

Minutes of the Board of Ward County Commissioners Special Meeting  
September 27, 2016

The special meeting of the Ward County Commission was called to order by Chairman Fjeldahl at 7:00 p.m. with Comm. Louser, Walter, Wepler, and Nybakken, present. Also present were Department Heads: Ryan Kamrowski, Melissa Bliss, Amanda Schooling, Dana Larsen, Roza Larson, Leona Lochthowe, Bob Barnard, and Devra Smestad.

Chairman Fjeldahl asked Commissioning Board for any input into Special Meeting. None given by any Commissioner.

Moved by Comm. Wepler, seconded by Comm Louser to open Public hearing.

Roll call: all voted yes; motion carried

Chairman Fjeldahl opened Public hearing at 7:07 p.m.,

Danita Magnuson, Surrey, North Dakota appeared stating that not only is the cost of living going up but also healthcare costs and now property taxes. Everyone needs to be tightening their belts. Auditor Smestad listed out the extras, stating that this increase would only affect the counties portion of the tax statement, giving the example of a \$200,000.00 home would see an increase of \$13.77 (1.53 mill or a 1.84% increase).

Carolyn Grath appeared explaining that she lives in Renville County but owns land in Ward County. She feels they have no say because of this, but Auditor Smestad explained the state law regarding the equalization hearing process.

Ryan Kamrowski appeared speaking again of the formal appeals process on tax property. Chairman Fjeldahl explained that the hardest hit with this increase will be those getting both the property tax increase and the mill levy increase.

Roger E. Neshem, Berthold, North Dakota, appeared speaking that his farmstead by Lonetree has been hit four times this year by hail storms. He believes the weather modification should be stopped, no other counties purchase this program and that we are the eastern most point for weather modification. Chairman Fjeldahl added that farming today has changed from the small grains years ago to more of the soybeans and oil products, and the difference in rain amounts that is needed for these crops. Chairman Fjeldahl believes that hail suppression is not working reiterating that Ward county is the 10<sup>th</sup> largest soybean producer in the state.

Gordon Johnson, Max, North Dakota appeared discussing when times are tough we need to cut spending and not raise taxes. He noticed every category in the budget had increased except for Veterans Services. Mr. Johnson questioned the Advertising & Promotions budget also. Auditor Smestad explained that there were two directors for Veterans Services for a period as one was retiring and training in the new position. Smestad spoke on the Advertising & promotion explaining that it covers Economical Development in all 12 cities that encompass Ward county. Chairman Fjeldahl spoke of the budget process how it gets submitted to the board for approval/rejection and that last year's budget all departments have to justify their needs and that all were asked to make cuts.

Moved by Comm. Walter, seconded by Comm. Nybakken. To close Public hearing  
Roll call: all voted yes; motion carried.

Chairman Fjeldahl Closed Public Hearing: 7:40 p.m.

Commissioner's Board discussed weather modification. Discussion how it's never been brought to a discussion before, how long we've been using it, is it benefiting the farmers? The reason it exists is for hail suppression-thus insurance agents are for it. Area water boards say it's a substantial benefit for rain water. Comm. Wepler discussed creating a forum to address the pros and cons. Cost for this program is \$244,000.00/yearly.

Moved by Comm. Walter, seconded by Comm. Louser to approve removal of the weather modification from the county budget. Roll call: Chairman Fjeldahl, Comm. Louser, Comm. Walter yes; Comm. Wepler, and Comm Nybakken no: motion carried.

Other budget discussion on Highway budget: cutting it from 10 mills to 9 mills.

Moved by Comm. Walter, seconded by Comm. Louser to approve the decrease in Highway budget from 10mills to 9 mills. Roll call: all voted yes, motion carried.

Other budget discussion on employee wage increase: Wage increase was submitted at 3.5%. Auditor Smestad had figured a 20% increase in the healthcare cost when figured it came to an actual 17.6%. With the lesser amount it would save money in the upcoming budget.

Moved by Chairman Fjeldahl, seconded by Comm. Walter to lower employee raise from 3.5% to 2%. Roll call: Comm. Wepler, Louser, Nybakken no, Chairman Fjeldahl and Comm. Walter voted yes. motion failed.

Other Business: Board discussed 90 day review for John Crosby. It will be held at 11:00 a.m. October 4, 2016. Commissioner's meeting will recess if still in session.

Moved by Comm. Walter, seconded by Comm. Louser to hold final budget review at said time. Roll Call: all voted yes. Motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Wepler, seconded by Comm. Walter to adjourn meeting. At 8:25 p.m. with no further business, the meeting was adjourned.