

**TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2009**

**APPROVED MINUTES OF THE  
COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION HELD**

**STATE OF MINNESOTA)  
DODGE COUNTY)**

**DODGE COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
MANTORVILLE, MN**

**2009-01 Work Session**

The Dodge County Commissioners met in a Work Session March 31, 2009, in the Conference Room A at the Dodge County Courthouse Annex, Mantorville, MN, at 9:00 a.m. CDT. David Hanson opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. CDT.

Meeting Convened

The Chair acknowledged those present and established that there was a quorum:

Those Present

Members present:	Klaus Alberts	District #1
	Lyle Tjosaas	District #2
	David Erickson	District #3
	Don Gray	District #4
	David Hanson	District #5

Members absent: None

Also present:	David McKnight	County Administrator
	Becky Lubahn	Deputy County Clerk

Motion by Tjosaas seconded by Alberts to approve and adopt the agenda as presented. *Motion adopted unanimously.*

Agenda Approved

County Administrator David McKnight discussed 2010 county budget issues with the Board. Mr. McKnight informed the Board that the meeting will focus primarily on the 2010 budget.

2010 County  
Budget Discussion

The County Administrator noted that Mark Gamm was not going to be available to discuss his proposal for departmental reorganization due to the upcoming retirement of the Planning Director and that he would present part of the proposal on behalf of Mr. Gamm.

Mr. McKnight reviewed with the Board the 2010 budget analysis information and the wage scale history information.

The Board discussed with the County Administrator the possibility of cutting positions rather than cutting across the board. Another option discussed was furloughs.

The County Administrator reminded the Board that furloughs are not temporary, they are permanent. The only way to replace the furloughed hours is to increase taxes.

Mr. McKnight stated that he needs to work with the four bargaining units that have settled contracts to discuss options for the future.

The County Administrator shared with the Board 2010 county program aid budget projections.

County Program  
Aid Projections  
Discussed

Mr. McKnight reviewed the cafeteria contribution worksheet. It was noted that the cafeteria contribution dollar figures listed are based on a worst case scenario. The County Administrator stated that due to the current budget situation, the county cannot afford to give employees the increases similar to prior years.

Cafeteria  
Contributions  
Discussed

The County Administrator reviewed with the Board the projected 2010 retiree health insurance costs, employees who will be eligible for full contribution towards health insurance costs, employees who will be eligible for \$50 contribution towards health insurance costs, the age of current employees on our retirement plan, the number and year for employees eligible for full contribution.

Retiree Health  
Insurance  
Discussion

Mr. McKnight informed the Board that although there was not anything in the packet regarding the 2010 non-union wage scale he needed direction from the Board for next year. The County Administrator discussed ideas for the non-union wage scale and commented that the Board needs to include the commissioner salaries in the plan to reduce costs.

Non-Union Wage  
Scale Discussion

Commissioner Hanson commented that benefits are a key attraction to employees and he wanted to keep it that way.

Commissioner Hanson reminded the Board that they did approve a 0% increase for a couple of years but when you do this you get behind and continue to fall further and further behind in comparison to other counties.

Commissioner Alberts stated that he is not in favor of laying off employees, he prefers to cut hours if needed.

Mr. McKnight commented that he believes the hiring freeze has not worked for the county. The County Administrator suggested initiating a hiring gap that would require departments that need to fill an opening to wait a few weeks/months after a position has been vacated to request authorization to re-hire. This would allow the department time to determine if they really need to fill the vacancy.

Hiring Freeze/  
Hiring Gap  
Discussion

Commissioner Erickson noted that this is not always an option for grant funded positions since it would have a direct impact on the budget. If nobody is there to do the work or you do not meet state requirements, the funding for certain programs may go away.

The County Administrator stated that the goal is to save everything they can today so they will not have to lay people off tomorrow.

Discussion took place regarding the possibility of requiring department heads to go to the County Administrator first when requesting authorization to fill a vacant position. This would allow Mr. McKnight time to review all requests thoroughly before the Board sees the request.

Discussion returned to the 2010 non-union wage scale.

Non-Union Wage  
Scale Discussion -  
Continued

The County Administrator reported that the PERA increase is going up for the fifth year in a row and that it will be going up another quarter percent. This is the fifth year in a five year plan.

PERA Increase  
Discussed

Employee Relations Director Lisa Hager met with the Board to discuss early retirement options. Ms. Hager noted that Olmsted County is only offering an early retirement option to offices where employees would not be replaced. Another way to save money would be to replace people that retire with someone that would be hired at a lower salary.

Early Retirement  
Options Discussion

Discussion took place regarding the possibility of not offering early retirement to all groups. Ms. Hager noted that deciding not to offer early retirement to all groups may irritate people but feels that this option is meant to be offered as a way for the county to save money. It was the consensus of the group that since the Highway Department does not have a wage scale and everyone is hired at the same rate that there would be no cost savings incentive to offer early retirement to this department.

The Board was in agreement that they preferred delaying the option of offering an early retirement plan right now because they feel the county is not overstaffed and would not be saving much by offering this option to employees. It was noted that the county has been consistent with only replacing people as needed.

Commissioner Erickson thanked the Employee Relations Director for her work on early retirement options plan.

Ms. Hager informed the Board that she has talked to her counterparts in counties that are offering early retirement options and according to them their counties are not saving much money.

The County Administrator discussed with the Board taxes for next year and levy limits. Mr. McKnight stated that he is looking for a figure from the County Board that is comfortable, realistic and defensible to the public.

Tax Levy  
Discussion

Commissioners were asked to report on where they think the levy should be set for 2010. The following is a list of levy amounts suggested by the commissioners:

David Hanson	3%
Don Gray	3.75%
David Erickson	under 4%
Klaus Alberts	0%
Lyle Tjosaas	3.25%

The County Administrator indicated that he believes he has enough information to begin working on a 2010 draft budget which will be presented to the County Board at a later date.

Mr. McKnight shared with the Board a letter from the Dodge County Soil and Water Conservation District and informed them that he has a meeting scheduled with Soil and Water to discuss concerns with their annual allocation.

Soil and Water  
Conservation  
Annual Allocation  
Discussion

Commissioner Erickson wanted to know why the Soil and Water office has not adjusted their fee structure in order to increase their annual revenue amount.

The County Administrator reminded the Board that all agencies were treated the same and reduced by the same percentage.

Seminary funding was discussed. It was agreed that \$1,000 funding for the Wasioja Seminary property should be sent to the Dodge County Historical Society.

Seminary Funding Discussed

Mr. McKnight reviewed with the Board the Environmental Quality/Planning plan. Under the new plan the Environmental Quality office and Planning and Zoning office would become one department under a new name.

Reorganization of Planning and Zoning & Environmental Quality Offices Discussed

The County Administrator discussed the reorganization/re-assignment of the Planning Director job duties.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:55 a.m. CDT.

Meeting Adjourned

The next regular meeting of the Dodge County Board of Commissioners will be held on April 14, 2009 at 9:30 a.m. CDT.

Next Regular Meeting

**ATTEST:**

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DAVID HANSON  
CHAIR, COUNTY BOARD

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DAVID MCKNIGHT  
CLERK

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DATED: