

Traverse County Commission
Regular Board Meeting
July 5, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Commission Chair Kayla Schmidt. Other Commissioners present were Mark Gail, Dwight Nelson, Jerrel Olson and Chad Metz. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Nelson moved to approve the agenda with the addition of Randy Bullis from the City of Tintah to ask County to do a aquifer testing for Tintah and Taylor Townships and Soliciting Ordinance discussion, Gail second and the motion was passed unanimously. No conflicts of interest were expressed. The June 20, 2023 minutes were unanimously approved upon a motion by Nelson and second by Olson.

Highway Department

County Engineer Chad Gillespie and Brian Koch, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, appeared before the Board with a department update. Gillespie had all informational items for today's meeting beginning with a quote for a new motor grader for \$531,280.00 if the Board would like to entertain adding one and an additional Highway Maintenance worker. Gillespie has also updated the County Comparison Chart, adding some additional western counties. Traverse County still have the most miles per blade route, this includes dirt roads that the Townships still have us blade. We are the only County that administers Flood/FEMA work for Townships. Gillespie will be raising the rates for Townships in 2024, he is currently gathering information to propose new rates. He will also be having Townships sign a maintenance contract with the County for various services, he will be looking at 3 to 5-year contracts. Our current township rates are low compared to other counties. Townships have the option to hire someone else if they don't want to go with the County. Nelson is on board with adding another motor grader and employee but we need contracts in place with the Townships first so we know there will be the income coming in to pay for it. Gillespie wants to remind everyone that if trees or weeds need to be sprayed they will need to talk with John Fridgen our Agriculture Inspector. Spraying comes out of the Highway Department budget on County and CSAH roads. If there are trees or weeds on a Township road, the Township can hire the County or another entity. A Tandem Truck was one big ticket item in the budget this year and Gillespie would like to buy it early, this would mean less downtime, it is automatic so they can get through the route about 20% faster than the current manual one and it has an underbody to scrape pavement better. It would also save us roughly 20 gals a day in fuel consumption. He will bring this as an action item to the next meeting. Gillespie explained that we have a free ditch cleaning permit located on our website. He said that the main thing to remember is if you are not the landowner to get their permission for the excavator to sit on their property as the County can't give permission to trespass. Milling started today, July 5, on the CSAH 20 project and they will start to pave the week of July 10.

Law Enforcement Center

Sheriff Trevor Wright appeared before the Board with a department update. Wright reported that the average jail occupancy for June was 73.99%. He also informed the Board that there was a recent audit that was done by the Post Board that regulates our license. This time the audit was on our training records and our policies and procedures. They do an audit within every 5 years and we passed the audit. Wright asked for approval for out of State travel to attend the Mid-States Organized Crime Information Center (MOCIC) training in Branson Missouri August 21 – 24, 2023. Gail made a motion to approve the out of state travel, second by Metz and approved unanimously.

Soil and Water Conservation District

Sara Gronfeld appeared before the Board with a department update. Gronfeld reported that 1 septic system program upgrade grant application was received along with 1 new permit application. For the Wetland Conservation Act, the County Highway Bridge and Culvert Projects Wetland Delineations are being reviewed, Gronfeld met with the County's consultants on site to review their work. Gillespie submitted the Wetland Application for County Highway CSAH 15 Project and it is being reviewed. Comprehensive watershed planning grants are funding projects within the Bois de Sioux-Mustinka planning area as scheduled. The Upper Minnesota River planning process is moving along; committees are working on draft plan revisions and preparing for public notice. A draft resolution was given to the Board to look over prior to needing approval later. Gronfeld reported that the spring seeding projects are completed.

City of Tintah

Randy Bullis appeared before the Board on behalf of the City of Tintah to discuss aquifer testing. Bullis explained to the Board that they have two dairies six miles on both sides of Tintah, one in Campbell Township in Wilkin County and one in North Ottawa in Grant County for a total of 20,000 head of cattle between the two dairies. They have had some complaints from their residents about their water changing for the worse. He is asking on behalf of the City of Tintah that the Commissioner would consider doing aquifer testing for the Tintah Township and Taylor Township so they can get a better idea of what is going on with their water. They are discussing putting up a third dairy six miles north of Tintah in Champion Township in Wilkin County that will potentially house 19,000 head of cattle. Nelson asked if Bullis has contacted Wilkin and Grant County to see if they would be willing to do the aquifer testing with us and we could split the cost. Olson said even if we pay for the aquifer testing we still won't have a say in whether the new proposed dairy gets approved, he asked if we want to pay for the knowledge but then we can't do anything about it. County Attorney Matthew Franzese will reach out to Wilkin and Grant Counties and explain the issue we have. Kit Johnson mentioned that when B.J. Bonin, PG Hydrogeologist came and was very knowledgeable but when he gave his report he didn't have any hard numbers for us because there hasn't been enough testing done to date, do we want to spend the money on another aquifer testing and not get the hard numbers? Franzese said that the primary takeaway was that based on the wells in those townships we aren't as water rich as we thought we were. In order to get the hard numbers, we need to do observation wells. And because of the clay we have in those townships the water most likely doesn't recharge as well as we would want it to.

Auditor/Treasurer

Auditor/Treasurer Kit Johnson appeared before the Board to inform the Board that the City of Browns Valley has requested to purchase a forfeited parcel in the City of Browns Valley. Johnson is proposing on the behalf of the City of Browns Valley that we sell this parcel to the City of Browns Valley. He mentioned that in the past we have put a purchase price of \$150.00. Upon a motion by Olson and second by Metz the sale of the tax forfeited parcel to the City of Browns Valley for \$150.00 was approved unanimously.

County Coordinator

Upon motion by Nelson and second by Gail the following bills were approved unanimously.

Advanced Correctional Healthcare, Inc.	\$5,306.58
Bartz Collision & Glass	\$7,553.02
Computershare Trust Company N.A.	\$18,297.50
Hometown Planning	\$2,620.00
The Retrofit Companies, Inc.	\$2,493.05
Traverse County Historical Society	\$3,000.00
West Central Regional Juvenile CT	\$8,049.00
Wheaton-Dumont Elevator	\$3,749.69
Commissioner of Transportation	\$2,604.96
Hormann Works LLC	\$76,269.00
Houston Engineering, Inc.	\$10,115.25
John Deere Financial	\$3,093.93
Kellen, Ryan – 54K LLC	\$12,155.00
L&S Grafix	\$2,098.00
Nelson Auto Center	\$12,482.63
Schmitz, Todd	\$9,392.50
Terracon Consultants, Inc.	\$4,550.00
Whaley Excavating, Inc.	\$61,638.50

Per M.S. 375.12, the number of claims totaling \$2,000.00 or less was 46 totaling \$16,651.70.

Chad Klindworth, Building Maintenance Supervisor, appeared before the Board. He explained that Social Services has some projects that they need his assistance with this summer along with trying to keep up with the lawn, weeds, cleaning and maintenance. He is seeking approval to hire a seasonal worker for the rest of the summer. Upon a motion by Metz and second by Gail the Board unanimously approved the hire of one 20-40 hour per week summer help with a wage range of \$15.00 – \$21.17 based on experience.

Commissioner Schmidt explained that she has been approached by multiple concerned people regarding the elderly being targeted for land easements and she was wondering about a Soliciting Ordinance for the County. Franzese said that this should be brought to the Planning Commission/Board of Adjustments first, they can discuss the topic and make a recommendation.

Public Comment

Cindy Lichtsinn asked how the County would go about getting the well testing started. Schmidt contacted BJ Bonin but hasn't heard back, she will contact Sara Gronfeld to see what else can be done locally. Lichtsinn suggested that the County start looking into State grants for testing. Allen Wold said that if the county has a County Wide Use Plan, which we do not have in our zoning ordinances, but One Watershed One Plan does qualify, according to Gronfeld. Wold said that Gronfeld would be the one to reach out to for this.

Committee Reports

Metz attended the One Watershed One Plan Committee. Schmidt talked to the DNR about the aquifer testing, they are waiting on approval from the supervisor to discuss the questions that she has brought forward.

Schmidt adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m.