Official Proceedings of the Stutsman County Commission—September 26, 2023

At 8:00 a.m., Chairman Klose called the special meeting of the Stutsman County Commission to order. Jerry Bergquist, Chad Wolsky, Joan Morris, Levi Taylor, and Mark Klose answered the roll call.

Klose stated that the special meeting was regarding budget related topics and board discussion only. The public input budget hearing will be on October 3rd, 2023, at 4:30 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Jessica Alonge, Auditor/COO stated the preliminary budget was approved on August 1st, 2023. Since that time, the WSI premium decreased by $32,500, and the commission approved the custom health insurance plan from NDPHIT which decreased the health insurance budget by $152,125. Due to investment changes $928,000 in bank revenue has already been collected so far in 2023, when originally there was no revenue amount in the budget. For the preliminary budget, the mills were calculated at 86.04 mills, and with the recent changes it was brought down to 81.5 mills. Other areas of savings for 2023 include health insurance, retirement, and FICA for unpaid salaries of unfilled positions, and a savings of $30,000 in the general fund for not hiring a 3rd party to do the salary survey. $100,000 in the local assistance and tribal consistency fund has also been received, which can be allocated anywhere. Alonge is projecting that salaries for 2023 are going to be under by approximately $322,300.

Alonge has met with Jim Wentland, Road Superintendent, and Mike May, Interstate Engineering, regarding upcoming road projects. They will be meeting with the DOT at the conference in a few weeks regarding the $2,010,000 set aside for road projects that can be used only for maintenance and construction of roads and cannot be used to match any projects. Wentland is working on a priority list for those funds.

Klose brought up the JSDC request that was put in the preliminary budget at the full 4 mills He is on the JSDC board and there is nothing that he is aware of that the increase is needed for, and they have a reserve that can move the corporation along as well. Morris also mentioned the airport possibly using funds from JSDC. Taylor stated that in reviewing the budget he noticed several areas where larger amounts had been budgeted for, and the amount spent out of those line items has not come close to being met. A motion to reduce the JSDC request from $579,496 to $444,763 setting the mill at 3.07, the same as last year, was made by Bergquist, seconded by Morris. Roll call vote: Bergquist, Wolsky, Morris, Taylor, and Klose voted aye. Motion carried.

Klose then mentioned that the Weed Board mill levy needs to be at a certain amount to be eligible for grants from the state ag department. The minimum is a 3 mill local match.

Shannon Davis, Human Resource Director, explained the overall employee salaries that have been worked into the preliminary budget. The steps were increased from 2% steps to 2.5% steps, and there is currently a 5% COLA worked into the budget at this time.

A motion to move forward with a 5% COLA and a 2.5% step increase for employees with a satisfactory evaluation was made by Bergquist, seconded by Wolsky. Morris stated that she has never seen large increases like this in private industry and other public entities. Her hope is that such large increases will not come in the upcoming years. Wolsky stated that wages needed to be raised to retain the good

employees that the county has. Roll call vote: Wolsky aye, Morris no, Taylor aye, Klose aye, and Bergquist aye. Motion carried.

Davis did a market comparison including counties, cities, and comparable state positions. It was identified that several departments needed grade changes to be brought to market value. There are 15 positions that would have a grade adjustment, with most of them being a one grade increase due to the steps in the pay scale changing. Three positions would need to be brought up more than one grade. They are the nurse supervisor, the sheriff, and the human resource specialist. Klose presented that unlike private businesses the county cannot just stop doing their daily business. To be a nurse supervisor, you must be a registered nurse, and there is a wide range of competition for that position. A requirement for that position is also that it is 24/7 on-call, and the county does not pay on-call pay. Bergquist reminded the commission of the drastic changes made earlier in the year to the State's Attorneys office. He would like to see all the grade changes implemented.

Davis stated that her job is to give market comparable for all departments. She must give accurate information. She does not research specific departments or individuals unless she sees that there is a need to do so, or it is requested by the commission.

A motion to approve the grade changes per Davis's request was made by Wolsky, seconded by Bergquist. Klose does not disagree with anything said and he agrees on most of the grade changes, but he has some reservations on some of the increases for two or three positions. He has nothing personal against any of those people but feels that some of them are over the top. Morris agrees with the nurse supervisor position grade change, but she cannot see giving a $70,000 raise to only 3 individuals. She would prefer to see the funds go to entry level positions in corrections and to dispatch. Roll call vote: Morris no, Taylor aye, Klose no, Bergquist aye, and Wolsky aye. Motion carried.

Morris noticed that the general fund allocation went down to 1.2 from 1.8 and she would like to see a reconciliation of how that happened. Alonge will put something together.

Taylor brought up some of the items that he noticed in looking through the budget. The mental health line item under district court is budgeted at $65,000 and in the past the amount spent has not even come close to that. Fritz Fremgen, State's Attorney, explained that these are contracted services for the offender, that the county must pay.

Some of the other items were buildings & grounds, joint LEC maintenance and service contracts. Taylor gave a list of the items that he noticed to Alonge, and she will put something together on those line items for the October 3, 2023, meeting.

At 9:30 a.m., a motion to adjourn the special Commission meeting was made by Bergquist, seconded by Taylor. Motion carried.

ATTEST:

Jessica Alonge	Mark T. Klose
Auditor/COO	Commission Chairman