



BOARD MINUTES
BOARD OF WRIGHT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Tuesday, September 24, 2024
DATE APPROVED: October 1, 2024

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

The Wright County Board met in regular session at 9:00 A.M. with Diedrick, Vetsch, Holland, Schoen, and Kaczmarek present.

Present and responding to roll call were the following:

Board of Commissioners:	Tina Diedrick
	Jeanne Holland
	Michael Kaczmarek
	Nadine Schoen
	Darek Vetsch

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

YEARS OF SERVICE RECOGNITION

A. 2024 Quarter Three Years of Service Recognition

40 employees were recognized for milestone years of service anniversaries ranging from five to 40 years.

MINUTES - DISPENSE WITH READING, APPROVE AS WRITTEN/REVISED

Motion to approve minutes collectively with the changes listed below made by Diedrick and seconded by Schoen

For: 5; Against: 0; Abstain: 0; Absent: 0; Recused: 0

A. Approve Minutes from the County Board Meeting (9-10-2024)

B. Approve Minutes from the Personnel Committee Meeting (9-11-2024)

Interim County Administrator Greg Kryzer asked to revise the recommendation for Item 2, Finance Restructure, bullet point one: Leave Finance as is and push through the re-class for Property Tax Administrator.

C. Approve Minutes from the Drainage Authority Public Hearing for County Ditch 38 (9-16-2024)

Kaczmarek asked to make the following addition to paragraph three on page three: "all utilities within the park were not mapped, utilities were found to be running through the mobile home park but didn't specifically find the route of the septic system out of the park."

REVIEW & APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Kryzer asked to remove Item D1, Health & Human Services: Approve Meridian Behavioral Health's Request for Letter of Support to Expand its Treatment Program in Howard Lake.

Motion to approve the agenda with the listed modification made by Schoen and seconded by Kaczmarek

For: 5; Against: 0; Abstain: 0; Absent: 0; Recused: 0

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Kaczmarek and seconded by Holland

Comment regarding Item E1, Authorize Interim County Administrator to Sign Letter Terminating 5 ARP-SLFRF Broadband Grant Agreements with LTD Broadband, Diedrick said she is disappointed that the rural part of the county will not be able to benefit from the ARP funds due to provider issues. Vetsch said that a number of factors contributed, including matching funds from state and federal grants that were not received.

For: 5; Against: 0; Abstain: 0; Absent: 0; Recused: 0

A. ADMINISTRATION

- 1. Approve Developers Agreement with Holthaus Solar Farm in Monticello Township**

B. ATTORNEY

- 1. Consent for Expenditure from Forfeiture Funds**

C. FINANCE & TAXPAYER SERVICES

- 1. Approve the Reimbursement of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Funds as Follows:
County ARP Funds:
Approval of Use of ARP Funds from 01-099-493-000
\$54,729.00 5.6 Clean Water: Stormwater- Albion Township
\$40,000.00 2.29 Grants to Mitigate Financial Hardship-Wright County AG Society**
- 2. Acknowledge Warrants Issued Between September 1, 2024 and September 17, 2024.**

D. HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

1. ~~Approve Meridian Behavioral Health's Request for Letter of Support to Expand its Treatment Program in Howard Lake~~
2. Approve Tobacco License for Otsego Liquor and Vape Inc. (DBA Otsego Tobacco and Liquor).
3. Approve Request to Rehire One Full Time Eligibility Specialist Position
4. Approve Request to Rehire One Full Time Office Technician II Position.

E. PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

1. Authorize Interim County Administrator to Sign Letter Terminating 5 ARP-SLFRF Broadband Grant Agreements with LTD Broadband:
 - BB-002-02 Middleville Township (105 passings, \$191,833)
 - BB-002-03 Stockholm Township (117 passings, \$189,449)
 - BB-002-04 Victor and Stockholm Townships (109 passings, \$192,528)
 - BB-002-08 Middleville and Cokato Townships (301 passings, \$195,615)
 - BB-002-09 Victor Township (168 passings, \$198,661)
2. Approve Change to Grant End Dates:
 - From 11/1/2024 to 12/11/2024 for ARP Grant TOWN-011 Maple Lake Township Surface Transportation Grant (\$19,878.55)
 - From 11/1/2024 to 6/30/2025 for ARP Grant TOWN-013 Monticello Township Surface Transportation Grant (\$87,734.00)
3. Approve the Amendment to Existing Grant Agreement: BB-002-05 Windstream Lakedale, Southside and French Lake Townships

TIMED AGENDA ITEMS**A. 9:15 AM- CHAD HAUSMANN, HIGHWAY**

1. Approve Resolution to Transfer the Excess of the Last Two Years of State Aid Municipal Distribution to the State Aid Regular Construction Account

Highway Engineer Chad Hausmann said in order not to lose funds for the municipal projects, the excess funds need to be transferred into the state aid

regular construction account. The funds can still be used for municipal projects from the regular account once transferred.

Motion by Diedrick and seconded by Holland

For: 5; Against: 0; Abstain: 0; Absent: 0; Recused: 0

2. Adopt Resolution and Approve MnDOT Cooperative Construction Agreement No. 1056963

Hausmann said this is a Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) project for the summer of 2025 and the county contribution is to cover half of the cost of replacing a signal in Annandale.

Motion by Diedrick and seconded by Holland

For: 5; Against: 0; Abstain: 0; Absent: 0; Recused: 0

B. 9:20 AM- MATT DETJEN, PARKS & RECREATION

1. Approve the Order Initiating Repairs on County Ditch #38

Agriculture and Drainage Supervisor Matt Detjen said this item is a follow-up from the September 16 public hearing, where the Drainage Authority recommended initiating repairs.

Kryzer commented that this is the culmination of years, even decades, of work and that Detjen's diligence and hard work has contributed to the success of the repairs being authorized. Detjen said that Wright County is lucky to have Kryzer as an in-house attorney who handles all of the ditch legalities internally, which is a huge savings to the landowners. Kaczmarek added that the first documented petition found on this ditch is from 1972 and the work chosen to be done is easily justifiable.

Motion by Diedrick and seconded by Kaczmarek

For: 5; Against: 0; Abstain: 0; Absent: 0; Recused: 0

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

A. ADMINISTRATION

1. Approve the 2025 Budget and Adopt Resolution

Diedrick read the following statement:

"I would like to thank our department heads and staff for working diligently to bring forward their 2025 preliminary budgets. Thank you for prioritizing your budgets in order to serve the people of Wright County well. I very much appreciate you working with the Board and for all your thoughtful responses to

our questions. I would also like to thank my constituents for their thoughts and feedback regarding the levy.

Mr. Chair, I am struggling to understand why the majority of the County Board has requested an additional \$195,000 be removed from the Sheriff's Office budget for 2025. I strongly object to the Board's efforts to "Defund our Sheriff's Office." The Sheriff's Office had already reduced their 2025 budget by \$500,000 during the budgeting process. During our last budget retreat Commissioner Schoen directed staff to "cut the Wellness Program, cut the Mentorship Program, and cut the Professional Services budgets in the total amount of \$195,000 from the Sheriff's budget; with Commissioners Holland and Kaczmarek agreeing. The Interim County Administrator did remind the Commissioners that they cannot determine the line items to cut in the Sheriff's Budget. There was also no consideration at all during that meeting to bring the Sheriff Office staff to the table to discuss the implications of the proposed cuts.

I am sure you are aware that the last four years has been very difficult for law enforcement in our county, state and country? Since the "Defund the Police" movement, staffing shortages continue to stress law enforcements' efforts to protect and serve our communities...." We are the fastest growing County in the State, and keeping our residents safe is my highest priority.

Crime statistics in Wright County are beginning to reflect the continued impacts of these societal changes. For example, in Wright County, the investigations for child pornography cases have dramatically increased 200% just from last year. And unfortunately, there have been 5 homicides in Wright County since 2020, including the recent homicide just last week in Annandale. We've also had 4 officer involved shootings since 2020. Which all the officers are alive and well today and have been cleared...BECAUSE the Sheriff emphasizes high quality training and a positive and supporting culture. These are the very things that my fellow Commissioners desire to cut.

Law Enforcement is inherently a high-risk job. Fortunately, even the Legislature has attempted to address these concerns by signing a law, which went into effect in July 2023, that introduces mandatory wellness training for officers, and further emphasizes mental health awareness and support in the field. These reforms aim to balance the well-being of officers with the need to maintain a functional and financially sustainable law enforcement workforce.

The impacts to these proposed cuts to the Sheriff's Wellness and Mentorship programs budgets would include costs for mandated OSHA hearing and "fit mask" health testing, gym equipment, mental health education, Peer Support Teams and the Champlain program. Participation in these programs continues to grow every year since implementation.

Perhaps without understanding the impacts of cuts to the Professional Services budget, these items do include language services, documents shredding, psychological testing, vehicle tows, and the retired FBI expert which trains our trainers and the deputies at our training center. Just because my fellow Commissioners do not believe his services are necessary, doesn't make it so.

On that note regarding training, I would like to share an unprompted compliment to the Sheriff's Office from the AMC conference I attended last week. An attendee asked which County I represented, when I responded Wright County. She then stated that her County was interviewing a Wright County deputy...who was moving to her area. She was extremely impressed with the candidate and

the training he had received. She also complimented the 3 Sergeants she followed up with for their knowledge and professionalism.

Wright County is the third largest Sheriff's Office in the state. Why? Because the Wright County Sheriff's Office has intentionally built relationships, invested in high quality training and technology, supported and developed our deputies and staff...to build the trust to best serve and protect our communities and schools. The people of Wright County believe in the professional leadership of our Sheriff's Office.

Therefore, I would really like to work together as a team and ask my fellow commissioners to join me as I make a motion to approve the preliminary budget to include an additional \$195,000 into the Sheriff's Office 2025 Budget by utilizing fund balance."

Vetsch said speaking on behalf of some board members and some of the discussions, the board itself is not in the inclination of defunding law enforcement, it is actually quite in favor of funding law enforcement. For many years, the board has been in favor of funding law enforcement and the Sheriff's Office has received the lions share over the decades in comparison to other departments, which should be the case as a growing county with a lot of contracted work. Vetsch said he understands that there may be a perception with the reduction, but \$195,000 is approximately half of 1 percent of the Sheriff's budget and many other departments have had far greater cuts, upwards of 10 to 15 percent, to help lessen the burden on taxpayers in Wright County. He understands the want to try to fund law enforcement to the best of the ability, but it is constantly a finesse game to ensure the services needed are provided and met with a dollar amount that the taxpayers can afford. The funding ebbs and flows, and this is one of those years where the board needs to retract and lean some things out and next year there is a good possibility that the board may be able to go the other direction.

Holland said that she is very proud of the Wright County Sheriff's Office. She has been advised many times that according to state statute, the board of commissioners cannot tell the Sheriff how to allocate his budget. Holland said that she did not want the levy to be 8 to 12 percent as Diedrick did, she preferred 4 percent, but compromised at 5.71 percent. The City of Albertville has asked if the Sheriff's Office can reduce its hourly rate as it is killing the city's budget. Holland said that she has been attending City Council meetings and is hearing that people are struggling and do not want taxes to increase. The City of Otsego is refusing to have a fire department for a city of 25,000 people, they are ok with contracted services. Holland said that she understands that it looks like the board is cutting the Sheriff's Office budget, but they can generate revenue to make up for the amount cut. She is not happy about the 5.71 percent levy increase but will go with what the board discussed because it had a lot of very good, thoughtful meetings.

Schoen said that she can stand by the 5.71 percent levy with her constituents. She was also not in favor of the 8.5 percent levy increase and felt the need to make strong cuts in a lot of areas. There was never a comment that dictated taking out the Sheriff's wellness program, she is not here to direct what he does with his budget.

Diedrick said that the original percentage was preliminary and through the process, departments have worked with Administration to get to a 5.71 percent

levy. Diedrick said that she is not asking to change the levy, she is asking to utilize reserve funds.

Motion to approve the preliminary budget to include an additional \$195,000 into the Sheriff's Office 2025 Budget by utilizing fund balance made by Diedrick. The motion failed for lack of a second.

Kaczmarek said that his "do not pass go" numbers are mainly tied to appropriations, specifically the Health Partners Well at Work clinic. The clinic was started on speculation but now that the county has actual numbers, he is frustrated that the dollar amount budgeted to fund the clinic is not specifically allocated within fund 100. There is \$300,000 currently budgeted, above the \$750,000 already funded to keep the doors open for prior years. Kaczmarek said that it is too late in the season to consider at this point, but suggested a future board consider the clinic operations next year. The total amount of appropriations in question is \$520,000 and Kaczmarek said that he will not be able to support the levy due to said appropriations.

Motion by Holland and seconded by Schoen

Aye: 4; Nay: 1; Abstain: 0; Absent: 0; Recused: 0

Names:

For: Diedrick, Holland, Schoen, Vetsch

Against: Kaczmarek

Vetsch said he wanted to note that the Sheriff has been an excellent partner in getting citizens what is needed. The Sheriff can true up the entire budget with no reduction in service and he can come forward at anytime in 2025 to reallocate funds.

Diedrick said that she would like to submit a letter from the Deputies Union to include in the minutes record.

2. Take Action To Set Truth and Taxation Public Hearing Related to 2025 County Budget

The 2025 Budget Hearing (formally known as Truth in Taxation) was scheduled for 6:00 p.m. Thursday, December 5.

Motion by Diedrick and seconded by Holland

For: 5; Against: 0; Abstain: 0; Absent: 0; Recused: 0

3. Schedule ARP Committee of the Whole

An ARP Committee of the Whole (COTW) was set for 1:00 p.m. Tuesday, October 1.

Motion by Schoen and seconded by Holland

For: 5; Against: 0; Abstain: 0; Absent: 0; Recused: 0

4. Schedule a Committee of the Whole to Discuss the Law Enforcement Training Center Memorandum of Understanding with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

A COTW to discuss the Law Enforcement Training Center Memorandum of Understanding with the Federal Bureau of Investigation was set for 1:00 p.m. Tuesday, October 8.

Motion by Holland and seconded by Kaczmarek

For: 5; Against: 0; Abstain: 0; Absent: 0; Recused: 0

5. Set Agenda for the Tuesday, October 8, 2024 County Board of Commissioners Workshop

Kaczmarek asked to add two items to the workshop agenda:

1. Out of county agency use of the training center.
2. Subscription and payment to the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC).

Due to the number of items already on the October workshop agenda, it was decided to add out of county agency use of the training center to the October agenda and subscription and payment to AMC to the November agenda.

Motion by Holland and seconded by Schoen

For: 5; Against: 0; Abstain: 0; Absent: 0; Recused: 0

6. Authorize Commissioners to Attend the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) Conference December 9 -11, 2024 and Cancel the December 10, 2024 Workshop of the County Board

It was determined that there would not likely be a quorum attending the AMC conference, therefore a notice would not be necessary. The cancellation of the December workshop will be discussed at the October 15 board meeting. The item was tabled.

B. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Approve and Adopt Recommendations from the Personnel Committee Meeting (9-11-2024)

Kryzer reminded the board that the Finance recommendation was changed in the minutes approval portion of the meeting.

Diedrick moved to return the first recommendation back to the personnel committee, with IT and HHS present, to accommodate their feedback. The motion died for lack of a second.

Vetsch said that this process has been well-vetted. The internal Project Administration Department has thoroughly reviewed the structures to leverage people and processes. The reorganization is at a cost savings to taxpayers and leverages systems in the county. Health and Human Services (HHS) and

Information Technology (IT) have been involved to some degree when moving to the centralization of IT and Financial Services. This is the final step needed to complete the reorganization.

Diedrick said that the Property Tax Administrator position was reclassified to a grade 15, and she is disappointed that this position's reclass was denied last year and the county has lost a really good employee in that position since.

Vetsch said that the committee is working diligently to find a solution to reorganize the Finance & Taxpayer Services Department that works for the department and taxpayers.

Motion by Holland and seconded by Schoen

For: 5; Against: 0; Abstain: 0; Absent: 0; Recused: 0

2. Approve and Adopt Recommendations from the Drainage Authority Public Hearing for County Ditch 38 (9-16-2024)

Motion by Kaczmarek and seconded by Schoen

For: 5; Against: 0; Abstain: 0; Absent: 0; Recused: 0

ADVISORY COMMITTEE / ADVISORY BOARD UPDATES

Holland gave an update on the Minnesota Transportation Alliance Washington DC Fly-In conference that was attended by Holland, Schoen, Kryzer and Hausmann. Holland thanked Schoen for all her hard work on transportation projects over the years and the relationships that she has built in the process. She also thanked Kryzer and Hausmann for the individual expertise they contributed. Schoen agreed and thanked everyone for their contributions. Kryzer said that they were able to meet with senators directly, not just their staff and that is largely contributed to the relationships and leadership of the commissioners.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:01 a.m.

WARRANTS ISSUED

A. Warrants Issued

Wright County Board meeting minutes submitted by Caitlin Chovan,
Administration Office Manager

