and use of county vehicles. Under the policy, if using a county vehicle, commissioners will be charged IRS tax rate for the use of the county vehicle, and it will be diluted out of the \$2,400 traveling expense account. Kryzer said that there needs to be a written policy, the handbook applies to county board members, but it is necessary to create a Finance policy that staff and Administration can work with.

Diedrick asked for clarity on what is in practice when a fleet vehicle needs to be returned daily and if at a conference the vehicle would not be able to return daily and if finance could come up with language as to what is in practice. Vetsch said that the policy was trying to prevent a county car to be tied up for multiple days and the intent is to use a personal vehicle for an event such as a multi-day conference. If using a county vehicle, then compensation should not be taken. Kaczmarek asked if two commissioners carpool in a county car, would each commissioner be able to claim half of the expense. Finance Director Lindsey Meyer said that there needs to be communication to what is expected. Vetsch said vehicles are to be back every day per policy. Diedrick said to allow that flexibility.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve the Commissioner Expense Reimbursement Process

8. Commissioner Process for Adding Items to Board Agendas

Vetsch said that this is memorialized for when a citizen asks a commissioner to add an item to a board meeting so the commissioner would be able to refer to the policy. Kaczmarek said that he agrees with the part that is updated and would like to bring up the deadline. Kaczmarek spoke with County Administrator Lee Kelly and they discussed when the information is to be submitted, and the deadline. Kaczmarek said that Kelly is to make sure that all attachments are included before the board deadline, or the item should not be included on the agenda. Diedrick said that would include PowerPoints as some have a presentation or information is in a PowerPoint. Vetsch said the presenter sometimes does not give notice that they will have a presentation. Kelly said he would appreciate input from board about agenda items missing attachments. If they should be included in the agenda for attachment submission later, or excluded from the agenda completely if an attachment is not submitted by the deadline.

Schoen said that she would want information up front because there may be consequences to that but would need to make it clear. Vetsch said having both ways is hard as the board has chosen to meet less frequently. There would need to be more fluidity for the information to come in last minute. If meeting weekly, then the board would be able to give a harder deadline. Trying to get as much information up front as possible from outsiders and department heads. Holland said that there should be a hard deadline and have PowerPoints to read ahead of time. Kaczmarek agreed with Schoen and Holland. Kaczmarek said there is no enforcement on this and it's in writing and not being followed. Diedrick recommended getting attachments included as soon as possible and allowing some flexibility. Vetsch said that sometimes the presentation is intended to walk you through slides and should be presented day of.

RECOMMENDATION: Add recommended language to the Commissioners Handbook

9. Mid-Year Reclassification Request Process

Wilfahrt recommended having four meetings throughout the year to consider personnel requests. Requests should traditionally come forward at budget time and midyear. If there is an unpredictable need, The Personnel Committee could determine whether a new employee or reclass will be considered outside of budget season. Some other changes such as legislative, or circumstances such as COVID, will be considered. Changes that will not be considered would be general capacity, positions that were changed over time or mid-year reorganizations. The documentation that is required is outlined in the procedure and the process by which position changes can be requested is that the department head will make a request to Human Resources and Finance to put the documentation together. Then the request will go to the Assistant County Administrator. There is also an internal staff group which includes Finance, HR, and Administration that will review requests. The internal staff group will recommend to The Personnel Committee and then will go to the board if necessary.

Holland and Vetsch are in favor of the process. Diedrick is in favor and asked for clarity of grants and if they meet the quarterly criteria. Wilfahrt said that there is flexibility in there in case of emergency and would need to be done now and there be a special event. Kaczmarek asked about taking a closer look at the grants when they are not tied to hiring and when they expire. Wilfahrt said there are changes in some internal operating documents such as green sheets. If a position is funded by an outside source, it will be indicated and through the budget process will track what positions are grant-funded and what are not. Vetsch said that there would be a meeting of the Personnel Committee to review any reclassification or new positions in February, May, August, and November. Kaczmarek said that in the meeting timing does not state any reason. Kaczmarek said that the wording would need to be clearer. Goodrum asked if there is an open position for six months and unable to find or fill the position where that would fall. Meyer said that would fall into unpredictable vacancies.

RECOMMENDATION: Informational Only

10. Solar Charging Station for Employees/Public/Fleet

Assistant County Administrator Marc Mattice said that people are plugging in their personal vehicles in the parking lot. Mattice asked if there was an interest to research electric vehicle charging stations. Vetsch asked if the revenue would be able to go to vending funds. Holland, Schoen, Vetsch and Kaczmarek do not support and do not have any interest in purchasing. Mattice said there may need to be a change in policy not allowing people to plug in vehicles.

RECOMMENDATION: There is no interest at this time in pursuing public/employee charging stations.

11. Coffee Cart in Lobby

Mattice said that the county denied the café in the Government Center and there is no outside vendor interest in doing a café in the Justice Center. There has been research looking at other options regarding a coffee cart. Sherburne County utilizes a coffee cart that is owned by the county and operated by Options out of Big Lake, which operates similar to Functional Industries in Buffalo. The agreement provides Options with the space and there is no revenue sharing. Mattice had a conversation with Functional Industries and there is interest but there would be a staffing cost and the cost of purchasing the coffee cart. Wilczek said that the cart itself is self-contained and there is a water tank under with a base heater that would plug into a wall. There were questions brought up with this and asking if Wright County could do something similar to Sherburne County. Wilczek confirmed that this setup can be accomplished with minimal cost. Vetsch said that the demand for a coffee cart was driven by a lot of staff. Mattice said that if Wright County were to partner with Functional Industries, the county would have to buy the cart. Kaczmarek does want any general funds to be applied to the cart and is not in favor. Vetsch said if someone wants to come in run it where they are provided with an outlet and water and pay utilities but does not want to invest money to buy the cart. Wilczek said there have been conversations had around the idea for a vendor in Justice Center.

RECOMMENDATION: Draft and publish an RFP and bring back with an operation plan if there are interested organizations or businesses.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 pm.

County Board Workshop minutes submitted by Jenn Eggersgluss, Administrative Specialist