

COMMISSIONERS PROCEEDINGS
APRIL 1, 2020

Agenda: 10:00 AM PAYROLL IN WORKPLACE WITH COVID-19

The Board of County Commissioners met in special session with Commissioner Tron Stegman present. Also present were; Amy Jo Tharp, County Clerk; via zoom.com - Joe Thompson, County Commissioner; Pat Hall, County Commissioner; Paul Kitzke, County Attorney; and RoGlenda Coulter, Hugoton Hermes. Tron called the meeting to order.

This session was public by way of www.zoom.com conference to comply with state regulations. There were several people in attendance on the line: Kelsee Burnett and Lynne Webb.

Those who attended in person were: Amy Rich, Sheriff Ted Heaton, Susan Schulte (PIO), Ross Sullivan and Vanessa Willis.

Amy Rich explained to the commissioners the employers can pay employees if they wish. She said going along with what Kelsee Burnett stated at the prior meeting, the district court employees are receiving administrative leave pay because the budget is already in place and the money is there, and that Amy Jo had relayed recently other Kansas counties have been paying employees who are exercising the stay at home order.

Amy Rich then shared a description of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) the Department of Labor implemented to take effect April 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

Amy ended with a couple points she thought the commissioners may want to consider when making the decision on pay. She said she felt confident the department heads will make sure essential business is carried out. If we all really want to try and do our part in the stay-at-home order, they may be more likely to send employees home knowing they will be compensated. If commissioners decide not to compensate, department heads may be more hesitant to send employees home if they have to use accrued time in order to be compensated; adding that part-time employees are not subject to accrued time, so they would be without pay.

Tron agrees it should be at the discretion of the department heads if they feel they can operate with a skeleton crew, whether to rotate employees or how to handle their department. He is okay with compensating all employees and would like to revisit any decision made today at the next regular commissioner meeting on April 13.

Pat said he agrees people should be paid and reiterated the salaries are already in the budget and money accounted for.

Joe said no one should miss a paycheck and unless there are major changes, he is in agreement.

Paul suggested if a motion is made, it needs to reflect the COVID-19 pandemic as the reason for the decision.

Pat made a motion to allow department heads to decide which employees are essential at this time and who should go home with paid leave due to the COVID-19 pandemic and pay is retro-active to Monday, March 30, 2020. This motion will be revisited on April 13, 2020 at the next regular commissioner hearing. Joe seconded. Motion carried.

Joe stated the KAC has put on several COVID-19 webinars that have been recorded and offers great information for many aspects of what is going on. Amy Jo and Amy relayed they had tuned in to multiple webinars in order to try and keep as updated as possible.

Tron said he heard from Paula Rowden and it has been confirmed that at this time there is only one (1) positive COVID-19 case in Stevens County and the KDHE website has posted incorrectly. Susan said she and Rodney have finally gotten through to KDHE to get that fixed and it should be updated today.

Joe asked how everything is in Vanessa's office. Vanessa said business is slow because they are not doing motor vehicle or driver licenses until the state reopens. At this time, she is making sure there is enough money transferred into the accounts for payroll and accounts payable. Joe asked if there is anything that has to be done in the office on a daily basis and Vanessa said no, most can wait.

Joe asked Amy Jo if there was anything new to report for the August primary election. Amy Jo said at this time the Secretary of State is still going forward with conducting elections as normal. She said the state does not want to consider an all-mail ballot for the primary election to be in compliance with accessibility laws/issues. She said they have conferences on Wednesdays to discuss and get updates on the elections.

Joe said he has been receiving questions on the small businesses who are not considered essential by the state. At the next commissioner meeting he would like to revisit how the county could help these businesses so they won't have to permanently shut their doors.

By motion, the Board adjourned.

Attest: Amy Jo Tharp, County Clerk

Tron Stegman, Chairman