Official proceedings of the Stutsman County Special Commission Meeting— August 23, 2022

At 10:05 a.m., Mark Klose called the Stutsman County Special Commission meeting to order. Joan Morris, Steve Cichos, Dennis Ova, and Mark Klose answered the roll call. Ramone Gumke was absent.

Morris asked to hear from employees and how they felt about the health insurance options. Sherrif Kaiser stated he was not in favor of a higher out of pocket option.

Klose asked what the premiums would be for the employer and employee making a change to the next out-of-pocket maximum option. Shannon Davis, Human Resource Director explained moving to the next option of $3,500 out of pocket amount, the savings in a single policy would be $12.86 and $31.10 for a family.

At 10:11 Ramone Gumke joined the meeting.

Davis explained when the County was on NDPERS, the budget was on a biennium and the County split the increases in half. The average between 2015 and 2020 was a 6% increase per year. Since joining NDPHIT, there have not been increases, however if a three-year average was done, the increase would be 5.62% per year.

Jim Wentland, Road Superintendent explained how increasing the out-of-pocket maximum would be too much financially to take on for himself and coworkers.

Joni Fredrickson, Legal Secretary, expressed her concerns with high out of pocket maximums.

The 2022 health insurance budget for 2022 was $1,319,225 and if the current plan remains in place, it will be $1,669,600 for 2023. Klose stated that would be about a 2.5 mill increase.

Commissioner Gumke would like to consider a departure from the current plan after 2023. Gumke stated we have quality employees and should leave the plan as is and not raise the out-of-pocket to stay competitive.

Karl Bergh, Park Superintendent explained that 6 years ago he left a job he enjoyed and took a wage cut because the benefits at Stutsman County were more appealing. Bergh feels the County should continue the current insurance plan in 2023, and then opt for better insurance plans after 2023.

A motion was made by Cichos to leave the insurance plan as is, seconded by Morris. Roll call vote: Ova, Gumke, Morris, Cichos, and Klose voted aye. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Cichos to approve a 4% COLA increase and a 2.5% step increase, seconded by Ova.

Shannon Davis stated we do not give .5 percent for step increases.

Cichos amended his motion to approve a 4% COLA and 2% step increase, seconded by Ova.

Davis spoke on the importance of keeping our employees, and that Stutsman County has lost 31 employees so far in 2022. This is more than the total number of employees lost per year in the past few years. The ads for job openings are being published as “open until filled” because they are not getting any applicants. Davis stated the reasonable thing to do is to leave the 8.6% COLA and 2% step increase already budgeted in the 2023 budget to make Stutsman County competitive with other jobs and to retain the valuable staff Stutsman County currently has.

Klose stated Davis' statement was well said, but he has talked to businesses around Stutsman County and does not think 6% is an insult to the employees. Klose specified he has taxpayers to satisfy. Employees are taxpayers too but Klose stated there is a difference.

Cichos called for question. Roll call vote: Gumke – no, Morris, Cichos, Klose, and Ova – yes. carried.

At 10:44 a.m. a motion was made by Cichos to adjourn, seconded by Morris. Motion carried.

ATTEST:

Jessica Alonge Auditor/COO	Mark T. Klose Commission Chairman