

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROSEAU COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

April 21, 2020

The Board of Commissioners of Roseau County, Minnesota met in Special Session held at the Courthouse in the City of Roseau, Minnesota on Tuesday, April 21, 2020.

CALL TO ORDER

The Special Meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Board Chair Roger Falk. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Commissioners present were Roger Falk, John Horner, and Russell Walker. Jack Swanson and Daryl Wicklund attended through WebEx. Others attending through WebEx were Jeff Pelowski, Joleen Kezar, Kristy Kjos, Brian Ketring, Martie Monsrud, Chris Stauffer, Sue Grafstrom, Diane Gregerson, Martin Howes, Karla Langaas, Liz Lund, Pam Shaw, Cindy Tangen, Sandi Weiland, and Mike Trinka.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the Agenda was made by Commissioner Walker, seconded by Commissioner Swanson, and carried unanimously.

COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no comments or announcements.

COUNTY BOARD ITEMS

COVID-19 Pandemic – Situation Update

Emergency Management Director Grafstrom provided an update, as follows:

- Minnesota has the lowest mortality percentage rate. What the State of Minnesota has been doing is working.
- There will be a drive for homemade masks this weekend at the fire stations in the County.
- Northwest Community Action has applied for a grant to house people that test positive, but do not require hospitalization, in hotel rooms in order to contain the spread of the virus. Essential services such as food, medicine, and transportation would be provided.
- A New York Times article dated April 20, 2020, was distributed. The article was entitled “COVID-19 Vaccine Truths regarding Vaccine Development, Vaccine Production, and Drug Treatments”. According to the author of the article, it will take at least 12 to 18 months to have a marketable vaccine.
- According to Director Grafstrom, four goals need to be achieved in order to reopen the State of MN: 1) A sustained reduction in the number of COVID-19 cases for at least 14 days; 2) State and regional hospitals must be able to safely treat all patients requiring hospitalization; 3) Must have the capacity to test anyone who has symptoms; and, 4) Must be able to aggressively trace all known contacts of COVID-19 positive patients.
- Director Grafstrom believes that Roseau County needs to develop a “Plan for Responding to a Roseau County COVID-19 Outbreak”, including: 1) The County needs to develop plans to aggressively trace the known contacts of COVID-19 positive cases, (the MN Dept of Health performs this task at the current time); 2) Coordinating a concerted effort between Altru, Lifecare, and Roseau County Public Health to perform a number of COVID-19 related tasks, (the County medical facilities/agencies currently perform this task).

Following discussion, there was no Board action taken.

There was a discussion on what the County could do to help re-open small businesses with social distancing still in effect. This would require a modification of the State-mandated stay-at-home order.

The topic of property tax relief options was discussed at length. Approximately 10 counties have enacted some sort of property tax relief; with the most prevalent being delaying penalties and interest on delinquent 1st half payments for a two month period. It was pointed out that payment of 2nd half taxes may be a bigger issue if the current situation continues. The MN Legislature is still debating the property tax relief issue as well. The Association of MN Counties (AMC) is recommending that individual counties hold off on enacting relief measures until the Legislature decides what they plan to do. If the State plan is not adequate, then AMC would lead a coordinated effort amongst counties to develop a property tax relief plan. Following a lengthy discussion, Board consensus was to continue to follow the guidance being provided by AMC.

Finally, Coordinator Pelowski informed the Board that the Federal Legislature is currently working on the massive COVID19–3.5 legislation. Both NACo and AMC are lobbying for direct relief payments to counties. The current version of the legislation contains approximately \$500M for MN counties; Roseau County’s share would be approximately \$1.34M. He urged the Commissioners to contact our Federal legislative delegation and ask them to approve direct payment to Counties.

Upon motion carried, the Board adjourned the Special meeting at 11:00 a.m. The next Regular meeting of the Board is scheduled for Tuesday, April 28, 2020, at 8:30 a.m.

Attest:

Date: _____

Jeff Pelowski, County Coordinator
Roseau County, Minnesota

Roger Falk, Chair
Board of County Commissioners
Roseau County, Minnesota