

**SPECIAL MEETING OF CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MEETING IN BUDGET SESSION
JULY 25, 2024**

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Chairman Chad M. Peterson called the special meeting to order at 8:01 AM on Thursday, July 24, 2024, 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; County Accounting Manager, Sarah Heinle; and County Accountant, Gerald Jenson.

2. METROPOLITAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Executive Director of the Metropolitan Council of Governments (Metro COG), Paul Griffith was present to review the 2025 budget. The 2025 request is for \$17,427 to cover local dues for Metro COG's operations and overhead and \$365 for the local funds for internal operations based on a formula approved by the Metro COG Policy Board and local match for projects in 2025.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Breitling moved and Mrs. Scherling seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for Metropolitan Council of Governments as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

3. HOMEWARD ANIMAL SHELTER

Director of Homeward Animal Shelter, Tasha Haug was present to review the 2025 budget request. The request is for \$8,000, an increase from \$7,500 in 2024. 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.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for Homeward Animal Shelter as presented. Discussion: Mr. Peterson said a few years ago there was a discussion about getting Homeward a larger facility, he asked if that was still in the works. Ms. Haug said the project is still being discussed. She said an expansion takes time and large number of resources. 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%. Executive Director of Valley Senior Services, Paul Grindeland was present to review the 2025 budget request. The request is for \$2 million, no change from 2024. Mr. Grindberg asked if there have been any discussions to request the state increase the matching percentage at the upcoming session. Mr. Grindeland said the percentage has not changed for many years, despite efforts to increase the percentage. He said he has not heard of anyone supporting a bill to increase the matching percentage in the upcoming session.

Treasurer of Cass County Council on Aging, Keith Zeutschel was present to discuss the 2025 budget request for Cass County Council on Aging. The request is for \$195,920 which is up from \$146,934 in 2024. 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.

Ms. Scherling said all the clubs receive different amounts of funding. She asked if there is a formula to which clubs receive funds or how clubs are allocated funds. Mr. Zeutschel said each club makes their own budget request. Mr. Grindeland said some clubs have more members and fundraisers than

others and offer different programs and services, which leads to varying funding requests. Mr. Peterson said he is in favor of restructuring the funding requests to make it fair and meet the needs of all clubs. He said he is not in favor of clubs saving taxpayer dollars in reserve funds.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for Valley Senior Services and Cass County Council on Aging as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

5. OTHER FUNDS

Human Service Zone

Ms. Heinle said this is an in and out fund for the Human Service Zone where expenses are paid and then costs are reimbursed by the State.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Kapitan moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Human Service Zone fund as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Debt Service Funds- Wild Rice Estates Subdivision

Ms. Heinle said the last debt service fund in use is the Wild Rice Estates Subdivision Fund. She said the debt has been closed out and funds can be used for improvement projects within the subdivision.

MOTION, passed

Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Grindberg seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Wild Rice Estates Subdivision Fund as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Motor Pool Fund

Ms. Heinle said the 2025 Motor Pool Fund is the same as 2024 and includes no new vehicles.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Kapitan moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Motor Pool Fund as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Technology Trust Fund

County Information Technology Director, Bob Henderson was present to discuss the 2025 Technology Trust Fund budget. He said the fund pays expenditures for hardware and software purchases and departments are billed for each expense. Mr. Peterson asked what the \$3,000 for education and per diem was added in 2025 for. Mr. Henderson said the expense was added in 2024 for training if needed for Microsoft licensing model and was also included in 2025.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Kapitan moved and Mrs. Scherling seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Technology Trust Fund as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

6. HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Executive Director of the Cass County Historical Society (Bonanzaville), Beth Jansen was present to review the 2025 Historical Society budget. The request is for \$190,000 for general operations and \$500,000 for infrastructure needs, up from \$240,000 in 2024. Ms. Jansen said Bonanzaville has worked to overcome many building repair challenges and is increasing revenue and annual profits each year. She discussed the infrastructure and deferred maintenance needs of Bonanzaville.

Mr. Peterson said the 2025 request is a large increase compared to previous years and the County is working to decrease the current deficit for 2025. He said he supports funding of \$240,000 and potential for additional funds with a matching requirement to leverage additional funds for Bonanzaville. Mrs. Scherling agreed that the request is a large increase from previous years and

would support matching funds. Mr. Peterson suggested funding \$240,000 for general operations and \$100,000 funding that requires a two thirds match meaning Bonanzaville would need to find \$300,000 in matching funds and would receive \$100,000 matching funds from Cass County.

MOTION, failed

Mr. Kapitan motioned to approve the 2024 preliminary budget for the Cass County Historical Society with \$240,000 in general operational funding and an additional \$200,000 for infrastructure requiring matching funds. The motion failed due to lack of a second.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Kapitan moved and Mr. Peterson seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Cass County Historical Society with \$240,000 in general operational funding and an additional \$100,000 for infrastructure requiring two-thirds matching funds. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

7. BREAK

The Commission took a break at 8:52 AM and reconvened at 9:01 AM.

8. VALLEY WATER RESCUE

Valley Water Rescue President, Pete Fendt was present to review the 2025 budget for Valley Water Rescue. The request is for \$46,895 up from \$42,631 in 2024. Mr. Fendt said the increase in the budget request is due to increased equipment costs.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Kapitan moved and Mrs. Scherling seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Valley Water Rescue as presented. Discussion: Ms. Scherling asked what the increase in computer equipment is for. Mr. Fendt said the cost of rescue equipment has gone up including the dry suits and Valley Water Rescue will be looking to purchase new boats in 2026. Ms. Heinle said the \$27,260 listed under computer equipment should be listed as field equipment and she will adjust the line item to the correct spot in the budget. Mrs. Scherling asked how many people are on the Valley Water Rescue Team. Mr. Fendt said there are 30 team members. Mr. Wilson said the new Law Enforcement Storage Facility will begin construction soon and once complete, Valley Water Rescue Equipment will be moved from the County Highway Department building. Mr. Fendt said a clean storage place is needed for the lifesaving equipment as the Highway Department building has dust and dirt that can damage the equipment. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

9. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

County Sheriff Jesse Jahner was present to give an update on the Sheriff's Office preliminary budget as requested by the Commission at budget hearings yesterday. Mr. Jahner said the Sheriff's Office worked with the Finance Office to estimate the Jail salary may be budgeted at \$2,259,240 to account for additional positions and costs associated with the Jail addition set to open in 2025, down from the original budgeted amount of \$3,012,986. Mrs. Scherling said if the new Jail pod opens earlier or more staff are hired sooner, the Sheriff's Office can come back to the Commission and ask for a budget adjustment.

MOTION, passed

Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Sheriff's Office as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

10. FARGO CASS PUBLIC HEALTH

City of Fargo Director of Public Health at Fargo Cass Public Health (FCPH), Jenn Faul was present to review the 2025 budget request for FCPH operations. The request is \$1,212,078, up from \$1,051,976 in 2024. Ms. Faul said the budget increase is due to salary increases. Mr. Peterson said

information should be shared with the City of West Fargo as to how much the City of Fargo and Cass County are subsidizing costs for West Fargo regarding FCPH services.

MOTION, passed

Mr. Kapitan moved and Mr. Grindberg seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for Fargo Cass Public Health as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

11. FIRST LINK

Director of First Link, Jennifer Illich was present to review the 2025 budget for First Link. The request is \$7,000 which reflects no change since 2020. Ms. Illich said First link is the only twenty-four seven 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 to the County in disaster planning and operations.

Mrs. Scherling said in the past the budget request was \$5,000 for general funding and \$2,000 for the Navigator and this year's request is simply for \$7,000. She asked if the Navigator was eliminated. Ms. Illich said the Navigator program has expanded to include additional services and support to anyone struggling with behavioral health challenges.

Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for First Link as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

12. CAPITAL PROJECTS

Round Hill Subdivision- 402

Forest River Subdivision- 413

Grandberg Amber Plains Subdivision- 418

Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for Round Hill Subdivision Fund 402, Forest River Subdivision fund 413, and Grandberg Amber Plans Subdivision 418 as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Flood Control Sales Tax Fund- 420

Ms. Heinle said this budget includes revenues at projected sales tax receipts for County flood control projects and 94% of the sales paid to the Diversion Authority for the Metro Flood Diversion project.

Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Flood Control Sales Tax fund 420 as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Career Workforce Academy- 422

Ms. Heinle said this fund was started in 2020 with a one mill levy. She said the levy will be ending in 2024 and the request will be to transfer any remaining funds at the end of 2024 to another capital project fund.

Mr. Kapitan moved and Mr. Peterson seconded to remove Career Workforce Academy Fund 422 from the 2025 budget as the levy is ending in 2024. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Building Fund- 401

Ms. Madrigga said 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 the 2025 Building Fund budget includes \$5 million for the Red River Regional Dispatch Center per the Joint Powers Agreement, \$1.5 million for the Robert D. Johnson Building, \$1 million for the County space needs review, and \$1 million for the additional Courtroom. She said the amounts are place holders

as the exact amounts for projects are not yet known. She said when the projects are ready for expenditures, the request will come to the Commission for approval.

Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Building Fund 401 as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

13. INTERNAL SERVICE FUNDS

Dental Insurance Fund

Ms. Madrigga said the 2025 Dental Insurance fund includes no increase to premiums due to the large fund balance.

Health Insurance Fund

Ms. Madrigga said based on projections the County received from benefits consultant Brown and Brown, the Finance Office is recommending a 12.3% increase to health insurance premiums for 2025. She said the County has not yet received the actual numbers from Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Dental Insurance Fund and Health Insurance Fund as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Health Insurance Premiums

Ms. Madrigga said the Finance Office is proposing a change to the percentages of health insurance paid by the County and employees. She said the recommendation is for the employee only tier to increase 6.3% and the employee rate be \$53 per month and the County rate be \$788 per month, for the employee plus dependent tier to increase 12.6% and the employee rate be \$201 per month, and the County rate be \$1,394 per month, and the employee plus family tier to increase 18.9% and the employee rate be \$532 per month and the County rate be \$2,281 per month.

Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Peterson seconded to approve the 2025 health insurance premiums as recommended by the Finance Office. Discussion: Mr. Grindberg said he is supportive of the new health plan. Mrs. Scherling said the County didn't make all the large changes proposed by Brown and Brown and opted to take a step approach to make small changes over the next few years to improve the plan and the fund. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

14. ROAD DEPARTMENT

Planning Department

County Engineer, Tom Soucy and County Planner, Cole Hansen were present to review the 2025 Planning Department budget. The request is for \$176,948 up from \$128,356 in 2024. Mr. Soucy said the increase is due to the request for a .5 position for an Assistant County Planner and .5 GIS Technician position. He said half of the requested position is included in the Planning budget and half is included in the Highway Department budget. Mr. Hansen discussed the increase in subdivision plat applications over the past few years. Mr. Grindberg asked why the number of subdivisions is trending higher in recent years. Mr. Hansen said subdivision applications have increased as the County updates its ordinance and people started following the regulations as they were not as closely in the past. He said the County is also no longer using splits or auditors lots for subdividing, only using the subdivision process. Mr. Soucy said many of the applications are dividing farmland from residential properties. Mr. Hansen said the County is projected to handle 30-36 subdivisions in 2024, up from 24 in 2023 and 19 in 2022. Mr. Peterson suggested the County look at increasing the subdivision application fees to recoup some of the department costs.

Mr. Breitling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Planning Department as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried with Mr. Breitling, Mr. Grindberg, Mr. Kapitan, and Mrs. Scherling voting "yes" and Mr. Peterson voting "no".

Mr. Breitling left the meeting.

15. 911 SERVICE FUND


Ms. Heinle said the North Dakota Association of Counties is taking over the 911 fees for North Dakota Counties.

Mr. Scherling moved and Mr. Grindberg seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for 911 Service Fund as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

16. RECESS

The meeting recessed at 10:23 AM until Friday, July 26, 2024, beginning at 8:45 AM.

ATTEST:



Brandy Madrigga, County Finance Director
Cass County, North Dakota

APPROVED:



Chad M. Peterson, Chairman
Cass County Board of Commissioners