



# Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

**8A**  
Agenda Item #

**Requested Meeting Date:** November 9, 2021

**Title of Item:** Adopt 2022 Legislative Priorities

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY	<b>Action Requested:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft) <i>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing*
<b>Submitted by:</b> Jessica Seibert		<b>Department:</b> Administration
<b>Presenter (Name and Title):</b> Jessica Seibert, County Administrator		<b>Estimated Time Needed:</b> 10 min.
<b>Summary of Issue:</b>  Attached are the revised 2022 Aitkin County Legislative Priorities. Changes have been made based on feedback from Commissioners and staff.		
<b>Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:</b>  		
<b>Recommended Action/Motion:</b> Adopt 2022 Legislative Priorities.		
<b>Financial Impact:</b> Is there a cost associated with this request? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" 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>		

# 2022 Aitkin County Legislative Priorities

## Administration

1. 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.
2. Aitkin County supports strengthening Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) funding programs to address regional inequalities and guarantee full property tax loss replacement.
3. Aitkin County support legislation that allows joint powers boards the opportunity to meet virtually without limits on the number of meetings held virtually per year or requirements that participants disclose their individual meeting location address.

## Assessor

1. 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 recent legislative changes, Minnesota now has a total of 68 classifications which is the most of any State in the US.
2. 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.
3. Raise the minimum value threshold for the taxation of personal property to \$10,000 for all personal property units including mobile homes, travel trailers, and park model trailers. Currently this only applies to travel trailers on campgrounds or resorts. Lower value units generate such a low tax amount that government loses money by taxing them.
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 public property and critical infrastructure.

## 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. 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.

## Economic Development

1. 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.
2. Aitkin County supports Broadband development in rural areas, under-served and un-served areas. Continue to make Broadband improvement a state priority.
3. Aitkin County supports programs that develop workforce training, vocational training and specialized trade training for all residents.
4. Aitkin County supports legislation that continues to provide assistance to small businesses recovering from the pandemic.

## Environmental Services

1. Aitkin County and MACPZA support increased Natural Resources Block Grant (NRBG) funding and continued flexibility for the use of the funding. Aitkin County and MACPZA also support 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.
2. Aitkin County and MACPZA support modifications to the SSTS licensing programs to ensure tests are consistent with course materials and Minnesota Rules 7080-7083.
3. Aitkin County and MACPZA support state (DNR) assistance with implementation of regional executive boards to address aquatic invasive species challenges and meet minimum standards developed by MAIRSC, MNDNR, MACPZA, and MLR.
4. Aitkin County and SWAA support allocating 100 percent of the revenue generated by the Solid Waste Management Tax (SWMT) to state and county waste management activities, including increased funding for SCORE (Governor's Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment) grants to counties.
5. Aitkin County and SWAA support 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 and recycling costs. Furthermore, SWAA supports reducing end-of-life costs to consumers through increased manufacturer responsibility.
6. Aitkin County and SWAA support requiring the MPCA to issue, and/or reissue all demolition land disposal facility permits, in a timely manner, in accordance with the MPCA's 2005 Guidance Document (as listed on the MPCA website) until such guidance are otherwise modified by new Rule or Statute.
7. Aitkin County supports legislation prohibiting new captive cervid farms in the state and further calls upon state agencies to immediately prohibit the transport of farmed cervids within the state and halt the registration of any new captive cervid farms until such time that the legislature enacts such legislation.
8. Aitkin County and SWAA support bonding requests for proposed solid waste management projects as a partial match to the funds that counties invest in infrastructure for safe, environmentally sound management of solid wastes mandated by the state.
9. Aitkin County and SWAA support the use of manufacturer payments to fully reimburse county collection and recycling costs.
10. Aitkin County and SWAA support State encouragement and funding to prevent food waste and divert food scraps and other organics from the MSW stream, and resolve permitting and other issues to facilitate expansion of composting and other organic management facilities and methods.
11. Aitkin County and SWAA support standards/labeling requirements for compostable products to reduce processing impacts and costs of contamination at composting facilities.

## Health & Human Services

1. Aitkin County supports modernization investments that align with the Modernization Strategic plan and take the fresh approach that has been laid out in the Gartner recommendations. Implementation of the Modernization Strategic plan will ensure development of an interoperable system, will improve efficiency, effectiveness, and reduce the costs of the delivery of services, enhance customer service, and expand county decision-making authority. This includes resource support to counties for developing community services that support modernization, an integrative application process, and application of agile practices or “LEAN” processes to identify and correct system problems early on.
2. Aitkin County supports Direct Care and Treatment Cost of Care Policy Changes. This includes development of a review process for discharges and subsequent financial responsibility for Does Not Meet Criteria (DNMC) days. Additionally, tools need to be developed to work in partnership with counties to reduce DNMC days at direct care and treatment facilities.
3. Aitkin County supports changes to the Consolidated Chemical Dependency Treatment Fund (CCDTF) under the Under Substance Use Disorder(SUD) Reform: As a result of SUD Reform and Direct Access, counties have been taken out of the treatment decision-making role, yet currently under statute remain financially responsible for eligible clients. Counties should no longer be financially responsible for a county share in costs that are paid through the Behavioral Health Fund.
4. Aitkin County supports a state implementation of Family First Prevention Service Act (FFPSA) that meets the core tenants of the federal statute and ensures equitable access to services state-wide, assuring financial sustainability to counties and avoiding unfunded mandates and cost shifts to counties.

## 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.

## Human Resources

1. Change the frequency of reporting for pay equity from every three years to every five years.
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. 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.

4. 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. Support changes to MS 282 (Tax Forfeited Land Laws): As directed by the county board, the county auditor may lease tax-forfeited land under the terms and conditions prescribed by the county board for the purposes of investigating, analyzing, and developing conservation easements that provide ecosystem services. And The county auditor, under the terms and conditions prescribed by the county board, including reversion in the event of nonuse, may convey conservation easements as defined in section 84C.01 on tax-forfeited land.
2. Continue forest road grants to counties to maintain county-administered forest roads to counties that have appointed land commissioners.
3. 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.
4. Secure funding needs to be in place to deal with derelict tax forfeited properties.
5. 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))
6. 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.
7. 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?
8. Support state funding to local government units for beaver control.

## Sheriff's Office

1. Pursue legislation that would prohibit firearms in county buildings where court services occur.
2. Pursue legislation that would continue medical assistance payments for incarcerated individuals allowing for more mental health and chemical addiction treatment options which may result in stabilization after release and reduced recidivism. (Federal program)

## 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 Treasurer's 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.