



Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

4F
Agenda Item #

Requested Meeting Date: September 10, 2019

Title of Item: 2020 Legislative Priorities

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY	Action Requested: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft)	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing* <i>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</i>
Submitted by: Jessica Seibert		Department: Administration
Presenter (Name and Title): Jessica Seibert, County Administrator		Estimated Time Needed: 10 minutes
Summary of Issue: Attached is a list of proposed 2020 legislative priorities based on feedback from the County Board and Department Heads. The Board will have an opportunity to review, discuss, and edit the priorities. This information will not only guide Aitkin County advocacy efforts during the upcoming legislative session, but will be provided to both the Association of MN Counties and MN Rural Counties to aid in their development of legislative platforms.		
Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:		
Recommended Action/Motion: After discussion, approve 2020 Aitkin County Legislative Priorities.		
Financial Impact: Is there a cost associated with this request? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$ Is this budgeted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>Please Explain:</i>		

2020 Aitkin County Legislative Priorities by Department

Administration

1. Aitkin County and the Association of MN Counties support the state of Minnesota providing financial compensation to all units of local government for court ordered refunds due to state determined values or state required assessment practices.
2. Aitkin County supports promoting legislation that preserves tax base in response to increased property tax appeals, utility tax refunds, and potential "dark store" assessing practices.

Assessor

1. Repeal of the Statute that requires field appraisers to have the AMA license. This is Minnesota Statute 270C.9901. This law should be repealed because small rural counties have no need for this level of licensure. It will likely exacerbate a shortage of rural appraisers that perform assessment functions. The County Board passed a resolution supporting this back in 2014.
2. Simplification of the property tax system. We should support legislation that would reduce the number of classifications of property in Minnesota. When assessors spend lots of time classifying property, they have less time available to value property. The complexity makes the system difficult for most people to understand. After the last legislative session, Minnesota has expanded the total number of classifications to 68 which is the most in the US by a wide margin.
3. Increased safety of field employees. Change State Law to grant assessors access to location data of more predatory offenders. Field staff are required to do physical inspections of all real estate in the county. Not knowing where dangerous criminal live puts staff in the field at risk.
4. Change the Disabled Veterans Market Value Exclusion to a state administered refund program. If this change would take place, the costs of the program would be spread over the whole State instead of shifting the tax burden on local governments.
5. Any new program mandated by the State should be funded by the State.

Attorney's Office

1. Additional sustainable (on-going) funding for County Attorneys for child protection.
2. Additional sustainable (on-going) funding for County Attorneys for the state judiciary's shift of a substantial amount of court administration duties to the County Attorneys' Offices.
3. Increased penalties for damage to pipelines.
4. Support of a statutory provision that Sentencing Guidelines apply to crimes prospectively only.

Community Corrections

Aitkin County supports the following MN Association of Community Corrections Act Counties (MACCAC) legislative policy positions:

1. Long term, Minnesota needs a clear vision for correctional services that addresses the role of prisons, community supervision and the state's role in funding. This is particularly important since counties provide local jail incarceration and the vast majority of community supervision, which are key alternatives to prisons. The legislature is chronically underfunding Minnesota community supervision. Action is required this session to preserve effective community supervision that protects Minnesota citizens. Minnesota Community Correction Act counties are in need of a supplemental budget appropriation of 4% for each year of the current biennium to address the state's share of their operating adjustment.
2. Community Corrections Act (CCA) Jurisdictions - Supporting the expansion of CCA counties with state funding and the removal of systemic/statutory requirements that act as barriers to counties in choosing the delivery system that best meets their individual needs.
3. Structural Change in Distribution of Funds - Future funding should be allocated using an equitable and transparent model that considers the need of each county.
4. Justice Reinvestment - bring the Justice Reinvestment Initiative of the Council of State Governments to the state of Minnesota.
5. Probation Lengths - discussion and evaluation of probation lengths is needed as part of a broader review of sentencing policy. Research indicates that longer probation terms do not reduce recidivism rates therefore they do not increase public safety.
6. Juvenile Life without Parole - support eliminating life without parole as a sentencing option for children.
7. Juvenile Justice Reform - Juvenile reform should continue and focus on: eliminating racial and ethnic disparities, reducing collateral consequences facing justice-involved youth; and modifying the current requirement for juvenile sex offenders to register as predatory offenders.
8. Restoration of Voting Rights - support the restoration of voting rights for individuals who are not incarcerated in a state institution.
9. Pre-trial Services - Increased emphasis on pre-trial services requires additional correctional resources. The Minnesota State Judiciary implemented statewide changes in pre-trial bail evaluation methods that places additional demands on probation officers and call for commensurate state funding.
10. Sex Offender Supervision - support legislation that takes a strong statewide approach to sex offender supervision by effectively monitoring overall behavior and activities of offenders using risk assessment and evidence-based practices that enhance public safety. Evidence shows residency restriction laws do nothing to address offender treatment or overall risk reduction, which are paramount to protecting public safety. State funding must be increased for local implementation of enhanced state standards for the supervision of sex offenders, particularly those offenders that transition to the community from the state Minnesota Sex Offender Program (MSOP).

Economic Development

1. Funding for the Border to Border Grant fund be set at \$1,000,000.00. For communities that are un-served by the State of MN definition, the current 50/50 match be lowered to a 30/70 match. This would allow more Border to Border Broadband grant funds to be utilized in areas that are most in need.
2. Increased funding for the State Grant In Aid (GIA) trails for ATV use. ATV riding is a fast growing family activity and current GIA funding is not keeping up for trail construction or maintenance.

Environmental Services

1. SWAA supports efforts to make improvements that would maximize the e-waste recycling program. Additionally, SWAA supports the use of manufacturer payments to fully reimburse county collection efforts.
2. MACPZA supports modifications to the SSTS licensing programs to ensure tests are consistent with course materials and Minnesota Rules 7080-7083.
3. MACPZA supports administering and allocating current NRBG funding for mandated state programs through the Minnesota Department of Revenue, similar to County Program Aid. Allocations for mandated state programs through the NRBG should not be considered grants.
4. MACPZA supports state funding to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for purposes of establishing ordinary high water and 100 year flood elevations on public waters.

Health & Human Services

1. Aitkin County supports state and federal investments in technology modernization at the Departments of Health and Human Services. These investments will improve the efficiency of county staff that enter information into the systems and enhance customer service. This includes the following:
 - A. Aitkin County supports the funding necessary for the Minnesota Eligibility Technology System (METS) to function properly and reliably, and alleviate excessive burdens on tax payers and improve services provided to customers.

Position on Public Health Care Eligibility System is that counties will advocate for a health care eligibility system that serves as a sustainable platform for performing health care functions and fully integrates with other health and human services technology systems. MACSSA recommends that the state take the following actions to determine whether METS can appropriately meet the needs of consumers and county staff:

 - The state should conduct a review of other platforms including other states' operations, systems, and business governance as an alternative to the Curam platform.
 - The state should develop a modernization roadmap with clearly defined goals and timelines. The future direction of the public healthcare eligibility technology system and how it will integrate with the modernization of other systems must be a part of that roadmap.
 - B. Aitkin County also supports strong and clear collaboration with counties as the MnCHOICES system moves from final development to implementation.

- C. Aitkin County supports legislation that would require field tests of any new technology system prior to statewide implementation.
 - D. Aitkin County supports increased resources for development of programs, partnerships, monitoring and data collection systems, and other initiatives to prevent and reduce violence.
2. Aitkin County supports simplifying and streamline all Health and Human Services Programs:
 - A. Minnesota’s health and human services programs are governed by statutes and rules that have institutionalized complexity. Concurrently, services are delivered on antiquated computer systems that foster “siloed” approaches to serving people. Technical challenges to programing Minnesota’s complex laws have impeded improvement. Additionally, “siloed” programs impede the state’s vision to provide holistic services and use data to improve services and outcomes. It is essential to comprehensively simplify program requirements and processes to facilitate person-centered, integrated and efficient services.
 3. Direct Care and Treatment Cost of Care and Policy Changes. Counties are required to pay for costs of care for individuals at Anoka Metro Regional Treatment Center (AMRTC) and Community Behavioral Health Hospitals (CBHHs) for days of service that the individual Does Not Meet Criteria (DNMC) for psychiatric care. There are many factors that result in DNMC days being accrued, and counties should not have to bear the cost of care in instances when they are not able to influence the timeline on discharge. Additionally, other policy and operational barriers exist that can also have impacts on the quality and timeliness of placement or discharge planning. The state must develop a review process for discharges process and subsequent financial responsibility for DNMC days. Additionally, the state should develop tools to work in partnership with counties to reduce DNMC days at direct care and treatment facilities.
 4. Substance Abuse Disorder (SUD) Reform: County assessor certification process for comprehensive assessments. Current law requires persons conducting comprehensive assessments to be licensed alcohol and drug counselors (LADC) by 2020. Many counties currently employ staff who are not LADCs to conduct chemical use assessments. Due to the significant shortage of LADCs, counties are very concerned about access to services if individuals are not able to have an assessment done by an LADC in a timely manner. MACSSA recommends providing for a certification process for county staff so that counties can continue to provide this service if they choose and promote timely access to treatment. Requiring an LADC for county staff will likely result in many counties no longer providing this service.
 5. MnCHOICES Assessments: Resource and Promote Improved Experiences For Individuals. The 2017 Legislature enacted a county cost share for the cost of administering MnCHOICES assessments for individuals needing Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). The intent was to improve program efficiency and improve the experience of individuals receiving assessments. However, the Legislature did not make significant changes to the program requirements and counties have been left under-resourced. To appropriately resource and improve the MnCHOICES assessment process the Legislature should 1) Sunset the county cost share by 2020 2) Reduce assessment processes by 50% by 2020 3) Removing Rule 185 and State Plan services of Personal Care Assistant (PCA)/Home Care Nursing from the process and 4) Develop a reassessment administrative option for lead agencies to validate ongoing eligibility for current HCBS recipients.
 6. Aitkin County supports restoration of federal funding to local public health for emergency preparedness and response.
 7. Aitkin County supports restoring and increasing flexible funding for essential local public health services through the local public health grant.
 8. Aitkin County supports increasing the tobacco tax and expanding it to tobacco related products, increase purchase age to 21 years old and continued state funding to counties in order to support prevention and health-related costs of tobacco use.

9. Aitkin County supports preventative public health programs such as, continued federal funding and adjunctive eligibility for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) grant and state funding for county maternal and child health services such as, family home visiting.
10. Aitkin County supports secure individual and family stability and prevent homelessness by assuring the reimbursement rates and state funding allow all counties to sustain and grow housing support services.

Highway Department

1. Local Road Improvement Program/Local Bridge Bonding Program - Aitkin County supports immediate funding of the Local Road Improvement Program and the Local Bridge Bonding Program to fund regionally significant local road and bridge projects throughout the state.
2. Increase in Highway Funding - Aitkin County supports long term, sustainable transportation funding increases distributed through the Highway User Tax Distribution Fund by increases in the state gas tax and license tab fees. Aitkin County also supports dedicating the existing sales tax revenue on motor vehicle parts to the Highway User Tax Distribution Fund.
3. Revise M.S. 163.06 Subd. 6, to allow all counties, regardless of the number of townships or market value, the ability, by resolution, to expend the funds provided in subdivision 4 in any unorganized territory or portion thereof in such county.

Human Resources

1. Require the State Bureau of Mediation Services to create a neutral informational flyer, posted on their website, that employers and union representatives can share with new hires outlining the 3 options that employees now have for union membership following the Janus v. AFSCME supreme court decision, including the full share, fair share, and (new) non-paying dues member option, all of which entitle the employee to the benefits contained under the collective bargaining agreement. These options need to be clearly and openly communicated to all employees. No employer should have to fear receiving or defend a costly Unfair Labor Practice charge for openly sharing the new non-paying dues member option with current employees and new hires.
2. Simplify the process and shorten the timeline (no longer than 6 months) for Minnesota Counties who are interested in exiting the Minnesota Merit System. Allow counties to exit at any time throughout the calendar year.
3. Employers are required to promote the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program annually and to every new hire. Remove this mandate. Allow information to be placed on the intranet.
4. Pay Equity – eliminate the need for pay equity reporting for all employers that have a uniform wage scale and no employees placed either below the MIN or above the MAX.
5. Require the State to go through all of the mandates that require county staff training, and have the State develop a condensed online video training library –partnering with OSHA and the federal government as necessary– so the counties can access a free training library 24/7/365. The trainings can be shown to existing staff and to new hires during orientation, and would ensure all MN counties had access to the same training info, law changes, legislative updates, etc. -- and would provide efficiencies and reduce local

costs because all staff could take the training in a staff meeting or at their desk (instead of traveling long distances across the State to obtain the required trainings).

6. Develop a system to allow county HR staff, with training, electronic access to the BCA system for running immediate/onsite criminal background checks to expedite recruitments. Currently, we are required to mail requests and it can take a week or more to receive the results.
7. Clearly state in the law that County Boards (and city/township/school) are allowed to discuss non-union wages and benefits in closed session too, in addition to union negotiations strategy.
8. Public Employee Insurance Program (PEIP) groups (Aitkin County offers PEIP) are exempt from the health insurance bidding law which requires employers to bid every 60 months. PEIP also offers dental insurance and life insurance. Recommend the State offer a short-term disability, long-term disability, and vision plan, also exempt from the bidding law and that pools MN public-sector employees benefits together to obtain the best purchasing power.
9. State Unemployment – Update eligibility criteria to ensure employees who voluntarily resign or retire are not later deemed eligible for unemployment benefits charged to the employer, if they have not held subsequent employment. Example: Employee voluntarily resigned, was brought back temporarily to train in new hire, then filed for unemployment and was approved. Update eligibility to include an end date for eligibility when hours are reduced so the claim does not continue to accrue for multiple years on end (LLCC). Update eligibility to ensure employees who resign instead of going through an investigation, following alleged crimes being committed against the employer (i.e. theft), should not be eligible to receive unemployment. Update eligibility criteria so that limited term jobs, seasonal/summer temps jobs, and election clerks do not trigger unemployment eligibility.
10. Oppose any new state-mandated time off benefits such as the Paid Family and Medical Leave benefit program, funded by employees and employers. Public employers currently provide generous leave accrual banks. Allow public employers and unions to negotiate paid time off benefits without a state mandate.

Land Department

1. The burden of blighted properties within City limits is falling onto County governments. Counties have little influence on how a City may or may not enforce blight issues prior to a property forfeiting. Final property cleanup is often deferred to Counties after years leading to forfeiture. Failure to act in a timely manner is exacerbating the blight issues. Cities should retain the administration of tax forfeited properties after forfeiture.
2. Secure funding needs to be in place to deal with derelict tax forfeited properties.
3. There should be an increase to the maximum \$12,000 lease amount to accommodate cell tower lease agreements. Counties are not able to enter cell tower agreements. Language should include the lease value and lease term to be determined by the county board as well as reverter language for non-use. (282.04 TIMBER SALES; LAND USE, LEASE, PARTITION, EASEMENT. Subdv 1(d))
4. Environmental education is extremely important to our region. Efforts to support curriculum and RELC's (i.e. Long Lake CC) is vital to acquiring/protecting lands for our future.

5. Legislation to support use of Outdoor Heritage (Legacy) funds to support updating forest inventory on County/State lands – how can we protect/enhance habitat if we have irregular data on what we currently have?
6. Support state funding for beaver control.

Recorder's Office

Sheriff's Office

1. Pursue legislation that would prohibit firearms in county buildings where court services occur.
2. Pursue legislation that requires applicants for a permit to purchase or permit to carry a firearm to submit a qualified urine test. Recent legislation allows denial of a permit for use of Naloxone.

Treasurer's Office

1. Under Return of state fees - Suggest adding Marriage License fees to be retained by the county as the state receives most of the revenue but all the work is done in my office.
2. Have Mobile Homes returned to tabs issued by the DVM rather than being taxed thru the property tax system or raising the value threshold for them to be taxed thru the property tax system.