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AITKIN COUNTY BOARD

April 28, 2020

The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners met this 28th day of April, 2020 at 9:03 a.m. at the Aitkin County Government Center with the following members present: Commissioner J. Mark Wedel, Laurie Westerlund, Donald Niemi, County Administrator Jessica Seibert, and Administrative Assistant Angie Sahr. Attending via Webex: Board Chair William Pratt and Commissioner Anne Marcotte.

CALL TO ORDER

Motion made by Commissioner Westerlund, seconded by Commissioner Niemi and carried, all members present voting yes to approve the April 28, 2020 agenda.

APPROVED AGENDA

**AITKIN COUNTY HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
April 28, 2020**

**HEALTH &
HUMAN
SERVICES
BOARD**

Attendance

The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners met this 28th day of April, 2020, at 9:05 a.m. as the Aitkin County Health & Human Services Board, with the following members present: Commissioners J. Mark Wedel, Don Niemi, and Laurie Westerlund. Commissioners Bill Pratt and Anne Marcotte attended remotely via video and phone. Others present included: H&HS Director Cynthia Bennett, County Administrator Jessica Seibert, Assistant to the County Administrator Angie Sahr, H&HS Accounting Supervisor Carli Goble, Public Health Supervisor Erin Melz, who attended via video conference, and Jennifer Eisenbart, Aitkin Independent Age, who attended via phone.

Agenda

Motion by Commissioner Marcotte, seconded by Commissioner Wedel and carried, all members present voting yes to approve the April 28, 2020 Health & Human Services Board agenda.

Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Marcotte, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members present voting yes to approve the March 24, 2020 Health and Human Services Board minutes.

Bills

Motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Niemi and carried, all members present voting yes to approve the bills.

Health & Human Services Director Report, Cynthia Bennett, ACH&HS Director

Directors Update

Cynthia began by stating the response within HHS to COVID-19 has been very intense.

She sited some things that have happened since the response began-

- There have been 50 waivers approved by DHS to adjust program regulations to better serve the consumers.

- There have been expansions to the use of telephones, telehealth, distance contacts to comply with social distancing and our communities have adapted well to church on the radio, not shaking hands, and following directional arrows in grocery stores.
- We have used out-of-the-box thinking to find adaptations to make things work.
- COVID-19 has still not reached its peak.
- We continue to make adjustments and adapt to be able to provide the services our community's needs.

The legislative docket, which is scheduled to conclude on May 18th, includes the continued request for counties to provide support in a variety of areas, such as –

- PPE for essential employees.
- Availability and support for telepresence and expanding on that.
- Homeless services.
- Flexible funds for covering response efforts.
- Mental health support.
- Emergency assistance for families.
- Parent support.
- Childcare assistance.
- Housing modifications
- Policy modifications to support the Federal Families First Prevention Act.
- SUDS reform.
- Looking at billing issues with DHS and how we are going to correct the errors that DHS made.

Commissioner Niemi inquired about the COVID-19 peak and the models being utilized for predictions.

Cynthia responded that both MDH and the Governor's models suggest a June or July peak to the disease.

Erin Melz added that the expansion of testing could change the projections.

Cynthia ended by applauding the HHS staff for going above and beyond to continue to provide services for our communities, the Departments within the county for their support and work during this event and lastly noted how amazing it is to see all of the support for each other within our communities.

COVID-19 Update, Erin Melz, Public Health Supervisor

Erin continued by first echoing her appreciation for all of the Aitkin County employees who have gone above and beyond for the county and their communities.

She went on by giving a brief situational update on COVID-19.

There are 3,816 positive cases of COVID-19 in the state and that she expects that number to rise due to the expanded testing.

There have been 286 deaths due to COVID-19, of which, most have been in long term care facilities.

9 Counties have yet to report their first case of COVID-19

She updated the Board that the DOC is now meeting only twice a week as opposed to meeting three times a week previously due to them having done a lot of preparations and gotten a lot of things in place the previous weeks.

She went on to state that they have begun the discussion and planning process in the event it is decided to reopen the county offices to the public.

The Commissioners added their thank you to all of the employees of the county for their response to COVID-19.

Commissioner Pratt asked Erin about how the determination is made where someone lives regarding someone who tests positive for COVID-19.

Erin responded that it is determined by the person's county of residence, not necessarily where the person was tested or where they were currently located, at the time the test was given.

Financial Reports, Carli Goble, H&HS Accounting Supervisor

Carli presented the board with her financial reports slideshow, of which a copy was provided to the Board members prior to today's meeting.

Commissioner Marcotte asked about the out-of-home placements costs and if we know why the drop in these costs has been dropping so significantly since 2010.

Cynthia said that she would follow up on this and get the information for the Board members sent out this week. Commissioner Marcotte asked if under the Adult Regional Treatment Center Costs showing the yearly totals, if the number of clients, total, that were paid for during the years could be added.

Carli responded that she would add that for next time.

Commissioner Pratt asked if Carli could give an example of what kind of flexibility programs are offering.

Carli gave an example that with the SHIP grant the monies can now pay for activities not previously allowed. Hannah Colby can make informational signs encouraging social distancing whereas previously that would not have been covered with those grant dollars.

Committee Reports

Joint Powers Board Update

Commissioner Westerlund reported that they had their Community Health Board meeting and talked primarily about COVID-19, spending, and that they were awarded \$144,626 from a grant.

H&HS Advisory Board

Commissioner Wedel remarked that they did not meet but that they have been working on reviewing their by-laws to bring it up to date with the current make-up of the group.

AEOA Update

Commissioner Westerlund stated AEOA met via video conference and inducted a new board member, had financial training, went over tax statements, and the new executive director talked about what they were doing during the COVID-19 outbreak.

CARE Board

Commissioner Westerlund stated the CARE Board met and had a short meeting. They talked about applying for some of the SBA protection grants and loans and had not heard anything back on them yet.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

Next Meeting – May 26, 2020

Break: 9:45 a.m. to 9:55 a.m.

Christine Pierce, Owner of Bann’s Bar and Grille in McGregor voiced her concerns in regards to Commercial Properties Tax Payments during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Motion by Commissioner Marcotte, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, Commissioners Marcotte, Westerlund, Niemi voting yes and Commissioners Wedel and Pratt voting no to amend the Consent Agenda. Item 2L was removed and placed under 5C for more discussion.

Motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members present voting yes to approve the amended Consent Agenda as follows. A) Correspondence File April 15, 2020 to April 27, 2020; B) Approve April 14, 2020 Board Minutes; C) Approve Electronic Funds Transfers: \$692,277.83; D) Approve Auditor Vouchers – Diesel Tax: Road & Bridge \$374.49; E) Approve Auditor Vouchers – Sales Tax: General Fund: \$365.25, Road & Bridge: \$15.57, Long Lake Conservation Center: \$102.79, Parks: \$53.39 for a total of \$537.00; F) Approved Commissioner Vouchers: General Fund \$143,510.56, Road & Bridge \$24,601.72, Health & Human Services \$7,598.06, State \$5,990.00, Trust \$36,248.70, Forest Development \$5,646.45, Capital Project \$626.90, Long Lake Conservation Center \$4,267.77, Parks \$2,350.14 for a total of \$230,840.30; G) Approve Manual Warrants/Voids/Corrections – Elan: General Fund \$6,564.25, Road & Bridge \$35.98, Health & Human Services \$1,700.17, Forest Development \$9.95, Long Lake Conservation Center \$278.94 for a total of \$8589.29; H) Approve Risk Assessment and Internal Control Policies; I) Approve Township Approval of 3.2% License Application; J) Approve 3.2% Malt Liquor Licenses; K) Approve On Sale Combination Wine Strong Beer

BREAK

**CITIZEN’S
PUBLIC
COMMENT**

**CONSENT
AGENDA**

License; M) Approve Timber Permits Extensions; N) Adopt Resolution: Search & Rescue Donation – City of Tamarack; O) Adopt Resolution: Search & Rescue Donation – Williams Township; P) Adopt Resolution: Search & Rescue Donation – Seavey Township.

Under the consent agenda, motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members present voted to approve – Risk Assessment and Internal Control Policies;

Risk Assessment and Internal Control Policies

Under the consent agenda, motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members present voted to approve – Township Approval of 3.2% License Application;

Township Approval of 3.2% License Application

Under the consent agenda, motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members present voted to approve – 3.2% Malt Liquor Licenses;

3.2% Malt Liquor Licenses

Under the consent agenda, motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members present voted to approve – On Sale Combination Wine Strong Beer License;

On Sale Combination Wine Strong Beer License

Under the consent agenda, motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members present voted to approve – Timber Permits Extensions;

Timber Permits Extensions

Under the consent agenda, motion for a resolution by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members present voted yes to adopt resolution – Search & Rescue Donation – City of Tamarack;

Resolution #20200428-049 Search & Rescue Donation – City of Tamarack

WHEREAS, Aitkin County is generally authorized to accept donations of real and personal property with a 2/3 majority vote pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 465.03 for the benefit of its citizens.

WHEREAS, the following persons and entities have offered to contribute the cash amounts set forth below to the county:

City of Tamarack	\$100.00
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WHEREAS, the terms or conditions of the donations, if any, are as follows:

City of Tamarack	Aitkin County Search & Rescue
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WHEREAS, all such donations have been contributed to the county for the benefit of its citizens, as allowed by law.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Aitkin County Board of Commissioners finds that it is appropriate to accept the donations offered.

<p>At 10:00 a.m. Rich Courtemanche, Land Commissioner held a Public Hearing for Classification of Tax-Forfeited Land. No Public comment was given;</p> <p>Motion by Commissioner Marcotte, seconded by Commissioner Niemi and carried, all members voted to adopt resolution – Public Hearing for Land Classification;</p> <p>WHEREAS, a public meeting was held on April 28, 2020 at 10:00 am at the regular county board meeting and that prior to meeting for the purpose of classifying or reclassifying tax-forfeited lands, the county board gave notice of its intent to meet for that purpose in postings, on the web site, and in the local newspaper, in addition to sending letters to any township, city, and school district in which the properties were located, and</p> <p>WHEREAS, at the meeting, no objections were raised on any of the attached parcels.</p> <p>THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Aitkin County tax forfeited parcels be classified as per below.</p> <p>Rich Courtemanche, Land Commissioner discussed Tax Forfeited Land – Property Trade;</p> <p>Mike Dangers, County Assessor reviewed the 2020 Assessment Summary with the Board;</p> <p>Motion by Commissioner Westerlund, seconded by Commissioner Marcotte and carried, all members present voting yes to schedule a public hearing to grant and “Off Sale” Liquor License to Westerlund Inc., d/b/a Westerlund Cenex, on May 26, 2020 at 10:30 a.m. at the Aitkin County Government Center. Commissioner Laurie Westerlund abstained;</p> <p>Motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Niemi and carried, all members voted to adopt resolution – Property Tax Penalty Abatement;</p> <p>WHEREAS, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz has issued a series of Emergency Executive orders which include, among many others, a “Stay at Home” order which temporarily requires non-critical workers to stay safe at home, and several orders that require the temporary closure of certain non-critical businesses, all of which are aggressive, but necessary, community mitigation strategies to slow the transmission of COVID-19, reduce illness and deaths, and limit the economic impacts of the outbreak; and</p> <p>WHEREAS, these necessary measures put in place to mitigate the COVID-19 health emergency have resulted in a significant loss of income to many individuals, businesses, and property owners in the County and across the state and nation; and,</p> <p>WHEREAS, all levels of government are looking for ways to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 health emergency on the economy in general and on individuals, businesses,</p>	<p>Public Hearing for Classification of Tax-Forfeited Land</p> <p>Resolution #20200428-052 Public Hearing for Land Classification</p> <p>Tax Forfeited Land – Property Trade</p> <p>2020 Assessment Summary</p> <p>Schedule Public Hearing - 2020 Off Sale Liquor License – Westerlund Cenex</p> <p>Resolution #20200428-053 Property Tax Penalty Abatement</p>
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and property owners; and

WHEREAS, at the county government level, temporary abatement of the penalty for late property tax payments by extending the date when penalty begins to accrue to July 1, 2020 for the May 15th due date would be helpful to property owners. The first one-half of property taxes in Minnesota are due on May 15, 2020. Paying property taxes by this date may be difficult for many property owners that have been affected by COVID-19;

WHEREAS, not all individual and business property owners are experiencing financial hardship in the County due to COVID-19, and those who can, should pay their property taxes in a timely manner. Escrowed property, railroad and Utility taxpayers are exempt from this abatement; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Minn. Stat. Section 279.01, Subd. 2 (a), the county board may, with the concurrence of the county treasurer, delegate to the county treasurer the power to abate the penalty provided for late payment of taxes in the current year if any county board so elects, the county treasurer may abate the penalty on finding that the imposition of the penalty would be "unjust and unreasonable".

WHEREAS, the County Board finds that the imposition of penalties for late payments of property taxes owed by property owners due by May 15, 2020 would be "unjust and unreasonable" due to the significant economic hardships experienced by these property owners during the COVID-19 public health emergency; and,

WHEREAS, The County Treasurer within Aitkin County has concurred with the proposal to temporarily abate the penalty for late property tax payments on all properties other than those mentioned as exempt within the County due to the public health emergency that would otherwise be owed by May 15, 2020, until July 1 2020. Property owners who are financially able to make their first half property tax payments by the May 15, 2020 deadline are strongly encouraged to do so to help insure the County and other local governments will have access to the financial resources they need to serve the public during this public health emergency.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,

- 1) The County Board temporarily abates any penalties for late payments made for first half property tax payments due by May 15, 2020 but paid by June 30, 2020. The date that penalty will begin to accrue on first half property taxes is July 1, 2020, except for property owners with escrowed property, railroad and utility property.
- 2) The County Treasurer, pursuant to Minn. Stat. Section 279.01, Subd. 2 (a) shall abate until July 1, 2020, the penalties provided for late payment of taxes due May 15, 2020. Property owners will not be required to submit an application of any kind to the County in order to take advantage of this postponement of penalties. Property owners that have already made first half tax payments prior to the May 15, 2020 deadline will not qualify for a refund in order to allow the taxes owed to be paid later on.
- 3) Property taxes paid by escrow, taxed as railroad or utility are not included in this resolution.

AITKIN COUNTY BOARD

April 28, 2020

Motion by Commissioner Marcotte, seconded by Commissioner Niemi and carried, all members voted to approve Fair Ground Building Repairs;

Fair Ground Building Repairs

Motion by Commissioner Westerlund, seconded by Commissioner Wedel and carried, all members voted to approve Equipment Purchase – Motor Grader;

Equipment Purchase – Motor Grader

John Welle, County Commissioner discussed the US Hwy 169 – CR 54 – CR 56 Intersection. The board was in support with moving forward on this project;

US Hwy 169 – CR 54 – CR 56 Intersection

Board Chair recognized Public Service Employees for Public Service Recognition Week May 3rd – May 9th;

Public Service Recognition Week

Jessica Seibert, County Administrator

County Administrator Updates

- Administrative Updates
- 1st Quarter 2020 Budget Review
- Curbside Service of Library Materials in Aitkin County

Motion by Commissioner Westerlund, seconded by Commissioner Marcotte and carried, all members voted to approve Interim Policy: COVID-19 Program for Employees;

Interim Policy: COVID-19 Program for Employees

The Board discussed: Facilities Committee, Budget Committee, Toward Zero Deaths, Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS), Historical Society, Aitkin Airport Commission, East Central Regional Library Board, HRA, AMC, Mississippi Headwaters Board, Personnel Committee, Economic Development, Snake River Watershed;

Board Discussion

Motion by Commissioner Wedel seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members voting yes to adjourn the meeting at 12:22 p.m. until Tuesday, May 12th, 2020 at the Aitkin County Government Center.

ADJOURN

William Pratt, Board Chair
Aitkin County Board of Commissioners

Jessica Seibert
County Administrator