

**SPECIAL MEETING OF CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MEETING IN BUDGET SESSION
JULY 28, 2023**

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Chairman Chad M. Peterson reconvened the special budget meeting at 8:06 AM on Friday, July 28, 2023 via Microsoft Teams, 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.

Ms. Madrigga said the Finance Office made the changes the Board approved at yesterday's meeting and provided a copy of the updated budgets to each Commissioner.

2. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Jim Prochniak, County Emergency Manager was present to review the 2024 Emergency Management budget. Mr. Prochniak said changes to the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) have reduced the distribution the County will be reimbursed by the State. He said the distribution will be 47.21% or \$52,211. He said additionally, the State has eliminated funding of the Assistant Emergency Manager reimbursement. He said the 2024 budget request has increased due to these decreases in State funding. Mr. Prochniak said the County will no longer serve as a pass through for EMPG grant dollars to the City of Fargo, which is a reduction in the budget.

MOTION, passed

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

Hazardous Preparedness and Response Fund

Mr. Prochniak said the 2024 budget request is consistent with prior years. He said 50% of the filing fee for hazardous materials goes to the State and the fund normally has around \$30,000.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Grindberg moved and Mrs. Scherling seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the Hazardous Preparedness and Response Fund as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

3. TAX DIRECTOR

Paul Fracassi, County Director of Equalization was present to review the 2024 Tax Director budget. Mr. Fracassi said the 2024 budget request includes no major changes. He said there is an increase in professional fees for contracts with Vanguard for work on larger commercial properties.

Mr. Peterson asked if changes in the way the County charges the City of Horace for assessment as previously discussed have been made. Mr. Fracassi said the contracts the Equalization Office has with cities and townships have a provision for charging permit fees and the Equalization Office will utilize those fees when needed. He said the fees are included in the Equalization revenues and are low estimates, he said they will likely be higher than what is budgeted.

Mrs. Scherling said she appreciates the investment the County and Tax Equalization Office have put into having online access for citizens to view property and assessment information online.

MOTION, passed

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

4. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

County Sheriff Jesse Jahner, Chief Deputy Haaland, Captain Andy Frobog, and Lieutenant Katie Fuller were present to review the 2024 Sheriff's Department budget request. Mr. Jahner said the

2024 budget requested at \$25,164,725, up \$1,424,735 from 2023. He said of the increase, approximately \$1 million is from increases at the Jail due to increases in prisoner boarding costs, inmate health services, food costs, and a general increase in the number of inmates at the Jail. Mr. Frobig said he used actual costs from January 2023 to April of 2023 to estimate figures for 2024. He said prisoner boarding is based on 10 inmates per day and for food costs he used the same population as in 2023, however, costs per meal have increased which led to an overall increase in food costs. Mr. Frobig said boarding inmates is budgeted at \$85 per day and the actual cost is over \$90 per day as entities are increasing the rate charged for prisoner housing.

Mr. Peterson said the Commission recently approved an increase the Cass County Jail charges to house inmates. He asked if this increase is included in the 2024 budget request. Mr. Frobig said this increase is not included in the 2024 budget as it was approved after the budget was submitted to the Finance Office. Mr. Frobig said he would recommend a 10% increase in the revenues. Ms. Madrigga said the Finance Office will increase the revenue by \$140,000 for line item 6035.

Mr. Kapitan entered the meeting.

Mr. Jahner said the Sheriff's Office has lost some employees, and several positions are open. Mr. Peterson said once the Jail addition is complete, many staff will be needed to staff the new pod with 200 beds. He said the additional staff will cost a substantial amount. Mr. Jahner said he anticipates the additional staff for the Jail addition will be needed starting in January of 2025. Mr. Wilson said according to the County's contract with Klein McCarthy, the addition will be complete in April of 2025.

Mr. Grindberg asked if a market analysis has been done on the Sheriff's Office, specifically the Jail staff. Mr. Wilson said the County's salary consultant Gallagher completed a salary survey for the County's overall matrix and recommended no change, however, noted differences in the County's actual salaries being low likely due to the higher number of steps the County has compared to other entities. Mr. Wilson said Gallagher also gave a cost estimate yesterday afternoon for the County to condense the pay matrix to 12 steps and estimated the cost to be \$310,000.

Mr. Grindberg asked why the Sheriff's Office is losing employees. Mr. Jahner said staff leave for a variety of reasons such as pay with the largest reason being the nature of the work in the Jail. He said it is hard work in the Jail and the nature of today's workforce is to not stay at a job for many years as it was in the past. Mr. Jahner said the approximate cost to train a correctional officer is \$11,595 and 80 people have left the Jail since January of 2020. He said many of the staff in the Sheriff's Office start in a position at the Jail and move into a field deputy position. Mrs. Scherling said the Sheriff's Office has nearly a \$1 million retention problem. She said the Chamber and other organizations are working on retention and the County needs to look at the big picture and figure out a solution.

Mrs. Scherling said health care costs are substantial to the Sheriff's budget and the County is being asked to take on Jail nursing services. She said the County should look to contract with the University of North Dakota on a nurse partnership. Mr. Jahner said there are many sick people coming into the Jail that are homeless, addicts, and have mental health issues.

Mr. Peterson asked how many vehicles are being requested for 2024. Mr. Jahner said the request is for 10 new vehicles, and the Sheriff's Office will get rid of 10 vehicles. He said the Sheriff's Office will shuffle cars around to get rid of vehicles with the oldest and highest miles. Mr. Peterson asked what the Sheriff's Office used to estimate gas expenses. Mr. Jahner said the \$287,500 gas expense is figured at \$5 per gallon for 57,500 gallons of gas. Mr. Peterson asked what the professional consulting services for \$230,000 is for. Mr. Frobig said the funds are for psychiatric services and professional license fees for social workers and law enforcement.

Mr. Grindberg asked if the Sheriff's Office staff have bullet proof vests for protection against rifles. Mr. Jahner said the Sheriff's Office got rifle body armor through a grant from Firehouse Subs a few

years ago that are used over the normal vests staff have. He said only patrol and investigators have this gear. He said he would like to purchase 80 additional rifle body armor for civil warrants staff. Mr. Jahner said a few citizens have reached out wishing to provide funds to purchase the gear, and there are likely funds in the 2023 budget to cover the costs. Mrs. Scherling asked if head protection is effective protection from gun fire. Mr. Jahner said helmets can be effective and staff have helmets they can wear during critical incidents.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Breitling moved and Mrs. Scherling seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the Sheriff's Office as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Fuller said the Sheriff's Office would like to propose an increase in the mileage rate charged for civil and warrant fees. She said the Commission had previously suggested adopting the same rate that the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS) utilizes. She said the current IRS rate is \$0.67 per mile and the suggestion is to review and be consistent with the IRS rate each year. She said it has been over 15 years since the last adjustment was made. Mr. Peterson said this item should be brought to the Board at a regular Commission meeting for approval.

24/7 Sobriety Program Fund

Mr. Frobig said the 2024 budget for the 24/7 Fund is similar to previous years. He said the fund is used for the 24/7 Sobriety Program for breathalyzer tests, at home monitoring, and other services. Mr. Frobig said additional funds may be needed as one staff position is covered out of this budget and expenses exceed revenues. Ms. Madrigga suggested the budget be approved as presented and a transfer from the general fund can be completed if needed.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Breitling moved and Mr. Peterson seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the 24/7 Sobriety Program Fund as presented and a general fund transfer if required. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Sheriff Asset Forfeiture Fund

MOTION, passed

Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the Sheriff Asset Forfeiture Fund as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

JAIGB Fund

MOTION, passed

Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the JAIGB Fund as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Jail Commissary Fund

Mr. Frobig said the Jail Commissary fund has increased due a high utilization by inmates. He said funds must be used for items and services that have a direct benefit to inmates and are not required to be provided. He said the Commissary fund can be used for the Ignite initiative for inmate programs.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the Jail Commissary Fund as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

SWAT Vehicle Fund

Mr. Jahner said this fund is used for the SWAT unit's rook. He said SWAT is looking to purchase a vehicle to pull the rook and trailer. He said currently SWAT uses a truck from the Highway Department when needed.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Kapitan moved and Mr. Grindberg seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the SWAT Vehicle Fund as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

5. FINANCE OFFICE

Ms. Madrigga presented the 2024 budget for the Finance Office. The Finance budget consists of revenues and expenses from the Finance Office, Cemetery Fund, and Election Fund. Ms. Madrigga said the Finance Office's revenues are up 37% due to high interest income. She said currently the average interest rate is over 4%. She said from January 1, 2023 to June 29, 2023 the County's interest income has been approximately \$650,000.

Ms. Madrigga said the largest request in the Finance Office budget is two staff positions. She said the first position is to reinstate a full time accountant at a C41/C44 with a base salary of \$62,389. She said when the Treasurer's Office and Auditor's Office were combined in 2020, this accountant position was lost. She said this position will be responsible for the Red River Regional Dispatch Center Fiscal Agency, grant management, federal funding programs such as ARPA, CARES, EECB, and LATCF, and assisting with year-end reporting and annual budgeting processes.

Ms. Madrigga said the second position request is for a Wedding Coordinator/Administrative Assistant with an anticipated A12 or A13 pay grade with a base salary of \$38,877. She said currently the Finance Office offers marriage licenses and weddings, however due to the demand of the Office, only two weddings are offered per day and there are blackout dates during elections and tax season. She said this position would allow for more weddings and less blackout dates. Ms. Madrigga said it is expected part of the cost for this position will be offset by an increase in revenues for marriage licenses and wedding summaries and eliminating the need for temporary staff.

Mr. Peterson said he can support the accountant position and does not support the Wedding Coordinator position. Mrs. Scherling said she supports the Wedding Position if the position can support itself in the budget in terms of increased revenue and less in temporary worker pay. Ms. Madrigga said if the Wedding Coordinator position is taken out of the budget, funds need to be added to the budget for temporary worker pay.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Kapitan moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the Finance Office as presented. Discussion: Mr. Peterson said he does not support the motion and does not believe the Wedding Coordinator position will pay for itself. Mrs. Scherling said she does not support the accountant position. On roll call vote, the motion carried with Mr. Breitling, Mr. Kapitan, and Mr. Grindberg voting "yes" and Mr. Peterson and Mrs. Scherling voting "no".

Cemetery Fund

Ms. Madrigga said the Cemetery Fund includes a 5.1% increase in the salary for the caretaker for the Springvale Cemetery.

MOTION, passed

Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the Cemetery Fund as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Election Fund

Ms. Madrigga said there will be a presidential election in 2024 which places a great deal of expenses on the County's election budget. She said the Commission has approved 21 polling locations for 2024 as compared to 10 in the 2020 election. She said cost for polling locations will remain the same at \$80,000 due to local churches, cities, and park districts providing space at no cost. She said the largest cost to the 2024 election budget request is \$570,000 to purchase 125 additional ExpressVote machines. She said it is expected that 50,000 to 60,000 voters will turn out to vote centers on election day and the addition of 125 ExpressVote machines would adequately fill the needs of the 21 vote centers. Ms. Madrigga said the County currently has 150 ExpressVote machines that were purchased with partial funding by the State. She said the cost per machine is \$4,375 not including the cost of installation and shipping.

Mr. Peterson asked how many ExpressVote machines will be at each vote center. Ms. Madrigga said the number of ExpressVote machines will vary at each vote center depending on the size of the vote center and how many ExpressVote machines can be accommodated. She said for example, the plan is to have 21 ExpressVote machines at the Fargodome. Mr. Peterson asked what percentage of voters use the ExpressVote machines. Ms. Madrigga said during the last election approximately 40% of the voters used ExpressVote. Mrs. Scherling said it is her experience people want paper ballots. Ms. Madrigga said Cass County has 70 to 80 ballot styles. She said the ExpressVote is easy to use and provides the least likely event for human error to give out the wrong ballot style.

Ms. Madrigga said the Commissioners could take a multi-year approach to the purchase if needed by purchasing half of the machines this year and half before the next election. She said she has talked to the State about providing partial funding for the ExpressVote machines, however, does not believe State Aid is likely as priority goes to smaller counties.

MOTION, failed

Mrs. Kapitan moved to approve the 2024 Election budget as presented. The motion failed due to a lack of a second.

Mr. Breitling said half of the units would cost approximately \$330,000.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Breitling moved and Mrs. Scherling seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary Election budget with the purchase of only half of the ExpressVote machines and if the State were to provide a 50% match, the full purchase could be made with a budget adjustment. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

6. BREAK

The Commission took a break at 10:36 AM and reconvened at 10:43 AM.

7. RECESS

The Commission recessed the meeting at 10:43 AM to hold a County Park Board meeting. The Commission reconvened at 10:54 AM.

8. COUNTY PARK

MOTION, passed

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

9. ROAD DEPARTMENT

Jason Benson, County Engineer and Tom Soucy, Deputy County Engineer were present to review the 2024 Highway Fund budget. Mr. Benson said the 2024 budget includes \$25.7 million in revenues and \$27.6 million in expenditures. He said the largest request for 2024 is a request for two equipment operators out of the Highway Fund and one assistant planner position from the planning

fund. Mr. Benson said the two equipment operator positions would bring the Highway Department back to operating levels in 2006 and offset the labor shortage the Highway Department has in the summer due to the inability to find temporary truck-drivers and laborers. He said the equipment operators are also needed in the winter for extra snowplow operations.

Mr. Benson said since 2004, Cass County has had one full-time planner with no additional staff and over the last 20 years there have been 6 different planners with each staying 1 to 6 years. He said the frequent turnover decreases continuity in planning activities, services, enforcement, and interpretation of applicable laws, ordinances, and regulations. Mr. Benson said the requested Planner 1 position will be a 50/50 cost share with the Planning Department and Highway Department. He said the position will assist the Planner with daily functions as well as support highway right of way acquisitions, develop the 5-year highway plan, and support Metro COG transportation committees and studies.

Mr. Breitling said he does not support the Planner 1 position due to lack of workload; he said the Cass County Planning Commission did not meet twice this year due to lack of subdivision applications. Mrs. Scherling said she would like to explore all the options for the Planning Department such as hiring an outside consultant. Mr. Benson said if an outside consultant was hired to fill the Planner role, the County would lose a contact person for cities, townships, and citizens, which is important for communication. Mrs. Scherling said the position should be sent for evaluation by Gallagher. Mr. Benson said other planners in North Dakota cities and counties are higher paid. Ms. Peters said this position was brought to the Personnel Overview Committee and the Committee said the position should be brought for budget approval by the Commission before being sent to Gallagher. Mrs. Scherling asked if the Planner position could be elevated without adding an additional position. Ms. Peters said the County could send the position to Gallagher to be reviewed.

Mr. Grindberg said the County needs to further analyze housing and planning needs. He said Cass County is the only county in North Dakota to use deed restriction. Mr. Benson said there have been discussions in the past that a task force be created to discuss these needs.

Mr. Benson discussed various costs and projects to be completed in 2024. The total 2024 costs for engineering services is \$1,096,376, the total cost of highway projects is \$13,706,592, the total costs of bridge projects are \$4,383,468, the total cost of right of way is \$200,000, and the total cost of heavy equipment is \$570,000.

Mrs. Scherling said the 2022 to 2023 winter was a bad winter with a lot of snow. She said 1 additional equipment operator may be adequate. Mr. Benson said additional equipment operators are needed in the winter for snow plowing and in the summer for hauling gravel. He said if both operator positions are approved, the temporary work budget can be reduced from \$145,000 to \$80,000.

Mr. Peterson said he struggles to support two operator positions as the County is continually getting bigger and better equipment and not acquiring additional miles of road. Mr. Breitling asked when sections of County roads will be transferred to the City of Horace. Mr. Benson said the County will likely turn over 6 miles of County roads to the City of Horace in 2026 or 2027. He said the County will acquire 1 mile of road near the North Dakota Soybean Processors Plant and two miles of road near 158th Avenue.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Scherling moved and Mr. Grindberg seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the Highway Department with one equipment operator position and a reduction to account 211-4001-431-1020 to \$80,000. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Planning Department

Mr. Benson reviewed the 2024 Planning Department budget. The request is for \$190,719. Mr. Benson said there are no projects or additional funding requested in 2024 besides the Planner 1 position.

Mr. Peterson said he does not support the additional planner position. He said he supports looking at other planner options and sending the Planner position to Gallagher to be reviewed.

MOTION, passed

Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Grindberg seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the Planning Department with the removal of the Planner 1 position and to look at alternative planning position options. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

10. VECTOR CONTROL

Ben Prather, County Vector Control Director was present to review the 2024 budget. Mr. Prather said the 2024 request includes a 0.85 mill levy. He said the 2024 budget is similar to previous years, however, has increases due to inflation. He said the request includes the purchase of two new vehicles and two full aerial applications of adult mosquitos for the City of Fargo, West Fargo, and sect acreage outside of the cities.

MOTION, passed

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

11. BREAK

The Commission took a break at 12:30 PM and reconvened at 12:50 PM.

12. COMMISSION BUDGET

The 2024 budget includes a \$150,000 request from the FMWF Chamber and a \$800,000 request from the GFMEDC. Both budgets were discussed during budget hearings on July 27, 2023.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Peterson seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the Greater Fargo Moorhead Economic Development Corporation as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Scherling said she cannot support \$150,000 to the FMWF Chamber. She said she would like a comprehensive plan with goals and outcomes to address economic issues. Mr. Kapitan said he agreed with Mrs. Scherling. Mr. Peterson said the FMWF Chamber provided a breakdown of the request as he requested yesterday. Mr. Grindberg asked if the Commission would like to fund any of the FMWF Chamber request. Mr. Kapitan said he supports funding \$100,000, not the additional \$50,000 that was added to the request this year. Mrs. Scherling said the County did not provide funding to the Chamber prior to 2020 and funds were allocated by the County for one project, not as ongoing funding. She said there needs to be an end and a plan with a goal.

Mr. Peterson said he struggles with the request as he believes the County should be a good partner. He said he likes the concierge program and believes there is value to this program. Mr. Grindberg said the discussion of workforce is an ever changing topic and the region needs a cohesive plan. Mr. Breitling asked if the Commission does not act on the Chamber budget, does that exclude the request from the 2024 preliminary budget. Mr. Peterson said that is correct, no action taken will exclude the \$150,000 request from the budget.

Mr. Grindberg said if the community can come together and make a comprehensive plan that is vetted by the FMWF Chamber and GFMEDC, he would support additional workforce funding. He said if all the interested parties can come together with a united front, the community can understand what the group is trying to achieve versus every six months one entity coming up with another

program. He said there is a national company that has a successful record of economic development with 4 projects in the Fargo-Moorhead including Fueling Our Future. Mr. Grindberg said the point of the Forward Sioux Falls presentation was to show that there are alternatives that encourage private and public partnership other the County creating and funding a Job Development Authority, as has been discussed.

Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve a \$125,000 matching funds in the 2024 preliminary budget contingent on full Commission approval to support a multi-year private sector investment campaign establishing a comprehensive economic and workforce growth plan before January 1, 2024. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Wilson said yesterday during the Red River Valley Fair (RRVF) budget the Board approved a 2024 budget allocation of \$800,000. He asked if the Board would like to use any CARES funds for a portion of the RRVF as the Commission did last year. Mr. Breitling said he would prefer utilizing CARES funds for the RRVF allocation. Ms. Madrigga said utilizing CARES Funds rather than General funds would take strain off the General Fund.

Mr. Breitling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the \$800,000 allocation for the Red River Valley Fair be taken from the CARES Fund and restricted to infrastructure projects. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Grindberg moved and Mrs. Scherling seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the Commission as amended. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Commission Other Funds

The Commission Other Funds includes fund 216 COVID, 229 Emergency, 242 ARPA, 246 Pass Through Grants, 247 Public Safety Communication System, 248 FM Diversion, 249 Opioid Abatement, and 250 LATCF.

Ms. Madrigga said with the Commission's previous action to move the RRVF allocation from the General Fund to the 216 COVID also referred to CARES Fund, there will be a change of \$800,000 for the expenditure.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2024 Commission Other Funds budget as amended. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

13. OTHER BUDGETS

Human Service Zone

Ms. Heinle said as of August 1, 2023 the State will be taking on all the indirect costs which the County used to fund. She said the State Human Service Department decides and reimburses costs based on this budget.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2024 Human Service Zone budget as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

911 Service Fund

The 911 Service Fund is funded by 911 fees on both cell service and land line service. Of the fees collected, 5% goes to the North Dakota Association of Counties to pay for the Next Generation 911 Network Transition Project and the State imposes a \$0.50 fee for each line for the Statewide Interoperable Radio Network Fund.

MOTION, passed

Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2024 911 Service Fund budget as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Debt Service Funds

Ms. Heinle said this is the last debt service fund in use is the Wild Rice River Estates Subdivision Fund. She said the debt has been closed out and the Finance Office needs to confirm the funds can be moved into a capital projects fund to be used by the Highway Department on road improvements or other needs in the area.

MOTION, passed

Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Grindberg seconded to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the Debt Service Funds as presented.

14. CAPITAL PROJECTS

401 Building Fund

The Building Fund is funded by a 4.5 mill levy. The Building Fund is intended to provide for the construction and remodeling of County buildings. Ms. Madrigga said 2024 Building Fund includes \$5 million for the Red River Regional Dispatch Center, \$1.5 million for an Election Building, \$100,000 for relocating the Information Technology Office, and \$400,000 for a new Courtroom.

402 Roundhill Subdivision

413 Forest River Subdivision

413 Grandberg Amber Plains Subdivision

420 Flood Control Sales Tax

422 Career Workforce Academy

MOTION, passed

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

15. INTERNAL SERVICE FUND

Motor Pool Fund

Ms. Heinle said the 2024 Motor Pool Fund budget includes a proposal to increase mileage fees from \$0.40 per mile to \$0.55 per mile to replace two vehicles.

MOTION, passed

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

Health Insurance Fund

Ms. Madrigga said the County has not yet received a recommendation for premium costs from the County's insurance provider, Blue Cross Blue Shield for 2024. She said the Finance Office has included a 12% increase. She said this fund must keep a balance between 25% and 50% of expenditures and there is a 7% increase in expenses.

Dental Insurance Fund

Ms. Madrigga said the dental insurance fund is also expecting a 7% increase in expenditures, however, the Finance Office is not recommending an increase in premiums.

Mr. Peterson asked where the vision insurance is located in the budget. Ms. Heinle said in 2023 the vision insurance was located in the Administration budget and in 2024 is included in each

department's budget. She said the County's vision insurance is not self-funded, the County pays the premium and the insurance company handles the rest.

MOTION, passed

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

16. SALARY DISCUSSIONS

Mr. Peterson said the 2024 preliminary budget includes a 5.1% cost of living increase for all County staff. He said the Commission also needs to discuss condensing the pay scale to 12 steps as presented by Gallagher. He said reducing the number of steps in the County's pay matrix has an impact not only to the 2024 budget, but all budgets moving forward. Mr. Peterson said over the next few years the County will also have to figure out a new retirement plan as the current plan will be closed for incoming employees in 2025. He said he supports a 3% COLA and no step compression.

Mr. Grindberg said he would like to see a five year forecast of how condensing the pay matrix will affect the cost of staff salaries. He said additional data and information is needed before he would be comfortable reducing the matrix to 12 steps. Mr. Kapitan said he is in favor of condensing the matrix to 12 steps. Mr. Grindberg said he is concerned with staffing in the Sheriff's Office, namely in the Jail. Mr. Wilson said the proposal to condense the County's pay matrix was designed by Gallagher and Ms. Peters to benefit lower pay grades in the first steps. He said this will help increase pay for lower grade positions, including the Sheriff's Office.

Ms. Peters discussed the step study completed by Gallagher. She said the County's current matrix has 17 to 21 steps. She said the study was recommended by Department Heads who were concerned the large number of steps were not competitive. She said Gallagher concluded the County's salary range is competitive, however, actual salaries are under market due to the high number of steps it takes to reach the top of the pay scale. Ms. Peters said Gallagher's recommendation is that the County implement a 12 step matrix and they have estimated the cost to be \$310,00 or 1.45% increase to current payroll. She in the 12 step matrix, grades A11 to B23 would reach midpoint at step 5, grades B31 to C52 would reach midpoint at step 6, and grades D61 and higher would reach midpoint at step 7. She said this method would help with compression issues on the lower grades in the matrix.

Mr. Grindberg said he is not comfortable agreeing to condense the number of steps at this time. He said he would like additional time to consider the request and get additional information on future budget impacts.

Mr. Breitling said in the past the Commission has adjusted the Sheriff's Office salaries specifically. He said the Commission could consider making an adjustment to the Sheriff's Office staff to address the issue rather than the entire pay matrix. Ms. Peters said the Correctional Officer or other specific position could be sent to Gallagher for review.

MOTION, failed

Mr. Kapitan moved to approve the 12 step matrix proposal. The motion failed due to a lack of a second.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Peterson seconded approve a 3% cost of living increase as part of the 2024 preliminary budget. On roll call vote, the motion carried with Commissioner Peterson, Commissioner Grindberg, Commissioner Breitling, and Commission Scherling voting "yes" and Commissioner Kapitan voting "no".

17. RECESS

Mr. Peterson suggested the Commission meet to wrap up any other budget discussions on Tuesday, August 1, 2023. The meeting recessed at 2:37 PM.

ATTEST:

APPROVED:



Brandy Madrigga, County Finance Director
Cass County, North Dakota



Chad M. Peterson, Chairman
Cass County Board of Commissioners