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BOARD OF PEMBINA COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S PROCEEDINGS

Special Meeting

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July 21, 2026

1:00 PM

The board of Pembina County Commissioners met in Special Session in the Commissioners Meeting Room of the Courthouse. Chairperson Otto called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

Roll call: Pat Hardy, Scot Becker, Blaine Papenfuss. Darin Otto, Andrew Cull. A quorum was declared.

Also Present: Angelle French, Dawn Mandt, Garret Fontaine, Lisa Keney, Cory Mortensen and Knute Gjovik.

Motion made by Darin Otto and seconded by Blaine Papenfuss to approve the agenda as presented. All voting in favor; motion carried.

Auditor Gapp handed out packets outlining the proposed preliminary budget. She stated it included pay increases for all employees with an average increase of 3 percent.

Angelle French presented the 2027 proposed budget for the Pembina County JDA. She is requesting \$259,000.00 for the 2027 year which works out to be approximately 3.5 mills. She explained the programs they fund throughout the county such as Manufacturing Day and Marketplace for Kids. She also presented the new Career Builders program they are hoping to launch in 2027. It is a state program for scholarships or college loan repayment programs businesses can participate in for recruitment of college graduates to take local jobs. There is a three-year commitment for the loan repayment program. The payments would go directly to the loan provider and the state matches the payment.

Dawn Mandt, the Executive Director of the Red River Regional Council addressed the commission on a request for funding of \$27,810.00. She passed around several handouts to the commission for their review. She explained the expense and breakdown of employees for the regional council and how it differs from the JDA. She stated they are made up of 5 organizations. She stated they provide the staff and management services for all 5 organizations. There are 8 regional councils throughout

the state. Scot Becker is the Pembina County Commissioner member on the board. She then discussed the Red River CHDO program where new homes are being developed and built throughout the region with federal dollars. The homes are being sold at cost. She stated the homes have been selling for approximately \$325,000.00 to \$350,000.00. She then stated going into the next legislative session she is hoping housing is addressed. She then briefly discussed many other programs they oversee. She stated they have been asked to partner and help with the Rural Health Transformation Program. She also stated they are getting more involved in legislative policy to try and get more rural development voice in policies. Commissioner Cull asked when the incubator building in Grafton will be up and running. She stated she hoped they would be moved over there by the end of the year. Commissioner Becker asked about what percent the Regional Council would be using of the incubator building. Dawn stated the building is approximately 10,000 square feet. She stated approximately 10 to 15 percent of the space will be set aside for the Regional Council. She stated there would be office space available for rent. She said the kitchen will have memberships, fees and classes. She stated she had been in Medora and met with the Department of Ag regarding funding for the kitchen portion of the building and was waiting to hear back on that. She discussed the incubator would be a great place for large meetings to be held as there isn't a place in the area that can really do that at this time. Commissioner Becker then asked about how Grand Forks County being involved in our regional council affects the region as a whole as they have so many things going on already. She stated that it does affect the region and will be addressing it in 2027. She stated half of the work force in Grand Forks comes from outside of the City of Grand Forks which shows the rural area is fundamental to their success. She stated Grand Forks launched a UAS incubator for tech innovation for the UAS industry and stated she would like to work together with these folks. She stated she feels it is the regional council's role to make that happen. Discussion followed on funding through the general fund and at this time the county is not able to fund anything through the general fund. Discussion followed on funding through the JDA's levy. Discussion on new growth and how that affects the levy. Pembina County had minimal new growth for 2026. Discussion on costs mandated by the state such as elections, Primary Residence Credit notices, etc. discussed. The state requires these by counties but doesn't give an avenue to cover costs other than through the general fund. Health care and premium increases also discussed. Dawn discussed how a lot of the sales tax income the larger cities such as Grand Forks and Fargo get comes from the rural community as they have to travel to shop for certain items and they are building their cities on that rural sales tax income. She feels there could be a new formula for distribution of that sales tax. Dawn encouraged the commission to get involved in the legislative discussions.

The commission reviewed all of the department and other levy fund preliminary budgets. Discussion on general fund departments versus departments who have their own levies such as extension and veteran service departments. General fund departments cannot carry over any extra they do not spend. It is all basically one fund. Commissioner Otto asked if the JDA budget was maxed out. Auditor Gapp stated it was

not. They are allowed 4 mills and they are at 3.48 mills with their proposed budget. Discussion followed on adding the Red River Regional Council request to the JDA budget. Auditor Gapp stated if they want to consider it, they need to add it now because they can't add it at the final budget approval, but they could take it out then if they add it now. Discussion followed on a .25 mill for the Regional Council. Motion by Darin Otto and seconded by Scot Becker to add a .25 mill to the JDA preliminary budget for the Red River Regional Council. Roll Call: Patrick Hardy, yes; Scot Becker, yes; Blaine Papenfuss, no; Darin Otto, yes; Andrew Cull, no. Motion carried.

States Attorney Fontaine addressed the commission regarding his budget. He had to increase his dues line for the States Attorney's Association because the dues were discussed at his conferences as being raised for next year. Those dues cover trainings and conferences. He did reduce his overall budget lines by \$10,000.00 from last year to cover his employee raises for next year. Overall, his total preliminary budget was less than last year's budget.

Auditor Gapp stated she will forward all of the individual department budgets to the commissioners so they have them all for review before the final budget hearing.

Auditor Gapp discussed how the departments that are not within the general fund levy get to carry forward any unused money from year to year. She stated using this new budget form, it shows how much they are carrying over for use the following year and gives a more transparent view of all departments. She stated taking the carryover into consideration has allowed the county to lower the mills in a couple of these departments for next year.

Motion made by Andrew Cull and seconded by Scot Becker to do their homework to prepare for the next budget meeting and adjourn. All voting in favor; motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 2:01 PM.