RANSOM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Regular Meeting – August 17, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting was called to order by chairman Hansen. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Members present: Connie Gilbert, Neil Olerud, Greg Schwab, Joe Mathern, and Norm Hansen.

The agenda was then reviewed. Hansen asked to add himself to the agenda right away. Kirsten Gilbert was also added to the agenda. Olerud moved, seconded by Schwab to approve the agenda. All aye. Motion carried.

Hansen would like to step down as chairman immediately. He feels it is what would be best for the county, and would like his voice to be heard in a different tone. Gilbert moved to appoint Vice Chair Mathern to take over as the Chairman, seconded by Olerud. All aye. Motion carried.

Olerud moved to appoint Connie Gilbert as the Vice Chairman. At this time Gilbert is not interested in being the Vice Chairman. Mathern moved to appoint Olerud as the vice Chair, Gilbert, seconded the motion. All aye. Motion carried.

Minutes from the previous regular scheduled commission meeting on August 3, 2021 were then considered. Along with Budget minutes from August 4, and August 5, 2021. Olerud moved to approve the minutes with corrections, seconded by Gilbert. All aye. Motion carried.

Bills were then reviewed. Olerud moved, seconded by Gilbert to approve bills with a few changes. All aye. Motion carried.

Kirsten Gilbert – Emergency Manager appeared before the board to let them know she is required by state to upgrade her email account to Pioneer. Pioneer will cost the county thirteen dollars and twenty-five cents per month for now. Eventually the charge will be twenty-two dollars a month. Pioneer is a much more secure email package with added features. Eventually everyone in the state system will have to migrate over to a pioneer email account. The board gave Gilbert the go ahead with the email account.

Joe Mathern let the board know that Kirsten Gilbert is concerned about her job duties as highway secretary. Mathern would like to get together to clarify and possibly separate a few things. The portfolio holders of the highway department are Hansen and Olerud, Mathern is the portfolio holder for Gilbert as the highway secretary and emergency manager. Hansen stated there could only be two portfolio holders there so he suggested Olerud and Mathern meet with Gilbert and Hopkins. A meeting was set following the commission meeting.

10:00 a.m. Motor Grader Bid

RDO presented a bid with the option to lease for 60 months for $48,604.93 per year with a buyout after the 60 months option of $167,512. Or the option to purchase out right for $348,363.87. The motor grader bids were tabled so Hopkins can review the specs. The bid award will be at the next regular scheduled commission meeting on September 7, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. The board asked Jamie some questions about the motor graders, and the equipment/technology that comes in them. Jamie stated RDO does offer some basic free training, they also have a three-five-day course where the highway department could go to the John Deere Plant and get some in depth training for a cost if Hopkins was interested.

Hopkins has been approached by a resident about putting in an approach and then widening a current approach the resident has. Due to the current price of steel the resident has asked if a plastic culvert can be used. The board discussed; Hopkins was going to do a little more research on plastic culverts. The county will not pay for the culvert in the approach the resident would like widened unless the current culvert is rusty, and then the county will only pay for the standard size culvert.

Bob Flath with Ransom County Soil Conservation appeared before the board to discuss Matt Reinke wanting him to plant trees on a section line along 70th street se where there is currently no road. Right now, it is being farmed right up to both sides of the section line.

 Flath would like to plant trees right at the allowed thirty-three foot set back mark if the commission is alright with it. Reinke feels there will never be a need for a road there, he would like the trees to be planted to help prevent soil erosions. Flath would like to plant two rows of trees, one full mile along that section line. Olerud moved, seconded by Schwab to allow Flath to plant the trees on the section line with a thirty-three-foot set back. Gilbert would like Huether to know about it. Hansen also would like both land owners to be in agreeance before trees are planted. The motion was tabled until Flath can talk to Dana Huether.

Flath also asked permission to plant trees at Randy Mairs fifty feet off the roadway, the current ordinance states one hundred sixty feet but his current shelter belt is fifty feet he would like to continue in line with that. Olerud moved, seconded by Gilbert to allow Flath to continue in line with Mairs current shelterbelt fifty feet off the roadway. All aye. Motion carried. Hopkins’s thought moving forward we should have a variance to the ordnance sometime the one hundred sixty feet isn’t necessary.

Darren Benneweis – Sheriff, appeared before the board to let them know he met with Cindy Chesley the City of Enderlin Auditor and they are good with the 2022 Enderlin Police contract presented to them. If there would have been any issues Mayor Deon would have contacted Sheriff Benneweis to discuss. Benneweis recommended that Enderlin get one third of the covid money left over from the first round.

Benneweis also let the board know he has been getting numerous complaints about the gravel pit west of town. He has spoken to States Attorney Fallon Kelly, and believes the county has an ordinance that could make it so all gravel pits need a permit to operate. Currently Knife River has not taken a permit out through Ransom County to operate in the County. Benneweis stated the sheriff’s department could start enforcing all gravel pits have that permit to operate, if the board chose to go that direction. Discussion was had. Chairman Mathern would like to see the township, county and city and both representing attorneys get together for a sit-down meeting regarding the gravel pit. Benneweis will work on setting a meeting up.

The treasurer’s position was discussed. There were five applicants, one could not be acknowledged as it came in late. Three were interviewed for the position. A starting wage needs to be decided so Gilbert and Mathern can call and offer the job to a candidate. Olerud moved to started the new treasurer/motor vehicle manager at $48,000 per year which would be $23.08 per hour. Mathern called for a second three times. Motion died due to a lack of a second. Schwab motioned to hire the new treasurer at $18.50 per hour, seconded by Olerud. No one was in favor. All opposed. Motion failed. Gilbert moved to hire the new treasurer at $19.50 per hour, seconded by Olerud. All aye. Motion carried.

Mathern spoke to Chuck Horter with the NDACo he is willing to come down to Ransom County and meet with the board to help customize the handbook to Ransom County’s needs. Gilbert moved, seconded by Hansen to have Horter do the handbook for the county for $3000 and it will be paid for out of the HR budget. All aye. Motion carried.

Joe Mathern- would really like to have Eagle View come do another presentation for the county. He stated the tax assessor’s office is the county’s livelihood, and by using Eagle View they would be able to assess up to 40 parcels in one day from their desk. The county currently struggles to find employees, Mathern thinks it is important to start looking to see how technology can help get jobs done with less staff.

Schwab had to leave the meeting at 11:25 a.m. He joined by zoom for the rest of the meeting.

A delegate for the NDACo convention in October was discussed. Hansen moved to nominate Olerud as the county delegate, seconded by Gilbert. Gilbert, Hansen, Mathern, in favor. Olerud opposed. Motion carried.

A letter for the Department of Water Resources was prepared regarding the cost share application on the Virgil Schultz Bridge Bank Slope stabilization project letting them know the Sovereign Land permit was signed and approved on July 20, 2021 by John Packowksi. The letter also stated the Virgil Schultz Bridge Bank Slope stabilization project was bid with the Maple River Bridge Slope stabilization project which has been completed. The equipment is parked onsite, and we are waiting on a response for when they can begin work. The County is looking to avoid additional stand by time costs for the Contractor. Ransom County is asking for a timely response from the Department of Water Resources on when the cost share request will be approved. Olerud moved to have Hansen sign the letter as he was the chair when the letter was typed, Gilbert seconded the motion. All aye. Motion carried.

Gentzkow presented a letter from Dakota Business Solutions stating the temperature kiosk needs a software update that is $600 annually. Gentzkow doesn’t feel like the kiosk is getting used much anymore now that Covid has calmed down a little bit and has asked the commissioners if we could remove the kiosk and not pay for the software update. The board agreed to just put the kiosk away for the time being, if they feel they need it again, they will do the software update.

Mathern has called and spoke to the Village about some of the issues the County has and would like to hire them to come in and deal with some issues. He believes they have the knowledge to go to each office and assess if the office is adequately staffed or not. They charge $110 per hour; it would cost roughly $3000. The board was willing to have the Village do a presentation on the services they offer, but did not want to commit to anything without Schwab present.

Olerud moved to have the county budget hearing held at 10:00 a.m. on September 21, 2021 during the regular commission meeting, seconded by Gilbert. All aye. Motion carried.

The NDACo convention is October 3-5 in Bismarck which will interfere with the first commission meeting in October. Gilbert moved to reschedule the first regular scheduled meeting for Thursday October 7, 2021 at 9:00 a.m., seconded by Hansen. All aye. Motion carried.

The next budget meeting is scheduled for August 31, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

Darren Benneweis – Sheriff reported he looked into the private dam that was reported the Hansen. Yes, there is a dam. However, nothing that he sees will ever create an issue.

Tim Meyer called during the meeting and spoke to Chairman Mathern, Knife River has been checked by the state and they are in compliance for the decibel reading noise ordinance. Meyer is wondering why we need to keep readdressing when Knife River hasn’t broken any ordinances. The board would like to have State’s Attorney Fallon Kelly present at the next meeting to discuss the gravel pit.

There being nothing further to come before the board, Chairman Mathern adjourned the meeting at 1:15 p.m.

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Nicole Gentzkow Joe Mathern, Chairman

Ransom County Auditor Ransom County Commission