Official Proceedings of the Stutsman County Commission—June 15, 2023

At 9:00 a.m., Chairman Klose called the special meeting of the Stutsman County Commission to order. Jerry Bergquist, Chad Wolsky, Joan Morris, Steven Cichos, and Mark Klose answered the roll call.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Shannon Davis, Human Resource Director presented her review and recommendations of the internal salary survey. Davis met with each commissioner individually prior to the meeting to go through the information that she had gathered. The information included the 2019 Springstead salary survey results, the review and recommendation that was implemented January 1, 2020, and a survey calculation by using the information from the salary survey and adding average annual increases through 2023, as well as an adjusted pay scale option that would bring the county closer to market value in some areas for the current year. Davis also included some possible grade changes that could be made on the scale.

Klose mentioned doing business differently because each department may not be staffed at 100%. He also questioned whether there could be a District Attorney instead of just a State's Attorney or possibly having different pay scales for different departments.

Davis offered the possibility of hiring bonuses for certain departments. She also mentioned the NDPERS Public Safety Retirement Plan for Law Enforcement and Correctional Officers. Davis offered other options to possibly bring more applicants such as tuition assistance and housing assistance. Davis is looking at the overall picture, county wide, to help all departments and make things better.

The potential increase that Davis worked on was kept very modest and would bring the county to a comparable range.

Cichos suggested highlighting the benefit package. The county pays 13.26% for retirement, and the benefit package is second to none. He recommended the County Facebook posts start highlighting the benefit package. Davis pointed out the survey is based on wages only and does not include benefits and that Stutsman County is fairly in line with market value on benefits. In future years the amount of retirement being contributed by the county is going to decrease to 8% in total.

Davis stated that in 2016 the county picked up an additional 5% of health insurance premiums in lieu of a pay increase. Jessica Alonge, Auditor/COO stated that in 2002 there was a 2% increase in retirement contribution, and 2% in 2004 in lieu of salary increases. Employees hired before 1987 were grandfathered into a plan where their contribution of health care would never increase. The county still has one employee on this plan.

Bergquist would like to get the salaries in line so there is something to move forward with and feels this could be accomplished by making grade adjustments to create a separation between job descriptions and pay grades. He also stated that after working with the county for 32 years he never made it to step 15 in his grade.

Morris thinks that with Davis's recommendation the county looks too high compared to other counties. Davis explained that the NDACo survey can only be comparable to an extent because of which counties report and how they reported. Some departments in Stutsman County require their employees to learn multiple duties in different departments, where other counties strictly only work for one department.

Davis explained that all positions are budgeted for whether they are filled or not. Retirements and payouts of sick leave for those retiring are also budgeted for, as well as any planned promotions within the year.

The preliminary budget must be approved by August 10.

The budget memo and recommendations of the Wage and Benefit Committee was discussed. The department heads recommended maintaining the current health insurance splits. Bergquist pointed out that if the adjustments that Davis suggested were implemented, then the request from the wage and benefit committee would not seem so steep, because the county would essentially be meeting them part way.

Davis indicated she was asked to provide the commission with information to review and gave a solution to fix things overall. She cannot keep doing these studies if things are not going to change.

Cichos stated he would like to avoid having discussions similar to last year with the employees.

Klose thinks discussions on salaries should be held in front of the commission not the personnel committee or the wage and benefit committee because it is a decision the commissioners make. Bergquist provided background on the reasons why the committees were formed.

Davis is asking for direction on how to move forward to start on the 2024 preliminary budget. The preliminary budget can always be changed before October. The next special meeting date will be discussed at the June 20, 2023 regular commission meeting.

At 10:40 a.m., a motion to adjourn was made by Morris, seconded by Cichos. Motion carried.

ATTEST:

Jessica Alonge Auditor/COO	Mark T. Klose Commission Chairman