

# PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROSEAU COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

May 5, 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, May 5, 2020.

## CALL TO ORDER

The Special Meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Board Chair Roger Falk. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Commissioners present were Roger Falk, John Horner, Russell Walker, and Daryl Wicklund. Jack Swanson attended through WebEx. Others attending through WebEx were Jeff Pelowski, Joleen Kezar, Kristy Kjos, Brian Ketring, Martie Monsrud, Sue Grafstrom, Diane Gregerson, Martin Howes, Karla Langaas, Liz Lund, Pam Shaw, Chris Stauffer, Cindy Tangen, Brenda McMillin, Sandi Weiland, and Mike Trinka.

## APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Falk requested adding a Resolution urging the Governor to reopen County businesses to the COVID-19 Situation Update. A motion to approve the amended Agenda was made by Commissioner Swanson, seconded by Commissioner Walker, and carried unanimously, (roll call vote).

## COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no comments or announcements.

## COUNTY BOARD ITEMS

### Roundtable Discussion – Department Heads

Assessor – The deadline for filing a property tax appeal is normally April 30<sup>th</sup> on the year that the taxes are owed; however, this year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the deadline was extended to May 30, 2020. Assessor Lund requested two Commissioners be appointed to a tax court petition advisory committee. Board consensus was to add this request to the May 12, 2020, Regular Board Meeting Agenda.

Attorney – Attorney Kjos stated that the County's Dangerous Dog Designation Ordinance needs to be amended. On a related note, as a part of the May 26, 2020, Regular Board meeting Agenda, she is requesting that Ordinance enforcement-related appeals be considered by the Board.

Auditor – There was a question regarding a road easement located on a parcel of land located in Malung Township. Auditor Monsrud will update the Board when more information is received.

Building Maintenance – They have been focusing on spring-cleaning, including outside pest control and mowing/trimming. (The new mower was delivered on May 4<sup>th</sup>)

Coordinator – A draft Agenda for the May 12, 2020 Regular County Board meeting was reviewed. It was noted that the Roseau River Watershed District will be holding a Public Meeting on June 3, 2020, at 8:30 a.m., regarding the County Ditch 16 system.

Court Administration – They are working on a "re-opening" preparedness plan as in-person Court hearings may resume after June 1, 2020.

U of M Extension/4H – They are continuing plans for in-person activities beginning after June 30, 2020, and have had discussions with the Fair Board concerning the future of the 2020 County Fair.

Highway – The highway construction projects preconstruction WebEx meeting was held last week. Contractors will be starting on the overlay projects after Memorial Day, as the State will be removing road restrictions shortly.

IT – Director Stauffer noted that 92 County employees have completed the Cyber Awareness Training to-date; additional laptops are available for County Departments upon request; and, there are currently 28 County employees connected remotely.

Social Services – They have been busy keeping up with the constantly evolving/changing State COVID-19 rules and waivers; they continue to follow AMC guidelines; and, they have begun working on a re-opening preparedness plan for their facility.

Treasurer – A letter was received from the IRS stating that their recent Audit of our existing Jail Bonds has been completed and further examination of our records has ended.

Veterans Service Office – The State made available \$6.2 million for assistance for veterans; of that total, approximately \$1.2M is still available; therefore, VSO Howes has been busy writing grants to attempt to access those funds for our veterans.

#### COVID-19 Pandemic – Situation Update

Emergency Management Director Grafstrom provided an update; including, long-term care facilities remain to be the hot spots in Minnesota; there are staff members in other Counties that are refusing to come back to the workplace; Roseau County still has only had 1 confirmed case and there have been no positive cases in long-term care facilities; contact tracing will become very important if there is an outbreak of positive cases; and, a meeting is planned for today, (May 5, 2020), with LifeCare Public Health regarding the County COVID-19 Response Plan approved by the Board last week.

Coordinator Pelowski provided an update concerning the ongoing discussion surrounding possible property tax relief options. The State Legislature continues to work on this issue, but it is not likely that a timely solution is forthcoming. Commissioner Horner, Treasurer Gregerson, and Coordinator Pelowski met last week to formulate a recommendation to the Board over this issue. As discussed at that meeting, it was noted that AMC staff had been consulted over the issue of the distribution process for property tax revenues received between May 15<sup>th</sup> and July 15<sup>th</sup>, should the County decide to delay penalties for payments received between those two dates. To summarize, we believe that the County could legally distribute those revenues before the next tax settlement date, which is scheduled for November; Treasurer Gregerson concurred; and, she believes that her office would be able to distribute those tax revenues by August 1, 2020. Following discussion, Commissioner Horner made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Swanson, and carried unanimously (roll call vote) to approve the following Resolution:

**2020-05-01**

#### **ROSEAU COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS ABATING THE PENALTY ON LATE PAYMENT OF PROPERTY TAXES FOR TAXES PAYABLE IN 2020**

**WHEREAS**, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz has issued a series of Emergency Executive Orders which include, among many others, a “Stay at Home” order which temporarily requires non-critical workers to stay safe at home, and several orders that require the temporary closure of certain non-critical businesses, all of which are significant, but necessary, community mitigation strategies to slow the transmission of COVID-19, reduce illness and deaths, and limit the economic impacts of the outbreak; and

**WHEREAS**, Roseau County desires to provide temporary relief to its residents and businesses within the County that have been directly or indirectly impacted by the economic pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; and

**WHEREAS**, all levels of government are looking for ways to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy in general and on individuals, businesses, and property owners in Roseau County and across the state and nation; and

**WHEREAS**, the due date for payment of the first one-half of current property taxes (May 2020) may not be changed locally; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 279.01, subd. 2, the County Board may, with the concurrence of the County Treasurer, abate the penalty for late payment of property taxes; and

**WHEREAS**, the County Board finds that adhering to the statutory due date for payment of the first one-half of property taxes may result in additional negative impact and be unjust and unreasonable; and

**WHEREAS**, the County Board finds that temporary payment relief through abatement of the penalty for a time period may provide flexibility for affected owners; and

**WHEREAS**, counties collect and disburse property taxes not only for counties, but also for all cities, townships, school districts, and special taxing districts and the state of Minnesota. Cash flow and operations of all local government is set around the collection dates for property taxes. The County Board acknowledges the seriousness of any delay of collection and disbursement of property taxes and will work to minimize this impact; and

**WHEREAS**, not all individuals and business property owners are experiencing financial hardship in Roseau County due to COVID-19, and those who can, should, pay their property taxes in a timely manner.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the Roseau County Treasurer (Treasurer) is directed to implement this application and undertake such actions and require such assistance as needed to accomplish this Resolution action to the extent practicable and allowable by law.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, by the Roseau County Board of Commissioners as follows:

1. Pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 279.01, subd. 2, the County Board hereby delegates to the Treasurer the power to abate the penalty provided in Minn. Stat. § 279.01 for the late payment of first half current property taxes payable in May 2020, to the extent provided for in this Resolution.
2. The County Board further directs the Treasurer to take the steps necessary to impose the following modified penalties for late payment of first half current property taxes due and payable in 2020 to the extent provided for in this Resolution:
  - a. For taxes paid May 16, 2020 through July 15, 2020: a penalty of 0% of the unpaid tax otherwise due and owing.
3. The County Board further directs that the distribution of property taxes paid after the May 15, 2020, due date will be settled on a special schedule to provide those funds to tax authorities no later than July 31, 2020, if at all practicable.
4. This Resolution does not limit the authority of the County Board to abate taxes or property values, taxes, penalty, or interest as otherwise provided by law.

Auditor Monsrud provided follow up information concerning the ongoing discussion regarding mail-in balloting for the upcoming 2020 elections. She stated that three Townships have agreed to do mail ballot elections, (Hereim, Lake, and Malung). In addition, Commissioner Swanson noted that Jadis has also agreed to go to mail ballot election. There was no Board action taken.

Coordinator Pelowski presented a copy of the Resolution passed by the Roseau City Council on May 4, 2020, for Board consideration. The purpose of the Resolution is to request that the Governor's Office address the inequities created in his recent Executive Order 20-48, before the businesses not allowed to re-open are no longer viable. Following Board review and revision of the Resolution as presented, Commissioner Swanson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Walker, and carried unanimously (roll call vote) to approve the following Resolution:

**2020-05-02**

**RESOLUTION URGING GOVERNOR WALZ TO ALLOW  
BUSINESSES IN ROSEAU COUNTY TO REOPEN**

**WHEREAS**, The Roseau County Board is urging Governor Walz to allow businesses, including "non-critical" businesses, in Roseau County to reopen;

**WHEREAS**, the "Stay-at-Home Order" was to be lifted on May 4<sup>th</sup> but now has been extended an additional two weeks (May 18<sup>th</sup>);

**WHEREAS**, the "Stay-at-Home Order" has caused undue hardship and financial loss to many small businesses, some whom will never recover from this catastrophe, as businesses continue to have financial strain due to health and business insurance, taxes, rent, utilities and other costs, with no source of revenue to cover those costs;

**WHEREAS**, all businesses can reasonably reopen as the "Stay-at-Home Order" is not a one size fits all solution, "Critical" businesses, such as hardware and grocery stores, are allowed to stay open but must successfully follow the guidelines handed down by the MN Department of Health and the CDC; our "Main Street" non-critical businesses are just as capable of following those same guidelines;

**WHEREAS**, we firmly believe that all of our businesses can reopen safely, and still provide adequate protection to our most vulnerable citizens.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the Roseau County Board respectfully requests that our non-critical businesses be allowed to reopen as soon as the business prepares and posts a Preparedness Plan on-site. The Plan must address the items contained in the MN Department of Health and CDC guidance.

County Recorder Position Discussion

Coordinator Pelowski reminded the Board that County Recorder Pam Grand will be retiring May 22, 2020. Also, if no petition is received stating the Board Resolution adopted by the Board on April 14, 2020, which established the appointed Recorder position, is invalid, then the Recorder position officially becomes appointed on May 14, 2020. Board consensus was to lay this item over until after the May 14, 2020, petition deadline; therefore, this item will be included in the May 19, 2020, Special Board Meeting Agenda.

Roseau Highway Maintenance Facility Discussion

Commissioner Falk and Commissioner Wicklund met with Iden Magnusson and Mickey Slater regarding the potential sale of their property adjacent to the current Highway Maintenance Facility to the County. They have agreed to sell a five-acre parcel at the price of \$25,000 per acre.

The only stipulation they requested would be for the County to allow a cartway to their property. Following a lengthy discussion, the Board requested Engineer Ketring to acquire estimates to repair the current facility; and, they compared the cost/benefit of building a new facility adjacent to the current facility vs. building a new facility at the City Industrial Park. Continued discussion of this item will occur at a future Board meeting after Engineer Ketring obtains updated cost estimates for repairing the current facility.

Upon motion carried, the Board adjourned the Special meeting at 10:30 a.m. The next Regular meeting of the Board is scheduled for Tuesday, May 12, 2020, at 8:30 a.m.

Attest:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Jeff Pelowski, County Coordinator  
Roseau County, Minnesota

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