



BOARD MINUTES

BOARD OF WRIGHT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

APRIL 9, 2020

DATE APPROVED: APRIL 21, 2020

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| Christine Husom | District 1 |
| Darek Vetsch | District 2 |
| Mark Daleiden | District 3 |
| Michael Potter | District 4 |
| Charles Borrell | District 5 |

The Wright County Board met in special session at 1:00 P.M. with Husom, Vetsch, Potter, and Daleiden present. Commissioner Borrell joined the meeting remotely.

AGENDA

Husom stated the Board will discuss COVID-19 updates because of the extension of the stay-at-home order issued by Governor Tim Walz. Lee Kelly, County Administrator, requested a petition to the Agenda for approval of the Labor Agreement with AFSCME so payroll can be processed.

Daleiden moved to amend the Agenda to include approval of the Labor Agreement with AFSCME. The motion was seconded by Potter and carried 5-0 on a roll call vote.

AGENDA ITEMS

APPROVE AND AUTHORIZE SIGNATURES ON THE LABOR AGREEMENT WITH AFSCME FOR THE 2020-2022 CALENDAR YEARS.

Daleiden moved to approve and authorize signatures on the Labor Agreement with AFSCME for the 2020-2022 calendar years. The motion was seconded by Potter and carried 5-0 on a roll call vote.

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) - FUTURE STATE OF COUNTY OPERATIONS

Kelly suggested the following topics for today's meeting:

- Extension by Governor Tim Walz of the stay at home order through 5-03-20
- Discussion on whether to extend closure of the public facing counters at County buildings, which are currently closed through 4-17-20
- Discussion on employee compensation, which is currently effective through 4-18-20
- Update by Public Health

Extension by Governor Tim Walz of the stay at home order through 5-03-20

Discussion on whether to extend closure of the public facing counters at County buildings, which are currently closed through 4-17-20

Husom thought it would be appropriate to extend the closure of the public facing counters through 5-03-20 to be in line with the Governor's directive. Greg Kryzer, Chief Deputy Attorney, said the Governor's Executive Order 20.33 extends the stay at home order through Sunday, 5-03-20 at 11:59 PM.

Daleiden moved to keep the public facing counters closed through the end of the day on 5-03-20. The motion was seconded by Potter. Potter stated that if Governor Walz issues another extension, the Board will discuss whether to adjust at that time. The motion carried 5-0 on a roll call vote.

Discussion on employee compensation, which is currently through 4-18-20

Kelly asked for Board direction on employee compensation after 4-18-20, which is the end of a pay period. Kelly said through data analysis of time sheets for the last pay period, over 95% of employees were able to complete work at home. Departments have become creative in finding ways to complete processes remotely. The Building Maintenance Department has been completing maintenance and painting.

Considerable discussion followed on the expectations associated with employee standards while working remotely, to include the following starting on 4-19-20:

- Remote work will continue if there is work that can be completed in that manner. If not, employees will need to report to work. Department heads and supervisors will need to oversee and provide direction.
- Employees working remotely should work eight-hour days and should be available to respond to inquiries within an hour time frame. Department heads will be made aware of an employee's need to work a flexible schedule because of extenuating circumstances such as caring for a child at home.
- Departments should collaborate to determine whether employees can assist with work in other departments.
- Employees will be expected to utilize PTO/sick leave/vacation for personal time.

Schawn Johnson, Human Resources Director, said up to this point, the understanding is that employees working remotely would be available to answer calls and emails. The County is paying them to be available. Starting 4-19-20, employees would be required to take PTO/Vacation/Sick for time when they are not working.

Johnson said the County could consider implementation of an unpaid leave program where employees would sign up to voluntarily take time off each week without compensation. Benefit accruals and health insurance would continue. He viewed this as a savings to the County and it would allow employees to remain at home without affecting accruals. With this type of program, unions would have to be contacted to determine how the program would be implemented. Christine Partlow, HHS, said this type of program can impact the workload of an employee and in some cases does not benefit the County.

Johnson said the current process is for employees to use their accrued leave before moving to an unpaid leave status. To implement a voluntary leave without pay program, Administration and HR staff would need to draft a document outlining the program for Board approval to run from April to the end of the year.

Borrell questioned whether employees could elect to go on unemployment. Johnson said there are not many employees without accrued leave. He thought most employees will want to keep their jobs, and the County wants this as well due to training costs and not knowing whether the employee will be available for rehire when the economy improves. To lay an employee off involves the union and the layoff is based on seniority. It is done by classification and the employee that is laid off may not necessarily be the one requesting the layoff. Johnson said the voluntary leave without pay program would allow employees to take time off without pay and return to their position. Borrell said with a short-term layoff, the employee could collect unemployment and it would be less of an economic hardship on them. Johnson responded that it would result in an economic hardship on the County, as counties have to pay dollar for dollar for unemployment. Johnson said the County is seeing an influx of unemployment claims from past employees, as the County is responsible for a percentage of their unemployment. Ten claims have been received this week.

Johnson stated the Board approved the FSCRA (Federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act) leave on 4-07-20 which allows for more protection for staff if they or their family members get the COVID-19 virus. It includes 10 days of sick leave under the federal policy, and also the extension under the FMLA with 12 weeks of protection as well.

Matthew Fomby, Information Technology Director, said the reason he became an employee for Wright County after 24 years of active duty is that those who work for the public enjoy doing it. He suggested a mechanism where employees can indicate if they have time available to assist other departments. There is work that can be completed in the IT Department.

Daleiden suggested directing staff to bring draft documentation to the 4-14-20 County Board Workshop for review. He suggested a Board Meeting on 4-16-20 to approve any recommendations from the Workshop. Kelly said staff can prepare language for the voluntary leave without pay program and clarify the expectations moving forward to present at the Workshop. The Workshop recommendations could be approved at the 4-16-20 Board Meeting. Potter said this will also allow a plan moving forward in case the Governor extends the order.

Potter moved to schedule a County Board Meeting on 4-16-20 at 1:00 PM. The motion was seconded by Daleiden and carried 5-0 on a roll call vote.

Marc Mattice, Parks Administrator, referenced items approved by the Board on 4-07-20 regarding COVID-19 and distance learning. He asked whether information will become available on how to apply for those benefits. Johnson said forms will be made available tomorrow on the Intranet or they can be sent by email to the employee. For the sick leave and FMLA extension, employees must meet certain criteria or situations and that will be spelled out in the application form.

Mattice referenced the expectation for an employee response within a one-hour time frame. He said there needs to be some type of reasoning on that expectation. Some positions or circumstances may not allow response in a one-hour time frame. Daleiden said much of this will need to be left up to department heads. He requested allowing Administration to reduce this to writing. Husom suggested that departments send questions/concerns should be addressed to Lee Kelly or Schawn Johnson. Vetsch said the accountability expectations are more geared to those employees working remotely.

Update by Public Health

Sarah Grosshuesch, Public Health Director, referenced documentation previously provided to the Commissioners that includes information on the current incident command structure and the surveillance report. She plans to provide an updated report to the Board weekly.

There have been 12 Coronavirus cases in Wright County (6 active cases and 6 that are off isolation). The report is cumulative, so it does not include current hospitalization data. Over the period of the report, 3 cases required hospitalization and there are no known deaths. Grosshuesch learned today there are two long-term care facilities in Wright County that have defined an outbreak. One is located in Otsego and the other in Delano. An outbreak is defined as having at least one staff member or resident in the facility with 10 or more residents.

Daleiden encouraged department heads to collaborate with other counties on their efforts relating to COVID-19.

Vetsch was on the Trailblazer bus this morning delivering meals to seniors. He extended appreciation to Public Health, Catholic Charities, Wright County Community Action (WCCA), and the volunteers who have been delivering thousands of meals. It is expected 4000 meals will be delivered by the end of the week. There is still a demand of calls at WCCA with seniors wanting to get on the program. He expects that on the back side of the pandemic, the elderly may want to continue with the program.

The meeting adjourned at 1:57 P.M.

County Board Minutes submitted by Susan Backes, Clerk to the County Board