

**SPECIAL MEETING OF CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
APRIL 19, 1997**

1. MEETING TO ORDER

Chairman Alon Wieland called to order a special meeting of the Cass County Board of Commissioners at 3:10 PM Saturday, April 19, 1997. Four members were present at the time the meeting opened as follows: Donna Schneider, John Meyer, Roberta Quick and Alon Wieland. Paul Koenig arrived later.

Others present included Fargo Mayor Bruce Furness; Dennis Walaker and Pat Zavoral, City of Fargo officials; Keith Berndt, County Engineer; Michael Montplaisir, County Auditor; Jeff Volk, Moore Engineering; Jim McLaughlin, Southeast Cass Water Resource District board member; and homeowners Vern Kepler, George Haugo, Mark Christianson, Clay Hestdalen and others.

2. FLOOD EMERGENCY, Request approved to cut through County Highway 81 south of Fargo

Chairman Wieland said he called this emergency meeting at the request of City of Fargo officials who are asking permission to cut a 15' section out of Highway 81 to allow overland flood water west of Highway 81 to go into the Red River. Mr. Wieland said anyone wishing to speak on this issue will be given an opportunity to address the commission. Fargo Mayor Bruce Furness expressed his appreciation to the county for calling this meeting on short notice.

Pat Zavoral explained the current situation with overland flooding after an aerial survey today by Fargo officials. The City of Fargo met with the engineer for the Southeast Cass Water Resource District, Jeff Volk, and with members of the Southeast Cass Water Board, looking for an opportunity to provide some relief at a point across Highway 81, obviously at a point where it would not have a significant negative impact on homes located in that area. Acknowledging the need to keep traffic moving on Highway 81, Mr. Zavoral said they have secured a temporary bridge from the Army Guard at Devils Lake, ND.

Dennis Walaker said Highway 81 is acting like a dam and is breaching at many places right now. They would not cut through the entire road but would top it off. This location is the best place to make the cut, in his judgement. In answer to a question from the audience, he believes there is no danger of getting a back-flow of water. He believes cutting the road will have less than a 2" impact on the Red River, and it will benefit surrounding subdivisions, as well as the City of Fargo. He said the water is being metered by the section lines at this time.

Questions and concerns were expressed by people living in Chrisan and Forest River Subdivisions and Commissioner Quick living in the City of Briarwood. Vern Kepler, representing the chairperson of the Forest River Homeowners Association, was opposed to making the highway cut at the location recommended and suggested a cut further north. Also, there was concern about additional flood waters inundating this area where people have already been fighting the flood for 10 days or more, as well as concern about the highway eroding. They also asked about the city providing assistance to individual homeowners.

Keith Berndt, County Engineer, supports the suggestion to make the cut just south of the City of Briarwood. Jim McLaughlin concurs with this location also, and he agreed with Mr. Walaker that the rise of water on the Red River will not be more than 1 ½". A majority of this water will still go into Drain #53, according to Mr. McLaughlin. Mr. Walaker said erosion will not be a problem because there is no velocity to the water since the difference in height on each side of the road is very small.

If this cut is made, Jeff Volk said 50 sections of land are not going to drain but the effect will be one section of land falling seven-tenths of a foot--to the level of the Red River right now.

Mr. McLaughlin said the water situation was under control prior to the April 5th storm. The Corps of Engineers, city and county crews were cleaning ditches and getting drains to flow. He said the last storm added 4-5 inches of liquid moisture throughout the entire system, filling a number of the drains. The ensuing cold weather helped in some instances, however, it slowed down the flow of water into the natural drains.

Mr. Wieland called on the county engineer for a recommendation at this time. Mr. Berndt suggested approving Fargo's request in an effort to prevent a large portion of homes in south Fargo from becoming flooded. He sympathized with those whose homes have already been flooded.

Mr. Wieland commended the flood-fighting efforts of the county thus far, including road crews working to keep roads open; and after being somewhat caught up on roads, now providing sandbags and sand to aid in the building of sandbag dikes and to reinforce existing dikes in the rural area. The Courthouse operated on a skeleton crew for a number of days to allow employees time to help with sandbagging efforts. Mr. McLaughlin said some of the money individual homeowners have spent for sandbagging efforts may be reimbursable by FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency).

There was still concern about the impact of this cut and the location of it. Mr. Zavoral said the City of Fargo is in such a position right now that they could have an army guard truck full of sandbags at the site of cut in the event it is needed. He said they will do what they can to make sure there are bags available should they be needed, and the bridge will be put in place as quickly as possible.

Members of the county commission were given an opportunity to express their feelings, and they praised the efforts of individual homeowners fighting the flood and volunteers throughout the community. It was a consensus to support the professional opinion of the engineers and city officials in making this decision today.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Meyer moved and Mr. Koenig seconded to authorize the City of Fargo, the Corp of Engineers, and possibly the Southeast Cass Water Board as part of that decision making process, to remove a 15' section of concrete on Cass County Highway 81; and to place a temporary bridge to maintain traffic through that area. On roll call vote, motion carried unanimously. Mr. Koenig reiterated the assistance offered by the City of Fargo, and Mr. Wieland asked Fargo officials to continue monitoring that situation.

3. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION, passed

On motion by Mrs. Schneider and seconded by Mr. Koenig, the meeting was adjourned about 4:30 PM.

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

Michael Montplaisir - Auditor
Cass County, North Dakota

Alon Wieland, Chairman
Cass County Board of Commissioners