

Barnes County Commission
November 6, 2012
Valley City, ND 58072

The Barnes County Commission met in regular session on Tuesday November 6, 2012 with all members present.

Social Services

Heather Pautz, Social Services, requested a temporary pay increase for Katie Pommerer due to a temporary increase in workload. The Social Services board recommended the increase to the Commission. Commissioner Froelich made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Leitner, to increase Katie Pommerer's salary from \$11.69 hourly to \$12.69 through January 2013. Froelich, Leitner, Schwehr, and Berntson voted yes and Knutson voted no as the Commission hadn't received detailed information regarding the request prior to the meeting. Motion carried.

ASSIST training (suicide prevention) will be presented by Wellness in the Valley on December 6th and 7th. Pautz requested approval to send Social Services staff. The cost is \$2850, or \$150 per person, and is half the cost of what the full price of the training would be. Social Services have the money in the budget, but needs approval from the Commission as it's over \$1000. Commissioner Froelich made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Leitner, to approve Social Services using \$2850 from their budget to send staff to ASSIST training. Motion carried unanimously.

Pautz requested smartphones for the child welfare staff to allow them to access calendars as well as using them for educational programs and better communication with clients. The total cost to switch them to smartphones would be \$1100 as they are eligible for upgrades. Jason Thiel, MIS, also recommended they have smartphones as it would be beneficial for scheduling purposes when they are working away from the office much of the time. Commissioner Knutson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Leitner, to approve the purchase of smartphones for the child welfare staff. Motion carried unanimously.

Board Appointments

The Commission set the deadline to apply for open board positions as November 26. Board members will be appointed to the Housing Authority at the November 20 Commission meeting as well as having their terms extended and set to expire at the end of December during their respective terms so they line up with other county board term expirations.

Planning and Zoning

Betty Koslofsky, Planning and Zoning, requested an auditor's lot of .56 acres in SW ¼ of 14-137-58 for the City of Kathryn to be able to sell the land. Commissioner Berntson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Knutson, to approve the auditor's lot. Motion carried unanimously.

Koslofsky requested an auditor's lot of 23,199 square feet in SE ¼ of 12-140-58 to vacate what is the street at 20', move the alley to the east and construct a storage building on the property owned by Steve Guertin. Commissioner Froelich made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Knutson, to approve the auditor's lot. Motion carried unanimously.

Smith Property in Pillsbury

Carol Nelson, Attorney representing Doris Smith, requested a reduction in taxes for a property located at 17-143-56 in Pillsbury belonging to Smith. Her husband's brother was handling the lease of property to Koch Asphalt. Doris Smith's husband, Lloyd Smith, passed away in 2009 and Doris inherited the property. Koch Asphalt abandoned the leased property, quit paying for the lease and no taxes were paid on it as of 2006. Koch Asphalt was responsible during the lease agreement for paying the property taxes on the land. Betty Koslofsky, Tax Equalization, recommended reducing the value on the structure to decrease the taxes due, have Smith pay \$1157.71 so it's up to date and go from there. Commissioner Knutson questioned who would ultimately be responsible for paying the taxes. Since Koch abandoned the property, the lease would have been terminated and the property owner was responsible, however, no one is sure where tax statements were being mailed. Smith never received tax bills and was unaware until 2011 that taxes had not been paid on the property. The foreclosure process started in 2011 and the property was in the county's name for one year so it was exempt at that time. Commissioner Berntson questioned how property taken by the county could be returned to the previous owner without back taxes being paid. Chairperson Schwehr asked for time to discuss the issue with States Attorney Lee Grossman and the Commission will revisit the issue in the near future at another Commission meeting.

Commission Discussion

Tax Sale deadlines were discussed for the sale. Julie Mindt, Interim Auditor, suggested to leave the payment deadline at November 19, Lee Grossman, States Attorney, recommended November 29 and Commissioner Knutson recommended December 4 for the Tax Sale. After discussion, the Tax Sale date was set for 8 am on November 29. Commissioner Berntson questioned what the final date should be for property owners to be able to pay off taxes and

expressed concern that someone with an interest in purchasing the property could drive from a distance for the sale, only to find that taxes had been paid off the day before. Commissioner Leitner made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Froehlich, to accept payments on delinquent properties up to 4 pm on November 28th. After discussion, Commissioners Leitner and Froehlich voted yes, Knutson, Berntson and Schwehr voted no. Motion failed. Commissioner Knutson made a motion to have the cutoff for payment on the 19th of November at 4 pm. Motion failed for lack of a second. After further discussion, Commissioner Knutson again made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Froehlich, to accept tax payments, including penalties, up to 4pm on November 19th. Commissioners Knutson, Froehlich, Berntson and Schwehr voted yes and Commissioner Leitner voted no. Motion carried. The date and time of the tax sale was set for 8 am on November 29th. Notices will be placed in the Times Record.

Mindt discussed the process for increase/decrease on taxes. The individual processing it in the past wasn't doing it correctly. Only taxable value was used and exempt properties weren't looked at. If exempt values were included, it would raise tax values which would reduce the mill levy for those areas affected. It would take a significant amount of time to get things straightened out this year and would delay tax statements. The Commission agreed that the time should be taken next year to do the process properly, but to continue processing this year as it has been done in the past.

Commissioner Leitner requested to set a special Commission meeting to finalize the budget and discuss salaries. The Commissioner agreed to set a special meeting for Monday, November 19th at 8:00 am.

Commissioner Leitner volunteered to be the County Commission representative at canvassing on Tuesday, November 12th.

Commissioner Berntson gave updates on the status of a list of county equipment to put up for sale at the North Star Auction.

Commissioner Froehlich made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Knutson, to approve the minutes from the October 2nd, 16th, 19th and 23rd Commission meetings. Motion carried unanimously.

Auditor Search Committee Report

After interviewing six candidates, the committee identified Joe Sykora as their unanimous nomination for Auditor. The second choice candidate was Beth Didier. Sykora requested to meet with the Commission to discuss compensation and job duties. A background check will be done and the Commission will meet with Sykora at the special Commission meeting on the 19th.

Highway Department/Courthouse Lighting Assessment

Marcy Douglas, Missouri River Energy Services, presented quotes and information on the lighting survey that was done at the Courthouse and Highway Department. The first set of quotes for the Highway Department, for lighting without motion sensors, was approximately \$85 per fixture. It's approximately a 6.8 year payback without incentives, or 4.4 with incentives. Cost after incentives is approximately \$7,075. The second set of quotes for the Highway Department, for lighting with motion sensors, was around \$95 per fixture. It's approximately a 7 year payback without incentives, or 5.2 with incentives. Cost after incentives is approximately \$12,025. The recommendation by MRES is to go with motion sensors as it is better savings in the long run. Kelly Kohn, Kohn Electric, suggested retrofitting the lights in the Courthouse as it would be the biggest cost savings. The estimate is around \$38,000, but after rebates are considered he would be able to calculate the cost ratio and paybacks. Chairperson Schwehr asked Kelly Kohn to work on estimates with rebates considered and report back to the Commission at the December 18th meeting.

Highway Department

Kerry Johnson, Road Superintendent, reported that a bridge in Minnie Lake Township is in need of work. Some bridge caps are coming off the piling and it is starting to tip in. Currently, it's dry under the bridge, but it normally has had a lot of water running under it. Industrial Builders has looked at it and is working on estimates for repair and Shawn Mayfield, KLJ, is getting estimates for the cost of a new bridge. There would be no federal aid for this. The Commission requested Johnson to get bids and come back to the Commission with them so the project can be escalated.

911 Contract

Dave Schelkopf, City Administrator, presented Resolution No. 1879 to the Commission requesting the County to provide a plan for employee transition and a plan for day-to-day operation of the 911 Department. Dave Schelkopf stated, currently, the City is trained and certified to back up dispatch and the County doesn't have employees on 24/7 to serve as backup. The LEC Committee met and discussed the setup and transition of 911 to a different area of the

LEC. Avis Richter, City Auditor, put together a sheet with current dispatcher benefits that will be forwarded to the County for a cost comparison.

Commissioner Knutson indicated that Kim Franklin, Emergency Manager, has been working with Richter to put together a benefit comparison. The only change is where the paycheck comes from for the dispatchers. Currently, there are 6 dispatchers and operations require 5.2. Knutson recommend that one dispatcher should take .8 of their time to fill the 911 Coordinator position. There should be an administrative person to handle administrative calls only and funnel things to dispatchers in the Valley City Police Department. There is a plan to have a third station at the jail to backup dispatch. Chairperson Schwehr asked if there were two dispatchers on duty at all times and Schelkopf indicated that 10.4 employees would be required to have two on duty for each shift. Schelkopf also indicated that the City needs to see an operational plan from the County indicating who the supervisor will be and where the office will be located. Currently, Police Chief Fred Thompson is there during the daytime to provide leadership at no cost to the County. The City worked through the initial conversion issues in the early 90's, but the County hasn't had to go through this. Dispatch can operate with 5 or 6 personnel, but if it's changed substantially without a good plan or cost analysis, the City is concerned about having to pay more for a system that's already working well.

Commissioner Froehlich asked if the Police Department would continue to be backup for dispatch if the County takes over. If not, two more dispatchers would have to be hired. It could be \$80,000-\$100,000 annually for some of these changes. Froelich was concerned that there would be problems with 24/7 operations if the PD isn't able to provide backup. Commissioner Knutson stated a plan was in the works to have jail personnel be backup. Knutson hasn't seen an operational plan by the City and requested to have them present that information to the Commission.

Lee Grossman, States Attorney, presented a termination clause. In order to go forward with a January 1 takeover by the county, notice has to be provided to the City with 30 days' notice to give them opportunity to opt out. Grossman recommended that the Commission not commit to January 1 if they are unable to have an operational plan in place by then. Commissioner Schwehr stated that it may be better to push the date back a few months rather than commit to a date that the County may not be prepared for. Commissioner Knutson will continue working on the transition plan.

Commission Discussion

Discussion was held on the FEMA property cleanup process. Someone has been contacted to remove the scrap iron from the Berg property.

Paperwork was received November 5th regarding the landslides at the lake. Chairperson Schwehr visited with Rich Sheuneman regarding the properties. If FEMA agrees, the County could sign those properties over to the Corp of Engineers.

Sick time was discussed regarding a seasonal park employee. Commissioner Knutson reviewed it with Julie Mindt and seasonal or part-time employees are not eligible for sick leave.

Jason Thiel, MIS, reported that the conversion from Lotus Notes to Microsoft Outlook mail went smoothly.

With no further business, Commissioner Knutson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Leitner, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Julie Mindt
Interim - Barnes County Auditor

Cindy Schwehr, Chairperson
Barnes County Commission