

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2014

**APPROVED MINUTES OF THE
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING HELD**

**STATE OF MINNESOTA)
DODGE COUNTY)**

**COUNTY ADMINISTRATION OFFICE
MANTORVILLE, MN**

2014-18 C.O.W.

The Dodge County Commissioners met in Committee of the Whole September 23, 2014, in the Commissioner's Room at the Dodge County Courthouse Annex, Mantorville, MN, at 4:30 p.m. CDT. Chair Rodney Peterson opened the meeting at 4:30 p.m. CDT. Meeting Convened

The Chair acknowledged those present:

Those Present

Members present: John Allen District #1
Tim Tjosaas District #2
Rodney Peterson District #3
David Erickson District #4
Steven Gray District #5

Members absent: None

Also present: Jim Elmquist County Administrator
Becky Lubahn Deputy Clerk

County Administrator Jim Elmquist met with the Board to discuss setting the 2015 preliminary budget levy.

2015 Preliminary
Budget Levy
Discussion

Included in the Board packet was the proposed preliminary budget and resolution indicating a 12.5% preliminary levy increase from 2014. Since the previous draft, fund balance from E911 funds were added to the budget, a reduction of \$16,000 was made to SWCD, and a reduction of a vehicle and an off-road vehicle was made to the Sheriff's budget. Mr. Elmquist reported that at this point, all other items have remained the same until the Board makes a final decision on the budget at its December 23, 2014 final levy meeting date.

The County Administrator reported the significant drivers to this budget is the increased debt load the Board is undertaking as well as County Program Aid revenue reductions projected from the State. Mr. Elmquist stated the levy represented within the preliminary budget could change in light of the bid opening for the construction project. The County Administrator reported that it is likely the final levy will be less than what is certified today as expenditures and revenues are somewhat easier to project as they move closer to 2015.

Mr. Elmquist indicated this is a do not exceed levy which is required by statute to be approved and then forwarded to the County Auditor.

The County Administrator informed the Board the draft budget, which they received for their August 19, 2014 special meeting, included a contribution amount of \$124,482 to the Dodge County Soil & Water Conservation District for 2015. The correct amount, which is listed in the preliminary budget, is \$106,021.

Finance Director Lisa Kramer was available to comment on the proposed 2015 preliminary budget.

2015 Preliminary
Budget Levy
Discussion -
Continued

Commissioner Allen stated he was not in favor of giving the SWCD more money in 2015 than they have in previous years.

The Board discussed what level of increase they were comfortable with.

Commissioner Erickson expressed concern with sending out the proposed 2015 property tax statements with a 12.5% levy. It was Mr. Erickson's opinion that once those statements go out citizens won't remember that the County Board will likely make cuts to this figure in December.

Commissioner Tjosaas indicated he was fine with setting the preliminary budget at 12.5% and further reduce it in December.

Commissioner Gray concurred with Commissioner Tjosaas' comments.

It was noted that it has been a common practice for the County Board to set a preliminary levy in September and then spend the next two months trying to find areas in which they can make cuts to the proposed budgets in an effort to lower the actual levy figure in December.

Commissioner Peterson stated that he didn't think the remodeling projects bid would come in as high as it did.

Commissioner Allen reported the Board doesn't have to accept the remodeling projects construction bid tonight, this would be one way they could cut the preliminary budget levy.

Commissioner Gray commended Commissioner Allen for his willingness to ask hard questions and seek out additional information on items the County Board will be asked to make a decision on. Mr. Gray felt the manner in which Mr. Allen approaches things in which he felt needed to be more informed on allowed Mr. Gray to also become more informed on areas that he too had questions on but didn't feel comfortable asking.

Commissioner Gray stated the budget is not where he wanted it to be and the building project is not where he wanted it to be; however he still believes the County Board is working for the greater good of the people.

Commissioner Erickson discussed courthouse parking issues and security issues and noted that the construction plan is not perfect but better than what the county has now. Mr. Erickson wasn't sure if remodeling will handle the county's needs for the next twenty years. Mr. Erickson commented that at this time it would be hard to know what the county's needs will be in twenty years.

Commissioner Tjosaas stated it's time to move forward with setting the county up for growth and opportunity in the future.

Commissioner Allen commented that another way they could create savings is by shaving what they plan to do inside the buildings.

It was Commissioner Gray’s opinion that they saved the county money by renovating the school.

2015 Preliminary Budget Levy Discussion - Continued

Lisa Kramer informed the Board that she is looking forward to the renovations because there will finally be adequate parking space, improved security and adequate conference room space at both buildings.

Commissioner Erickson reported the Board was appreciative of the fact that Judge Williamson is willing to work with them on changes to the courtroom renovations.

The Dodge Creek/Lower Branch of the South Fork of the Zumbro River naming issue was postponed; individuals that need to be a part of this discussion item were not available for tonight’s meeting.

Creek Naming Discussion Postponed

County Attorney Paul Kiltinen arrived at 5:08 p.m. CDT.

County Attorney Arrived

Commissioners provided their agency reports. Commissioner Allen attended an EDA meeting, a special meeting at Fairview and a bid opening. Commissioner Erickson attended a SCHA Joint Powers Board meeting, a Highway 14 Project – Dodge County EDA meeting, a meeting with the Dodge County Employee Relations Director and County Administrator on SCHA regarding self-insurance on health care, a meeting at the Claremont Legion to answer questions on demolition projects, a Fairview Care Center meeting, a special meeting of the County Board, a District Court hearing on feedlot lawsuit, a SEMMCHRA meeting, a bid opening on the courthouse project and a SCHA Quality Assurance Committee meeting. Commissioner Gray attended a regular County Board meeting, a Highway 14 Partnership teleconference, a DFO Comp Plan meeting, a Farm Bureau meeting, a Dodge County Highway 14 Economic Impact meeting, a Dodge Refreshed meeting, a SCHRC Compensation Committee meeting, a Fairview Care Center meeting, a special County Board meeting, a Regional Transportation Forum, a bid opening and a SCHRC meeting. Commissioner Peterson attended a SWCD meeting, a Fair Board meeting and a SE MN Water Resources meeting. Commissioner Tjosaas attended a MnPrairie special meeting, a Fairview Care Center meeting, a special County Board meeting, an EDA meeting and a SCHRC meeting.

Agency Reports

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 5:25 p.m. CDT.

Meeting Adjourned

ATTEST:

RODNEY PETERSON
CHAIR, COUNTY BOARD

BECKY LUBAHN
DEPUTY CLERK

DATED: