RANSOM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Regular Meeting – September 6, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chairman Joe Mathern. Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Members present: Gilbert, Olerud, Beerman, Schwab, and Mathern. Also present via zoom: Amber, Cindy Morin, Nickela Runck, Maria Prouty, Shelly Schwab, Janelle Mairs, Lonnie Rotenberger, Kirsten Gilbert, Lynn Gonzalez, Kathie Erickson, Jenna Olerud, Chelsey Jones, Brenna Welton, and Bob Smith.

Agenda – The agenda was reviewed. Olerud moved to approve the agenda as presented. Schwab seconded the motion. All aye. Motion carried.

Minutes – Minutes from the previous regular scheduled commission meeting on August 16, 2022 were reviewed. Olerud moved, seconded by Gilbert to approve the minutes with changes. All aye. Motion carried.

Sheriff’s Department – Sheriff Darren Benneweis and Deputy Ward Kuehn joined the meeting to request the county purchase a drone. Benneweis presented a quote with three different price options. Benneweis is requesting the County purchase the middle price option drone out of ARPA funds. The drone could be used to help in searches for law enforcement, damage and disasters for the Emergency Manager and the highway department, and assessing for the tax department. Benneweis said the sheriff’s department would be willing to help others if requesting drone assistance depending on the scenario, however he requests that only the sheriff’s department flies the drone. The quote for the drone included an insurance policy for the drone that would replace the drone for $350 if something were to happen to it. Olerud moved, seconded by Schwab to approve the purchase of the drone out of ARPA funds. All aye. Motion passed.

Everbridge - Darren Benneweis, sheriff and Kirsten Gilbert, emergency manager appeared before the board to let them know they would like to switch from Code Red to Everbridge. Everbridge is more user friendly, cheaper, and the state has a contract with them. Due to the state having a contract with Everbridge anyone who chooses not to opt out of notifications will be notified when alerts are sent out through the state 911 system. Connie Gilbert moved, seconded by Olerud to approve switching from Code Red to Everbridge. All aye. Motion carried.

Security Committee – Sheriff Benneweis asked the board if they would support changes K. Gilbert and the Sheriff’s department are trying to implement due to findings of the Homeland Security Risk Assessment that was discussed during an executive session. The board all agreed they support any and all changes being implemented by K. Gilbert and the sheriff’s department. Benneweis also asked the board who the security committee consist of. Discussion was had. Beerman moved to have the sheriff’s department and emergency manager be the security committee and they can bring information back to the board. Schwab seconded the motion. All aye. Motion carried.

Emergency Manager – Kirsten Gilbert appeared before the board to let them know that the grant applied for over a year ago through homeland security to put additional cameras in, and film over the lower-level windows cost estimate has increased. The grant was going to cover one hundred percent of the project, but due to inflation the county will need to pay roughly $2000 to cover the price increase that the grant won’t cover. Olerud moved, seconded by Beerman to approve to spend the difference from the grant to the current price for cameras and film. All Aye. Motion carried.

Township assessing charges – Greg Schwab wanted to know what had been decided on the township assessing charges. After the large showing from townships, Schwab would like to see the assessing charges lowered. Olerud was not happy with Schwab inviting the townships to the commission meeting to discuss this matter. Schwab was told to bring it to the commission by Reinke when he was upset about Alleghany Townships assessing fees. Olerud read off some counties throughout North Dakota and dollar amounts they charge for assessing. Some counties charge a certain amount based off taxable valuation; others charge per parcel. No decision was made on how Ransom County will do it if they decide to change the current $8 per parcel assessing charge.

Emergency Manager – Kirsten Gilbert appeared before the board for discussion on her current position of fifty percent highway secretary, and fifty percent emergency manager. Andrew Beerman read a letter submitted to Nicole Gentzkow from Janelle Mairs stating she was resigning as 911 coordinator to concentrate more on her other duties in the sheriff’s department. Beerman has spoke to Kirsten Gilbert and she is willing to take on the 911 coordinator duties. K. Gilbert let the board know many emergency managers throughout the state are also 911 coordinators so she feels she would have the support needed to learn the position. Beerman motioned to make Gilbert a 95% emergency manager and a 5% 911 coordinator and remove the highway secretary position from her office immediately. Olerud seconded the motion. All aye. Motion carried. Sheriff Benneweis gave an update on what the 911 coordinator position all entails.

Highway Secretary – Ivan Hopkins was present to discuss the highway secretary position. Hopkins was asked if he would like to open the position up to someone internally working within the highway department or have the position continue to be a separate position. Hopkins wasn’t sure how they would do it if someone internally took the secretary position on top of their current position. As of the preliminary budget there is $28,000 budgeted for a part time highway secretary. Beerman moved, seconded by Gilbert to allow Hopkins to go through the hiring process to hire a part time person to do the highway secretary position. Gilbert, Beerman, Schwab, and Mathern were in favor. Olerud opposed. Motion passed.

Miscellaneous Highway Department - Schwab asked Hopkins about removing excess gravel from a curve he got a complaint on. Tim Huether would like to have the ditch to the North of Schwab’s residence on Huether’s land cleaned out.

Election – Gentzkow let the board know that both election sites had been inspected by Freedom Resource Center to make sure the poll sites were up to ADA standards. Both sites needed modifications before the elections to meet all ADA standards. The Expo Center and The Enderlin City Auditor’s Office were willing to make the changes needed. Gentzkow asked the board to allow up to $5000 per election site for the updates needed for ADA standards to be met. Schwab moved, seconded by Beerman to use ARPA funds to get voting sites in compliance with ADA standards and allow up to $5000 for each site. All aye. Motion carried.

North Dakota State Fair- Delegate was discussed.

Recorder’s Office – Shelly Schwab, recorder let the board know that Midwest Imagery will be coming to scan in mid-November.

There being nothing further to come before the board, Chairman Mathern adjourned the meeting at 1:05 p.m.

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Nicole Gentzkow Joe Mathern, Chairman

Ransom County Auditor Ransom County Commission