

Special Meeting Minutes of the Board of Ward County Commissioners
February 26, 2024

The special meeting of the Ward County Commission was called to order by Chairman/Commissioner Fjeldahl at 12:00 PM with Commissioners Anderson, Olson, Rostad, and Weppler present. Also present were department heads Jason Blowers, Lolly Gorze, Marisa Haman, and Robert Roed.

Decision was made at the beginning of the meeting to move the jail contract into the first position on the agenda and move the coroner contract to the second position.

Major Paul Olthoff came forward requesting to put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) for jail medical services as the current contract with Trinity Health had expired. He also requested that the current contract with Trinity be signed and backdated as a temporary contract until June so the RFP can be posted and filled.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Weppler to authorize an extension of the existing contract with Trinity Health and backdating to January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024 as well as authorizing to advertise a Request for Proposals for medical services for the Ward County Jail. Roll Called; all voted yes; motion carried.

Comm. Olson gave an overview of past coroner services and the current status of the coroner contract. A year ago a coroner committee was created. There was a proposal to add death investigators to the contract to increase the quality of services and provide scene response to deaths; a new contract was developed and the budget for it was approved. However, Trinity Health is no longer able to provide those services.

Dr. Scott Knutson, current coroner through Trinity Health, came forward to discuss the quality of care for the deceased and how it has developed and improved in the last 5 years with the current group of coroners. He would like to see that level of care continue with whoever takes over the coroner services for Ward County.

Comm. Olson proposed to create part-time positions within Ward County to hire a coroner and deputy coroners or death investigators. There was discussion on the liability of having coroners as county employees. It was suggested to check with NDIRF for more information.

Discussion was held on the status of the Request for Proposal that was approved to be advertised at the regular commission meeting on February 6, 2024. The RFP was still being drawn up and had not advertised as it was not fully finalized.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Rostad to reconsider the issuance of the Request for Proposals until the next meeting and when more information is obtained on creating a coroner position within Ward County. Roll called; all voted yes; motion carried.

At 12:49 PM with no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

ACCEPTED AND APPROVED THIS 5th DAY OF MARCH, 2024

Chairman, Ward County Commission

ATTEST:
