

MOWER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION

June 4, 2024

The Mower County Board of Commissioners in and for the County of Mower, Minnesota, met in a Work Session on June 4, 2024 at 1:00 p.m. at the Government Center, 201 1st Street NE, in Austin, Minnesota.

Members present, viz: Chair John Mueller, Vice-Chair Polly Glynn, Mike Ankeny, Dan Sparks and Jerry Reinartz. Member excused: Dan Sparks. Also in attendance were County Attorney Kristen Nelsen and County Administrator Trish Harren Gjersvik (arrived approximately 1:45 p.m.)

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Austin Convention & Visitor Bureau Director Nancy Schnable provided the Board with a review of the 2023 annual report. Highlights included the new mascot Chris P. Bacon has been making appearances at vacation shows. Austin has featured on the John McGivern Main Street Show. The episode has aired in Wisconsin and will air in Minnesota in 2025. The first of three American Junior Golf Association tournaments was hosted in Austin in 2023 with an estimated economic impact of \$341,491.

Environmental Services Supervisor Angela Lipelt and Assistant Public Works Director Valerie Sheedy reviewed for Board discussion proposed modifications to the Septic Loan Policy. Proposed revisions would include the presentation and execution of the promissory note at the beginning of the process when the applicants are readily available rather than after the project has been completed which will expedite payments to the contractors. Also proposed are additional documents that Environmental Services staff can use in reviewing applications in determining eligibility and ultimately limit financial risk to the County. Applicants will have the right of appeal if Mower County denies any loans due to high risk. With discussion commissioners suggested obtaining a signed release from applicants to be able to review financial records including credit reports. Also, it was noted that the staff shall review all documentation the same for all applicants. Also discussed was the possibility that the County not process / lend money through the AgBMP program and leave the process to bankers and lending institutions. However, the County does place an assessment on the property for 90% of the loan amount. The proposed revisions will be further modified before presentation to the Board for approval.

There was a brief discussion concerning the property that has been assessed for clean-up and the status on other properties of concern. The Board requested a solid waste quarterly report for status updates.

County Auditor-Treasurer Scott Felten provided a Tax Forfeited Land Sales Legislation Update. The new legislation is being digested and a few corresponding directives have been received. Procedures are being formulated and training is expected. One part of the legislation includes \$109 million which can be used state-wide to make

payment to former owners of tax forfeited parcels for excess funds over expenses and delinquent tax received during the foreclosure process for a period from 2005 – 2023. It was noted that the forfeiture process will involve the courts for the distribution of any proceeds from a sale. The Auditor-Treasurer will make a good faith effort to sell all tax forfeited parcels by year end (2 from 2022 and 13 from 2023).

Assistant Public Works Director Valerie Sheedy brought for discussion the possibility of modifying and/or waiving temporarily the \$600 variance fee for some farmers that fall into the guidelines that do not require them to register a feedlot but may wish to register their feedlot in light of the newly adopted Ordinance amendment. It may be an incentive to obtain data for previously unregistered feedlots. A discussion followed which included setbacks, when registration would be desirable even if not required, when variances considered, and if it was a question of just registering a feedlot or if a change was being considered such as an additional or new structure. Potential options are to do nothing, waive a fee or possibly a reduced fee for a period of time possibly retro to the adoption of the ordinance amendment or something else. The Board would like more information and instructed staff to wait a month or two to possibly get more feedback from farmers.

County Administrator Trish Harren Gjersvik provided for discussion a Veterans Partnership Guidelines received from Mike Ruzek. The guidelines will help manage the property with expectations clearly outlined. A formal agreement will be developed for approval.

In other brief updates the County Administrator Trish Gjersvik indicated that Joy Kanne will be receiving the 2024 Rotary Excellence in Government Award; the Government Center is open once a month in the evening to offer services provided by Health & Human Services, Veteran Services and the Recorder (passports); the website will be going through a refresh process and a photo contest will be underway to acquire photos that can be used on the website and Facebook posts; a consultant is being considered to assist with communications; the tree removal process and other projects are ongoing at the fairgrounds; and the County is expecting a memorandum of understanding with the University of Minnesota Extension for a wage increase for educators.

The work session concluded at 2:45 p.m.

THE MOWER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

BY: John D. Mueller Chairperson

Attest:

By: Trish Harren Gjersvik
Clerk/Administrator