

MOWER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION

May 7, 2024

The Mower County Board of Commissioners in and for the County of Mower, Minnesota, met in a Work Session on May 7, 2024 at 1:00 p.m. at the Government Center, 201 1st Street NE, in Austin, Minnesota.

All members present, viz: Chair John Mueller, Vice-Chair Polly Glynn, Mike Ankeny, Dan Sparks and Jerry Reinartz. Also in attendance were County Attorney Kristen Nelsen and Deputy County Administrator Matthew Verdick.

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Assistant Public Works Director Valerie Sheedy provided the Board with a Dodge/Wind Transmission Line Project Update. The Public Utilities Commission considered the recommendations of the administration law judge for the safest and less impactful route and the information submitted concerning the site permit and route permit for the project. The Public Utilities Commission will issue the site permit and the transmission line route permit along county roads Dodge 9/Mower 20/Mower 1. Township roads will not be impacted. Dodge/Wind will present a request to Mower County for a Right-of-Way Permit or a Use of Road Agreement that will outline such items as mitigation measures, pole placement and slope tapering. The Board can expect future updates concerning the permits/agreement and pre-construction meetings.

Assistant Public Works Director Valerie Sheedy provided the Board with a Comprehensive Planning Update. As reported to the Board on January 9, 2024, in community partnership a Request for Qualifications for a comprehensive plan had been prepared to invite consulting firms to develop and outline two distinct Comprehensive Plans that include citywide and countywide policies, goals and strategies to reflect a unified vision for both the City of Austin and Mower County for years to come. The plan budget is approximately \$450,000 comprised of funds from the County, City of Austin, Hormel Foundation, and some other private donations. As an update, six proposals were received and three firms were interviewed by a panel containing representatives from the City of Austin, Mower County, DCA, Mayo Clinic, Hormel, and Planning Commissioners. SCH/Velocity was selected as the consultant based on great engagement, outreach, good implementation plan, past successes and brought to the table some specialized involvements. The contract is being prepared and is expected to come before the Board for approval on May 28. The planning process for the development of the Comprehensive Plans will involve City and County Staff with community involvement in a new outreach effort to include community-wide priorities, values and interests.

Correctional Services Director Steve King and Department of Corrections District Supervisor Holly VanPelt presented the Correctional Services 2024 Comprehensive Plan. The full plan was handed out to all the commissioners. It was noted that it is a requirement that the plan be presented to the Board but that no Board action is needed. The Department of

Justice will be providing the plan to the legislature. The state has developed an updated rubric to calculate these costs for them by putting it into a combined comprehensive plan and the County gained \$90,000 back this year where typically the County received \$20,000 annually to reimburse Probation Officer wages. Locally the Mower County Corrections and the Department of Corrections (Austin) are a unique very collaborative group and the comprehensive plan reflects their goal to be more transparent about what is going on in corrections, what the agents are doing with clients, training they're getting and what are their caseloads. Mower County Correctional Services handles adult felons prior to convictions, adult misdemeanors and gross misdemeanors. The Department of Corrections (Austin) currently handles adult felons after conviction. Mr. King noted that his department has employed 14 probation officers for 20 years but the staff is overwhelmed even though the average 2600 arrest rate hasn't changed much over the years. What has changed is the mandates associated with each arrest from 16 in 2021 to 118 per arrest now. With the increased funding Mr. King may be looking to add to his team in 2025.

Under Miscellaneous Business Deputy County Administrator Matthew Verdick informed the Board that the Austin Mower County Homeowners Loan Board will need a new appointment to replace Mr. Taggart M who we recently appointed due to a conflict. The best candidate would be a banker or realtor and could be from anywhere in the county.

The Board also briefly discussed the Artworks Festival coming up in August.

The work session concluded at 1:45 p.m.

THE MOWER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

BY: John O. Mueller Chairperson

Attest:

By: Christina Cynsik
Clerk/Administrator