



Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

2P
Agenda Item #

Requested Meeting Date: September 27, 2022

Title of Item: Approve 2023 Legislative Priorities

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| <input type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA | Action Requested: | <input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion | <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item |
| <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY | <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft) | <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: |
| Summary of Issue: Additions/corrections have been made to the 2023 Legislative Priorities based on Commissioner feedback. | | |
| Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments: | | |
| Recommended Action/Motion: Approve 2023 Legislative Priorities. | | |
| Financial Impact: <i>Is there a cost associated with this request?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <i>What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$</i> <i>Is this budgeted?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>Please Explain:</i> | | |

2023 Aitkin County Legislative Priorities

Administration

1. Aitkin County supports the Northern Counties Land Use Board proposal addressing Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) funding programs focusing on regional inequalities and guaranteeing full property tax loss replacement.
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.
3. Aitkin County supports 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.
4. Aitkin County supports legislation eliminating personal income tax on Social Security payments.

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 criminals live puts staff in the field at risk.
3. 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.
4. 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. Minnesota's community supervision system is at a breaking point requiring a new funding formula and significant appropriation from the legislature to ensure public safety. Aitkin County urges the legislature to address this issue and enact a new, equitable, transparent funding formula in 2023 and increase statewide appropriations to adequately support community supervision. Although Community Corrections does have a number of other policy positions, the funding issue is the main focus in 2023, as it is necessary in order to continue to provide quality supervision services that strictly adhere to the evidence-based practices known to reduce recidivism.

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. Emphasize Broadband development in rural areas, under-served and un-served areas. Continue to make Broadband improvement a state priority by increasing funding to Border to Border and ReConnect grant programs and lowering or eliminating Internet Service Provider's match requirements.
3. Continue current programs that develop workforce training, vocational training and specialized trade training for all age demographic by offering or increasing funding to high school vocational training laboratories.
4. Increase availability of funds for new childcare providers by offering incentives that assist in at-home remodel and licensing fees and increase support for existing providers by offering programs that fund equipment upgrades.
5. Increased programming to develop entrepreneurial business expansion in rural areas.

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 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.
5. 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.
6. 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, as well as supporting the establishment of a bi-partisan, bi-cameral commission to address solid waste related issues.
7. 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.
8. Aitkin County and SWAA support standards/labeling requirements for compostable products to reduce processing impacts and costs of contamination at composting facilities and support the use of manufacturer payments to fully reimburse county collection and recycling costs.

Health & Human Services

NOTE: Priorities are still in development for MACSSA, MASSA, and LPHA. 2022 priorities are listed below.

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 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. Support state funding to local units of government 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 DMV rather than being taxed thru the property tax system or raising the value threshold for them to be taxed thru the property tax system.