

CLAY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS – WORK GROUP

12:30 PM, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2024

Meeting Room A / B – 3rd Floor – Courthouse

MINUTES

The Clay County Board of Commissioners met in work group session with the following Commissioners present: Paul Krabbenhoft, Frank Gross, Jenny Mongeau, Kevin Campbell, and David Ebinger. Others present: County Administrator Stephen Larson, County Attorney Brian Melton, HR Director/Asst. Administrator Darren Brooke, and Communications Coordinator Jacqueline Finck

Call to Order

Commissioner Ebinger called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

Commissioner Ebinger stated that there are two agenda additions: the Board will be asked to provide guidance on how funding will be assigned for the FMWF Chamber and FMWF EDC within the Clay County final budget and discuss opting out of medical insurance for Elected Officials.

On motion by Commissioner Gross, seconded by Commissioner Campbell, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the agenda additions listed above.

Citizens to be Heard

There were no citizens to be heard.

2025 Legislative Priorities

County Administrator Stephen Larson brought forward the legislative priorities that were approved last year: Mental Health Acuity – Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF), Flood Diversion Funding, and 911 Emergency Response Funds. Through the legislative process, the Board also approved of a legislative priority, looking for funding for County Road 26 and requested funding for a female program for transitional housing. Unfortunately, none of these items were brought forward last year for funding purposes. Mr. Larson stated that we're here today to discuss the legislative priorities for this coming up legislative session in 2025.

Mental Health Acuity – PRTF

Commissioner Ebinger stated there are three priorities listed and asked if Commissioner Mongeau would like to discuss the Mental Health Acuity – PRTF priority. Commissioner Mongeau stated that she feels this is important and stated several different counties throughout the state have resolutions for support on their agenda, so the momentum of support continues. There are 26 counties, five tribal nations, Concordia College, Minnesota State University of Moorhead are all signing resolutions of support. We are working with the City of Moorhead and the school districts, Lakeland Mental Health. Senator Kupec and Representative Keeler stated this will be their

priority. Representative Joy said he is big support of this. Commissioner Mongeau stated she is very proud that the Board has taken an active stance to raise the awareness and to put forth the work to have a PRTF in Clay County. We are pushing really hard to get within the Governor's budget and are hoping to get a meeting in St. Paul within the next week. Commissioner Mongeau stated we're working really hard with both Senate & House representatives and committees.

Commissioner Krabbenhoft stated how important it is to continue to work with our contacts and legislative groups and make sure both sides are covered. There were some issues last legislative session with partisanship so with going after funding within the Governor's budget, it takes some of that away. Commissioner Krabbenhoft is appreciative of James O'Donnell for taking the time to show people the vision of what the PRTF will look like.

Commissioner Mongeau stated that she is appreciative of Commissioner Campbell, Klein McCarthy and staff to get the framework of what the facility needs to be so we have everything in line so we're ready to go. Commissioner Mongeau stated that we are on the agenda to present to the City of Moorhead on the 25th and we'll also be going to the major cities in Representative Joy's & Senator Kupec's areas as well. With the 26 counties, they're represented by so many Senators & Representatives on both side of the aisle which really helps because this truly is a bipartisan effort to address the needs.

Commissioner Ebinger stated that looking at funding for the PRTF through the Governor's budget and DHS grants is an option. With regards to the Flood Diversion funding, we may need to look at something similar because time is running out.

Commissioner Campbell stated the article in the Star Tribune and the Fargo Forum highlighted the needs of what we're talking about here. He stated he likes the handout but doesn't want to underestimate the DHS visit that was here and when they saw the option of the proposed changes for the facility, they requested if we would consider 6 of the beds being for accommodating a secure setting. The articles don't talk about how there are zero beds in the state of Minnesota with a secure setting within a PRTF. There are some youth that need that type of setting. Solutions stated that yes, a secure accommodation can be made. When it comes to lobbying, we shouldn't underestimate when DHS asks for that and how significant that may be when asking for these funds.

Commissioner Krabbenhoft stated that there was discussion about the inclusion of the tribes and accommodating therapy in pertaining to their native culture. Commissioner Mongeau stated that, that came up when tribes came up with DHS for the visit, to allow culture-infused care into the facility. That's why we feel this is a great location, kids will be closer so the social workers, their families, and their communities that are raising them.

Further discussion ensued regarding potential growth of the facility, AMC support, and the workforce to sustain the facility.

Flood Diversion Funding

Commissioner Campbell stated one of the stipulation within the agreement for the Moorhead Clay County Joint Power Authority is that the county would lobby for funding for flood mitigation. So, not only should we be doing it but we're obligated to. Funding for the Diversion Authority would probably be coming through bonding grants that would probably be initiated through the MN DNR. The previous funding, in 2024, was \$52.4 million. They asked for an updated breakdown of what the cost would be for each project. Commissioner Campbell discussed the costs for each project with the total being \$59.1 million.

Commissioner Mongeau stated that she feels it's important to talk about the difficulty there will be down in St. Paul. She stated Clay County will continue to request funding for flood mitigation but it is more difficult to receive the funding than it is in North Dakota because of other areas in Minnesota that have issues with flooding as well. Commissioner Mongeau stated that she talked to the chair stating that MCCJPA needs help lobbying for the funding from the Diversion Authority. She stated it would be helpful to explain and educate how the process works and where the funding is going being that Minnesota and North Dakota are involved in this project and that there are barrier that we have to mitigate.

Commissioners Campbell & Ebinger discussed that there is a resolution on the agenda for the Diversion Authority. Commissioner Campbell stated that Mayor Mahoney stated that it may be in the Diversion Authority's best interest to invest in a lobbyist.

Commissioner Mongeau stated that the rules and requirements for bonding requests sort of changed mid-session last year. There were some pretty big stipulations that would have affected people requesting bonding. We had changed the bonding request from \$20 million \$10 million and if we were going to get \$3 million, it was going to look like we were going to have to come up with the additional \$7 million. So, moving forward with requests, if that's the rule we need to be made aware of that.

Further discussion ensued regarding the Diversion Authority hiring a lobbyist, work with and strategizing with elected leaders, project breakdown, and the difference between government/funding options in Minnesota and North Dakota.

911 Emergency Response Fund

Commissioner Ebinger stated the 911 Emergency Response Funds legislative priority may have to take a backseat while we work on the other two legislative priorities. He stated this session we will have to wait to get a mockup mediator hired. The frustration is the 911 fees that people pay on their phone bills is not getting to the counties and local jurisdiction. Representative Joy has put a lot of effort into this and is going to continue. Commissioner Ebinger stated that he doesn't see a lot of movement happening with this until questions are answered.

Commissioner Mongeau stated this can still be a legislative priority and that it is more

policy-based. Representative Joy is still pushing hard on making sure he gets the documents needed. This can be addressed in committee. Commissioner Ebinger agreed and stated the Department of Public Safety can't give you a straight answer regarding the total funds. Commissioner Campbell also stated that he feels this can still be a legislative priority because it's important to Clay County. He also stated this legislative priority is different than the other two because it affects all 87 counties. These funds are important when we're thinking of cost of dispatch, rural ambulance or transitioning to next generation 911. Commissioner Campbell stated we should be a strong partner with our AMC Public Policy Committee.

Commissioner Ebinger introduced Emilio Lamba, AMC representative for Public Safety. Mr. Lamba stated that he had heard from many counties regarding interest in funds from the 911 fees and stated that funding has been fairly safeguarded by Department of Public Safety (DPS). When wanting to find out how much is in the fund, it's been hard to move DPS on. They want to preserve the functioning of it as it is now. Mr. Lamba discussed working with DPS regarding the funds, especially with the cost that comes with upgrading to next generation 911 for counties.

Further discussion ensued regarding 911 fees, working with DPS, and looking at other potential funding streams.

Mr. Larson asked the Board if there were any other legislative priorities that would like to be discussed. With the general consensus that these are the only three, Mr. Larson stated he will bring these forward for Board action.

Agenda Addition: Board will be asked to provide guidance how funding will be assigned for the FMWF Chamber and FMWF EDC within the Clay County final budget.

Mr. Larson stated conversations were had earlier this year with Shannon Full, President & CEO of FMWF Chamber of Commerce and Joe Raso, President & CEO of Greater FM EDC regarding their funding requests. They are looking for a combined request of \$250,000 for Innovate 28. When looking at the County budget, the Board was looking at providing a funding amount of \$100,000 to the FMWF Chamber of Commerce and \$85,000 to the Greater FM EDC. Conversations were had with each entity and the thought was to then have the combined request of \$185,000 to go towards Innovate 28 or keep it as it remains. After discussing with Ms. Full, she felt it was important to give an update and why she felt doing the combined request for Innovate 28 would be beneficial. Ms. Full thanked the Board for their continued support for the work that both the Chamber and the EDC do relating to public policy, talent & workforce, and business development. As presented earlier, the Innovate 28 plan is the joint plan that has both private and public sector. Ms. Full further discussed other funding sources for the Innovate 28 program and the benefits of investing in the program. The program will also have an advisory committee that Clay County would be part of.

Commissioner Mongeau thanked Ms. Full for all the Chamber has done for Clay County and her concerns with the lack of representation from the EDC when it comes to Clay

County. She stated that there is some hesitancy with regards to the combined funding.

Commissioner Krabbenhoft stated that he trusts Ms. Full and the Chamber with the work they have committed to Clay County and if that's the direction the Chamber would prefer, then he will consider the request.

Commissioner Ebinger stated that he serves on the Great FM EDC Executive Board and shares the same concerns that Commissioner Mongeau mentioned that anything having to do with Minnesota is not even a topic. Commissioner Ebinger also praised the work that Ms. Full and the Chamber have done for Clay County and if Ms. Full's recommendation is to combine the funding for Innovate 28, Clay County will consider it.

Ms. Full thanked the Board and does feel that the Innovate 28 would be a beneficial program for Clay County to invest in. Ms. Full also stated that the funding ask will come yearly, so the Board will have the ability to review on an annual basis if the funding allocation is not in alignment with the Board's wants.

Further discussion ensued regarding the funding allocation and when to have it brought to Board for a decision on the allocation.

Agenda Addition: Discuss Opting Out of Medical Insurance for Elected Officials

Darren Brooke discussed how the Board previously took action allowing married couples within Clay County to be on one family medical insurance plan. It was also discussed potentially allowing elected officials to opt out of the County medical insurance plans as well. The Personnel Policy currently states that a County Commissioner can opt out of the county contribution and medical plan. Part of the discussion was if an elected official has other means of getting insurance, they can then opt out of the county medical insurance but still receive the county contribution to pay for the external insurance. The county contribution would be 100% taxable because there would be no health benefit deductions.

Commissioner Campbell stated that this has been discussed and for some there are considerable differences. Those that are elected are hired for a term and when the term is done and you're not re-elected then you're done. Elected officials aren't able to earn sick pay that allows you to help offset medical costs. Commissioner Campbell stated this would be a good place to start with other employees potentially being able to in the future. Commissioner Campbell confirmed with Mr. Brooke that this can't be determined on an individual basis, it needs to be as a group. Mr. Brooke stated that is correct, it would be the group of elected officials. This can have an impact on premium to claims ratio.

Further discussion ensued regarding implementation timeline and the option to opt out of county medical insurance.

Commissioner Gross asked if the employees we hire now have the option to opt out as well. Mr. Brooke stated that they do not have that option to opt out. Mr. Brooke stated

that those hired after 2020 have a lower county contribution amount. Mr. Brooke stated options for allowing employees to opt out will be looked at in the future along with seeing if we can be self-insured. Further research is needed to see what will be best for the county.

Commissioner Mongeau stated that she appreciates the Committee looking at options for the County to save some money but worries with this being elected officials only, there could be elections decided based on this decision. Further discussion ensued regarding the concerns with having elected officials being able to opt out of medical insurance and bringing this forward to Board for a decision.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 1:52 p.m.

David Ebinger, Chair
County Board of Commissioners

Stephen Larson, County Administrator