



BOARD WORKSHOP MINUTES

BOARD OF WRIGHT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

JANUARY 10, 2023

DATE APPROVED: JANUARY 17, 2023

Tina Diedrick	District 1
Darek Vetsch	District 2
Jeanne Holland	District 3
Nadine Schoen	District 4
Michael Kaczmarek	District 5

Members Present: Tina Diedrick, Darek Vetsch, Jeanne Holland, Nadine Schoen, Michael Kaczmarek
Others Present: Lee Kelly, Clay Wilfahrt, Greg Kryzer, Tony Kothlow, Skipp Machmer, Elizabeth Karels, Larkin Walters, Emily Schneider, Matthew Treichler, Nathaniel Helgeson, Jill Pooler, Alan Wilczek, Lindsey Meyer, Clay Wilfahrt, Marc Mattice, Barry Rhineberger, Jami Goodrum, Sean Deringer, Chad Hausmann, Don Baron, Heather Lemieux, Ryan Kotila

(Remote) Mike MacMillan, Bob Hiivala, Steve Jobe, Schawn Johnson, John Holler, Tanya West, Lori Pawelk, and Tony Rasmussen

Commissioner Darek Vetsch opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

1. Schedule Meetings as Needed

i. Retreat Date in February

Vetsch said the retreat would allow the board members to understand each other's perspectives and goals. County Administrator Lee Kelly said based on schedules the date that could work is 9 a.m. to noon Wednesday, February 8. Vetsch said the board would finalize that date at the next board meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: To schedule a retreat for 9 a.m. to noon Wednesday, February 8.

ii. Broadband Committee Meeting

Commissioner Tina Diedrick and Vetsch discussed the next Broadband Committee meeting date with Project Administrator Elizabeth Karels. Karels said that the Border-to-Border Grant second round is open and is closing Thursday, March 2. She advised to hold the meeting soon to ensure the county knew which projects it would be supporting. Vetsch recommended 9 a.m. Wednesday, January 18.

RECOMMENDATION: To schedule a Broadband Committee meeting at 9 a.m. Wednesday, January 18.

iii. HHS Discussion for the Business Manager Position

Vetsch said there needed to be a Committee of the Whole meeting to discuss the Business Manager position opening in Health and Human Services (HHS) Wednesday, January 11 to discuss the scoping of the position and steps forward. He expressed a desire to pair the Business Manager conversation with a discussion on the tax exemption for energy storage. Power plants are looking to push legislation through the State Senate that would provide energy storage units with tax exempt status. This would take a lot of property off the tax rolls. These storage units would not qualify for Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT). He said Sherburne County had large solar farms creating the need for solar storage in both Sherburne County and Wright County, negatively impacting tax capacity in Wright County. He explained that solar farms, while tax exempt for property taxes, still paid production tax. The proposed solar storage property would have zero tax value. He said it would be helpful to have a wholistic discussion regarding this issue. Kelly recommended setting the meeting for 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, January 18.

RECOMMENDATION: To schedule a Committee of the Whole (COTW) meeting at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, January 18 to discuss the vacant Business Manager position in HHS, the potential tax issue surrounding solar energy storage being suggested at the state level, and to support Vetsch discussing these issues with the state legislators.

iv. Auditor/Treasurer Review

Vetsch recommended a Committee of the Whole meeting before the end of January to review the Auditor/Treasurer and to discuss expectations for 2023. Kelly said the anniversary date for the Auditor/Treasurer is coming up in January. Since the Auditor/Treasurer answers directly to the board this meeting should be a closed session under Minnesota statute.

RECOMMENDATION: To schedule a COTW closed session to review the Auditor/Treasurer and discuss expectations for 2023 at 11:30 a.m. Wednesday, January 18.

v. Additional Discussion Item

Commissioner Michael Kaczmarek said he would like to discuss billing for phone services. He said it would be about the cost per line, long distance, the carrier, and the inconsistency in cost and description provided. Kaczmarek asked further that the staff provide information on whether the organizations renting space in the Government Center paid their own phone service. He would like to know what the understanding is for the renters of the space in the Government Center and if they pay their own phone bills. Vetsch recommended discussing this at the Tuesday, January 17 board meeting.

RECOMMENDATION To direct staff to provide information regarding phone services received by the county at all locations, specifically, the name of current phone carriers and how they were selected, the cost per line, the long-distance policy, the number of lines currently being billed for at the Government Center, and the phone service policy for organizations that lease space in the Government Center.

vi. Board Packet Schedule

Vetsch confirmed the board meeting packet schedule. The packet consists of the forthcoming meetings' agenda and accompanying documentation. He said recently the packet had been delivered when promised or a note had been sent explaining any delay. He said the goal was to be able to provide the packets by noon Wednesday to allow the commissioners adequate time to prepare. The move to two meetings per month means more information per meeting and more time required to prepare. Kelly said in June 2022 the deadline was set so that on weeks with a holiday the packet would be submitted to the board by noon Thursday, otherwise end of day on Thursday. He said that with changes in processes that have been recently implemented, Administration would need to keep this schedule to ensure staff adequate time to assemble the agenda and accompanying documents with the goal in mind to be able deliver earlier when able. Kelly said the staff deadline to submit Requests for Board Action (RFBA) was Wednesday at noon and with the board meetings moving to two times a month it was even more important for staff to get their RFBA in on time. Vetsch agreed that getting to know the new processes was important and reiterated the change should be eventual. He said that with the board meetings decreasing to two times a month there would be more items coming forward for discussion.

RECOMMENDATION: To allow Administration staff time to become acquainted with the new procedures surrounding the creation of weekly board packets with the intention of moving the timeline up as able providing commissioners adequate time to prepare.

vii. July 4 Holiday Week

Kelly said that with the first Tuesday in July landing on the Fourth of July the meetings have been moved to Tuesday, July 11 and 25 with the workshop being Tuesday, July 18. The agenda schedule has been updated.

RECOMMENDATION: To move board meetings in July due to the Fourth of July holiday, to Tuesday, July 11 and 25 and Tuesday, July 18 for the board workshop.

viii. Item for Future Discussion

Kelly said Information Technology (IT) Director Matthew Fomby has requested a closed session to discuss IT security. Kelly suggested it would be brought to the Tuesday, January 17 board meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: To have a closed session discussion about Information Technology (IT) security with IT director Matthew Fomby at some future meeting.

Sale of Human Services Center

Vetsch said there was an agenda item missing to bring the new commissioners up to speed on how the county got to it having a purchase agreement on the HHS building. Vetsch gave the history of the sale from the move to the new Government Center to the purchase agreement for the sale of the building. He mentioned information the prospective buyer had provided to the board. He said it was important for the board to be up to speed for the public hearing. Assistant County Attorney Greg Kryzer clarified that the board had already turned over the property being sold to the county Economic Development Authority (EDA).

Kryzer said that the time to tell the EDA to not sell is before the public hearing. Commissioner Tina Diedrick agreed that since there is no longer a need for the building the sale should go forward.

RECOMMENDATION: To recommend the Economic Development Authority (EDA) continue in the sale of the Human Services Center for which a Purchase Agreement exists

2. GIS Overview

Karels said the mission of the Project Administration Department is to provide a standardized approach for intake prioritization and execution of projects on behalf of county departments. Last year Geographic Information Systems (GIS) joined the project team in part because GIS was recognized to be an enterprise function similar in mission and vision to the Project Administration Department. Karels introduced the four members of the team, GIS Coordinator Alek Halverson, not in attendance, GIS Analyst Larkin Walter, and GIS Specialists Kalen Johnson, not in attendance, and Emily Schneider. Karels said GIS is an essential tool to aid the citizens of Wright County.

Walter gave an overview of GIS and its four key components. The four components are data, maps, apps, and database management. The first component is data. GIS is the avenue used to visualize data. GIS is taking tabular data and transforming it into a data visualization piece that can be easily understood. GIS professionals utilize data to create different layers in maps such as a point layer for address points, a line layer for street centerlines, a polygon layer for parcels, a grid layer for elevation, and aerial images. Overlaying all these layers together creates a map, a story, or a solution.

In GIS data is spatial data, which is information with a location attached to it, whether an address or GPS coordinates. She said there are currently 70 different layers of special data being utilized by Wright County, 37 are publicly available on the GIS hub.

The second component of GIS is maps. Walter showed the new Commissioner District map for Wright County and explained how this map has multiple layers - the road layer, the district layer, and road shield signs for county roads and highways. She said the Wright County campus map utilizes multiple layers, many not seen, but easily accessible such as the blueprints of the buildings, including floor details and office details. She said these maps are being used by emergency services, cities, and townships and many are changed yearly. Walter showed a map of a park being developed for citizens to utilize on their phones showing their location, paths, and activity features.

Walter said the third component of GIS is applications, whether mobile or web based. Wright County currently has six public facing web applications and three internal applications. A good example of how GIS has been utilized was during the pandemic, citizens needed information regarding COVID-19 cases. GIS created a central dashboard which used tabular data to visually show important statistics and information.

The fourth component of GIS is database management. The database management Wright County uses was created in-house by Halverson. It is a sophisticated database infrastructure that is the basis of building out applications and data.

Walter discussed the three main pieces of GIS at Wright County, the first being the parcel mapping. Walter said Schneider is responsible for parcel mapping. Parcel mapping is the geometry of new parcels, easements, and roads. In 2022 there were 54 new sub-divisions built with around 1,300 new parcels. There was a bump in the number of new parcels being built in 2021 when the county had more than 1,700 new parcels. Prior to 2021 the county could expect closer to 700 new parcels being built every year. She spoke about Beacon, the county's GIS platform currently with 73 active users, including townships and cities, recorders, surveyors, assessors, and Public Works offices. She said in Wright County they are just building the shapes of a parcel with the parcel I.D.'s attached. Beacon takes the data created by GIS which coincides to the data in the Recorder's Office, Assessor's Office and Taxpayer Services. Beacon combines these data sources together. This is viewable to the public, which has not always been there. In the last year Beacon was visited over four million times. Diedrick said Beacon is very user friendly.

The next piece is addressing. Walter said there are two layers with addressing. There are now about 68,000 address points in Wright County that have been created by GIS. She said the main use is for next generation 911 addressing. There are a set of standards the State of Minnesota has set for 911 addressing. The county adheres to those standards. Walters showed an example of an apartment building enhanced with floor plans, address points and unit numbers attached to the aerial photo. This map provides emergency services with more precise and reliable information that can and will save time and lives. The second layer provides address points that provide users with their district and other needs. Used in the "Find Your District" map these services integrate the districts and addresses so residents need only select their addresses to get information on their commissioner.

The third main piece is web services. The hub site provides all applications available to the general public. Users can navigate what data they want to download by the type they are looking for. Among the applications available are the "Find Your District" map and a parks viewer application that allows searching by activity and location. Another example is the Broadband Program map which shows where broadband coverage exists and where it is needed. With each application there are a number of layers that identify various aspects. The Campus map shows more details including the floor plans identifying different departments, conference rooms and more. This application is not published yet.

Kaczmarek said he appreciated the knowledge and ability to provide these resources to the public. He asked about the work done for businesses, citizens, and what if any fees are attached. Walter said data requests are made by county businesses more than map requests. She said GIS charges the cost on the fee schedule. She said it is usually smaller cities and townships that are requesting map service.

3. CMRP Overview

Vetsch said Central Mississippi River Regional Planning Partnership (CMRP), formerly the Highway 25 Coalition, has been around for more than a decade. He said the discussion was always about what is the best way to fix the traffic issues surrounding crossing the Mississippi. He said the solution to traffic issues was never assumed to be a bridge, the study was always intended to find the solution that best fit the problem. When the transition was made to CMRP a study was entered into with a company called Planning Next and the Framework 2030 initiative was created. Framework 2030 was intended to address areas of collaboration between Sherburne County and Wright County and the participating cities and townships to collect data sets and to establish areas where it could move forward as a group.

As the group moved forward it became clear that this initiative was more concerned with infrastructure, specifically with transportation. The goal was now to move forward to find a transportation solution for the region. This led to the need for a Planning and Environmental Linkage (PEL) study. Assistant Highway Engineer Chad Hausmann said the PEL study has three main concurrence points.

The first concurrence point is the stakeholder public involvement plan to generate the purpose and need of the project. The second concurrence point is the coordination of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to ensure all parties have the same expectations and understanding. If one or more groups does not agree with the others or has different ideas, then there is very little chance the group will get money.

The third concurrence point develops the purpose in need with the public involvement to see what issues are involved and finally looking at alternatives to address the need.

Hausmann said there is a Request for Proposal (RFP) out to consultants that when received will be reviewed by Sherburne County, Wright County, a member of the local government from each side of the river and MnDOT. A recommendation will then be made on the proposals. Each phase has a go/no go phase where each side can stop for any reason. There is a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) signed with Sherburne County that was approved in December to fund the RFP. Each county will take on different aspects of the project.

Vetsch said the purpose/needs statement would require \$500,000 - \$1 million. CMRP has a war chest of more than \$450,000. The remaining money would be paid by a split between Wright and Sherburne Counties. Vetsch said the plan is to pay with Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) for Wright County. Hausmann said in order to pay with LOST funds a public hearing would be required. He said this is a marathon not a sprint. It could take time to complete this process. He said the war chest money should get the CMRP through a year or two.

Vetsch said if the PEL process takes \$800,000 Wright County would still be moving forward with an additional \$1 million to \$1.5 million to complete. He said with the PEL process if there comes a time when the project ends Wright County is not out the full amount of money as opposed to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process which would require the full amount and the risk is higher with NEPA. Hausmann said PEL gets the county to a spot where it will lead to more alternatives and with the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) the hope is that this will be narrowed down to one. This, then can be used for lobbying for state and federal funding.

Vetsch said the biggest change is that instead of CMRP making the large decisions, it would be the JPA Local Government Unit (LGU) between Sherburne County and Wright County that is the deciding factor on how to move forward, at what pace, who is doing what study, and who is approving contracts. CMRP will likely morph into more of a cheerleading fundraising organization, but it did its job getting to where the process is.

Hausmann said in February the proposals will be reviewed as well as a Transportation COTW to go over the proposals to then take to the board for approval.

Kaczmarek asked if or when it would be known what will be obtained for highway taxes in 2022. Hausmann said he would check with Finance to see what the numbers were. He said six years ago it was \$6.5 million, but now he believed it to be \$10 to \$15 million.

Kaczmarek asked at what point the scope changes from a county/highway project to a MNDOT/Federal project. Vetsch said the first step in getting help from state and or federal government is to go through the PEL or NEPA process and get the federal government or state government to agree there is a problem. Once they agree there is a problem, they will help find a solution and then the county will be able to go to the state and federal representatives to get funding for the project. Vetsch and Hausmann agreed the construction would likely be paid by a combination of all parties involved.

Kaczmarek asked for the statute or rules from the state that shows that money can be used on this project that will likely end up being a state or federally funded project. Hausmann reiterated that there needed to be consensus with all parties involved.

Commissioner Nadine Schoen asked if the county is using sales taxes to pay for the PEL. Vetsch said at this time the county is not using taxes. He said the first \$400,000 would be paid for by CMRP funds, it would be two years at least before this would be addressed to be paid for by taxes. In 2024 the funds would be used, and the counties would start to receive invoices that need to be paid. That is the intent of the previous board. Hausmann said in February there will be a clearer picture on the costs and who is contributing what.

4. ERP Informational Discussion

Kelly introduced the issues being discussed with the history of the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) project and opened up for questions from the board for what happened in Phase 1 and what can be expected in Phase 2.

Diedrick asked how issues needing to be addressed are being tracked to show the process. ERP Project Manager Tony Kothlow said Sierra Cedar handles all issues going on. He meets with Sierra Cedar daily to go over the tickets and discuss solutions ensuring issues are properly handled.

Kaczmarek asked if Kothlow was offed off site in a business or at home. Kothlow said he is in a home office. Kaczmarek asked about accountability for his workday. Kothlow said there are daily meetings with county staff as well as online availability throughout the day. He said there is a contract agreed to between himself and the county and the end of the contract is the result. Vetsch said that Kothlow is correct. He was hired to get the county from Point A to Point B and what he does in the meantime is not important. Diedrick asked if there was a need for a resolution that required him to be onsite would he be willing to come in. Kothlow said he would be available to be on site. He said that during Phase 2 both he and the team of contractors from Sierra Cedar would be onsite to ensure everything is handled. He said that some of the staff are coming from Canada which only recently has allowed international travel. Vetsch thanked Kothlow for his hard work and apologized for his needing to defend his work as a contractor. Kothlow said he has enjoyed his time working with the county and working with the staff.

Kaczmarek has heard concerns from staff on “how tickets were handled and the follow up of the tickets.” Kaczmarek said that since such a large amount of money was being committed to Kothlow he thought it appropriate to question him as there are new members of the board and the money being paid had increased. Kothlow said that he did receive a raise as the money does not go directly to him, but to the agency he works through. Kaczmarek asked about what would come next for Kothlow when Phase 2 was complete at the end of 2023. Kothlow said the HR payroll process will be live at the end of January 2024. Kaczmarek asked about the county’s need at that time for his continued service. Kothlow said there would not be a need for his services after January 2024, but there would be a need for support service. He said at this time there is no internal support for Wright County. He said it would be good for IT to build up expertise of ERP to support it internally. He said this would be much more cost efficient. Kaczmarek expressed concern for how the tickets are being handled. Kothlow said there was a transition between the transition team and the support organization. Kothlow recognized that there could be a better response from Sierra Cedar. Kaczmarek thanked him. Diedrick said the intention was to be positive and learn from the process.

5. Snow Removal Process and Contract

Kelly presented the snow map of the parking lot on the county campus with each lot being individually numbered. Kaczmarek said this was brought up based on his own observation, employee comment, and constituent comments. He said at the swearing in ceremony on Tuesday, January 3 the lots in front of the Drivers Vehicle Services (DVS) noted as Lot 1 and Lot 3, are for residents and generally busy. The two lots in front of the board room and in front of the Justice Center noted as Lot 2 and Lot 4 seldom have any cars in them. He noted that the few cars he has seen in Lot 2 and Lot 4 appear to belong to staff. He then noted that there is snow piled up in Lot 2 and Lot 4 near the Justice Center that is slowly encroaching west as the piles continue to grow. Lot 11, set between the Government Center and the Justice Center, he recommended, be used by employees. He said emergency access to the Justice Center was blocked due to snow build up in Lot 11 and did not believe emergency personnel would be able to access the building there. He recommended Lot 2 and Lot 4 be cleaned allowing for more parking for employees or residents and more access points to the building.

Vetsch said opening Lot 2 and Lot 4 would not be a bad idea, he recommended keeping Lot 2 public and allowing Lot 4 to be utilized by staff.

Kaczmarek asked if The Highway Department would be able to move snow during the day shift, preferably after 4:30 p.m. when staff is gone. He added that a time limit should be put on the movement of snow to say that if Highway Department staff have not moved the snow in five days the contractor would be called in to move it. He asked about the price for the contractor to keep snow on the property as opposed to moving it across town. Assistant County Administrator Marc Mattice said the pricing would be similar as there is still equipment and labor. He said the cost for the

Highway Department to move the snow as determined by finance was \$42 per load which included labor and equipment cost which is quite a bit more cost efficient to the county. He said the Highway Department's main job was road and bridges, snow and ice control, and fixing guard rails after storms. The Highway Department was working on its projects. Highway Maintenance Superintendent Nathaniel Helgeson said the lot could be worked on early next week by the night staff. Kaczmarek asked what the night staff looked like staffing wise. Helgeson said the staff is one short and had its normal duties to attend to but after that would be able to help.

Kaczmarek recommended going with a five-day window for the Highway Department to clear snow before having the contractor come in. Vetsch said there is no urgency to move the snow as there is still parking. He said this winter has seen more snow than in 30 years. Helgeson said in December alone staff was out 20 days for snow and ice control. For the week between Christmas and New Year's Day, the Highway Department provided almost 24-hour coverage for a week straight. He said two weeks would be closer to realistic.

Facilities Director Alan Wilczek asked what the urgency or concern with the piles of snow the board was addressing. He asked if parking was limited due to the snow. Kaczmarek said they are prime parking spots for the Justice Center for juries or employees. He said the snow removal seen in malls or stores was such that the snow piles were moved to the ends of the lot where they did not encroach on the spots available. Wilczek said Lot 4 is the parking lot for the Justice Center, if they opened the lots for employees there would be no parking available. He said there are departments that do not abide by this map. Wilczek said Lot 11 is not the location emergency response would be responding to, rather the door at Lot 13 at the back side of the Justice Center. He said the staff that were parking in Lot 11 had parking spots elsewhere but were ignoring the Board approved parking map. He said there had been quite a lot of guidance given by the board in adopting these spots.

Vetsch said there did not seem to be anything that needed to change with the snow situation now, two weeks is not bad if people were talking about snow being removed from the parking lot. Helgeson said if this did get to the point of emergency then more would be discussed. He said in the past the day staff was brought in at 2 a.m. to help with snow removal. He said it would be better to allow staff to get to it when they are able.

Commissioner Jeanne Holland asked about the contract for plowing. Mattice said Public Works is plowed by the Parks & Recreation staff, and highway mechanics plow the Highway Department lot. The Government Center, Justice Center and Law Enforcement Center are plowed by a contractor. He said they do a nice job. He said there was one claim on the ice issue which is the lowest in years. Vetsch said there was a cost analysis done and it was found that having a contractor do the work as opposed to staff was cost efficient.

Diedrick thanked the staff for its work. Schoen said if the Highway Department is doing what it can and get the spots cleaned up as needed then there is nothing more needed to be done as weather dictates. She said she wants to keep things as is while making roads a priority. Vetsch said he understood that changing the employee parking could create an issue for the public. Mattice noted that originally the second and third lots in front of the Law Enforcement Center labeled Lot 6 and Lot 7 were for residents only but were changed to employee parking, so things can change. Mattice asked for a recommendation. Schoen said nothing more really needed to change as long as staff continued to stay on top of the snow.

Mattice brought up the lot in front of the Highway Department that is being used as employee parking. Hausmann said it would be best to not make it employee parking at this time. Diedrick asked if it is just a matter of reminding employees where they need to park or change the parking spots. Kaczmarek said that is the issue as some staff leaving at night must walk through an empty lot to get to their cars. Diedrick asked if this issue was particular to weather and whether there been complaints. Kaczmarek said there were staff and constituents who had complained to him. Vetsch said it is unknown what is going on in the Justice Center regarding the public. Diedrick said there are surveys available that can be used for eliciting staff feedback. She said the county is working though the first winter on the new campus and seems like this can be talked about in the spring. She said the snow issue is being addressed and employee parking can be addressed at a later date.

RECOMMENDATION: To continue utilizing the parking spots as approved by the board and continue to allow the Highway Department time to move snow as it is able.

The meeting adjourned at 10:46 a.m.

County Board Workshop Minutes submitted by Philip Hodges, Administration Specialist