

**SPECIAL MEETING OF CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MEETING IN BUDGET SESSION  
JULY 24, 2024**

**1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

Chairman Chad M. Peterson called the special meeting to order at 8:00 AM on Wednesday, July 24, 2024, with all members present as follows: Tony Grindberg, Duane Breitling, Jim Kapitan, Mary Scherling, and Chad M. Peterson. Also present was 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. BUDGET OVERVIEW**

Ms. Madrigga provided an overview of the 2025 preliminary budget. Once the preliminary budget is approved, it will be posted on the County website, and a hearing date for the final budget approval will be set for Monday, September 16, 2024, and noticed in the County's official newspaper, the Fargo Forum. Additional notices will be sent to taxpayers and entities listing the public hearing dates and times for local jurisdictions.

Ms. Madrigga said the 2025 value of a mill is \$1.32 million, up 5.6% from 2024. She said the preliminary budget includes no change in mills and the total County mills remain stable at 45.00 and a maximum mill rate on any property in the County remains at 52.55.

Ms. Madrigga discussed major impacts on the General Fund. She said the 2024 preliminary budget includes a 2.5% cost of living adjustment (COLA) for staff salaries, an increase of \$13.4 million in expenditures over 2024, 29 new full-time positions to staff the new Jail pod opening in 2025, 2 Sheriff Deputies positions, and 1 new position for the Highway Department and Planning Department. Ms. Madrigga said the recommendation from the Finance Office is to reduce budget expenditures by \$8 million to \$9 million for an overall budget deficit of \$2.1 million to \$3.1 million.

**3. COUNTY ADMINISTRATION**

Commission-1001

Mr. Wilson discussed the 2025 Commission budget. He said the Commission budget is similar to previous year requests with a notable increase of \$10,000 for an agenda management software, and \$12,000 for part time staffing. Ms. Heinle said the \$12,000 for part-time staffing is not currently in the budget and should be added.

***MOTION, passed***

**Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to add \$12,000 to account 101-1001 for temporary staffing. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Commission Projects-1002

Mr. Wilson discussed the 2025 Commission Projects budget. He said the Commission Projects budget is similar to previous year's requests with an increase in insurance rates.

Administrator-1501

Mr. Wilson discussed the 2025 Administration budget. This budget includes operating expenses for the Administration, Human Resources, and Communications offices. He said this budget remains stable from previous years.

Buildings and Grounds General-1502

Mr. Wilson discussed the 2025 Buildings and Grounds budget. He said the largest increase in the Buildings and Grounds budget is \$30,000 for contracted snow removal at the Courthouse and Annex. He said previously, Highway Department employees and equipment were utilized to clear lots. He said as the Highway Department works to be more efficient in clearing roadways in the winter, it makes sense for the Highway Department to focus on road routes and the County to contract snow removal for building lots. Mr. Peterson said if the snow removal cost for contracting is supported, the additional Equipment Operator position for the Highway Department requested in the budget for 2025



should be removed. Mr. Grindberg said the County needs to get creative with snow removal practices and suggested looking to add rural snow removal contracts.

#### Buildings and Grounds Courthouse-1503

Mr. Wilson discussed the 2025 Buildings and Grounds maintenance budget for the Courthouse. He said planned maintenance for the Courthouse includes several repair projects including \$100,000 for an upgrade to the south elevator, \$45,000 for HVAC Johnson Control updates, and \$40,000 for parking lot repairs.

#### Buildings and Grounds Jail-1504

Mr. Wilson discussed the 2025 Buildings and Grounds maintenance budget for the Jail. He said planned maintenance for the Jail in 2025 including increases in water, sewer, garbage, gas, and electrical costs related to the new Jail Pod, and \$180,000 in projects including finishing the LED lighting conversion, updating a portion of the Johnson Controls system, and recarpeting the administration area.

#### Buildings and Grounds Law Enforcement Center-1506

Mr. Wilson discussed the 2025 Buildings and Grounds maintenance budget for the Law Enforcement Center. He said planned maintenance for the Law Enforcement Center are \$60,000 to replace the back shop roof, and \$26,000 for HVAC upgrades.

#### Buildings and Grounds Annex-1505

Mr. Wilson discussed the 2025 Buildings and Grounds maintenance budget for the Annex. He said planned maintenance projects for the Annex include \$35,000 in Annex parking lot repairs, and \$3,100 for the Boulger parking lot repairs across from the Courthouse.

#### Buildings and Grounds Robert D. Johnson-1507

Mr. Wilson discussed the 2025 Buildings and Grounds maintenance budget for the Robert D. Johnson building. He said the County purchased the RDJ in 2024 and exact costs for the building are unknown, estimates were used to create the 2025 budget. He said \$10,000 was included for general maintenance.

#### ***MOTION, passed***

**Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2025 Commission (101-1001), Commission Projects (1002), Administrator (1501) as amended, Buildings and Grounds General (101-1502), Courthouse (1503), Jail (1504), Law Enforcement Center (1506), Annex (1505, and Robert D. Johnson (1507) as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

#### **4. WEED CONTROL**

County Weed Control Officer, Kyle Aasand was present to review the 2025 Weed Control budget request. The Cass County Weed Control Board is requesting to maintain the current mill levy at 1.2 mills. Mr. Aasand said the total revenues for 2025 are budgeted at \$579,255 with total expenditures at \$667,732, meaning \$88,477 will be needed from reserves to cover expenditures over revenues. He said the budget includes a 5% inflation increase for most items and the largest increase is in chemicals of 10%.

#### ***MOTION, passed***

**Mr. Kapitan moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for Cass County Weed Control as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

#### **5. RECORDER**

Deb Moeller, County Recorder was present to review the 2025 Recorder's Office budget. Ms. Moeller said in 2024 the Recorder's Office has seen a slight increase in document counts. She said the request is consistent with previous years request with an increase in travel expenses for the upcoming legislative session.



Mr. Peterson said the Recorder's Office budget includes two positions that are currently not being utilized and have not been for the last few years. He suggested removing one of the two positions from the 2025 budget. Ms. Moeller said if the current document counts keep on pace or higher, the Recorder's Office will look to fill one of the two open positions at the end of 2024 or beginning of 2025. She said she is comfortable with removing one position.

***MOTION, passed***

**Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to adjust the 2025 Recorder's Office budget to remove one of the unfilled positions and the Commission upon request will support the additional position if needed. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

***MOTION, passed***

**Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Recorder's Office as amended. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

#### NDRIN Fund

Counties across the State are members of the North Dakota Recorders Information Network (NDRIN), a fund that is self-supporting through dollars generated from subscriber and copy fees. Ms. Moeller said NDRIN remains a consistent revenue source for North Dakota Counties, however, will likely see a dip in 2025 due to the cost of programming fees for a free fraud alert notice being implemented. She said the costs of the alert service will be spread over the next three years to reduce the impacts to counties.

***MOTION, passed***

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

#### Document Preservation Fund

Revenues from the Document Preservation Fund are generated through a fee per document collected by the County Recorder when documents are filed and covers the Recorder's Office technology needs. Ms. Moeller said the 2025 budget includes an increase in expenses of \$12,000 from 2024 due to technology vendor software and support increases.

***MOTION, passed***

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

#### **6. NDSU EXTENSION**

Cass County Extension Agent, Rita Ussatis was present to review the 2025 NDSU Extension budget request. Ms. Ussatis said the request is consistent with previous years with the largest changes being a 5% salary increase for Extension Agent's as determined by the State Legislature, an increase in travel costs, and increase in technology software costs. She said NDSU covers 50% of agent's salaries, and 100% of fringe costs, and the County covers 50% of salaries and operating and support staff costs. Ms. Ussatis said she has an additional request that was not included in the budget presented today, a request to add \$8,000 to the budget for temporary staff.

***MOTION, passed***

**Mr. Breitling moved and Mrs. Scherling seconded to add \$8,000 to 101-4502-401-10-25 for temporary staffing and approve the budget for NDSU Extension as amended. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

#### Extension Parent Resource

***MOTION, passed***



**Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Grindberg seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for Parent Resource as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Parenting Workshop-219

***MOTION, passed***

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

Mrs. Scherling asked how Extension is affected by the Red River Valley Fair Association (RRVF). Ms. Ussatis said the RRVF has helped the 4H program grow and expand over the years. She said without the RRVF 4H would have nowhere to do events.

**7. COUNTY CORONER**

Kristie Ross, County Coroner was present to review the 2025 Coroner's Office budget. Ms. Ross said the 2025 budget request is consistent with previous year's budget request with the largest changes of a decrease in contracted services for transports and small increases in travel, seminar registration, and investigations due to inflation. She said the largest increase is due to the request for \$18,000 for digital fingerprinting software and \$60,000 for remodeling the Coroner's Office. Ms. Ross said the Coroner's Office currently uses ink finger printing that is messy and moving to a digital software is convenient and gives an immediate response. She said the office remodel is needed to create additional office spaces, a shower area, breakroom, and laundry closet.

Mr. Peterson asked if the building remodel costs should be moved to the Buildings and Grounds budget as it is a building project. Ms. Heinle said the Coroner's Office is located in the Fargo Cass Public Health Office owned by the City of Fargo and rented by the County. She said since the space is not owned by the County, expenses for the office have historically come out of the Coroner's Office budget.

***MOTION, passed***

**Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Grindberg seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the County Coroner as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**8. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

County Emergency Manager, Jim Prochniak was present to review the 2024 Emergency Management budget. Mr. Prochniak said changes to the Emergency Management budget include an increase to field equipment, organizational memberships, and software costs. He said the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) will likely be reduced by 10 to 11%. Mr. Wilson asked if there is any discussion on the State picking up the cost being reduced by the EMPG. Mr. Prochniak said the decision to pick up the cost would be made by the legislature and he has not heard any talk of the costs being picked up. Mr. Peterson said the federal government is changing spending and he does not see the state subsidizing the costs.

***MOTION, passed***

**Mr. Kapitan moved and Ms. Scherling seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for Emergency Management as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Hazardous Preparedness and Response Fund-236

Mr. Prochniak said the 2025 budget for the Hazardous Preparedness fund is consistent with previous years requests. He said 50% of the filing fees for hazardous materials goes to the State and the other 50% goes to this fund.

***MOTION, passed***

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



## 9. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

County Information Technology Director, Bob Henderson was present to review the 2025 Information Technology budget. Mr. Henderson said the 2025 budget includes an increase in Maintenance Agreement Network Software due to county-wide deployment of multi factor authentication, Tyler MDR software, and a new software called TailScale which is a zero-trust network security tool to change the County's connectivity methods and allows for a higher level of control for access to the County's network. He said the one-year cost for TailScale is \$100,000 and is a subscription-based cost which would be ongoing annually. Mr. Peterson said he appreciates the diligence and security IT provides the County and proper IT security is necessary, however, he asked how many services are too much. Mr. Henderson said TailScale is a proactive approach and the IT Office is doing an effective job of keeping the County secure, the software would be an additional layer of security. Mr. Grindberg said he met with Mr. Henderson prior to budget hearings to review the IT budget as the Commission Portfolio and Mr. Henderson cut some costs before presenting the budget. He said the County needs to evaluate IT security needs and look at what software and solutions are available.

Mr. Henderson said the County is required by the State and North Dakota Century Code to utilize WAN connections through StateNET and costs are increasing by \$10,000 in 2025. He said the GIS and AS400/ARP 1808 budgets remain largely unchanged from 2024.

Mr. Peterson said he supports the budget as presented except for the \$100,000 expense for TailScale. He said he would like to see a full list of County subscription costs. Mr. Henderson said he would be okay with cutting the TailScale expenditure from \$100,000 to \$25,000 to allow for TailScale to be utilized as a test for some County positions.

***MOTION, passed***

**Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to reduce the 2025 preliminary IT budget from \$100,000 to \$25,000 for TailScale. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

***MOTION, passed***

**Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for Information Technology as amended. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

## 10. BREAK

The Commission took a break at 10:08 AM and reconvened at 10:27 AM.

## 11. VETERAN SERVICES OFFICE

Veteran Services Officer, Chris Deery was present to review the 2025 Veteran Services budget. Mr. Deery said his office is fully staffed and accredited. He said the 2025 budget request is consistent with previous years with no large changes. He said the Veterans Services Office continues to help veterans with PACT ACT claims, benefit claims, and participate in community events. He said locally, County veterans have been paid \$70 million.

***MOTION, passed***

**Mr. Breitling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for Veteran's Service as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

## 12. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

County Sheriff Jesse Jahner, Chief Deputy Dean Haaland, and Captain Andy Frobig were present to review the 2025 Sheriff's Office budget request. Mr. Jahner said the 2025 budget request is \$29,564,080 up from \$25,013,617 in 2024. He said the budget is up substantially due to the cost of the new Jail pod and general increase in costs for goods and services. He said the budget includes 29 new positions in the Jail for the new pod, 2 Deputy positions for contract policing in the City of



Horace, and purchasing 12 vehicles and selling 11 vehicles. Mr. Jahner discussed various line item increases such as upgrading the tasers at the Jail that are no longer supported, technology upgrades to the investigation room, flock camera system to monitor criminal activity, increase to cost share for the training center, replacing the AED batteries, and various other increases to the Sheriff's Field Office budget.

Mr. Jahner said the Sheriff's Office currently provides two deputies in Casselton, 2.5 deputies in the City of Horace, .5 deputies in the City of Reile's Acres, and .25 deputies in Mapleton for contract policing. He said the 2025 budget includes two new deputy positions requested by the City of Horace for contract policing. He said the City of Harwood has also discussed possibly adding contracted services. Mr. Jahner said the County pays for the equipment for the deputies such as vehicle, uniform, technology, which costs \$95,000 to \$100,000 and the contracted city pays for the deputy's salary and benefits. He said the reason the County covers the costs of the equipment is due to if contracted services are ended, the County has fully equipped deputies. Mr. Peterson suggested looking at the pricing in the future to make sure it is equitable.

Mr. Frobig discussed the 2025 Jail budget. He said the assumption made in the budget is the current jail plus an additional increase of 48 inmates for half of the year to account for the additional Jail pod. Ms. Madrigga said the staffing assumption is the Jail will be fully staffed including the staff for the Jail pod for the entire year. Mr. Grindberg said a more accurate number should be used to calculate the staffing costs for 2025 to avoid over budgeting. Mr. Peterson agreed, he said the additional staff pose a large increase in costs and the intention is not to increase the tax burden if funds are not needed. Mr. Frobig said staffing is not the only cost affected by the Jail pod opening, he said all Jail cost increase as the number of inmates increase. Mr. Grindberg said the County should work to establish a plan to make the best decision on when to open the new pod and budget accordingly.

***MOTION, failed***

**Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Sheriff's Office as presented. Discussion: Mr. Grindberg said he does not support the budget as presented, he said it is premature to approve a motion without having a plan for the pod opening and reducing the budget for salaries and benefits. On roll call vote, the motion failed with Mr. Breitling, Mr. Grindberg, and Mr. Kapitan voting "no" and Mrs. Scherling and Mr. Peterson voting "yes".**

Mr. Frobig said the FCC passed a new regulation to reduce per minute cost of inmate calling from \$0.21 per minute to \$0.07 per minute. He said at this cost, nearly all phone revenues will be gone. He said these costs go into the Commissary fund. He said it will be best to reduce the revenues for 2025 to account for this. Mr. Frobig said the United States Postal Service just increased the price of stamps to \$0.73 and will increase the costs of mailing within the Jail. He said District Court is discussing adding an additional ITV court session which would increase staff costs.

***MOTION, passed***

**Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded table action on the 2025 preliminary budget for the Sheriff's Office. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

The Sheriff's Office and Finance Office are going to work to come up with a more accurate budget estimate for benefits and salaries and present the information to the Board prior to the end of budget hearings.

**Sheriff Grant Fund-212**

Mr. Jahner said this fund has Sheriff grant funds from federal and state agencies including Back the Blue funds.

***MOTION, passed***



**Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Sheriff Grant Fund 212 as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

24/7 Sobriety Program-220

Mr. Frobig said the 24/7 fund budget for 2025 includes an increase in costs and revenues due to warrants. He said the fees are set by North Dakota Century Code and District Court Judges have started to waive program fees when requiring the program.

Sheriff Asset Forfeiture-221

JAIGB-226

Jail Commissary-235

Mr. Frobig said the Jail staff are working to find items to spend down the balance and purchase items to benefit the inmates. He said there will likely be opportunities to utilize the funds for items in the new Jail pod.

Swat Vehicle Replacement-241

Public Safety Communication System- 247

***MOTION, passed***

**Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Breitling seconded approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the 24/7 Sobriety Fund 220, Sheriff Asset Forfeiture Fund 221, JAIGB Fund 226, Jail Commissary Fund 235, Swat Vehicle Replacement Fund 241, and Public Safety Communication System Fund 247 as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**13. STATE'S ATTORNEY**

County State's Attorney, Kim Hegvik was present to review the 2025 State's Attorney budget. Ms. Hegvik said the 2025 budget request is similar to prior year requests with the largest increase to temporary staffing and overtime. She said she anticipates a request in 2026 for one additional Attorney and one additional Paralegal support staff. Ms. Hegvik discussed the State's Attorney's Office need to go paperless. She said the state is working on a new system, however, would likely not support the needs of Cass County.

Ms. Hegvik discussed the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant award that has historically been received by the State's Attorney's Office through the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. She said federally, the VOCA grant has been reduced significantly and the revenue has been decreased from \$45,000 in 2024 to \$20,000 in 2025. She said there is no guarantee the State's Attorney's Office will receive funding from year to year.

***MOTION, passed***

**Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the State's Attorney as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Asset Forfeiture Fund and Civil Asset Forfeiture Fund

Ms. Hegvik said the 2020 legislative session changed the asset forfeiture process, funds are approved through the courts, then through a committee, before being distributed to agencies.

***MOTION, passed***

**Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the State's Attorney Civil Asset Forfeiture Fund and Civil Asset Forfeiture Fund as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**



**14. TAX EQUALIZATION OFFICE**

County Director of Equalization, Paul Fracassi was present to review the 2025 Tax Equalization Office budget. Mr. Fracassi said the 2025 budget request includes no major changes with slight increases in software costs and increase to service with Vanguard for special projects. He said the budget also includes one of the current Tax Appraiser II positions to grow into an Appraiser III after the successful completion of a commercial assignment. He said the Tax Equalization Office will likely request an additional full-time employee in 2026 due to an increase in new homes throughout the County.

***MOTION, passed***

**Mr. Kapitan moved and Mr. Grindberg seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Tax Equalization Office as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**15. BREAK**

The Commission took a break at 12:33 PM and reconvened at 1:03 PM.

**16. WATER RESOURCE DISTRICTS**

Director-Secretary for the Cass County Water Resource Districts (WRD), Melissa Hinkemeyer was present to review the 2025 WRD budget request. Southeast Cass Water Resource District will levy 1.4 mills, remaining unchanged from 2024; Rush River Water Resource District will levy 4.00 mills, remaining unchanged from 2024; Maple River Water Resource District will levy 2.00 mills, reduced from 2.10 mills in 2024; North Cass Water Resource District will levy 4.00 mills, an increase from 3.50 in 2024. Each district will also levy an additional 1.50 mills for the Red River Joint Water Resource District.

Mr. Peterson asked if the WRD staff salaries have been looked at. Ms. Hinkemeyer said salaries have not been evaluated. She said the WRD sets its own COLA and policies. She said the COLA is typically larger than the County's due to the WRD not having steps or a pay matrix. Ms. Hinkemeyer said the Cass County Joint Water Resource District Board created a Human Resources Committee to look at salaries and policies for the WRD.

***MOTION, passed***

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

**17. FINANCE OFFICE**Finance

Ms. Madrigga presented the 2025 budget for the Finance Office. She said the main source of revenue for the Finance Office remains interest income. She said there are no major changes to the Finance Budget compared to 2024.

***MOTION, passed***

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

Cemetery

Ms. Madrigga said the 2025 Cemetery budget includes 2.5% increase to the sexton salary and a \$5,000 expenditure to enable efforts of the County Cemetery Board. Mrs. Scherling said the Cemetery Board has discussed that the County will no longer sell lots and will not have revenues for this purpose in the future.

Elections

Ms. Madrigga said 2025 is not an election year thus the budget is significantly decreased compared to 2024. She said the 2025 budget includes two election staff, training, and maintenance on election equipment.



### Marriage Licenses and Wedding Ceremonies

Ms. Madrigga said a Wedding Coordinator position was added in 2024 and the position has allowed the Finance Office to increase marriage and wedding services as well as eliminate the need to hire temporary staff during tax and election season. She said the 2025 budget consists of \$95,000 in revenues and \$64,000 in expenses for an overall fund increase of \$31,000.

#### ***MOTION, passed***

**Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Breitling seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Cemetery, Elections, and Marriage Licenses and Wedding Ceremonies as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

## **18. ROAD DEPARTMENT**

County Engineer, Tom Soucy, County Highway Superintendent, Blaine Laaveg, and County Assistant Engineer, Kyle Litchy were present to discuss the 2025 Highway Department budget. Mr. Soucy said the 2025 budget includes \$27.9 million in revenues and \$24.8 million in expenditures. He said the budget includes a request for one additional equipment operator position and one additional position funded half from the Highway Fund for an Engineering Technician that would focus on GIS activities and half from the Planning Fund as an Assistant County Planner.

Mr. Grindberg said he would like the Highway Department to look at options to contract with a rural farmer or another solution to aid in rural snow removal in areas such as Page as discussed at the Community meetings held earlier this year. Mr. Soucy said the option to contract rural snow removal was discussed with the Highway Department and at this time the Highway Department is not comfortable with contracting with a local resident for snow removal due to liability, training, and snow removal being inconsistent with current Highway Department practices. Mr. Peterson said he does not support an additional equipment operator position for 2025. He said it is practical that rural roads take longer to be plowed than roads in the metro area. Mrs. Scherling said she supports looking into alternative solutions and cost share. She asked if there is a potential to partner with Townships on snow removal. Mr. Laaveg said Townships often contract for snow removal services due to lack of equipment and funding. He said some Township Officers use their own equipment to conduct snow removal when Townships get behind. Mr. Peterson said an expenditure was approved in the 2025 Buildings and Grounds budget for snow removal services for the Courthouse and Annex parking lots, which should in turn free up an operator for conducting snow removal on County roads. Mr. Laaveg said having the additional operator moved from plowing parking lots to County roads will allow the Highway Department to add an additional road route and improve snow removal efforts.

Mr. Soucy discussed other expenditures for the 2025 budget including \$915,000 for design and construction engineering, \$11,560,000 for highway projects, \$3,140,000 for bridge projects, \$350,000 for routine repairs and maintenance, \$200,000 for crack sealing, \$450,000 for striping, \$100,000 for bridge and culvert repair, and \$300,000 for right of way projects. He said the budget also includes a request for \$885,000 for heavy equipment including an excavator, two pickup trucks, reversible snowplows, snow blower for tractor, brush cat mower, walk and roll packers, and an additional plow truck.

#### ***MOTION, passed***

**Mr. Grindberg moved and Mr. Kapitan seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for the Highway Department as presented and request the Highway Department report to the Commission in January 2025 on what is required to subcontract a pilot program for snow removal in rural parts of the County. Discussion: Mr. Peterson said he supports the Highway Department budget with the exception of the additional Equipment Operator position. Mr. Soucy said if the County parking lots are going to be contracted for snow removal, the Highway Department is comfortable with removing the additional Equipment Operator position. Mr. Grindberg amended the motion to remove the**



**additional Equipment Operator from the 2025 Budget, Mr. Kapitan seconded the amendment. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**19. VECTOR CONTROL**

County Vector Control Director, Ben Prather was present to review the 2025 budget for Vector Control. Mr. Prather said the 2025 budget includes a 0.85 mill levy, unchanged from 2024. He said the request is similar to previous years with large increases for the purchase of one truck and increases due to inflation costs of pesticides, gas, and other required supplies. Mr. Prather said there will be contract negotiations with Fargo and West Fargo for Vector Control services in 2025.

***MOTION, passed***

**Mrs. Scherling moved and Mr. Grindberg seconded to approve the 2025 preliminary budget for Vector Control as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**20. RECESS**

The meeting recessed at 2:39 PM until Thursday, July 25, 2024, beginning at 8:00 AM.

ATTEST:

APPROVED:



Brandy Madrigga, County Finance Director  
Cass County, North Dakota



Chad M. Peterson, Chairman  
Cass County Board of Commissioners