



BOARD MINUTES
BOARD OF WRIGHT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
JANUARY 18, 2022

Christine Husom	District 1
Darek Vetsch	District 2
Mark Daleiden	District 3
Mary Wetter	District 4
Michael Kaczmarek	District 5

DATE APPROVED: JANUARY 25, 2022

The Wright County Board met in regular session at 9:00 A.M. with Husom, Vetsch, Daleiden, Wetter, and Kaczmarek present.

COUNTY BOARD MINUTES 01-04-2022

Commissioner Mark Daleiden moved to approve the minutes from Tuesday, January 4, 2022. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mike Kaczmarek and carried 5-0.

AGENDA

Commissioner Darek Vetsch moved to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Daleiden and carried 5-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

Kaczmarek requested to pull Item A1 from the Consent Agenda for further discussion.

Daleiden moved to approve the Consent Agenda with the removal of Item A1. The motion was seconded by Kaczmarek and carried 5-0.

*Item pulled from the Consent Agenda for further discussion

A. ADMINISTRATION

1. *Authorization To Issue Payment To The Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust (MCIT) On The Following Invoices:

A. Wright County Renewal #189607	\$1,401,189.00
B. Wright County Wetland Appeal Board	\$1,054.00
C. Wright County Payroll Audit	\$28,325.00

2. Approve The Following Grant Application:
CDC-001 Economic Assistance For Community Dental Care (\$200,000)

B. ADMINISTRATION – FINANCE

1. Acknowledge Warrants Issued Between December 29, 2021 And January 11, 2022 (See Below, Item X. Warrants Issued)
2. Motion To Approve The Transfer Of Funds From The General Fund (Fund 01) To The CIP Fund (Fund 34) For Election Capital Equipment. A Journal Entry Will Be Processed In The Amount Of \$139,655.00 From 01- 071-000-0000-6910 Transfer Out Into 34-170-071-0000-5910 Transfer In
3. Motion To Approve The Reimbursement Of The American Rescue Plan Act Funds (ARP) As Follows:
County ARP Funds:
Approval Of Use Of ARP Funds From 01-099-493-8416.6261
\$1,575.00 2.10 Aid To Nonprofit Organization
4. Motion To Approve The Reimbursement Of The American Rescue Plan Act Funds (ARP) As Follows:
County ARP Funds:
Approval Of County Reimbursement Of \$4,756.61 From 01-099-493.6910 Transfer Out Into 01-100-493.5910 Transfer In As Follows:
\$690.04 For Administrative Expenses-Staff Costs
\$4,066.57 For 1.8 Other COVID-19 Public Health Expenses- Emergency Paid Sick Leave
Approval Of Use Of ARP Funds From 01-099-493-8428.6261
\$8,078.14 7.1 Administrative Expenses-Consultant Support

C. ADMINISTRATION - HUMAN RESOURCES

1. Motion To Extend The Wright County Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) Policy Through April 30, 2022

D. AG & DRAINAGE

1. Accept The Multipurpose Drainage Management 2022 Grant For \$210,000.00 On Joint Ditch #15

E. ASSESSOR

1. Request To Fill A Vacant Property Appraiser Position

F. EXTENSION

1. Confirm District 5 - County Extension Committee Appointment Keith Duske, Effective January 18, 2022 Term Ends On December 31, 2025 (Three Year Term)

G. HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

1. Position Replacement
 - A. Health Promotion Coordinator
 - B. Case Aide

H. HIGHWAY

1. Request To Fill Vacant Highway Maintenance Supervisor Position. We Have A Vacancy To Fill Due To A Promotion That Took Effect On Monday, January 10, 2022

I. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

1. Request To Fill The Vacant Technical Support Specialist Position
2. Request To Fill A IT Business Analyst Position Due To Resignation
3. Refer To The January 26th, 2022 Personnel Committee Moving Forward With An IT Infrastructure Position As Part Of The Approved 2022 IT Department Budget
4. Refer To 01/26/2022 Technology Committee:
 - A. CIP Process
 - B. Project Updates
 1. CAMA
 2. Nintex To Flow
 3. Website Redesign
 4. Admin – Government Center
 5. Admin – Event Scheduler (Qflow)
 6. ERP
 7. TeamDynamix
 8. EDMS – Recorder
 - C. 2022 Project Portfolio
 - D. TeamDynamix Project Planning Workflow
 - E. 2021 Project Summary Review

J. PLANNING & ZONING

1. Authorization To Fill Office Tech II Position Vacated Upon Promotion Of Sheryl Daniels To Office Manager

K. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

1. Renewal Of The Federal Equitable Sharing Agreement
2. Position Backfill
 - A. Backfill One Deputy FTE
3. Approve The Contract For Law Enforcement Coverage With The City Of Delano For 2022-2023

ITEMS PULLED FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA FOR FURTHER DISCUSSIONA. ADMINISTRATION

1. *Authorization To Issue Payment To The Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust (MCIT) On The Following Invoices:

B. Wright County Renewal #189607	\$1,401,189.00
C. Wright County Wetland Appeal Board	\$1,054.00
D. Wright County Payroll Audit	\$28,325.00

Kaczmarek stated he reviewed the Wright County Renewal #189607 and questioned if there have been any changes since last year or if there will be any changes once the county moves into the new Government Center. County Administrator Lee Kelly stated the renewal amount includes property, casualty, and workers compensation coverage. Kelly stated the county will move from builder's risk policy to covering the new Government Center once a certificate of occupancy is received.

Risk Manager Tim Dahl stated the property insurance includes buildings, vehicles, and other tangible assets, representing over \$200 million in insurable assets. Dahl added there will be a period that the new Government Center as well as the vacated Health & Human Services and current Government Center buildings are insured. The renewal amount is prorated. If coverage was canceled, the county would receive a refund. Dahl stated if the county were to seek coverage from the private market, the amount would be two to three times higher. The county is receiving a discount from MCIT due to the proactive measures put into place.

Kaczmarek moved to approve Item A1. The motion was seconded by Daleiden and carried 5-0.

2022 BOARD REORGANIZATION

The following is a list of members of Committees and the 2022 appointments. Alternates for Committees are in parentheses.

COMMITTEE

Broadband Committee

2022 APPOINTMENT

Vetsch, Daleiden

Budget Committee Of The Whole

All Commissioners, Administrator, Auditor/Treasurer, Finance Director

Building Committee

Kaczmarek, Wetter, (Vetsch), Facilities Services Director

Dental Clinic Steering Committee

Daleiden, Wetter

Ditch Committee (Combined Committee to Inspect & Joint Ditch Committee)

Daleiden, Kaczmarek, (Husom), plus Commissioner from District being addressed shall attend if not part of Committee. Joint Ditch meetings will require three Commissioners.

Finance/CIP Committee

Vetsch, Daleiden, Administrator, Assistant Administrator, Auditor/Treasurer, Finance Director, Assistant Finance Director, and IT Director

Noxious Weed Appeal Committee

Daleiden, Kaczmarek

Nuclear

Vetsch, Husom, (Wetter), Administrator, Emergency Management Director, and Emergency Management Deputy

Owner's Committee – New Government Center

Vetsch, Daleiden

Personnel/Employee Relations

Daleiden, Vetsch, (Kaczmarek), and HR Director. Administrator & Assistant Administrator for Union Negotiations. Finance Director & Civil Division Chief Attorney for Deferred Compensation.

Safety

Husom, Kaczmarek, Administrator, Assistant Administrator, Risk Manager, Emergency Management Coordinator. (Also, one Representative from each unit: Teamsters, WCDA, AFSCME, Attorney's, and 49ers)

Security

Husom, Kaczmarek, Two Judges, Administrator, Risk Manager, Court Administrator, & Representatives from each of the following Departments: Sheriff, Court Services, & County Attorney

Tax Forfeit Committee

Wetter, Kaczmarek, Finance Director

Technology	Vetsch, Daleiden, Administrator, IT Director, Auditor/Treasurer, Finance Director, & Representative from each Sub-Technology Committee: Land Records, Sheriff, Public Works, Law Legal, HHS, and Administration
Transportation Committee Of The Whole	All Commissioners, Highway Engineer, Administrator
Ways & Means	Husom, Wetter, Administrator
911 Planning Committee	Husom, Kaczmarek, (Wetter), Assistant Administrator, IT Representative, P&Z Administrator, Sheriff Representative, Emergency Management Deputy Director, GIS Coordinator, Communication 911 PSAP Mgr., Business Manager – Sheriff, Facilities Services Director, Risk Manager, Public Health Emergency Planner
<u>ADVISORY BOARDS</u>	
Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Advisory Board	Husom, Wetter
Area Transportation Planning (ATP)	Vetsch
Bertram Chain of Lakes Advisory Board (Bertram Chain of Lakes Regional Park Advisory Council)	Daleiden, Vetsch
Central MN Economic Development 7W District Joint Powers Board	Vetsch, Jolene Foss, (Wetter, Administrator)
Central MN EMS Region Joint Powers Board	Husom (Kaczmarek)
Central MN Jobs & Training Joint Powers Board (JTPA) Workforce Center	Husom
Central MN Emergency Services Board (Regional Radio Board)	Kaczmarek (Husom)
Central Mississippi River Regional Planning Partnership (CMRP)	Vetsch, Daleiden
County Extension Service	Wetter, Daleiden
Delegates to AMC	All Commissioners, Auditor/Treasurer, Administrator, Highway Engineer
East Central Joint Powers Board	Vetsch, Court Services Director
Economic Development Authority	All Commissioners
Economic Development Partnership Board (Wright County) aka WCEDP	Vetsch (Wetter)
Great River Regional Library Board	Husom (Vetsch)
Highway 12 Safety Coalition	Kaczmarek

Highway 55 Coalition	Husom, Wetter, (Highway Engineer)
Historical Society	Wetter
I-94 Coalition	Vetsch
Law Library Board	Husom
Legislative Matters	All Commissioners
Mentorship Education and Drug Awareness Coalition of Wright County (MEADA)	Husom
MnDOT Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)	Vetsch
Monticello Joint Planning Board	Vetsch
One Watershed, One Plan Policy Committee (North Fork Crow)	Wetter (Kaczmarek)
One Watershed, One Plan Policy Committee (South Fork Crow)	Wetter (Kaczmarek)
One Watershed, One Plan Policy Committee (Mississippi-Saint Cloud)	Wetter
Parks Advisory Board	Daleiden
Planning Commission	Daleiden
Public Works Labor/Management	Husom, Administrator, (Vetsch)
Region 7W Transportation	Vetsch
Regional Crime Lab (Tri-County Regional Forensic Laboratory)	Husom
Safe Communities of Wright County (SCWC)	Husom
Safe Harbor Task Force	Husom
Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)	Wetter
Trailblazer Joint Powers Board	Vetsch, Daleiden, (Wetter)
The Turn Steering Committee	Husom
Twin Cities Urbanized Areas (UZA) Boundaries	Vetsch
Water Management Task Force	Wetter
Wright County Agricultural Society	Kaczmarek
Wright County Area Transportation Advisory Council (WCAT)	Vetsch, Wetter

Wright County Community Action Council

Wetter, Daleiden, City Representative

Wright County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee

Kaczmarek

On a motion by Kaczmarek, seconded by Daleiden, all voted to accept the Board appointments as recommended.

Kaczmarek questioned the benefits of being a member of Minnesota Rural Counties. Kaczmarek added the county has its own lobbying group. Kaczmarek stated he believes many of the MN Rural Counties' objectives don't align with the county's objectives. Commissioner Mary Wetter stated she is also unaware of the items MN Rural Counties will be lobbying for but added transportation seems to be a concern.

Kelly stated membership dues for 2022 are \$2,900. The county joined the MN Rural Counties in 2018 and at that time there were more Waters of the US and drainage issues. Kelly added that past commissioners have felt there was value in the group. Vetsch added the county will only see benefits if the group is leveraged.

The commissioners agreed to further discuss the MN Rural Counties membership at the next County Board meeting on Tuesday, January 25, 2022.

TIMED AGENDA ITEMS

LINDSEY MEYER, ADMINISTRATION – FINANCE

Adopt Resolution Approving Wright County's Application For The 2022 Help America Vote Act (HAVA) Grant Program

Finance Director Lindsey Meyer stated she is expecting approximately \$49,000 which will be used toward OnniBallot equipment. Kaczmarek questioned if the county must provide matching funds for the grant. Meyer responded no. The funds will be used as a match for another grant the county applied for.

Daleiden moved to adopt the resolution approving Wright County's Application for the 2022 HAVA Grant Program. The motion was seconded by Vetsch and carried 5-0, on a roll call vote.

Adopt Resolution Establishing Absentee Ballot Board, Mail Ballot Absentee Ballot Board And UOCAVA Absentee Ballot Board For The 2022-2023 Election Cycle

Meyer stated the county is statutorily required to establish Ballot Boards.

Wetter expressed concerns with the language in the resolution related to allowing trained deputy staff to count absentee ballots and perform the absentee ballot board duties for all elections. Wetter stated there is currently a court case about having an equal number of Republicans and Democrats perform ballot board duties. Wetter added staff could be biased and she understood the law to require an equal representation of each party.

Meyer responded election judges and trained staff are expected to be impartial. Meyer stated the party balance is the sufficient number of election judges or trained staff. The makeup of the group can be determined at a later date. The resolution is purely to establish the absentee ballot boards.

Vetsch questioned is there is a way to add bipartisan observers to help build integrity to the process. The election process is under scrutiny. Vetsch stated the county must do as much as it can to add integrity to the election process.

Commissioner Christine Husom added election judges and trained deputy staff must be impartial and honest. Wetter stated she has previously been an election judge and understands things going on behind the scenes. Wetter added she is trying to avoid a mishap.

Kaczmarek questioned if there is anything different in the process from last year. Meyer responded no.

Daleiden motioned to approve the resolution with the members of the ballot board to be determined at a later date. The motion died for a lack of a second.

Vetsch stated there is no language in the resolution requiring staff to present the list of ballot board members to the County Board for approval. As written, the resolution gives the Finance Director the authority to appoint members to the ballot board. Office Manager/Elections Supervisor Corissa Aronson stated a list of ballot board members can be brought to the County Board for approval.

Vetsch moved to approve the resolution establishing absentee ballot boards for the 2022-2023 election cycle with modification of the language to include the requirement of presenting the list of ballot board members to the County Board for final approval. The motion was seconded by Wetter and carried 5-0, on a roll call vote.

TONY RASMUSON, ASSESSOR

The County Board Will Need To Set The Time And Date For The 2022 County Board Of Equalization In Accordance With Minnesota Statute 274.14

Senior Appraiser Manager Tammy Anderson explained the annual meeting must be scheduled after the second Friday in June and must occur before June 30 to allow county property owners the option to appeal to the County Board their assessment and classification for 2022. Anderson stated a deadline for property owners to make appeals has been set in previous years in order to allow staff time to gather information.

Daleiden moved to approve setting the 2022 County Board of Equalization at 4:00 p.m. Monday, June 13 with the deadline for property owners to make an appointment set as Monday, June 6. The motion was seconded by Vetsch and carried 5-0.

VIRGIL HAWKINS, HIGHWAY

Approve Resolution Regarding Spring Load Restrictions On The Wright County Highway System. Minnesota State Statutes (169.87) Provides Local Authorities, With Respect To Highways Under Their Jurisdiction, To Designate Seasonal Load Restrictions. Limiting Loads On Designated Highways During The Spring Thaw Period (When The Highways Are At Their Weakest Strength Due To Saturation Of The Underlying Soils) Protects The Investment And Preserves The Life Of The Highways.

Highway Engineer Virgil Hawkins stated load restrictions typically last eight weeks, however the county relies on data from Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). Daleiden moved to approve the resolution regarding spring load restrictions on the county highway system. The motion was seconded by Kaczmarek and carried 5-0.

Authorize Highway Engineer Hawkins And Assistant Highway Engineer Hausmann To Attend The NACE (National Association Of County Engineers) Annual Meeting/Management & Technical Conference In Buffalo (Erie County), New York, From April 24-27, 2022. County Board Approval Of This Budgeted Expense Is Required, Per County Policy, As This Involves Out-Of-State Travel. The National Association Of County Engineers (NACE) Annual Meeting/Management & Technical Conference Offers Timely And Informative Sessions And Education/Training On County Engineering Topics.

Kaczmarek questioned if there is an option for virtual attendance. Hawkins responded the entire conference was held virtually last year and the year before the conference was cancelled. This year, the conference will be held in-person or will be cancelled; there will not be a virtual option. Daleiden requested an update from Hawkins after the conference.

Daleiden moved to authorize Highway Engineer Hawkins and Assistant Highway Engineer Chad Hausmann to attend the NACE Annual Meeting/Management & Technical Conference in Buffalo (Erie County), New York, from April 24-27, 2022. The motion was seconded by Wetter and carried 5-0.

Approve Resolution Of Final Acceptance For Contract No. 2001 And Authorize Final Payment To Knife River Corporation In The Amount Of \$83,605.50. Contract No. 2001 Was Our 2020 Pavement Preservation Program And Included Segments Of CSAH 8, CSAH 31, CR106 And CR145. The Final Value Of The Work Certified Is \$7,863,073.64.

Vetsch moved to approve the resolution of final acceptance for contract No. 2001 and authorize final payment to Knife River Corporation in the amount of \$83,605.50. The motion was seconded by Daleiden and carried 5-0, on a roll call vote.

BARRY RHINEBERGER, PLANNING & ZONING

Action On Ordinance Amendment Number 21-5 Solar Energy Farms And Solar Energy Systems As Recommended By Planning Commission

Action On Ordinance Amendment Number 21-5A

Civil Division Chief Attorney Greg Kryzer stated a public hearing was held before the Planning Commission on Thursday, December 16, 2021. After lengthy discussion at the Planning Commission meeting, the ordinance was amended by removing a section, and recommended for adoption. Kryzer stated Amendment 21-5A includes the language that was removed at the Planning Commission meeting.

Vetsch moved to approve Ordinance Amendment 21-5 and Ordinance Amendment 21-5A. The motion was seconded by Kaczmarek.

Kaczmarek requested an amendment to Article 1, Section 2 by inserting the following after section 155.108(C)(15)(a)(15):

“A certified or sworn statement by the Applicant which includes a full listing and disclosure of all materials and substances which are included in the construction of the solar panels that will be placed on the property. This statement will need to be reaffirmed and redisclosed at the time the building permit application is filed.”

Kaczmarek stated the amended language comes from a discussion regarding public safety. If there was a fire, the fire departments would know what materials are located at the site.

Vetsch amended his motion to include the amended language Kaczmarek presented. The motion was seconded by Kaczmarek.

Vetsch stated there were numerous meetings regarding this matter. Vetsch stated members of the public have complained setbacks were not discussed, however, there was discussion about co-locating and the concerns of having small solar subdivisions. Vetsch stated this is not removing property owners rights, there is just a different process. If citizens want to have one megawatt units, there will have to be space between them. Larger units will be regulated by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

Wetter questioned if a property owner would be allowed to install a unit if the neighboring property already has an existing unit, less than one mile away. Kryzer responded there would have to be a one-mile setback. Wetter expressed concerns with multiple transmission lines going all over the place. Vetsch stated solar farms are only producing energy 17 percent of the time in Minnesota and the cost-benefit analysis needs to be weighed. Vetsch added all energy needs to be paying the same amount of tax.

Kaczmarek stated the ordinance was distributed to all cities and townships in the county. All approved the ordinance as written, except for one township due to the setback requirement. Many wanted to copy the language and others wanted the ordinance to be stricter. One of the requests was having the driveway permit approved to the solar field prior to construction. Planning & Zoning Administrator Barry Rhineberger stated that could be part of the site approval that the Planning Commission does. It could be a requirement at the time of permit application. Township roads have the authority to approve driveway locations.

Ordinance Amendment 21-5 and Ordinance Amendment 21-5A passed 3-2, on a roll call vote with Daleiden and Wetter opposing.

NOTICE OF ADOPTION OF WRIGHT COUNTY ORDINANCE 21-5

Please take notice that the Wright County Board of Commissioners on January 18, 2022 approved amendments to Wright County Ordinance 155.003 and 155.108. These amendments concern Solar Energy Farms and Solar Energy Systems. The amendments include changes to the definitions of Solar Energy Farms and Solar Energy Systems. Solar Energy Systems were increased in size up to 200 kilowatts and the permitted operations of Solar Energy Systems was increased to 40 kilowatts. The base amount of Solar Energy Farms was increased and amended to reflect the changes to Solar Energy Systems.

Wright County Ordinance § 155.108 also includes amendments to the decommissioning agreements and application requirements for Solar Energy Farm Conditional Use Permits. These amendments include a requirement for landowner signature on any applications as well as the prevention and control of noxious weeds. The application requirements were amended to also require more site plan mapping, more detailed surveys and plans for drainage and setbacks, and a disclosure of materials contained in the solar panels. The decommissioning agreements were amended to clarify when the escrow funds can be used for abatement and for reimbursement by private landowners.

Wright County Ordinance § 155.108 was also amended to include a one-mile setback for Solar Energy Farms that are less than 1.49 megawatts.

LEE KELLY, ADMINISTRATION

Approval Of Statement Of Work (SOW) With Sierra-Cedar For Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Implementation

Kelly said the SOW has been reviewed by several parties including internal legal. The plan is for a mid-February start with implementation of financials, contracts, and grants in 2022. Kelly stated the county reached out to other firms to compare prices.

Kaczmarek questioned if reference checks have been completed. Kelly responded a working group with Dakota County has been formed. Other government agencies have also been contacted. Kelly stated he is anticipating the system to go live at the end of 2022.

Vetsch moved to approve the SOW with Sierra-Cedar for ERP Implementation. The motion was seconded by Daleiden and carried 5-0.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

ADMINISTRATION

Cancel County Board Meeting In March, May, August, And November Due To Five Tuesdays In Each Month

Daleiden moved to cancel the March 1 County Board Meeting and move the County Board Workshop to March 15. The motion was seconded by Vetsch and carried 5-0.

Vetsch moved to cancel the May 31 County Board Meeting. The motion was seconded by Daleiden and carried 5-0.

Vetsch moved to cancel the August 23 County Board Meeting. The motion was seconded by Wetter and carried 5-0.

Wetter moved to cancel the November 22 County Board Meeting. The motion was seconded by Kaczmarek and carried 5-0.

Resolution Setting Minimum Salary For Elected Officials For January 1, 2023

Kelly stated the county is required by Statutes 387.20 and 388.18 to set a minimum salary for elected officials during an election year. Kaczmarek questioned if there is a process to set a maximum salary. Kelly responded his is not aware of other counties doing so and encouraged the board to set a salary on the merits of the candidate.

Daleiden moved to approve the resolution setting the minimum salary for elected officials for January 1, 2023. The motion was seconded by Wetter and carried 5-0, on a roll call vote.

Adopt Budget Schedule For 2023 Budget Process

Daleiden moved to adopt the budget schedule for the 2023 budget process. The motion was seconded by Vetsch and carried 5-0.

ADMINISTRATION – FINANCE

On January 7, 2022, The Department Of Treasury Department Released The Final American Rescue Plan (ARP) State And Local Fiscal Recovery Rule. In The Final Rule There Is New Standard Allowance Amount Available Up To \$10 Million Dollars For Revenue Loss, Not To Exceed The Award Allocation. The ARP Committee Is Recommending That Wright County Elects The Standard Allowance Of \$10 Million In Revenue Loss

Assistant Finance Director Heather Lemieux recommended the county elects the standard allowance of \$10 million in revenue loss rather than the \$1.6 million previously calculated by staff.

Vetsch moved to elect the standard allowance of \$10 million in revenue loss. The motion was seconded by Daleiden and carried 5-0.

COMMITTEE MINUTES

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (1-06-2022)

Wetter moved to approve the Thursday, January 6 Committee of the Whole meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Daleiden and carried 5-0.

I. Jail Medical Provider

Captain Pat O'Malley introduced CentraCare Director Heather Qunell and CentraCare Medical Director Dr. David Frenz. O'Malley stated discussions with CentraCare began several months ago. O'Malley stated the jail is required to provide medical services and the county currently has a contract with Mend Correctional Care to provide those services. Mend Correctional Care provides health technicians to help distribute medications, nursing services, mental health services, and an onsite provider.

Commissioner Mary Wetter questioned where Mend Correctional Care is located. O'Malley stated Mend is a correctional care provider and is not affiliated with any hospitals or clinics. Inmates come to the jail with all levels of medical and mental health needs. The severity of mental health issues has increased over the last 12 months. O'Malley stated there are potential problems with the current contract and he believes a contract with CentraCare would be in the best interest of the county. CentraCare only provides medical services to jails in counties where other CentraCare services are already established. CentraCare currently provides medical services to Stearns County, Benton County, and Todd County.

Frenz stated CentraCare is a large health care system based in St. Cloud. Benton County and Stearns County invited CentraCare to the jail medical provider business to provide more comprehensive care. Jail medical services are completely divorced from care before and after custody. When individuals are incarcerated, a lot of the treatment done before is erased and there is also not a lot of continuity once inmates are released. Frenz has been a physician since 2004 and is board certified in addiction medicine.

Frenz stated CentraCare has a goal of improving the health of the community, enhancing the patient experience, reducing the cost of care, and improving provider and staff well-being. Frenz explained CentraCare's philosophy is the standard of medical care in jail is indistinguishable from the medical care in the community. Frenz added CentraCare wants to provide seamless care before, in, and post-custody. CentraCare proposed to collaborate with Stellis Health to view pre-custody medical records. Additionally, Stellis could review the treatment provided and continue treatment after custody.

Qunell stated CentraCare will bring an electronic medical records system, called Epic, into the jail. Historically it has been difficult to determine what medicines individuals were prescribed prior to coming to jail. Qunell added there are many patients in jail dealing with mental health issues. CentraCare partners with other local agencies to help assess persistent medical issues. CentraCare has also developed protocols for correctional care staff to follow when medical care providers are not available.

One of the main missions of CentraCare is to provide the right care for the patient while in custody as well as creating a plan of care for when the patient leaves. CentraCare has worked to build relationships with other health systems in the area. Social workers can assist with housing. When relationships are built with key players in the county, the costs can be drastically reduced. Qunell presented a slide that tracked contacts with services such as detox, jail, police, and emergency room admissions for five individuals. The number of contacts with these agencies drastically reduced once a plan was created for each individual.

O'Malley stated there are a lot of people in and out of jail and the average length of stay is 14 days. There are inmates that are in jail for more than two years at a time. The seriously or mentally ill are typically in jail for three to six months or longer. The jail would like to create a better release program to help assist individuals connect with services that are

already available in the county. The relationship with CentraCare would open the door to things the jail is currently unable to do.

Wetter questioned what percentage of individuals need continued care. O'Malley responded a third of the jail population would benefit from the program and added 100 percent of the inmates staying in custody for more than six months would directly benefit.

O'Malley stated there is not a requirement to post a Request for Proposal (RFP). O'Malley added Anoka County previously posted an RFP and received only two responses. O'Malley stated the limited access to medical records is currently a roadblock for the jail. All medical records come by fax and there is no way of tracking information.

O'Malley stated the reason the discussions started with CentraCare is because the jail was having issues getting inmates seen by medical professionals in a timely manner. Frenz stated 85 percent of the time, inmates can meet through virtual health without taking them out of jail.

Commissioner Mark Daleiden questioned if the inmates would be transported to Monticello. O'Malley stated inmates are currently taken to Monticello because of the issues with getting individuals seen in Buffalo. Frenz stated CentraCare would rather not transfer to the emergency room and there are very few offsite transports. There are costs associated with having officers available for transport. O'Malley stated the county is currently paying \$513,000 for contract services alone with Mend. O'Malley added the county currently is involved in two lawsuits regarding medical services. Daleiden stated there have been payments to Allina for emergency room visits that are separate from the Mend contract. O'Malley stated the county spends approximately \$150,000 per year for outside medical services. CentraCare has proposed a cost of \$887,000.

O'Malley stated Mend currently provides health technicians that are trained to distribute medications while the CentraCare contract would include Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN). LPNs can help the jail in more ways than just distributing medications. Qunell stated a list of providers that can be contacted at any time – day or night – will be available.

Wetter questioned where lab work would be sent. O'Malley responded some testing is done on site and the rest is sent to a CentraCare lab. Frenz stated CentraCare could run lab work at the jail rather than immediately sending someone to the emergency room. Sheriff Sean Deringer emphasized the positive outcomes, community-based relationship, continuity of care, and minimized risk to the county. Commissioner Christine Husom agreed the model makes sense for the county.

Wetter questioned how long Stearns, Benton, and Todd Counties have used CentraCare services. Frenz responded CentraCare has worked with Benton since October 2017, Stearns since January 2021, and Todd for approximately a year now. Qunell added CentraCare is looking to be a partner, not a vendor. O'Malley stated the county is required to give a 180-day notice to Mend Correctional Care.

Daleiden questioned if other counties are billed for boarding inmates. O'Malley stated anything above in-house services is billed. Deringer added the county may do less billing with the CentraCare contract. If the inmates do not leave the facility, there will not be a bill. O'Malley added there are not typically many medical issues with inmates that are boarding.

Daleiden questioned if CentraCare would provide additional mental health care. O'Malley stated that is an area he is hoping to see improvement. Frenz added the CentraCare approach is vastly different than other vendors. Other vendors use the cheapest medicines, while CentraCare does not have a list of prohibited medicines. O'Malley added changing medicines that are working for an individual almost always causes issues. Deringer added there are several inmates on suicide watch, and it is important to mitigate risk as much as possible.

Commissioner Mike Kaczmarek questioned if the county pays any of the post-custody care. O'Malley responded the jail would not pay for post-custody care however, other county services may. Kaczmarek questioned how ambulance services would work. O'Malley stated the closest ambulance will come.

Kaczmarek questioned the staffing hours the CentraCare contract would include. O'Malley stated a doctor would visit the jail two times a week and there would be 24/7 on-call coverage. Registered Nurses (RN) would cover 116 hours a week, LPNs would cover 112 hours per week, and mental health services would be provided on site three times a week. Currently there is a doctor on site once a week for six hours and 24/7 on call services. RNs provide 120 hours per week; health technicians provide 100 hours per week, and mental health services are available eight hours per week.

Kaczmarek questioned if the jail has an X-ray machine. O'Malley stated the jail currently does not but there have been discussions about getting a portable X-ray machine.

Kaczmarek stated he would like the opportunity to contact the other counties that are contracting with CentraCare. Wetter questioned if the county could afford the contract. Finance Director Lindsey Meyer stated there are funds available. O'Malley added he believes Mend Correctional will ask for an increase in the contract cost because of staffing shortages.

Kaczmarek stated approximately \$150,000 is spent above the current contract for medical. O'Malley stated the medical conditions that come into jail cannot be controlled. O'Malley stated he does not expect a decrease in the amount spent on medical care outside of the jail. Qunell added the number of transports can be reduced, which will save the county money.

County Administrator Lee Kelly stated there is overall value in the contract and it will help reduce risk. Public Health Director Sarah Grosshuesch stated she has heard wonderful things from Stearns County about CentraCare. Grosshuesch added this is a phenomenal opportunity for the county and the savings are hard to quantify.

O'Malley stated once a contract is approved, Mend Correctional will be given a 180-day notice. Daleiden questioned what could be done if Mend Correctional terminated the current contract. Frenz stated CentraCare could provide service in the interim. Qunell added Mend has an agreement with nurses that states they cannot sign on with a jail provider for one year after leaving Mend.

RECOMMENDATION: The Sheriff's Office will continue working with CentraCare to finalize a contract. The contract will come before the commissioners for approval in approximately one month.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (1-10-2022)

Vetsch stated cities are statutorily required to offer law enforcement services while schools are not. Kaczmarek clarified the Sheriff's Office was previously authorized to hire two additional positions. The Commissioners agreed to authorize an additional three positions at the meeting. Husom requested to strike a sentence regarding communicating the openings.

Kaczmarek moved to approve the Monday, January 10 Committee of the Whole minutes. The motion was seconded by Daleiden and carried 5-0.

I. School Resource Officer (SRO) Contract Rate

Sheriff Sean Deringer stated the School Resource Officer (SRO) contract rate was previously 9/12's of a starting Deputy's salary. At the direction of the county board, the Sheriff's Office determined the overall expenses including benefits. For the 2020-2021 school year, the rate was calculated to be \$43,764; the 2021-2022 school year would be \$49,250; the 2022-2023 school year would be \$59,250; and the 2023-2024 school year would be \$69,250. Deringer explained it was a four-year plan to capture actual expenses.

The Commissioners chose to freeze the rate at \$43,764 at the request of the superintendents. Deringer suggested freezing the SRO contract rate at \$43,764 again for the upcoming 2022-2023 school year, and then starting in the 2023-2024 school year increasing the rate by 3 percent each year. A 3 percent increase would amount to \$45,077.

Commissioner Mark Daleiden questioned what the actual cost is. Sheriff's Office Manager Shawna Athman responded the actual cost is \$69,500 for the nine months the officers are in the schools. Commissioner Christine Husom questioned how many SROs there are. Athman stated 10.5 full-time equivalents (FTEs) are assigned during the school year.

Deringer stated Wright County has the largest SRO division in the state. Deringer added last year there were 29 child abuse cases, this year there have been 71; last year there were nine criminal damage to property cases, this year there

have been 37; criminal sexual conduct cases have increased from 15 last year to 25 this year; last year there were 25 disorderly contact cases and there have been 40 this year; domestic disturbances have increased from two last year to nine this year; juvenile complaints have increased from 245 last year to 465 already this year; and school threats have increased from six last year to 26 this year. The call load in the SRO division has more than doubled since last year. Deringer stated there is a significant need in the schools and it is becoming more difficult for schools to cover the cost of SROs.

Daleiden questioned how many school districts do not have SROs. Deringer responded Annandale and Howard Lake do not. The Monticello and St. Michael-Albertville School Districts are the busiest. If there were not SROs, squad cars would have to respond.

Daleiden suggested getting information out to the public. Commissioner Christine Husom stated she is in favor of freezing the contract rate for the upcoming school year and revisiting the rate in the future to determine if an increase is appropriate.

Commissioner Mike Kaczmarek questioned what the hourly rate of the contract is as well as how the SRO contract compares to city contracts. Athman responded the hourly rate would be \$28.05/hour. Deringer stated cities are statutorily obligated to provide services. Kaczmarek questioned if virtual learning will be returning. Deringer stated it is unknown.

RECOMMENDATION: Freeze the current SRO contract rate at \$43,764 for the upcoming 2022-2023 school year. The Commissioners will evaluate the rate again at the beginning of 2023. A letter will be sent to the school districts explaining the commissioners plan to increase the rate beginning in the 2023-2024 school year. Deringer will work with Communications Specialist John Holler to communicate school-related challenges, statistics, and information about county programs to the public.

II. Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Sheriff's Office Staff

Deringer anticipates the Sheriff's Office will face recruiting, hiring, and retention problems in the next one to three years. Deringer stated all Sheriff's Offices throughout the state are dealing with staffing issues. The last two graduating classes of new recruits into the field were significantly smaller.

Deringer stated nearly all current applicants have previous experience, but he believes that won't be the case for much longer. A year and a half ago, the county had 139 applicants and last spring there were only 36. Deringer is suggesting increased patrol coverage in cities starting January 1, 2023. The increase in coverage would require eight additional deputies that would need to be hired in August or September to complete training. Deringer expects to lose eight additional employees due to retirement in 2022. The Sheriff's Office could be looking at 20 open positions by the end of the year.

Deringer stated there are agencies offering bonuses and extended time off as incentives. Deringer stated the county currently has a good take home squad program, but improvements can be made. Deringer emphasized the need to be competitive in the job market.

Husom questioned what the educational requirements are to become a correctional officer. Assistant Human Resources Director Lori Pawelk responded a degree is required but there is an equivalency clause.

Deringer stated the board previously approved the hiring of two positions more than the authorized number of positions. Deringer questioned if the board would approve the Sheriff's Office hiring three additional positions, with the approval sunseting at the end of the year. Deringer stated it would help the office with some of the issues it is facing. Deringer is currently authorized to hire 157 positions, if the commissioners approve, he would be authorized to hire up to 162 positions.

Daleiden questioned how many deputies resigned last year, not due to retirement. Chief Deputy Matt Treichler stated six were hired by other agencies, three moved to the private sector, two retired, and one was elected as a commissioner. Kaczmarek questioned how much the county received in reimbursements for mutual aid in other counties. Deringer responded Aitkin County reimbursed 100 percent of expenses and Hennepin County reimbursed 50 percent of expenses. Athman stated the reimbursements were placed in the miscellaneous revenue account. Athman added Hennepin County

anticipated issuing a 75 percent reimbursement, but the funding source fell through. Kaczmarek questioned if the Sheriff would provide mutual aid in the future. Deringer responded it would depend on the need.

Kaczmarek questioned if there has been conversation to help retain employees that are planning to leave. Deringer stated many are retiring. There is a need for part-time help in the bailiff division. Deringer added a bonus incentive toward the end of the year could also help with retention. Kaczmarek mentioned a pay to stay option.

Kaczmarek questioned if mutual aid requests are approved by the county board. Deringer stated he has not sought board approval previously but has communicated with the commissioners each time aid was provided outside the county.

Human Resources Director Schawn Johnson stated the upcoming contract negotiation sessions will be very challenging. There are many proposals that have never been proposed before. Daleiden stated he would like to start negotiations earlier this year. Johnson stated he would reach out to the unions in April. Daleiden mentioned looking into incentives to retain employees. Civil Division Chief Attorney Greg Kryzer stated options could be negotiated with the unions. Athman added American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds are available for recruitment and retention. Daleiden suggested reaching out to department heads and other agencies for direction.

RECOMMENDATION: The Sheriff's Office is authorized to hire up to five additional positions over the 157 previously authorized positions.

COUNTY BOARD WORKSHOP (1-11-2022)

Kaczmarek requested staff determine the cost of providing in-house cleaning services and the cost to contract facility management services, excluding HVAC and electrician services.

Daleiden stated the current job description includes maintenance work, which is a higher pay grade than a custodian. Kelly stated a new job description would need to be created for an employee strictly doing custodial work. Vetsch moved to request staff to provide a cost analysis for providing cleaning services internally. The motion was seconded by Kaczmarek and carried 5-0.

Vetsch suggested discussing facility management services further at the February County Board Workshop.

Vetsch moved to approve the Tuesday, January 11 County Board Workshop. The motion was seconded by Daleiden and carried 5-0.

I. Schedule Meetings as Needed

a. Dental Clinic Steering Committee

County Administrator Lee Kelly stated the meeting is needed to review proposals from construction firms. After discussion, the commissioners agreed to schedule the Dental Clinic Steering Committee meeting at 10:30 A.M. Monday, January 24, 2022.

Kelly stated a closed session for the County Administrator's review needs to be rescheduled. The commissioners agreed to schedule a closed session Committee of the Whole meeting at 10:30 A.M. Tuesday, January 18, 2022.

Kelly stated the commissioners met in June 2021 and discussed bidding contract cleaning services. Kelly asked for clarification on the direction from the board because the recommendation in the meeting minutes did not reflect bidding out the services. Facilities Director Alan Wilczek stated he has pricing for the addition of the new building. The current cleaning contract for all county facilities expires in April. There was previous discussion of bidding out cleaning services or bringing the service in-house. Wilczek added he will need to either post a Request for Proposal (RFP) or hire additional staff.

Commissioner Darek Vetsch stated he would like to see what the proposed price would be first and if the price was too high, the services could be provided in-house. Wilczek stated the RFP would take several weeks to complete and award. It would also take time to determine staffing needs as well as hiring additional employees. Commissioner Mary Wetter

questioned how many employees would need to be hired if the work is done in-house. Wilczek stated approximately 12 employees would need to be hired.

The commissioners discussed contract length for cleaning services. Wilczek stated a one-year term could potentially be more costly. Wilczek added the contract would need to be awarded by March so there is time for the vendor to prepare.

Commissioner Mike Kaczmarek questioned if there is a warranty on the workmanship for the new building. Wilczek responded there is a one-year warranty on workmanship.

RECOMMENDATION:

Schedule the following meetings:

- **Dental Clinic Steering Committee – 10:30 A.M. Monday, January 24**
- **Closed Session Committee of the Whole – 10:30 A.M. Tuesday, January 18**

Wilczek will post an RFP for contract cleaning services including pricing for two-year and three-year terms.

II. Update on OSHA Emergency Testing Standard

Kelly stated the U.S. Supreme Court held a hearing on Friday, January 7, 2022, discussing President Biden's executive order requiring vaccination/testing of businesses with 100 or more employees, but a decision has not yet been released. The county has held off on any action, based on previous direction from the board. The Administration Department has done work to prepare in the event a decision requiring vaccination/weekly testing is made. Kelly stated most other counties in the state are taking a similar approach. The provisions were supposed to be effective on January 10, 2022, and testing is supposed to go into effect on February 9, 2022. Commissioner Mark Daleiden stated if the Supreme Court upholds the current rulings, there will likely be an extension for the ruling to go into effective as many agencies will not be prepared immediately.

Daleiden questioned if barriers need to be put in place at the new Government Center for preventative measures against COVID-19. Wilczek stated there are challenges with installing temporary barriers. Wilczek added much of the interaction with the public in the Health & Human Services Department takes place in intake rooms or interview rooms where it would be very difficult to install barriers. Health & Human Services Director Jami Goodrum stated there will still be a lot of interaction at the front desk. Goodrum added there are guidelines in place requesting staff be masked. Social Services Manager Jill Pooler stated staff have expressed concerns over safety and security.

Wilczek stated it is complex and time-consuming to install temporary plexiglass barriers. The county is moving into a brand-new building and holes will have to be drilled in the wood to secure the barriers. Kaczmarek suggested discussing options with department heads. Wilczek stated the counters should be uniform. Vetsch stated the buildings are sufficiently safe. Wilczek added there are wireless panic buttons placed throughout the building.

Public Health Director Sarah Grosshuesch stated COVID-19 barriers will not be effective. The only way to provide defense against a new variant is to have everyone mask.

RECOMMENDATION: The county will continue to wait for a ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court regarding the OSHA Emergency Testing Standard.

Additional barriers for COVID-19 or safety will not be added to the new Government Center building.

III. Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) Policy

Kelly stated the policy was adopted last year and expires at the end of January. The policy provides additional time to employees that have used or do not have accrued time off, in the event the employee is absent for a COVID-19 related event. Kelly suggested employees that have already used the allotted hours would not be eligible for more. To date, 33

employees have utilized the policy, amounting to 1,105 hours. The commissioners discussed extending the policy to April 30, 2022.

RECOMMENDATION: Extend the EPSL policy to April 30, 2022.

IV. Allina Clinic Memorial Statue

Commissioner Christine Husom stated the Allina Community Health Board has agreed to donate \$5,000. An additional \$700 in community donations has been collected. The statue will take approximately one month to construct. The wingspan options are 2.5 feet, 3.5 feet or 5 feet. The City of Buffalo Parks Department has three location options for the statue. Daleiden added no public funds will be used for the statue.

RECOMMENDATION: Informational only.

V. Update on the Fire Training Center

Kelly stated the City of Buffalo is aware of the Compost Facility study and looking for an update from the county on the potential for building a Fire Training Center. Kelly added the Fire Chiefs are still interested in pursuing the facility if the county is still open to the idea. If the Compost Facility property is not feasible for the needs, the Fire Chiefs may look elsewhere as well. Daleiden stated he believes it would be a good opportunity for the residents of Wright County. Vetsch added the county would need to know that all the fire departments are on board and willing to contribute funds.

RECOMMENDATION: Informational only.

VI. Planning & Zoning Department Staffing Update

Planning & Zoning Administrator Barry Rhineberger stated Office Manager Terrie Piram retired on Friday, January 7, 2022. The position was replaced internally by Sheryl Daniels. The Environmental Health position is still vacant; however, five interviews have been scheduled. There will likely be two rounds of interviews for the position. A Planner position has been posted with an application deadline of Thursday, January 20. An Office Technician II position will be posted Tuesday, January 11, and the position will be sent to the county board for approval on Tuesday, January 18. There is also an open Building Inspector position that will be posted later this month.

Daleiden questioned the qualifications of the candidates that applied for the Environmental Health position. Rhineberger stated 11 candidates applied and seven were qualified.

RECOMMENDATION: Informational only.

VII. Update on the Assessor's Office Computer-Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) System

Assessor Tony Rasmuson stated Business Analyst Jeremy Kringler joined the project after Andrea Benedict resigned. Rasmuson stated the project was fast-tracked in August 2021 with anticipation for the system to go live in November.

Rasmuson stated the department is currently doing dual entry in both the Avenu and Tyler systems. Daleiden questioned how long dual entry will be needed. Rasmuson responded through the current assessment cycle. Rasmuson added there is a need to get the tax system going. Kringler stated there have been counties that have worked on implementation for over a year while Wright County was able to complete implementation in three months. Information Technology is working on an export to help eliminate some of the dual entry.

Rasmuson is hoping to have valuations done before March. Rasmuson stated the department is very busy and will have to find the time to integrate the Tyler software for both tax and CAMA. The county does not currently have a contract in place for a tax system with Tyler. Once a contract is executed, the county will have to wait until Tyler is available for implementation, which could be 10-12 months.

RECOMMENDATION: Informational only.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE (1-12-2022)

Daleiden moved to approve the Wednesday, January 12 Personnel Committee minutes. The motion was seconded by Kaczmarek and carried 5-0.

I. Health & Human Services**A. Community Access for Disability Inclusion (CADI) Waiver Social Worker**

Jami Goodrum, Health & Human Services (HHS) Director shared with committee members the Waiver Case Management presentation and proposed Budget Amendment Form. She explained that the Board approved sending 100 cases to a third party Contracted Case Management agency in June. Due to community-wide staffing shortages they have only been able to send out approximately 20 cases to the contractor. Goodrum noted that the waiver case management caseload sizes for Wright County are significantly higher than comparable counties. The County is gaining new cases far faster than the contracted agency can manage the additional workload. Goodrum continued that the high caseloads have reduced the County's service response for clients and has resulted in higher workloads and decreased job satisfaction among staff members. Goodrum added that staff turnover is very costly to the County given the required training, coverage of vacant caseloads, and the diminishing candidate pool in the social worker field.

Goodrum noted by adding one additional full-time employee (FTE) social worker, staff will not be able to greatly reduce the County's existing high caseload sizes. She stated that her preference would be to hire three additional positions within the waiver case management area. This would allow for staff to handle and accept new cases that come into the County without further overloading staff and would bring the per person caseload numbers more in line with other comparable county agencies. Jill Pooler, Social Services Manager, explained that each new case management staff generates approximately \$35,984 to the HHS Budget.

A discussion regarding the budget neutral impact and revenue of these positions was held along with a discussion about the different work qualifications for the Case Aide, Eligibility Specialist, and Social Worker positions.

Commissioners Darek Vetsch and Mark Daleiden agreed to add two additional social worker positions within the Case Management staffing area.

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE TO HIRE TWO ADDITIONAL FTE TO THE WAIVER CASE MANAGEMENT STAFF.**BROADBAND COMMITTEE (1-12-2022)**

Vetsch moved to approve the Wednesday, January 12 Broadband Committee minutes. The motion was seconded by Daleiden and carried 5-0.

I. SUMMARY OF FUNDING REQUIREMENTS, PROCESS OF MOVING FORWARD

Projects Administrator Elizabeth Karels presented a four-phased plan for moving forward with the county's broadband grant program. Karels presented the funding requirements of the three available sources of broadband funding currently available – the American Rescue Plan (ARP), Minnesota Border-to-Border Grants and the Broadband Equity Access & Deployment (BEAD) Program. To date, only ARP funds set aside by the county board are available for projects. Karels said there is the potential to get Border-to-Border grants, but that program hasn't opened yet (it will later in 2022). She suggested for the first phase of the grant funding – “quick wins” grants using ARP funds – should have a portion of the county's commitment of ARP funds (approximately \$1 million) going to projects that can make an immediate impact.

Commissioner Darek Vetsch said that a significant change was made to the ARP allocations to townships that now allows them to use ARP funds for general fund expenses. Karels said that will likely make the process of getting matching funds from townships much trickier. Vetsch said this change could incentivize those townships that sincerely want broadband improvement to dedicate funds toward that process. Vetsch said he would like to put out project grants that would require a 50 percent match from the local municipality, giving a priority to those municipalities willing to share in the cost. Commissioner Mark Daleiden added that it could incentivize township residents to put pressure on township boards to commit ARP funds to getting broadband projects completed in their area.

Daleiden asked if the ARP guidance continues to be that areas that have been part of the Federal Communications Commission's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) are ineligible to receive ARP funding from the county. Karels said homes and businesses in RDOF zones can't access ARP funds because technically it would constitute "double-dipping." Kyle Moorhead of Hometown Fiber said the Internet Service Providers (ISP) have been able to secure rural areas for RDOF funding, but have up to 10 years to implement a program. Vetsch added an ISP can essentially hold a community hostage and simply turn back dollars while not allowing townships to access ARP funds for broadband.

Vetsch said that he would like to see the scoring criteria for Phase 1 project applications include the percentage of contribution provided by a city/township, the contribution from an ISP, the number of connections that would be created by the project, the total scope/size/cost of the project, the project's timeliness, cost controls and why a project would be best suited to access ARP funding than other funding sources. The recommendation from Vetsch and Daleiden was to earmark \$1 million in ARP funds for Phase 1 of the project with a general timeline of a grant application period of Jan. 21 through March 18, a grant review and award period of March 21 through April 8 and construction by ISPs through the end of 2022. Vetsch said if more qualifying applications are received, the total could exceed \$1 million.

Phase 2 of the project would focus on making investments on county-owned infrastructure to assist ISPs in expanding service more efficiently by providing the "middle mile" of connecting existing fiber lines. Vetsch said there are too many unknowns to go headlong into Phase 2 without having more information. Karels suggested creating a high-level design and commit to a conceptual plan with costs associated with it. In the study commissioned by Design Nine one alternative to create a fiber loop, but Vetsch stated his concern is that the loop concept may not be the most cost effective and he is looking for the most "bang for the buck" from the ARP fund investment. Vetsch said it is likely too early to be looking at Phase 3 – partnering with ISPs on Border-to-Border grants since, to his knowledge, no grants have been awarded from that \$70 million funding pool. Karels said that, while no grants have been awarded, the criteria for applying for the grants have been released for potential grant applicants. Daleiden said that, given the funding available, ISPs should be interested in reaching out to the county to partner on projects. Vetsch said he has concerns about giving funds to ISPs that could potentially take advantage of residents once fiber is installed. Vetsch added that he would prefer to give ARP funding to ISPs that are looking to create competition in the marketplace and keep fees for service reasonable.

Karels introduced Mike Smith-Nordquist of the Wright County Surveyor's Office who created a series of comprehensive maps that can be overlaid on one another using several individual map variables that factor in the findings of the Design Nine feasibility study. Some of the variables include locations of homes and businesses, speed test data, aerial photography, business and residential surveys submitted to Design Nine, the location of county properties/antennas/radio equipment, the designation of zones of the county by Border-to-Border grants, the proposed county fiber loop and RDOF zones that can't be accessed by ARP funding. Karels said the ARP requirements give preference to areas that are unserved and underserved. Smith-Nordquist said that the layers can be interchanged to take into account specific variables so the maps can serve as a spatial tool. Vetsch and Daleiden complimented Smith-Nordquist for the outstanding job he did on the map variables and that it will be an invaluable tool moving forward with broadband projects.

Vetsch said he would like to meet with Karels and Daleiden to evaluate the scoring system applied to projects so those who apply for funding through the county's broadband grant program will be aware of what factors are deemed most important to getting approval.

The committee briefly discussed the county's Dig Once policy, which includes the installation of conduit in conjunction with county road projects. Karels said the County Road 37 project between County Roads 18 and 19 will include the Dig Once policy as part of the engineering of the project. Assistant Highway Engineer Chad Hausmann said there are already several fiber lines in the project zone and most of them will require some relocation. Daleiden said it would be critical to have conversations with those providers to consolidate those efforts into one conduit line if possible, saying it would make sense for those providers to utilize the county-installed line instead of doing it themselves at a much higher cost.

Vetsch asked if there would be an issue with proceeding with going live with the application process without being formally approved by the full county board. County Administrator Lee Kelly said if the recommendation was to direct staff to proceed with creating the online application forms with the intention of going live Friday, Jan. 21 that it would be permissible. The county board will review the minutes at its Jan. 18 meeting, which will provide official board approval.

Moorhead said that several areas of the county don't have the proper internet speed designation assigned to specific areas of the county and would like to opportunity for Hometown Fiber to make its case as to the inaccuracy of some of the data that adversely impacts its ability to access funding sources. Daleiden suggested that there be a narrative included in the grant application forms to include the federal requirements of ARP funding.

Recommendations:

- ***Earmark \$1 million in American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds for Phase 1 of the grant program to start the grant application process.***
- ***Direct staff to implement the online grant application forms with the anticipation of going live Friday, Jan. 21, 2022.***
- ***Have staff come to the February Broadband Committee meeting with a conceptual plan for the implementation of Phase 2 of the project.***

The meeting adjourned at 10:53 a.m.

County Board Minutes submitted by Elizabeth Clow, Office Manager.