

**SPECIAL MEETING OF CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MEETING IN BUDGET SESSION
JULY 27, 2023**

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Chairman Chad M. Peterson called the special meeting to order at 8:00 AM on Thursday, July 27, 2023, with all members present as follows: Tony Grindberg, Duane Breitling, Jim Kapitan, Mary Scherling, and Chad M. Peterson. Also present were County Finance Director, Brandy Madrigga; County Administrator, Robert Wilson; Human Resource Director/Assistant County Administrator, Tracy Peters; Accounting Manager, Sarah Heinle; and Accountant, Gerald Jenson.

2. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Bob Henderson, Information Technology Director was present to review the 2024 IT budget request. He said the 2024 budget includes \$169,000 for maintenance agreements network software, an increase of \$33,000 from 2023; \$30,000 for maintenance agreements network equipment, an increase of \$12,450 from 2023; and \$200,000 for network equipment, an increase of \$135,072 from 2023. He said the large increase in network equipment is due to the request to purchase 5 new servers and 2 new storage devices. He said the equipment is needed to replicate the Courthouse network to a secondary location in the County for redundancy and failover in the event of a disaster.

Mr. Henderson reviewed the 2024 GIS budget request. He said the request includes a purchase to upgrade the current GIS system from an ArcGIS environment to an ArcGIS Enterprise (AE) agreement. He said AE allows for access to a wide variety of features the County does not currently have such as snowplow tracking and more concise election data tracking features. He said the cost to upgrade is \$59,000 per year and relies on the IT Department to work with individual departments on features and tracking. Mrs. Scherling asked if the North Dakota Association of Counties (NDACo) has resources for GIS. Mr. Henderson said NDACo has resources for counties, however, it is simpler than the GIS environment the County has now. Mr. Peterson asked if other entities within the County such as townships could have access to the updated environment for usage. Mr. Henderson said no, the license agreement with ArcGIS does not allow the County to give licenses to other entities.

Mr. Grindberg said since 2020, the IT budget has gone up by 1 million, he asked if IT has a five year plan for the Board to get a better picture of future needs. Mr. Henderson said he has prepared a five year plan per the goal in the County's Strategic Plan that was completed in June. He said the budget increased significantly last year due to the implementation of the ERP system to replace the AS400. He said the 2024 budget includes funds to keep licenses to access legacy data in the AS400 for the Human Service Zone. He said the plan is to no longer support the AS400 in 2025.

Mr. Henderson reviewed the 2024 Technology Trust budget request. He said the request is consistent with previous years. He said the trust is used as a method to purchase county-wide software and hardware, which are then billed to departments on a per-user basis.

MOTION, passed

Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Grindberg seconded to approve the 2024 Information Technology and Technology Trust preliminary budgets as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

3. HOMEWARD ANIMAL SHELTER

Tasha Haug, Director of Homeward Animal Shelter was present to review the 2024 budget request. The request is for \$7,500, an increase from \$5,500 in 2023. Ms. Haug said inflation has increased the cost of care for animals as well as an increase in the number of animals that need rescue. She said the contribution from the County will supplement the cost of daily care, food, and veterinary care for animals until they are adopted.

Mrs. Scherling asked where the shelter's operational income comes from. Ms. Haug said the shelter's income comes from Cass County, the City of Fargo, corporate donations, special events, grants, and adoption fees. She said in 2023 the shelter rescued over 70% of all animals from the Fargo Pound. Mr. Kapitan asked if the shelter offers in house veterinary services. Ms. Haug said the shelter has two local veterinarians that volunteer time. She said most veterinary needs are funded through donations and is the largest cost to the shelter.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for Homeward Animal Shelter as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

4. VALLEY SENIOR SERVICES AND COUNCIL ON AGING

The senior services budget is based on one mill per state law, the County levy's one mill and is matched by the state up to 87.5%.

Paul Grindeland, Executive Director of Valley Senior Services was present to review the 2024 budget request. The request is for \$2 million, no change from 2023. Mr. Grindeland discussed offered services such as meals on wheels, meals at senior centers, transportation, and resource specialists that provide resources to the elderly. He said Valley Senior Services has been providing meals in Cass County since 1971 and in 2023 served over 200,000 meals. Mr. Grindeland said the 2024 budget includes new staff positions to offer more services to seniors and to improve current programs. He said Valley Senior Services has future goals of a new meal center in West Fargo, a new senior center with the City of Fargo and the Fargo Public Library, and programming at the Fargo Parks new facility in South Fargo.

Mr. Peterson asked what the salary increase for staff will be in 2024. Mr. Grindeland said staff salary increases for 2024 will be from 4% to 5% and some positions need an additional adjustment. Mr. Peterson said there is a new facility being discussed in West Fargo and the County should have discussions with the owners to allow Valley Senior Services office space. Mr. Grindberg asked when the state legislature last adjusted the matching fund percentage. Mr. Grindeland said the percentage has not changed for many years. He said the 2023 state legislature approved additional funds to reimburse senior services for meals.

Keith Zeuschel, Treasurer of Cass County Council on Aging was present to discuss the 2024 budget request for Cass County Council on Aging. The request is for \$146,937 which is up from \$137,179 in 2023. He said the Cass County Council on Aging provides meals and many other services for seniors. He said the Cass County Council on Aging represents 13 local groups of elders and provides funding to all 13 groups for services and activities.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for Valley Senior Services and Cass County Council on Aging as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

5. RED RIVER VALLEY FAIR ASSOCIATION

Cody Cashman, General Manager of the Red River Valley Fair (RRVF) Association was present to review the 2024 budget request. The request is \$1,600,000 up from \$337,500 in 2023. Mr. Cashman discussed the history of the Red River Valley Fair and how Cass County helped fund the purchase of the current Fair property in 1967. He said the 2024 budget request includes funds to help with immediate infrastructure needs including repair to the grand stand and plumbing lines. He said the RRVF has significant infrastructure needs that have a cost of \$6 to \$8 million. He said the 2023 RRVF was held last week and had record attendance and numbers. Mr. Cashman said in recent years, the RRVF has increased events in an attempt to increase revenues. He said the RRVF is a non-profit organization and cannot levy funds, he said the 2024 request also includes a request for the County to levy two mills per year for the RRVF to help provide on going funds to the RRVF and its increasing infrastructure needs.

Mr. Grindberg said he met with Mr. Cashman prior to budget hearings to discuss the RRVF's 5 year plan. He said he appreciates Mr. Cashman's passion and work so far. He said there is a need for additional funding sources and state funding, he said there is much work to do. Mr. Peterson said local legislators need to be educated on the RRVF fair needs to get state funding

MOTION, passed

Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the Red River Valley Fair at \$1,600,000. Discussion: Mr. Peterson said he would support half of the requested funding. Mr. Grindberg and Mr. Kapitan amended the motion to approve \$800,000 for the preliminary budget. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

6. GREATER FARGO MOORHEAD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (GFMEDC)

Marshall Albright, GFMEDC Chair, and Joe Raso, President and CEO of GFMEDC were present to review the 2024 GFMEDC budget. The request is for \$800,000, which is up from \$700,000 in 2023. Mr. Raso discussed the GFMEDC's 2022 accomplishments in business development, community development, communications, and data and analytics. He discussed various projects that were completed recently, and others that are in the pipeline. He said from 2014 to 2022 the cumulative economic effects of the GFMEDC's projects have created nearly 10,000 jobs, over \$3 billion in new payroll and benefits, and \$8.3 billion in sales to businesses. Mr. Raso said from 2014 to 2022 Cass County has invested \$5.5 million in funding to the GFMEC and has seen a \$2.8 million return on investment which is an approximate \$300,000 net annual income to the County.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Kapitan moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for Greater Fargo Moorhead Economic Development Corporation as presented. Discussion: Mr. Grindberg said he would like to wait to act on the GFMEDC budget until after the Forward Sioux Falls and Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber presentations later today. Mr. Kapitan and Mr. Breitling amended the motion to table action on the 2024 GFMEDC budget. Motion passed.

Mrs. Scherling asked if Mr. Raso had any information, he wanted the Commission to know going in to the presentation later from the Forward Sioux Falls program. Mr. Raso said the GFMEDC has been working with the Chamber to come up with a strategy that would benefit the region and address workforce needs. Mr. Grindberg said he would like to hear all of the economic development conversations before approving any budget funds, He said he would like to see work on a future comprehensive plan to solve workforce and other economic issues. Mr. Raso said developing a workforce strategy is taking time. He said the GFMEDC request today is to continue to invest in the GFMEDC into 2024.

7. HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Beth Jansen, Executive Director of the Cass County Historical Society (Bonanzaville) was present to review the 2024 Historical Society budget. The request is for \$240,000, no change from 2023. Ms. Jansen said Bonanzaville has worked to overcome many building repair challenges in 2022 and 2023 and is increasing revenue and annual profits each year. She said 2025 allocated funds will be used \$190,000 for general operation costs and \$50,000 for special projects. Ms. Jansen said Dawson Hall and the old carriage building need to be demolished. She said Arthur Town Hall, the only building representing rural Cass County has been closed since 2021 and needs \$500,000 in repairs.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Breitling moved and Mrs. Scherling seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the Cass County Historical Society as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

8. FARGO CASS PUBLIC HEALTH

FCPH Operations

Desi Fleming, City of Fargo Director of Public Health (FCPH) was present to review the 2024 budget request. The request for FCPH Operations budget is \$1,051,976, up from \$993,115 or 5.93% in 2023. Ms. Fleming said the 2024 budget increase is due to salary increases and there are no changes in services.

Mrs. Scherling asked what cost of living adjustment (COLA) the FCPH staff will receive. Ms. Fleming said the budget includes a 3% COLA, however, the adjustment has not yet been approved by the Fargo City Commission. Mr. Breitling said the 2024 budget summary includes an item for a \$10,000 credit to Cass County, he asked what the credit is for. Ms. Fleming said the credit is for environmental fees FCPH collects.

Mr. Grindberg said he compared projected budget figures that were presented at the last FCPH Board meeting to the actual budget presented today. He asked why there are differences in state aid. Ms. Fleming said the state aid has been updated since the 2023 legislative session and additional grant information. Mr. Grindberg said the City of Fargo is projected to have revenue of \$8.4 million; he asked what if the budget is not approved. Ms. Fleming said this is an ongoing conversation as the request includes a Harm Reduction position. She said if the request is not approved, harm reduction services would have to be cut. She said the position is already staffed and performs existing services; it is now being considered as a formal budget request.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for Fargo Cass Public Health Operations as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

FCPH Jail Nurse

The request for FCPH Jail Nurse budget 2024 request is for \$742,453, an increase from \$664,602 in 2023 or 11.1% increase. Ms. Fleming said the increase is due to the 10% increase in Jail nurse salaries the Commission approved in late 2022 as well as normal COLA and step increases. She said FCPH is looking to transfer nursing services from FCPH to the County in 2025 as previously discussed. Mr. Wilson said County staff have been working internally to figure out the steps needed for the County to take over Jail nursing services.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Breitling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for Fargo Cass Public Health Jail Nurse as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

9. BREAK

The Commission took a break at 10:24 AM and reconvened at 10:36 AM.

10. RURAL AMBULANCE AND RESCUE ASSOCIATION

Jim Jager, President of the Cass County Rural Ambulance and Rescue Association was present to review the 2024 budget. The request is \$306,000, up from \$255,000 in 2023. Mr. Jager said Rural Ambulance has seen an increase in calls and a decrease in volunteers. He said another challenge is during the 2023 legislative session, House Bill 1365 was passed which requires all rural ambulance services with populations under 6,500 to form taxing districts by June 20, 2025. He said the taxing authority boards will then work with their ambulance district to determine whether a mill levy will be presented to the voters of their district at upcoming elections. Mr. Jager said this will be a difficult process for all the rural ambulance districts to go through. He said the rural ambulance also has a quick response team and it is unclear if the quick response team will fall under the taxing district.

Mrs. Scherling asked where Sanford Ambulance's service area is. Mr. Jager said Sanford ambulance cuts off near Mapleton. He said if there is a serious trauma, Sanford Ambulance may meet rural ambulance near Mapleton for assistance. Mrs. Scherling asked how many people rural ambulances service who are not from Cass County. Mark Moser, Vice President of Rural Cass

County Ambulance and Rescue Association was present and said he is on the Harwood Quick Response Unit and a majority of the license plates from incidents he serves are from North Dakota, he said he does not have specific information on if they are Cass County residents.

Mr. Peterson asked if \$280,000 would be an adequate amount of funding for 2024. Mr. Jager said rural ambulance workers are considered volunteers with minimal pay. He said people now do not want to volunteer, people expect to get paid for their time. He said ambulance services have considered paying minimum wage, however struggle with funding. Mr. Jager said the County's support is needed and appreciated.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Breitling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for Rural Ambulance and Rescue Association with \$280,000 in funding. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

11. VALLEY WATER RESCUE

Pete Fendt, Valley Water Rescue President was present to review the 2024 budget. The request is for \$42,631 the same amount since 2015. Mr. Fendt said in addition to the regular 2024 budgeted amount, Valley Water Rescue is requesting an additional \$24,000 to properly store life supporting equipment. He said the cost would cover rental fees and utility costs. He said currently the equipment is stored at the Cass County Highway Department and gets dusty and dirty. He said the equipment needs to be stored in a clean, climate-controlled building. He said the equipment was moved outside of the Highway Department this spring during sand bagging efforts which poses a risk to the expensive equipment. He said the equipment includes two boats and trailers and a pickup truck. Mr. Fendt said Valley Water Rescue has had this concern for a few years and no alternative storage solutions have been provided.

Mr. Wilson said there are funds in the 2023 Building Fund for a storage facility at the County's Law Enforcement Center that includes space for Valley Water Rescue's equipment. He said a request for proposal was put out for the project and came back with no qualified bidders. Mr. Wilson said the County has had internal discussions and is going to consult an architect to assess the square footage for the building to be sure it meets all the needs of the Sheriff's Office before proceeding. Mr. Peterson said the County and other entities associated with Valley Water Rescue have various storage facilities, he said storage space for Valley Water Rescue needs to be allocated.

MOTION, passed

Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the Valley Water Rescue as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

12. LAKE AGASSIZ REGIONAL COUNCIL

Amber Metz, Executive Director of Lake Agassiz Regional Council (LARC) was present to review the 2024 budget. The request is for \$30,000, up from \$28,350 in 2023. Ms. Metz said the 5% budget increase was requested to match a federal grant opportunity. She said LARC continues to work on many state and federal grant opportunities.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Breitling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for Lake Agassiz Regional Council as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

13. METROPOLITAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Paul Griffith, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Council of Governments (Metro COG) was present to review the 2024 budget. The 2024 request is for \$12,796 to cover local dues for Metro COG's operations and overhead and \$149 for the local funds for internal operations based on a formula approved by the Metro COG Policy Board. Mr. Griffith said Metro COG will transition to a transportation management area (TMA) on October 1, 2023 and there will be changes in funding. He

said the funding changes are unknown at this time, however, they are expected to be greater than current federal funding.

MOTION, passed

Mrs. Breitling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for Metropolitan Council of Governments as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

14. FIRST LINK

Jennifer Illich, Director of First Link, was present to review the 2024 budget. The request is \$7,000 which reflects no change from 2023. Ms. Illich said First link is the only 24/7 call line in North Dakota and services the 211 information and referral phone support line and 988 suicide and crisis phone line. She said First Link also provides assistance in disaster planning and assisted with setting up the County's sandbagging operation this spring.

Mr. Breitling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for First Link as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

15. FARGO MOORHEAD WEST FARGO CHAMBER

Shannon Full, President and CEO of the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber (FMWF Chamber) and Jenna Mueller, Executive Director of the Chamber Foundation were present to discuss the FMWF Chamber 2024 budget request. The request is for \$150,000, up from \$100,000 in 2023. Ms. Full discussed backgrounds and insights to the region including that workforce has been identified as the region's primary challenge and other secondary challenges such as a low unemployment rate, housing, childcare, skills gap, retention, lack of access to education and training, an aging workforce, difficulty hiring, increased labor costs, and inflation and wage pressure. Ms. Mueller discussed the current FMWF Chamber education programs including the Good Jobs Challenge, Ignite FMWF, Upskill-a-thon, and EDventures. She said interactions on the Ignite FMWF website have significantly increased over the past year.

Ms. Full discussed various community involvement programs in place including the community concierge program, Young Professionals Network, Leadership FMWF, Professionals of Color, and Woman Connect. She also gave a legislative update with bills passed during the 2023 legislative session including \$26.5 million inflationary cost funding for the Career Workforce Academy.

Mr. Peterson said the Chamber's budget request last year included a breakdown of funds that would go to each program. He said he would like to see a breakdown of costs for this year's request. Ms. Full said she would email the Board a cost breakdown.

Mrs. Scherling said she struggles to support the \$150,000 dollar request as it is a 50% increase in funding from 2023 and the County only began providing funding directly to the Chamber in 2022 for the Ignite initiative. Mr. Grindberg said he would like to wait to act on the Chamber budget until after the Forward Sioux Falls presentation at which time the Board can look at funding economic development initiatives on a larger, cohesive scale.

MOTION, passed

Kapitan moved and Mr. Peterson seconded to table action on the 2024 preliminary budget request for the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

16. BREAK

The Commission took a break at 12:04 PM and reconvened at 12:16 PM.

17. FORWARD SIOUX FALLS

Mike Lynch, Executive Director of Forward Sioux Falls was present and gave a presentation on Forward Sioux Falls. Forward Sioux Falls is a partnership between the Greater Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce and the Sioux Falls Development Foundation working toward the development of the

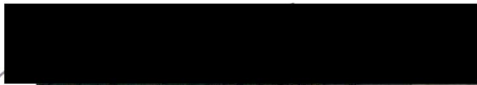
Sioux Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area. He said the partnership was created in 1987 to pursue long-term economic objectives with near-term needs and opportunities. He said Forward Sioux Falls has 325 investors throughout the Sioux Falls area. Mr. Lynch discussed the Forward Sioux Falls 2021-2026 pillars, 2026 program goals, the partnership governance, and funds raised by the program. He said from 2021 to 2026 Forward Sioux Falls has 23% or \$3,780,000 in public funding and 77% or \$12,691,000 in private funding. He discussed Forward Sioux Falls's land development, business retention, expansion, and attraction, and talent attraction, retention, and development. He also discussed various projects and programs completed by Forward Sioux Falls such as Health Sciences Clinical Simulation Center, DSU Cyber Security Research Center, Startup Sioux Falls, Sioux Falls Thrive, USD Discovery District, and Sioux Empire Housing Partnership.

Mr. Peterson asked what a key motivator is for private sector partnerships and funding. Mr. Lynch said an important motivator for investors is the increase in annual tax revenue. He said collective messaging and programs take stress off the public sector. Mr. Grindberg said Cass County and the Fargo-Moorhead region need the private sector to match public sector funds. He said a national fundraising consultant is needed to take the ideas to a higher level and make an impact on economic development and workforce needs. Mr. Lynch said Forward Sioux Falls has a national consultant that assists in developing programs. He said once the programs are developed, the program is tested, and if found successful in testing, receives funding and implementation. He said Forward Sioux Falls has support and trust from both private and public investors.

18. RECESS

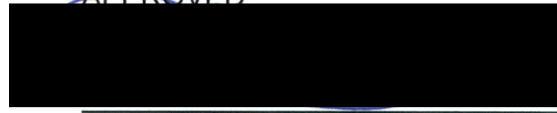
The meeting recessed at 1:04 PM until Friday, July 28, 2023 beginning at 8:00 AM.

ATTEST:



Brandy Madrigga, County Finance Director
Cass County, North Dakota

APPROVED:



Chad M. Peterson, Chairman
Cass County Board of Commissioners