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BOARD OF PEMBINA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PROCEEDINGS

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Special Session

December 7, 2021

7:00 PM

Public Hearing

Board of Pembina County Commissioners met in Special Session at 7:00 PM in the Farmers Room of the Pembina County Courthouse, to hear suggestions and comments for and against the proposal to change the offices of the Auditor/Treasurer and Clerk/Recorder from elected positions to appointed positions, with the following members present: Jim Benjaminson, Laverne Doyle, Nick Rutherford, David Moquist, and Andrew Cull.

Public in attendance include Zelda Hartje, Larry DuBois, Camburn Shephard, Clyde Reilly, Melissa Morden, Kay Braget, and Ron Storie.

Chairperson Doyle called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM.

Larry DuBois stated this was proposed in 2017, with no changes made at that time, and asked why this proposal is coming up again. Commissioner Doyle stated he feels it would be beneficial to the taxpayers to know that the individuals in these positions are qualified individuals. He also commented with an elected position any individual, whether qualified or unqualified, could win the election, which could be detrimental. Further discussion was held on how the current duties and responsibilities of the offices would change if they became appointed positions. There will be no changes in duties and responsibilities if these positions become appointed.

Camburn Shephard stated, in his understanding, it is not the purpose to have the Commission micro manage the departments. The reasoning is to ensure a qualified individual would be appointed for these positions. Commissioner Rutherford stated the appointments would be handled in the same manner as all current appointed offices are handled. Mr. Shephard commented that this would make the pool of eligible candidates much larger. Mr. Storie stated he feels the Commission is attempting to take control by not allowing the people to vote. Commissioner Moquist asked Mr. Storie what the county would do if only one **unqualified** individual runs for the elected position and wins. Mr. Storie stated there is a removal process for elected positions. Mr. Shephard stated the removal

process takes time, and significant damage could be done prior to removing someone from office.

Commissioner Cull commented very little interest has been shown in running for these positions, due to the insecurity of the positions. If the positions remain elected the individual could be left without a job after four years and very few individuals are willing to take that chance. Mr. Storie feels if the positions become appointed the Commission would end up hiring friends and neighbors. Mr. Storie asked if this would be put to a vote of the people. Commissioner Rutherford stated the Commission will be making the decision. Commissioner Benjaminson stated the only qualifications for these elected positions is to be 18 years of age, a citizen of the United States and a resident of the county for at least 30 days. Commissioner Moquist stated that qualified individuals may not apply for these positions if they remain elected positions because they don't want to run for reelection every four years, which significantly reduces the pool of eligible applicants.

Clyde Reilly asked if the general public would have access to the applicant resumes to discuss with their District Commissioner. That information is not a public record and cannot be shared with the general public.

Camburn Shephard stated, in his opinion, change can be good. If these positions do become appointed the Commission would still have the option to change these positions back to elected positions. Discussion followed on job qualifications. If these positions become appointed the Commission could set the job qualifications as they see necessary.

Discussion followed on how many other counties have these positions appointed. There are currently ten counties where these positions are appointed, including Cass, Grand Forks, LaMoure, Nelson, Pierce, Richland, Stutsman, Towner, Walsh and Ward.

Chairperson Doyle stated a final decision would be made at the December 21, 2021 meeting.

Larry DuBois commented that education isn't all an individual needs to do these jobs, they also need to know how to work with the public.

Motion made by Nick Rutherford and seconded by Jim Benjaminson to adjourn the meeting. All voting in favor; motion carried. The Commission thanked the public for their comments. Meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM.