

WATONWAN COUTY BOARD
MARCH 7, 2023
9:00 A.M.

The Watonwan County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on March 7, 2023 at 9:00 A.M. in the Commissioners' Meeting Room of the Courthouse, City of St. James. The following Board members were present: Jim Branstad, Dillon Melheim, Bill Miller, Jim Pettersen and Scott Westman. The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Branstad moved, Miller seconded and the motion passed unanimously, to approve the Agenda as amended.

Emergency Management/Safety Director Ryan Visher was present and reviewed a resolution in support of legislative action for upgrade of the ARMER Radios.

Branstad moved, Melheim seconded and the motion passed unanimously, to adopt the following:

WATONWAN COUNTY RESOLUTION
SUPPORTING OF HF1075 / SF 1576 AND PUBLIC SAFETY INITIATIVE

WHEREAS, The County of Watonwan is writing in support of this important public safety initiative, HF1075 / SF1576; and,

WHEREAS, Effective radios are the backbone of public safety in the State of Minnesota. Our first responders, firefighters, and law enforcement personnel depend upon this ARMER system to effectively perform their jobs. Radios save lives and serve every constituent of the State of Minnesota; and,

WHEREAS, Radios that serve the ARMER system are outdated in many jurisdictions. They are costly to maintain and replace. In local government units, where budgets are tight, it is very difficult to plan for the costly process of replacing this critical infrastructure. Local government units would urge the state to fund a grant program that allows for the critical upgrade of radios. We would also encourage sustainable funding to support ongoing replacement costs; and,

WHEREAS, the cost to replace the aging radios is a direct impact of our local taxpayers. ARMER radios are critical to deploying resources, protecting property and life, and protecting our workers. However, they often get overlooked for replacement because there is no existing funding source; and,

WHEREAS, in Watonwan County, there are approximately 350 radios on the statewide ARMER system, most of these radios are used by our small rural emergency departments. The emergency service departments who serve Watonwan County rely on this interoperability. The radios allow for communication between all emergency service departments.

WHEREAS, Watonwan County has aging radios on the ARMER system that are no longer supported, it is extremely difficult to find radio parts or used parts to fix or maintain the equipment. Our emergency responders rely on the ARMER radio system to provide the interoperability between the departments at the local, regional, State, and Federal levels. The replacement cost for the radios that are at the end of their life expectancy, range from \$2,500 to \$5,500 each, this expense does not include the radio programming or additional equipment, or supplies required to add the radio onto the Statewide radio system. The additional cost is approximately \$400 per radio.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Watonwan County supports the HF1075 / SF1576 and urges the importance of public safety initiative.

Visher reviewed an agreement with Red Cross outlining the County's and their sheltering responsibilities in the event of an emergency. The document is part of the Emergency Operations Plan.

Miller moved, Pettersen seconded and the motion passed unanimously, to approve the Chairman's signing of the Jurisdiction Commitments & Expectation Profile.

Melheim moved, Branstad seconded and the motion passed unanimously, to approve the training requests submitted by Ryan Visher.

Commissioner Melheim noted that the Fair Board would like to have Visher attend their next meeting to discuss emergency planning for the County Fair.

Branstad moved, Melheim seconded and the motion passed unanimously, to approve the minutes of the February 21 regular meeting.

Melheim moved, Branstad seconded and the motion passed unanimously, to approve payment of bills as audited and filed in the County Auditor/Treasurer's Office as follows by fund: General Fund—\$53,122.44; Solid Waste Fund—\$125.49; Ditch Fund—\$24,328.75; and the Road and Bridge Fund—\$286,497.71; and to pay the following credit cards: General Fund—\$7,284.61; Road and Bridge Fund—\$1,080.90; Library Fund—\$185.84; and Soil & Water Conservation—\$1,043.25.

Miller moved, Melheim seconded and the motion passed unanimously, to approve the abatement of property taxes on parcel #14.602.0250 for 2021 and 2022, removing the home value from the property due to fire.

Melheim moved, Branstad seconded and the motion passed unanimously, to approve setting the Judicial Ditch #9 M&W assessment, interest rate and terms at \$2,025,000, with an interest rate of 3.85% over 20 years.

Pettersen moved, Melheim seconded and the motion passed unanimously, to approve the Lease Agreement with Brown County Poultry and Pigeon Association for lease of the roller rink building at the County the Fairgrounds on March 4 and April 1, 2023 in the amount of \$200.00.

Branstad moved, Melheim seconded and the motion passed unanimously, to approve ending the Emergency Needs Leave for employees with COVID-19 effective May 11, 2023.

Pettersen moved, Melheim seconded and the motion passed unanimously, to approve Juneteenth - June 19 as a paid holiday which becomes effective on August 1, with observation beginning in 2024.

Branstad moved, Miller seconded and the motion passed unanimously, to approve ending the temporary appointment of County Engineer Teal Spellman.

Commissioner Westman inquired about a drainage issue on CD 1.

Commissioner Melheim reported that Bobcat will only manufacture track skid loaders. He noted that blacktop is hard on them, but that it may be the best option for the County.

Discussion was held regarding demolition of the County's building on First Avenue South in St. James. Asbestos abatement was needed before demolition could commence.

Melheim moved, Pettersen seconded and the motion passed unanimously, to adjourn at 10:00 A.M.

Jim Pettersen, Chairman
Watsonwan County Board

Lisa Schumann, Deputy Clerk
Watsonwan County Board

ATTEST: Kelly Pauling
Watsonwan County Auditor/Treasurer