Minutes of the Board of Ward County Commissioners

March 19, 2024

The regular meeting of the Ward County Commission was called to order by Chairman/Commissioner Fjeldahl at 9:03 AM with Commissioners Anderson, Olson, Rostad, and Weppler present. Also present were department heads Brian Vangsness, Brock Gilstad, Dana Larsen, Emily Burkett, Jason Blowers, Kelly Haugan, Kerrianne Boetcher, Kristi Frederick, Kristin Kowalczyk, Lolly Gorze, Marisa Haman, Robert Roed, and Roza Larson.

Marisa Haman, Auditor/Treasurer, added items 3.5 Service Awards and 9G Building and Grounds Rules discussion.

Moved by Comm. Rostad, seconded by Comm. Olson approve the agenda with added items. Roll called; all voted yes; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Weppler, seconded by Comm. Olson to approve the minutes from the Regular Commission Meeting on March 5, 2024 and Special Commission Meeting on March 14, 2024.

Correction in Regular Meeting Minutes to change EPAC to EAPC.

Roll called; all voted yes; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Rostad to approve the regular bills totaling $480,549.90 and HS Zone direct bills totaling $18,863.34. Roll called; all voted yes, motion carried.

Lolly Gorze, Human Resources Director, asked Dana Larsen to present the 10 years of service coin to Steve Hammer, Foreman, Hwy Department.

Ms. Gorze and Comm. Anderson then presented the 20 years of service coin to Kristin Kowalczyk, County Recorder.

Brian Billingsley, AICP, City of Minot Community & Economic Development Director came forward to speak regarding updates to the Minot Renaissance Zone. He spoke on amendments made to the proposed annexation block of 2F into the Minot Renaissance Zone. The proposed block was made smaller to exclude residential properties by using a property line for a boundary.

Discussion was held on the Renaissance Zone, how it functions, and its impact on property taxes.

Moved by Comm. Rostad, seconded by Comm. Olson to open a public discussion at 9:35 and include a 3-minute time limit per speaker. Roll called; all voted yes; motion carried.

Peter Hugret, Chair of the Renaissance Committee, came forward to speak on the movement of Renaissance blocks to other areas of the city that are in need of improvement once the current block is completed.

Scott Samuelson, Minot resident, came forward and spoke on his increase in property taxes since the Minot Renaissance Zone was started.

Ryan Ackerman, member of Aksal Group, came forward to speak on the benefits of the Minot Renaissance Zone and how it makes it more affordable to improve blighted buildings and entices investments in those areas.

Agreed by all to close public discussion.

Moved by Comm. Anderson, seconded by Comm. Weppler to vote on each amendment for the Minot Renaissance Zone separately. Roll called; all voted yes, motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Weppler, seconded by Comm. Rostad, to table Amendment #1 until more feedback is received. Roll called; Comm. Weppler, Rostad, and Olson voted yes, Comm. Anderson and Chair. Fjeldahl voted no; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Anderson to approve Amendment #2 as presented. Roll called; Comm. Olson, Anderson, Rostad, and Weppler voted yes, Chair. Fjeldahl voted no; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Anderson, seconded by Comm. Rostad to reject Amendment #3, the 10-year extension of the Minot Renaissance Zone.

Discussion was held regarding changing the 10-year extension to the Minot Renaissance Zone to a 5-year extension.

Comm. Rostad withdraws his second to the motion.

Chair. Fjeldahl seconds the motion to reject Amendment #3, the 10-year extension of the Minot Renaissance Zone. Roll called; all voted yes; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Weppler to grant a 5-year extension to the Minot Renaissance Zone. Roll called; Comm. Olson, Weppler, Rostad, and Anderson voted yes, Chair. Fjeldahl voted no; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Anderson, seconded by Comm. Olson to approve Amendment #4 as presented. Roll called; Comm. Anderson voted yes, Comm. Olson, Rostad, Weppler and Chair. Fjeldahl voted no; motion failed.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Anderson to amend the Minot Renaissance Zone Map to declare blocks 2C and 40C as completed blocks and add block 1F to the Minot Renaissance Zone. Roll called; Comm. Olson, Anderson, Rostad, and Weppler voted yes, Chair. Fjeldahl voted no; Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Weppler to add block 2F into the Minot Renaissance Zone. Roll called; Comm. Olson, Weppler, Anderson, and Rostad voted yes, Chair Fjeldahl voted no; motion carried.

Captain Anthony Owens, Ward County Jail came forward with a contract with renewal between the Ward County Detention Center and the Three Affiliated Tribes Gerald Tex Fox Justice Center.

Moved by Comm. Weppler, seconded by Comm. Rostad to renew the MOU as presented. Roll called; all voted yes; motion carried.

Dana Larsen, Highway Engineer came forward to present the plans and specifications for Galusha Ranch Paving District, an advertisement for a flexible farm lease, and a bid for pavement striping and crack seal.

Moved by Comm. Weppler, seconded by Comm. Olson to approve the plans and authorize the engineer to bid the Galusha Ranch Paving District Project. Roll called; all voted yes; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Rostad, seconded by Comm. Weppler to approve to advertise the farm lease agreement to the county owned property described as W1/2 lying East of platted portion and access road of Section 2-152-85 (Rice Lake Township) and consisting of approximately two hundred twenty-five (225) acres of which, approximately one hundred eighty (180) acres are tillable. Roll called; all voted yes, motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Weppler to authorize the Highway Department to advertise for the County Wide Center and Edge Line striping project, and Crack Sealing of County Road 23 and 25 in Sawyer and County Road 23 from Sawyer south to the county line near Benedict. Roll called; all voted yes, motion carried.

Beth Pietsch, Planning and Zoning Administrator, appeared regarding an Outlot Plat Application.

Application for an Outlot Plat for the following described property: Proposed Outlot 3 being a port. of SESW Sec 8-157-86, Carpio Twp. The applicant is requesting to parcel an outlot containing 2.19 acres for future rural residential use. Ward County Zoning applies, with the township recommending approval. Planning Commission recommends Approval of the Outlot Plat Application based on finding of facts and staff recommendations.

Moved by Comm. Rostad, seconded by Comm. Anderson to approve the Outlot Plat Application from Adam Knudsvig as presented. Roll called; all voted yes; motion carried.

Lolly Gorze, Human Resources Director, appeared with the following pay amendments: H. Dignan, Veteran's; C. Ellis, HSZ; M. Redmer, Library; M. Brooks, Library; and K. Barille, State's Attorney.

Moved by Comm. Weppler, seconded by Comm. Rostad to approve the payroll amendments as presented. Roll called; all voted yes; motion carried.

Marisa Haman, Auditor/Treasurer appeared.

Moved by Comm. Weppler, seconded by Comm. Rostad to receive and file the following correspondence: Invite to Public Health Week Open House, dated April 1, 2024 and Verisk letter dated March 4, 2024. Roll call; all voted yes; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Rostad, seconded by Comm. Anderson to receive and file the Ward County Public Library Annual Report. Roll call; all voted yes; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. Rostad to receive and file monthly reports including financials. Roll called; all voted yes; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Weppler, seconded by Comm. Rostad to approve raffles for South Prairie Athletic Boosters and Nodak Racing Club Inc. Roll called; all voted yes; motion carried.

Ms. Haman presented an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant to be applied for.

Moved by Comm. Weppler to approve authorization to submit Pre-Award Information Sheet for EECBG Program with $75,420 eligibility. Roll called; all voted yes; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Rostad, seconded by Comm, Weppler to approve the Call for bids on the Spring Lake land lease. Roll called; all voted yes; Motion carried.

Chairman Fjeldahl started a short discussion on building and grounds guidelines in reference to the increasing homeless population occupying the building.

Moved by Comm. Weppler, seconded by Comm. Olson to have the facilities committee come up with a plan for the Commission to consider. Roll called; all voted yes; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Weppler, seconded by Comm. Anderson to have a brief recess at 10:28 AM and return in Executive Session. Roll called; all voted yes; motion carried.

Executive session opened at 10:35 AM with Chairman Fjeldahl, and Commissioners Anderson, Olson, Rostad and Weppler present. Also present were department heads Marisa Haman and Roza Larson, Administrative Assistant Amanda Mahlum and by phone Auditor Craig Hashbarger from Widmer Roel.

Moved by Comm. Weppler, seconded by Comm. Rostad to close the Executive Session at 11:26 AM. Roll called; all voted yes; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Weppler, seconded by Comm. Rostad to hire attorney Bryan Van Grinsven if available, to represent Ward Co. to further investigate the Federal ARPA funding given to Project BEE and authorize him to work with the Auditor for information.

At 11:28 AM with no further business, the meeting was adjourned.