Official Proceedings of the Stutsman County Commission – August 6, 2024

At 12:13 p.m., Chairman Klose called the special meeting of the Stutsman County Commission to order. Jerry Bergquist, Chad Wolsky, Levi Taylor, Joan Morris, and Mark Klose were present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Chad Kaiser, Sheriff, presented the 2025 Agency Request on behalf of the Stutsman County Fair Association. Kaiser stated that the increased request from $43,330 to $50,000 is due to sealing the midway, bathroom updates, and increased dues. The Fair Association has not requested an increase from $43,330 in several years.

Alonge presented 2025 budget highlights. She stated that the centrally assessed values decreased by 10.73%, which brought preliminary estimated taxable value down to $149,611,718, which is $149,612 per mill. Ottertail had an $11,000,000 decrease in true & full value due to reporting errors in prior years, which has affected this year's valuation changes. Estimated revenues for 2025 are around $3,320,000 over the 2024 estimated revenues, and estimated expenses are approximately $390,000 under 2024 budgeted expenses. There was a 4.42% increase in health insurance, workforce safety had a 27% decrease from 2024, bringing the dollar amount to $112,260, dental insurance had a 5% increase, and for eligible employees, salaries have a 5% COLA and step increase for eligible employees applied. The March 2023 to March 2024 index is at 3% increase, and an additional 2% was included based on budget discussions for 2024 and increases for the 2024 salaries still being behind market rate. Interest revenues are 100% collected so far in 2024 and have been increased for 2025.

The Sheriff's department increased salary expenses due to the Vision Zero Coordinator position. Klose requested a specific fund/code be used for this payroll item to keep reimbursable expenses separate. Alonge recommended establishing a separate fund for this position if the board wanted it separated out from regular sheriff salary payrolls. Bergquist made a motion to create a fund for the Vision Zero Coordinator, effective for the 2024 budget year, seconded by Morris. Motion carried.

Commissioner Taylor questioned the Emergency Fund having no budgeted expenses or mill levy in the 2025 preliminary budget and asked if the upcoming ER projects need to be budgeted for in this fund. Alonge stated that the emergency fund has a maximum of 4 mills that can be levied, but once the fund balance reaches the equivalent of 10 mills in dollars, the fund in unable to levy anything more. The emergency fund has not been levied for since 2018 due to the fund balance being at the max. Alonge stated that there are other line items that have budgeted for the emergency repairs and that the fund balance is still at the 75% appropriation threshold and is within 10 mill max. Klose and Taylor suggested adding a mill to the preliminary budget.

Bergquist vocalized his concern with the 5% COLA and stated that he would feel more comfortable with a 3% COLA and step. Shannon Davis, HR Director, stated that putting in the 5% COLA and step was an implementation from last year's budget that was expected going forward to make up from last year's cost of living wages. Morris stated her concerns with the starting salaries for dispatch and corrections. Davis stated that when adjusting salaries, they look at the starting point and the range of salaries within the different types of classifications. Morris asked Davis what the dollar amount increase would be in doing the 5% COLA and step increase. Davis stated that with retirement and FICA included, it would be $574,775, and with the 3% COLA and step it would be $392,625. Bergquist made a motion to decrease the 5% COLA

to 3% for 2025, seconded by Morris. Roll call vote: Klose, Bergquist, Wolsky, Morris, and Taylor voted aye. Motion carried.

Klose stated that he is concerned about the 4 mills proposed for the job incentive fund. A motion to increase job incentive fund by 1% from the 2023 mill levy, in the approximate amount of $400,000 was made by Morris, seconded by Bergquist. Roll call vote: Bergquist, Wolsky, Morris, Taylor, and Klose voted aye.

Morris vocalized her concerns with the increased levy request for the James River Senior Center. Klose suggested inviting a representative to a special meeting for clarification.

Bergquist inquired about the legacy earnings within the highway distribution fund. Alonge stated that it is budgeted in the state aid distribution line item and is revenue once each biennium and is expected in August of 2025. The regular state aid distribution of $575,000 has been budgeted for revenue in the general fund and is then transferred to other funds based on fund balances.

Klose questioned the minimum levy for weed control. Alonge stated that the preliminary levy is approximately 3.03 mills to keep their reserves at 75% and to maintain the minimum to be eligible for the grant match.

Morris questioned the Prairie Dog Fund and stated that the state budgeted revenues concerns her due to legislature and if it is not received, expenses would exceed the revenues.

Morris mentioned the increase in the Sheriff's department budget and stated that after taking out all expenses for the Vision Zero program, the increase is $220,000. Morris questioned the $25,000 telephone increase. Alonge stated that when working on the 2025 budget, the only phone charges for the sheriff's office that were included were employee stipends. Previously the land line services and county paid cell phones were also budgeted and paid from the employee cell phone expense account. An account to separate the land line and county cell phones from the employee cell phone stipends was added for the 2024 expenses and is the reason for the $25,000 increase in the 2025 budget.

Berquist had questions regarding the non-departmental vehicles budgeted for 2025. Alonge stated that it's purpose would primarily be for the tax assessors, with other uses being conferences, and other travel for departments without vehicles. A motion to establish general government purchase of assets fund and to change the title of the existing fund 50 to the same name was made by Bergquist, seconded by Taylor. Roll call vote: Wolsky, Morris, Taylor, Klose, and Bergquist voted aye. Motion carried.

A special meeting to review the requested changes to the preliminary budget and mill levies was scheduled for August 7, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.

At 2:04 p.m. a motion to adjourn was made by Bergquist, seconded by Taylor. Motion carried.

ATTEST:

Jessica Alonge	Mark T. Klose
Auditor/COO	Commission Chairman