

MOWER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION

November 7, 2023

The Mower County Board of Commissioners in and for the County of Mower, Minnesota, met in a Work Session on November 7, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. at the Government Center, 201 1st Street NE, in Austin, Minnesota.

All members present, viz: Chair Mike Ankeny, Vice-Chair Jerry Reinartz, John Mueller, Polly Glynn and Dan Sparks. Also in attendance were County Administrator Trish Harren Gjersvik and Executive Assistant Denise Barthels.

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Health & Human Services Division Manager Pam Kellogg provided the Board with a list of possible considerations in response to the 2023 state legislation legalizing cannabis. Some counties and cities have elected to pass interim ordinances. One ordinance would place a moratorium prohibiting the establishment of new uses or the expansion of existing uses related to sales, testing, manufacturing, cultivating, growing, transporting, delivery and distribution of cannabis products until January 1, 2025. A second ordinance to regulate the use of cannabis in public places. Mower County could 1) do nothing, 2) adopt a cannabis ordinance for the purpose of defining "public place," 3) adopt an ordinance that would impose a moratorium or 4) adopt both public use and moratorium ordinance. Ms. Kellogg had several example documents from counties that have already taken action to adopt an ordinance. The Board agreed to move forward a public hearing on both ordinances. A date will be set at the next Board meeting on November 14th. Health & Human Services Director Crystal Peterson indicated that there is funding available through public health for education concerning cannabis.

Laura Kangas from Arvig Communications provided an overview of a resubmittal of an application for a low-density border to border broadband grant to extend internet fiber into unserved and underserved areas of Mower County. The last grant application in Mower County was unsuccessful. Ms. Kangas advised that the feedback on the application was that it did not contain letters of support from actual potential users of the fiber and why it was needed. Ms. Kangas reviewed the areas to be included in this application. The estimated cost of the project is \$4.1 million with the costs distributed as 11% Arvig, 14% County and 75% State DEED grant if awarded.

County Administrator Trish Harren Gjersvik provided an overview of a new source of funding called Statewide Affordable Housing Aid. Mower County will receive \$118, 000 annually. Some counties have created a trust fund to build up the fund for possible larger projects. Others have created revolving loan programs. The funds need to be spent within four years of receipt. The goal of this funding is to stabilize housing and reduce disparity in homeownership. Funds could be used to renovate tax forfeited properties to make them habitable and returned to the tax rolls.

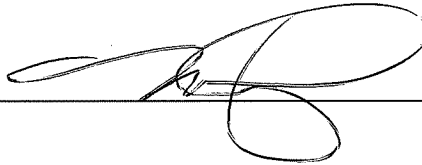
Under Other Discussion the County Administrator Trish Gjersvik reported that the Personnel Committee had met to review proposals for an addition of an Aging Services Supervisor in Health and Human Services and the addition of a Lead Telecommunicator job description for the Dispatch Unit, a Public Safety Tech II for the Correctional Facility, and movement of the Emergency Manger from Administration to the Sheriff's department with the addition of operational duties. The personnel committee will be recommending these items for approval at the next regular session.

It was noted that the Joint City / County meeting scheduled for November 8 for a review of the Law Enforcement Center Needs Assessment report has been rescheduled to November 21, 2023, at 4:00 p.m.

The work session concluded at 2:51 p.m.

THE MOWER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

BY: _____



Chairperson

Attest:

By: Trish Han Gjersvik
Clerk/Administrator