

MOWER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION

March 7, 2023

The Mower County Board of Commissioners in and for the County of Mower, Minnesota, met in a Work Session on March 7, 2023 at 1:00 p.m. at the Government Center, 201 1st Street NE, in Austin, Minnesota.

All members present, viz: Chair Mike Ankeny, Vice-Chair Jerry Reinartz, John Mueller, Polly Glynn, and Dan Sparks. Also in attendance were County Administrator Trish Harren and Executive Assistant Denise Barthels.

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Aaron Keenan and John Garry from the Development Corporation of Austin (DCA) presented to the Board for discussion a Business Succession and Transition Program. (BST) John Garry reported that the DCA held a strategic planning meeting and identified top priorities. Two of the top five priorities can be addressed with a Business Succession and Transition Program. Statistically approximately 53% of Mower County business owners will reach retirement age within the next five years. The BST with a loan/grant program can provide promotion of new and continuation of existing businesses with the goal to help maintain and sustain current business with the county and to support jobs and the tax base. The BST loan/grant program will be available prior to purchase for individuals looking to purchase a business requiring a 2:1 match for funding up to \$25,000. (More details concerning the loan/grant program available at the DCA). The Mower County Resiliency Grant program has approximately \$42,000 funds remaining that have not been allocated. The DCA is requesting that these remaining funds be reallocated to the BST loan/grant program and requests additional funding for the BST loan/grant program.

Public Works Director Michal Hanson reviewed with the Board a 5-year Bridge Replacement Program. Mower County is responsible for 369 bridges on the municipal, township and county transportation system. A structure is classified as a bridge if it has a clear span of ten feet or more. Currently about 9% of the bridges are officially classified as deficient (33 bridges). These bridges are classified as high priority for repair, replacement or removable as the funding becomes available over the next five years. There is an 1885 statute that specifically states that "Mower County is responsible for the construction and maintenance for bridges in the county that are valued over \$100." Townships are responsible for the first \$10,000 for repairs or replacement for any bridges in their district.

Solid Waste Officer Marcus Thompson shared with the Board the first preliminary design for the Recycling Center Addition for electronics recycling.

Environmental Services Supervisor Angela Lipelt provided to the Board for discussion information that approximately 105 County parcels do not have a record of abandonment for septic tanks after the parcels have connected to municipal services. It was noted that parcels can stay on their own septic system until it no longer is compliant and then they need to hook into the municipal system. At that time their prior tank system needs to be properly abandoned. According to State Rules and County Ordinance, the tanks need to be properly abandoned for safety and health.

COMMISSIONERS' RECORD MOWER COUNTY, MINNESOTA

Environmental Services Supervisor Angela Lipelt provided to the Board a list of commercial/industrial parcels that need compliance inspections. Every five years the businesses need to have their systems inspected for compliance. In reviewing the list of parcels it was noted that it is estimated that 18 of the 46 parcels listed are likely to fail the inspection based on the age of the system. Thirteen parcels it is questionable if they will pass the inspection due to changes in septic requirements since the date of their installation. And lastly 15 should pass. Assistant Public Works Director Valerie Sheedy indicated that the landowners will receive a notice that a compliance inspection is needed. It was also noted that septic systems can be depreciated.

It was noted that staff and the Planning Commission is working on new proposed ordinance language regarding the triggers that require septic inspections. (i.e., permits for the construction of sheds and a clear definition for Ag structures)

Director of Information Technology James Keltgen provided the Board with a technology update. Mr. Keltgen provided a project list identifying IT needs as critical related to infrastructure and security; major needs include employee and staff training on systems and minor needs that can wait to include enhanced connectivity. Technology is changing and there is a need to update the county systems. County Administrator Trish Harren indicated that there is approximately \$900,000 in ARPA funding that has not yet been designated by the County that can go to an IT capital project.


County Administrator Trish Harren reported that she had received a request from Mower County Emergency Management for funding to enhance the ARMER coverage in the Cities of Grand Meadow and Lyle. The grant funding expected to install two Outdoor Distributed Antenna Systems (ODAS) has been reallocated to another agency. Other grant funding is trying to be found but there is an urgency to meet this communication need. A Finance Committee meeting will be scheduled to discuss.


County Administrator Trish Harren reported that there has been a requested made to use the County property (PIN 21.060.0011) along Highway 56 and the Park in the City of Adams for Red Sled Pulling (tractor pulls) weekends through the summer months. The County will consider granting permission if the County is listed as an additional insured party of the organization's insurance policy.

Lastly, County Administrator Trish Harren reported that she had received a request from the Austin FFA Co-Advisor to make a presentation to the Board about Hemp Farming. Also, there is a request for a Commissioner that may be opposed to Hemp farming consider talking with the Austin FFA team to help with their project. The Board would be willing to hear the presentation during the April Work Session.

The work session concluded at 3:18 p.m.

THE MOWER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

BY:  Vice Chairperson

Attest:
By: 
Clerk/Administrator