

Traverse County Commission
Regular Board Meeting
April 16, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Commission Chair Mark Gail. Other Commissioners present were Jerrel Olson, Dwight Nelson, Chad Metz, and Kayla Schmidt. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The agenda was approved unanimously with the addition of jail information, upon a motion by Schmidt and second by Metz. There was no conflict of interest expressed. The April 2, 2024, Board minutes were unanimously approved upon a motion by Olson and second by Nelson.

Highway Department

Chad Gillespie, County Engineer, and Brian Koch, Highway Supervisor appeared before the Board with a department update. Upon a motion by Olson and second by Nelson the bridge grant agreement and the contract for SAP 078-598-038 Co. Rd 76 for \$1,348,233.00 was unanimously approved. Unanimous approval was given for sign clearing and grubbing final CP 23-02 for \$228.95 to Carr's Tree Service for tree removal ahead of the CSAH 15 project upon a motion by Nelson and second by Schmidt. Upon a motion by Olson and second by Schmidt unanimous approval was given for sign crushing contract CP 24-01 to CT Sibson Gravel & Crushing Inc. A motion was made by Nelson to purchase a broom attachment from SSR LLC for \$6,450.00, seconded by Metz and approved unanimously. The gravel quote CP 24-02 to Wagner Company for \$75,600.00 was approved unanimously upon a motion by Olson and second by Schmidt. Installation of parking pads by electrical pedestals at the County park, which the Highway Department will do the labor and use materials that they have on hand, was approved unanimously upon a motion by Metz and seconded by Olson. Gillespie went over some information items.

Traverse Care Center/Prairieview Place

Michelle Ehrenberg, Administrator, Minnewaska appeared before the board for a quarterly update. The last month has gone very well, they had around 15 new hires and continual tours of Traverse Care Center and Prairieview Place. They have gotten clarification on the warranties for the new freezer. Before the Board approves the purchase of the freezer, Olson wants to find out if the Ottertail rebate needs to be applied before the purchase. The freezer quote and grease trap quote will be on the May 7 agenda.

United States Fish & Wildlife

Blair Mace, Realty Specialist, and Bruce Freske, District Manager appeared before the Board to discuss a habitat easement for certification with Moore Brother of Underwood, Inc. It covers approximately 16 acres in Section 24 Taylor Township. There was a survey that was done, Schmidt made a motion to table this until the Board receives the survey, seconded by Nelson and approved unanimously.

Soil and Water Conservation District

Sara Gronfeld appeared before the Board with a department update. The County Feedlot year-end review is complete and satisfactory. There was one new permit application received for the sewage treatment system program. The local water planning program adopted their new budget. Gronfeld gave updates on the One Watershed One Plan and Upper Minnesota River planning process.

Auditor/Treasurer

Auditor/Treasurer Kit Johnson appeared before the Board with a department update. Johnson informed the Board that we have received \$81,262.00 in 2023 from the State of Minnesota for Statewide Affordable Housing Aid and we will receive the same amount each year until the program goes away. There are specific factors that need to be met for spending the money for instance affordable housing.

Johnson will touch base with surrounding counties and the Stevens County H.R.A as they help Traverse County. Johnson was looking for approval to transfer \$35,000.00 to the Traverse Care Center fund and \$5,000.00 to the Prairieview Place fund, unanimous approval was given upon a motion by Olson and seconded by Nelson. Johnson gave general updates.

County Coordinator

Upon motion by Olson and second by Metz the following bills were approved unanimously.

ADVANCED CORRECTIONAL HEALTHCARE, INC	\$15,834.48
COUNTIES PROVIDING TECHNOLOGY	\$5,459.72
DEPT. OF HUMAN SERVICES ECPN	\$5,656.55
GAZETTE PUBLISHING, INC.	\$5,622.75
HORMANN/MARK	\$2,200.00
MORRIS ELECTRONICS	\$2,113.13
POWERPHONE	\$8,298.50
REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINN	\$12,801.24
TRI COUNTY COOP OIL ASSOC	\$3,643.38
BOYER TRUCK PARTS	\$151,598.00
LARSON OIL, INC.	\$2,378.00
TRI COUNTY COOP OIL ASSOC	\$2,645.67
ZIEGLER, INC.	\$3,266.43
CEP	\$5,833.15
PRESBYTERIAN FAMILY FNDTN	\$2,173.48
PLACEMENTS	\$11,330.36
DHS	\$2,995.23
TRAVERSE COUNTY	\$2,500.00

Per M.S. 375.12, the number of claims totaling \$2,000.00 or less were 65 in the amount of \$34,531.66.

Lisa Zahl, County Coordinator informed the Board that we are planning to move the location of the motor vehicle testing to the new meeting room in the Courthouse. The State still needs to approve the updated contract, but we are hoping for approval and moving in May.

The KnowBe4 quote for cyber security training in the amount of \$7,257.60 for a 3-year contract was approved unanimously upon a motion by Metz and seconded by Schmidt.

The following resolution was approved unanimously upon a motion by Schmidt and seconded by Nelson:

**RESOLUTION OF THE TRAVERSE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGARDING REVENUE SHARING PAYMENTS FOR LANDS OWNED BY THE UNITED STATES FISH
AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
RESOLUTION 24-10**

WHEREAS, Federal agencies acquiring private land in Minnesota can erode the tax base in the counties in which they are acquired; and

WHEREAS, the tax base from the acreage which is privately owned is very consequential to the County and the County deems the rural tax base should be protected to ensure an equitable distribution of the tax burden across property owners; and

WHEREAS, the 1978 amendment to the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act (“the Act”) outlines how revenue generated on Federal lands is to be shared with local governments and provides authorization for Congress to appropriate funds when there is a shortfall in revenue; and

WHEREAS, if the amount appropriated by Congress is insufficient, the US Fish and Wildlife Service pays counties and other units of local government a pro-rata share; and

WHEREAS, the revenue sharing payments authorized under the Act offset losses in local tax revenue experienced by counties and other local governments due to the presence of substantial acreage of Federal land in their jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, Traverse County provides critical services to visitors of Federally owned land, including law enforcement, road and bridge maintenance, search and rescue, as well as others; and

WHEREAS, a recent analysis determined that the revenue-sharing payments provided by Federal agencies only replace approximately 11% of the revenue that would be gained if the property were privately owned, thereby shifting the burden onto other taxable properties; and

WHEREAS, in addition to revenue-sharing payments, US Fish and Wildlife may also make a one-time trust payment, that exceeds the annual revenue-sharing payment; however, once those funds are expended no additional trust payments are made and the levy burden is shifted to other properties as the annual revenue sharing payment does not equal the tax paid by other properties; and

WHEREAS, properties owned by Federal agencies are not subject to ditch assessments, thereby shifting the burden of costs associated with maintenance of these systems to other properties.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Traverse County Board of Commissioners supports legislation that would equalize the revenue-sharing payments and ditch assessments from Federally-owned land to the amount that would be owed if the property were privately owned, as assessed and levied by taxing districts within the county.

WHEREUPON, the above resolution was passed and adopted by the Traverse County Board of Commissioners on this 16th day of April 2024.

By:

Mark Gail, Traverse County Board Chair

Attest:

Lisa Zahl, Traverse County Board Clerk

There was a request from County Attorney Matt Franzese to get approval from the Board to initiate a “clawback” lawsuit against Burton Winters. He sold a home that had been owned by his deceased mother for \$15,000.00. Not only did Mr. Winters not have legal authority to sell the real estate, there was also a Medical Assistance lien against the property. Franzese wants to initiate the lawsuit in order to try to get back the funds from Mr. Winters that should have gone to the State of Minnesota, as well as attempt to get the State to satisfy the lien so that he can get title to the real estate into the buyer’s name. Upon a motion by Schmidt and second by Olson the Board unanimously approved Franzese’s request.

Emergency Manager Lynn Siegel appeared before the Board to ask for approval of the Verkada panic buttons. Right now we have an e-panic system on the county computers but in certain instances, it is hard to access, the cost of this is \$2,000.00 per year. The quote from Verkada is for 10 years for \$7,200.00. The quote was approved unanimously upon a motion by Olson and second by Metz.

Schmidt informed the rest of the Commissioners that there are only 10 counties in Minnesota that don’t have jails so the disparity is an isolated problem. She is asking the Commissioners if the letter that

County Attorney Matt Franzese is going to write should be sent to only the counties without a jail and the counties that hold their inmates. There was a consensus to just reach out to those counties.

The Financial Eligibility Worker position was reevaluated and the grade changed from a 13 to 14 which was approved at the Social Services meeting earlier today contingent on union approval.

Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

Committee Reports

Nelson went to the Soil & Water, Extension meeting, Primewest, Western Prairie and Horizon Public Health. Schmidt attended Horizon Public Health, Western Prairie, Preplacement Social Services, and Arthur Township meeting. Metz attended the Rainbow Rider, Soil & Water and IT Committee meeting.

Gail adjourned the meeting at 11:07 a.m.

Lisa Zahl, County Coordinator

Mark Gail, Chair