

The following are "unofficial minutes", subject to change at the next meeting.

BOARD OF PEMBINA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PROCEEDINGS

www.pembinacountynd.gov

June 16, 2020

8:30 AM

Board of Pembina County Commissioners met at 8:30 AM in the Commissioners Meeting Room of the Courthouse with the following members present: Jim Benjaminson, Laverne Doyle, Nick Rutherford and Hugh Ralston in person. Hetty Walker by telephone.

Chairman Ralston called the meeting to order.

Motion made by Laverne Doyle and seconded by Nick Rutherford to approve the June 2, 2020 Equalization meeting minutes as presented. All voting in favor; motion carried.

Motion made by Nick Rutherford and seconded by Laverne Doyle to approve the June 2, 2020 minutes as presented. All voting in favor; motion carried.

Commission reviewed the letter from the City of Pembina regarding the JDA 2021 budget request. Commission will review at budget time.

Commission discussed tentative dates to reopen all County offices. Auditor presented a listing showing when other counties have opened or are planning on opening. Commission discussed the Pembina County Reopening Plan and Short-Term Telecommuting Agreement. Motion made by Nick Rutherford to open all county offices, effective June 22, 2020, with all employees returning to a five day work week and all offices being open to the public from 8:00 am – 4:30 pm, following the guidelines set forth in the Pembina County Reopening Plan. Seconded by Laverne Doyle. Discussion followed. Roll call vote: Jim Benjaminson – yes; Laverne Doyle – yes; Nick Rutherford – yes; Hetty Walker – yes. Motion carried.

Auditor updated the Commission on the 2020 Primary Election. The Canvassing Board met Monday, June 15, 2020 to finalize the results. There were 2,470 ballots mailed to voters with 1,923 ballots returned. The Canvassing Board rejected six ballots due to late postmark or signatures not matching. The total number of ballots counted for the 2020 Primary/City Election was 1,917. Discussion followed on the contracts between Pembina County and the eleven cities that have the county handle their elections. The contracts have not been

updated since 1992. The Auditor will work with the Pembina County State's Attorney to compile updated contracts prior to the 2022 election.

Commission reviewed the May financial statement and claims. Motion made by Jim Benjaminson and seconded by Hetty Walker to approve the consent agenda as presented. All voting in favor; motion carried.

Commission discussed the vacancy on the Water Board with the resignation of Josh Heuchert. Motion made by Nick Rutherford and seconded by Laverne Doyle to appoint Ted Juhl to fill the unexpired term of Josh Heuchert. Discussion followed. All voting in favor; motion carried.

John Guzman, Farmer's Union Insurance, discussed dental, vision and life benefits for employees. John compared the coverages available through Delta Dental, the County's current dental carrier, and Equitable. Farmer's Union can offer an improved plan through Equitable with a 5% savings to employees. John also compared the coverages available through Ameritas, the County's current vision carrier, and Equitable. Farmer's Union can offer the identical plan design through Equitable for a reduction in premium of almost 15%. The Basic Life plan was discussed, which would provide a small savings to both the county and employees. John also discussed worksite plans for accident and critical illness. The accident plan will match or exceed current coverages while offering employees a high and low option, with a 44% reduction in premium for the high option. The critical illness plan is a guaranteed issue plan that combines heart attack, stroke and cancer coverage. Maximum benefits up to \$100,000.00 are available at an up to 34% cost savings. Auditor will work with Mr. Guzman to set up a date for a virtual meeting with employees prior to any final decisions.

Mikka Willits, Tax Director, present for abatement hearing. The application is for 2019 abatement or refund of taxes on property located in Crystal Township (Parcel 07-2080000). Per NDCC 57-23-06 the application is to be reviewed by the Commission at the first regular meeting after receiving the township recommendation, which Mikka received on June 10, 2020. Due to the application being filed through the office of Fleming, DuBois and Fleming, Ms. Willits requested Mr. DuBois to attend today's meeting. Mr. DuBois requested the hearing be rescheduled for the next Commission meeting, scheduled for July 7, 2020. Motion made by Laverne Doyle and seconded by Jim Benjaminson to reschedule the hearing for July 7, 2020 at 9:30 AM. Discussion followed. Roll call vote: Jim Benjaminson – yes; Laverne Doyle – yes; Nick Rutherford – yes; Hetty Walker – yes. Motion carried.

Mikka Willits, Tax Director, presented the North Star Coop Payment in Lieu of Tax (PILOT) review for Parcel 06-0420010. Zelda Hartje, Cavalier Township Assessor, also present. Mikka reviewed the Commission minutes from June 7, 2011 where the motion was made to approve a 5-Year New or Expanding Business Exemption with the 15 year PILOT to be addressed after the completion of the building and an appraisal. Zelda stated that this issue has been brought up

every year at the Cavalier Township Equalization meeting. The township feels the PILOT for North Star Coop should be revisited since an appraisal has not been completed on the property. Mikka has reached out to Carsen Appraisal Services to complete an appraisal on the property, but, due to COVID-19, Mr. Carsen is not doing any physical inspections at this time. Zelda presented the appraisal valuation Mr. Carsen completed on Walhalla Farmer's Grain and noted that the North Star Coop property would most likely be appraised much higher. Motion made by Laverne Doyle and seconded by Nick Rutherford to have the building appraised and the PILOT revisited upon completion of the appraisal. Discussion followed. Roll call vote: Jim Benjaminson – yes; Laverne Doyle – yes; Nick Rutherford – yes; Hetty Walker – yes. Motion carried.

Drainage permit received from Thomas Beard, to regrade the ditch on the east side of County #12 to the depth of the new culvert, in Section 35 of Akra Township. Permit was approved by the Water Board and Devin Johnson, Highway Supervisor. Motion made by Laverne Doyle and seconded by Jim Benjaminson to authorize the Chairman to sign the permit as presented. All voting in favor; motion carried.

Culvert request received from Rick Bigwood to install a 30" x 60' culvert, for a field approach, in the NE¼ of Section 35 of St Thomas Township. The application has been signed by two township officials, approved by the Water Board and Devin Johnson, Highway Superintendent. Motion made by Jim Benjaminson and seconded by Laverne Doyle to authorize the Chairman to sign the request as presented. All voting in favor; motion carried.

Three culvert requests were received from Felson Township. The first request is to replace two 36" x 40' culverts with two 36" x 45' culverts, in the SE¼ of Section 30 and SW¼ of Section 29; the second request is to replace a 24" x 40' culvert with a 24" x 45' culvert in the SE¼ of Section 19 and the SW¼ of Section 20; and the third request is to replace a 48" x 30' culvert with a 48" x 40' culvert in the NE¼ of Section 29 and NW¼ of Section 28, all in Felson Township. The applications have been signed by two township officials, approved by the Water Board and Devin Johnson, Highway Superintendent. Motion made by Laverne Doyle and seconded by Jim Benjaminson to authorize the Chairman to sign the requests as presented. All voting in favor; motion carried.

Culvert request received from Randall Wagner to install a 24" x 60' culvert, to drain water behind the field approach, in the SW¼ of Section 35 of Felson Township. The application has been signed by two township officials, approved by the Water Board and Devin Johnson, Highway Superintendent. Motion made by Jim Benjaminson and seconded by Nick Rutherford to authorize the Chairman to sign the request as presented. All voting in favor; motion carried.

Culvert request received from David Cook to install one 18" x 60' culvert, for a field approach, in the SE¼ of Section 5 of Advance Township. The application has been signed by two township officials, approved by the Water Board and

Devin Johnson, Highway Superintendent with the recommendation to install a 24" culvert instead of an 18" culvert. Motion made by Laverne Doyle and seconded by Jim Benjaminson to authorize the Chairman to sign the request with the recommendation of a 24" culvert. All voting in favor; motion carried.

Drainage permit received from David Cook, to regrade the ditch along County Road #1, in Section 5 of Advance Township. Permit was approved by the Water Board and Devin Johnson, Highway Supervisor. Motion made by Laverne Doyle and seconded by Nick Rutherford. All voting in favor; motion carried.

Devin discussed the email he received from NDACo requesting a listing of road and bridge projects the county is anticipating to be funded with Prairie Dog revenue. The Commission would like to keep County Road #1 at the top of the list followed by the north half of County Road #2 and part of the south half of County Road #2. Devin informed the Commission that construction on the box culvert north of Drayton should start around June 22nd and updated them on the County Road #1 project.

Casey Buchmann, Democratic Public Service Commissioner candidate, addressed the Commission regarding his concerns with how Governor Burgum wants to direct \$33 Million dollars of the \$1.25 billion dollar stimulus funding from the CARES Act. Mr. Buchmann stated the allotment of the Federal stimulus money is solely in the hands of a six member commission, consisting of the Governor, Secretary of State, Senate Appropriation Chairs and Majority leaders. Mr. Buchmann questions if there is enough input for this six member commission to make the decisions about the \$1.25 Billion dollar stimulus package. Mr. Buchmann feels the legislators should play a bigger part and reaffirm their role in appropriating the dollars. Where is the transparency and public input? The state identified 368 oil wells that are out of use and Governor Burgum wants to use \$33 million dollars from the Federal stimulus package to plug, cap and clean up these wells. By State law, oil companies are required to secure a financial insurance of \$100,000.00 bond or higher, for the purpose of plugging, capping and cleaning up unused wells if the company shirks their responsibility. According to Ron Ness, ND Petroleum Council President, stated "It appears if you use those funds then you don't need to seek reimbursement for plugging of these wells from their operators". State Mineral Resource Director, Lynn Helms, stated "The state is not planning to confiscate bonds to reimburse the cleanup costs". According to Mr. Buchmann, North Dakota could lose out on \$70 million dollars that could be used elsewhere. Mr. Buchmann feels the people of North Dakota should know where the \$1.25 million dollar Federal stimulus funds are being spent. Commission thanked Mr. Buchmann for the information.

Motion made by Jim Benjaminson and seconded by Laverne Doyle to adjourn the meeting. All voting in favor; motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 11:30 AM.