RANSOM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Regular Meeting – April 21, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chairman Neil Olerud. Members present: Neil Olerud, Norm Hansen, Connie Gilbert, George Bunn, Steve Dick, and Fallon Kelly.

The agenda was reviewed, Nicole Gentzkow asked to add KLJ to the agenda at 10:00 a.m. Dick moved, seconded by Hansen, to approve the agenda with the addition. Roll call vote was taken: Hansen – yes, Gilbert – yes, Bunn – yes, Dick – yes, Olerud – yes. Motion carried.

Minutes from the regular scheduled commission meeting on April 7, 2020 were considered. Bunn moved, seconded by Gilbert, to approve the minutes with corrections. Roll call vote was taken: Hansen – yes, Gilbert – yes, Bunn – yes, Dick – yes, Olerud – yes. Motion carried.

Bills and payroll were reviewed. Hansen moved, seconded by Gilbert, to approve bills and payroll. Roll call vote was taken: Hansen – yes, Gilbert – yes, Bunn – yes, Dick – yes, Olerud – yes. Motion carried.

Kirsten Gilbert - emergency manager, asked the board to sign an emergency declaration for the spring flooding. She stated the townships she has spoken to have had some washout or water damage. The state hasn’t signed one yet, but the county will need to have one in place for when, or if the state does. Bunn moved, seconded by Dick, to have Olerud sign the State of Emergency Declaration. Roll call vote was taken: Hansen – yes, Gilbert – yes, Bunn – yes, Dick – yes, Olerud – yes. Motion carried.

Scott Smyth with KLJ said the DOT has announced there will be a stimulus package for government agencies. Smyth has been working with Hopkins to see what projects they should submit to the DOT. They submitted multiple seal coat projects, along with the McLeod road, Englevale road, Sheldon road, and Elliott road. It could have a better cost share match, than the normal federal money. Smyth spoke to the Corp of Engineers and they are moving forward with the Sheldon road bridge project. They said they would like to do a site visit, however with COVID 19 that has been delayed. Hopkins stated another large chunk has fallen in at the Sheldon Bridge site.

Kirsten Gilbert did some research on the Ballinger corner from previous floods and FEMA information. She stated that Hanson Township had gotten $26,000 in 2013 from the 2011 disaster for the Ballinger corner. Typically FEMA does not cover the cost of pumping water from a site. The FEMA disaster typically ends on the last crest of the Red River. Last year FEMA did not approve any grade raises.

Mike from Interstate Engineering joined the call to represent the Ransom County Water Board, Galen Dick joined on behalf of Hanson Township, to discuss what could be done this year to open the road at Ballinger corner. Bunn asked Galen Dick how necessary it is for the county to take action to get this stretch of the road open, or if alternative roads could be used. Dick thinks it is a pretty serious issue to not have roads useable. This intersection has the county roads going two directions, and the township roads going two directions. They would like to wait until the James River is down, or has crested. Ransom County Water Board would like the help of state water commission to get a permit. It can take a few weeks to get everything in place, so they would start the process now. The question was asked who will be sponsoring this project. Galen Dick suggested it be a joint project between the county and Hanson Township. Dick suggested the project be paid seventy five percent County, and twenty five percent Hanson Township. The Water board doesn’t feel like they have any funding for this project, or responsibility to pay for it. Jeff Hopkins said he would like to see a grade raise done.

General Irrigation would come in to set up a pump, they charge $900 for both set up and tear down. It is $1.50 per foot of pipe, and we will need 3000 feet of pipe. The cost per week will be $4500 in pipe, plus pump rental of $1500. The total cost per week will be $6000. Galen Dick and Mike with Interstate will talk to get all details figured out. As of right now there is no exact time line on how long they will need to pump the water. Norm Hansen asked if Galen Dick felt comfortable to speak on behalf of Hanson Township, and if they would be in favor of this. Galen Dick said he did, and they were for it. Gilbert motioned, seconded by Dick, to get the permit going for pumping. A roll call vote was done: Hansen – no, Gilbert – no, Bunn – no, Dick – yes, Olerud – no. Motion failed.

Bunn motioned to go ahead with permit, and the county paying for seventy five percent, and Hanson Township paying twenty five percent. Dick seconded the motion. A roll call vote was done: Hansen – yes, Gilbert – yes, Bunn – yes, Dick – yes, Olerud – yes. Motion carried.

Kirsten Gilbert asked to be kept in the loop, she needs to know dollar values so she knows if we are close to the FEMA threshold. Hopkins is going to get estimates on the amount of gravel work that needs to be done to make this road passable.

Jeff Hopkins said he contacted the gravel pits who had submitted bids, all pits had given prices for class five gravel. Camas can also supply class thirteen if needed, however it is more expensive.

Steve Dick asked about grading the Qual road at the intersection near highway 32 as it is rough. Hopkins said they can only grade that road minimally, and need to do it after a rain.

Nicole Gentzkow asked the commissioners to approve purchasing Microsoft Surfaces for the board. It would make zoom calls easier, allow them to all have access to documents and correspondence, and reduce printing and postage cost. There is no guarantee, however we may be able to get some financial reimbursement on them from COVID 19 funding. Gilbert moved, seconded by Hansen to approve the purchase of Microsoft Surfaces. A roll call vote was done: Hansen – yes, Gilbert – yes, Bunn – yes, Dick – yes, Olerud – yes. Motion carried.

Vote by mail was discussed. The board would like Gentzkow to put a note in with the ballots, to explain and reinforce that the June election is only vote by mail. The deadline for vote by mail ballots is June 9, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. Gentzkow let the board know every county is required to have at least one drop box for ballots. She presented one to the board from American Security Cabinets. The box cost $2218, it can be mounted to the ground and is secure. This drop box is the style some other counties are going with. It is a bit expensive, but stands out. If we had it custom made to say drop box, not ballot box, we could use it year round. Gilbert moved, seconded by Hansen, to purchase the drop box from American Security Cabinets. A roll call vote was done: Hansen – yes, Gilbert – yes, Bunn – yes, Dick – yes, Olerud – yes. Motion carried.

Darren Benneweis – sheriff, asked if his department could put some shelving up in the old county shop for storage in their area. Dick said to go ahead and put the shelving up. Bunn asked that they do their best to keep the cost down. Benneweis stated as of right now he put the airboat on hold. He was going to sell it, but is waiting.

Nicole Gentzkow – auditor, asked permission to get a county cell phone. She is getting a lot of work calls on her personal cell phone. She also has been required to put a few apps on her phone, in order to authorize state websites, and Bremer bank access. Gentzkow would like Christine Opp and Nickela Runck deputy auditors to get reimbursed ten dollars per month for having to have the apps on their phones as well. Gilbert moved, seconded by Hansen, to allow Nicole Gentzkow to get a phone through Verizon, and Opp and Runck to be reimbursed ten dollars per month. Roll call vote was done: Hansen – yes, Gilbert – yes, Bunn – yes, Dick – yes, Olerud – yes. Motion carried.

Nicole Gentzkow asked that during budget time the county really consider switching from NRG to Computer Express in Oakes. Jamie with Computer Express has been helping with some issues recently, due to NRG not getting back to the county in a timely manner. Fallon Kelly will review the NRG contract.

The shared human resource position was discussed. The job listing was never run in the Gazette. The board agreed it needed to be run in the Gazette for two weeks.

There being nothing further to come before the board, Chairman Olerud adjourned the meeting at 10:40 a.m.

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Nicole Gentzkow Neil Olerud, Chairman

Ransom County Auditor Ransom County Commission