

COMMISSIONER'S PROCEEDINGS
SEPTEMBER 27, 2021

Agenda: 8:30 – Bills
 9:30 – Tony Martin
 10:00 – Jayme Rich

The Board of Stevens County Commissioners met in regular session with all members present. Paul Kitzke, County Attorney and Amy Jo Tharp, County Clerk were also present. Tron called the meeting to order. Joe moved to approve the minutes of the last meeting. Pat seconded. Motion carried. Pat moved to approve the county vouchers. Joe seconded. Motion carried. The Clerk was instructed to draw warrants on the Treasurer chargeable to the various funds of the county for the following amounts:

General	\$	50,344.15
Road & Bridge	\$	77,271.53
Airport	\$	2,316.81
Noxious Weed	\$	2,700.31
EMS	\$	63,338.33
Fire	\$	3,544.91
Community Health	\$	17,752.86
Sheriff	\$	42,387.38
Special Law Enforcement	\$	1,449.90
Emp P/R Misc W/H	\$	31.12
<u>County Building Fund</u>	\$	<u>2,783.02</u>
TOTAL:	\$	263,920.32

Tron talked about windmills coming to Stevens County. He said a Haskell County Commissioner and the Road Supervisor told him Haskell County had the windmill company use Kirkham Michael to engineer the project.

Joe said the biggest issue is if the windmill company abandons or goes bankrupt causing millions of dollars for clean-up and there is no room at the landfill for the parts. The blades can't be scrapped, burned, or torn apart so finding a large enough place to dispose of them would be difficult. Pat said the liability for the windmills would be large in itself. Pat also stated he didn't know how it would be sustainable for the taxpayer. Joe said if they come in and have to put up transmission lines, they have the right to enforce eminent domain. This would give them the right to take over private property to create a right-of-way for these lines to be put in. This would possibly mean huge towers to support the transmission lines even if the property owner is opposed.

Tony said Angela hasn't heard anything on the windmills.

Joe said he would agree to the windmills if they were in the right place, right number of setbacks and something to reimburse for costs. Pat feels the windmills are not a good idea for Stevens County.

Tony said he is short some workers as one (1) resigned, one (1) is out for another week or so due to Workman's Comp and a third (3) is going to be retiring in November.

The oil distribution truck for Road and Bridge broke down again after the recent repairs. Tony mentioned the truck is a 1996 model and he would like to look at something more dependable for next year. He said a new oil distribution truck is around \$230,000.00 and hopes to get around \$30,000.00 to \$60,000.00 for a trade-in. Joe asked if the tank can be replaced, and Tony said the truck is so old and having other numerous issues as well.

Tony was approved to get specs drawn up for a new oil distribution truck.

Tony said a property owner called him with complaints about the mobile home which was approved to move into the county. Tony drove out to the mobile home and said it looks nothing like what was presented or represented at the past commissioner meeting. He distributed pictures he took of the mobile home when he went out to inspect it. The commissioners were stating the home has several issues and looks in bad shape compared to the pictures they had seen and wondered if it was even the same mobile home.

Due to the weather, the roads are not very well maintained as there has been no moisture, causing issues with blading. Tony also stated an area on Road V between Road 21 and Road 23 is starting to get a bunch of holes. He is unsure why, but they are repairing the road as the holes appear.

Joe said he spoke with Grey County Public Works Administrator and was told the whole county is on a program where the residents are charged anywhere from \$400.00 to \$500.00 per year on their taxes for sanitation services. Tony and Joe said one (1) company goes around and gathers trash for disposal and takes it to Seward County's landfill. The commissioners were all in agreement it would not be beneficial for Stevens County at this time.

Amy reminded the commissioners their next meeting is October 12th instead of Monday, the 11th due to Columbus Day holiday.

Amy addressed the issue of department heads not getting bills signed and stated they will probably see some late fees and other issues as time goes on. The auditors have stressed the department heads or someone of their choosing need to sign invoices before any bill is to be paid.

Amy asked the commissioners if they want to approve the Community Health bill for sprinkler and lawn repair to come out of the building fund, as it came out of the department fund in the past. The commissioners approved the cost to come out of the building fund.

Jayne Rich, County Treasurer, came in as requested. Tron said there were several allegations made about her through formal written complaints.

1. Instructing employees to clock out at a certain time but employee continuing to work until work tasks are completed. This violates wage and hour laws under the Fair Labor Standards Act. Regardless of whether employer instructs employee to work past clock-out time or employee voluntarily decides to continue working to complete assigned work duties, the reason is immaterial. The hours are work time and are compensable.
2. Derogatory comments made in the workplace. This could potentially create what employee may consider a hostile work environment.
3. Instructing employee to take time off and use MBE leave as compensation when the policy only allows specific MBE related reasons.

Jayne responded to the commissioners by stating these accusations were false. She claimed she only told her employees to clock out no later than ten (10) minutes past five (5) and they knew better not to work after clock out time. She also stated she did not instruct employee to use sick leave as compensation but decided to have employee use that when she discovered later in the week there was a need to care for a sick relative. Jayne said an employee requested two (2) days off due to a family medical issue. She said the employee used those days as sick time, following the MBE policy. Jayne then stated the employee did not show back up to work or call in for 3 days so she assumed the medical issue was still going on and needed to get time cards to payroll so she put it down as sick pay.

The accusation of derogatory comments was also labeled as false by Jayne because she said her employees need to see her as a leader and who they can respect to keep a healthy workplace

Pat asked Jayne if she had any paper trail to support her decision of transitioning an employee from full time to part time. Jayne said she did an evaluation six (6) months ago and explained to the employee what they needed to improve on and based her decision on what would be best for the county residents.

Amy said evaluations or such paperwork pertaining to employees needs to be turned in to the HR Department to put into the employee personnel file. Jayne said she will get copies to HR of the evaluations or write-ups in the future and that she did not realize a copy needed to be presented for the personnel file. Pat agreed to why a paper trail is necessary in case any accusations arise, or someone wants to file charges so there is some sort of evidence supporting or debunking such claims. The commissioners summarized when it comes to county rules and regulations, everyone needs to be mindful of them to avoid costing the county money in the long run. Joe encouraged seeking counsel from the county attorney if there are questions concerning issues with employees. Joe said he would like to investigate more human resource training for the department heads and commissioners.

Pat told Jayne he understands having three (3) full time employees, excluding the Treasurer, would be beneficial but the county can't afford another full-time employee, which would have to include benefits.

Shelby Martin with the Wellness Center came in and said with the grant money received she had purchased a water bottle filler, had the hot water heater moved and Alfaro construction stayed within their bid amount. She said there is still money left in the grant and plans to purchase new equipment. Revenue is higher and Shelby is hoping to break even.

By motion, the Board adjourned.

Attest: Amy Jo Tharp, County Clerk

Tron Stegman, Chairman