



# Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

**8A**  
Agenda Item #

**Requested Meeting Date:** November 28, 2023

**Title of Item:** Approve 2024 Legislative Priorities

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA	<b>Action Requested:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested
<input 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>

<b>Submitted by:</b> Jessica Seibert	<b>Department:</b> Administration
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<b>Presenter (Name and Title):</b> Jessica Seibert, County Administrator	<b>Estimated Time Needed:</b> 30 Min.
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**Summary of Issue:**

Attached are the 2024 Aitkin County Legislative Priorities incorporating feedback provided by department heads and Commissioners.

State legislators and AMC staff have been invited to attend for discussion. Several department heads will provide background information on various priorities.

**Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:**

**Recommended Action/Motion:**  
Approve 2024 Aitkin County Legislative Priorities.

**Financial Impact:**

Is there a cost associated with this request?  Yes  No

What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$

Is this budgeted?  Yes  No *Please Explain:*

# 2024 Aitkin County Legislative Priorities

DRAFT

## 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.

## 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 Attorney's Offices in greater Minnesota to help increase County Attorney's Office staff wages and salaries so that they can be competitive with the new State Public Defender's wages and salaries.
2. Additional sustainable (on-going) funding for County Attorney's Offices for child protection.
3. Additional sustainable (on-going) funding for County Attorney's Offices for the state judiciary's shift of a substantial amount of court administration duties to the County Attorney's Offices.
4. Increased penalties for damage to public property and critical infrastructure.

## Community Corrections

1. Funded data collection and research- State funding and support for improved data infrastructure necessary to provide information on outcomes of supervision. The creation of consistent statewide standards for data collection through the current database, CSTS, in order to ensure consistent data standards and regular collection and analysis of data.
2. Recruitment and Retention of Community Supervision Staff - efforts both locally and at a statewide level to increase effective recruitment and retention of community supervision staff.
3. Mental Health Supports - An increase in mental health services throughout the state, and particularly in rural Minnesota. An expansion in placement and program options is necessary to ensure that individuals are not incarcerated due to lack of mental health services.
4. Juvenile Detention Standards- making sure that changes to juvenile detention policies include collaboration and input from stakeholders including probation and the counties that run juvenile detention facilities.
5. Juvenile Stays of Adjudication - the option of longer periods of stayed adjudication for juvenile offenders in order to allow greater assessment and treatment of juveniles before an adjudication decision is made.
6. Juvenile Delinquency Age - while noting changes to juvenile delinquency age limits may be appropriate, we strongly encourage any enacted legislation should include consideration of exceptions related to serious offenses.

## Economic Development

1. 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. Execute the BEAD program funding to the rural counties with the most need.
2. 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 and staffing support. Assign the current funding appropriately in order to reach the providers, not just the families.
3. Prioritize funding allocated for housing developments that solve the market rate and workforce housing shortages in rural counties.
4. Support the promotion of outdoor recreation in the rural counties.
5. 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.
6. Increase programming to develop entrepreneurial business expansion in rural counties.

## Environmental Services

1. Aitkin County and MACPZA support local government authority to regulate the time, place and manner of all cannabis businesses, Minnesota Session Law 2023 Chapter 60, within its jurisdiction.
2. Aitkin County and MACPZA support addressing solar and wind system end of life handling, including full decommissioning, to ensure the financial burden does not fall onto local governments and local taxpayers who may or may not have benefitted from the solar energy generated.
3. Aitkin County and MACPZA supports 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 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 in response to state mandates and goals.
6. Aitkin County and SWAA support Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) to include improved product stewardship among manufacturers, retailers, and consumers and which creates producer-led material and toxicity reductions, reuse, repair, and recycling programs. These programs must include transparency and accountability measures, maximize use of existing infrastructure, and provide local governments with a voluntary role in development and implementation.

## Health & Human Services

1. Support legislation for System Modernization which would include the main computer systems for HHS staff. (Maxis, METS, Prism, SSIS) Legislation should include funds to cover county costs associated with DHS investments. Support legislation of an innovation fund for counties to co-develop collaborative solutions.
2. Support legislation for high acuity mental health hospital bed capacity for adults and children that will support planning for solutions.
3. Support legislation to allow MnCHOICES reassessments to be conducted as administrative reviews to reduce the amount of assessments and staff needed for this service. This will focus resources on new assessment needs and will improve access for clients.
4. Support legislation to change the child protection response of educational neglect to a child welfare response to increase access to supports for families.

## 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.

## 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, in addition to union negotiations strategy.
4. Aitkin County supports legislation that would allow data to be shared between county departments giving appraisers and other field staff advance notice of potentially dangerous properties when working in the field.

## Land Department

1. Support Outdoor School for All Minnesota legislation. This is a grant that would fund a three-day, two-night immersive nature experience for every fourth through eighth grade student. This would include all programming fees, transportation and ancillary costs such as teacher stipends, thus making these trips entirely free to students and schools.
2. Support a legislative solution to Minnesota's tax forfeiture law that does not negatively affect the county's management responsibilities and apportionment. Many agencies are working on this as a result of the Tyler vs. Hennepin County legal case.
3. Aitkin County supports dedicated state funding to local government units for beaver control and opposes any legislation that would restrict type of trap used, trap size, and trap placement.

## Recorder's Office

1. Aitkin County supports electronic submissions of well certificates through the Department of Health.
2. Aitkin opposes the addition of surcharges to the recording fee for non-recording activities and purposes.
3. Aitkin County supports statewide eRecording.

## Sheriff's Office

1. 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.