

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
PENNINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JUSTICE CENTER BOARD ROOM
AUGUST 13, 2024 – 10:00 A.M.**

Pursuant to M.S. 375.07, the Pennington County Board of Commissioners met in the Pennington County Justice Center Board Room in Thief River Falls, MN, on Tuesday, August 13th, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. Members Present: Seth Nelson, Roy Sourdif, David Sorenson, and Neil Peterson. Members absent: Bruce Lawrence.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Nelson and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The Chairman asked if there were any amendments to the agenda. The County Coordinator noted that Lisa Loegering has been added at 10:55 a.m. Motioned by Commissioner Sourdif, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to approve the agenda with the addition presented. Motion carried.

Recognition of Citizens: None.

Motioned by Commissioner Sorenson, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, to approve the County Board minutes of July 23, 2024, as written. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, to approve the Auditor & Manual warrants for July 2024 totaling \$2,065,202.89 and the following Commissioner warrants. Motion carried.

County Revenue	\$139,783.45
Road & Bridge	\$ 81,401.76
Solid Waste Facility	\$ 4,500.89
Ditch Funds	\$ 13,012.75

Per diems and meal reimbursements in the amount of \$2,125.00 were also approved.

Michelle Landsverk and Tony McClean of Advance Thief River met with the Board. Mr. McClean introduced himself to the Board and thanked them for their support through the years and for having a presence on the Advance TR Board.

Ms. Landsverk noted that the recent DEED grant has allowed greater involvement with local businesses and in providing resources they need. Since March 1, 2024, they have provided 417 hours of assistance and served 28 small businesses. 69 jobs have been created or retained in this same time period. She presented their 2025 work plan and budget and asked the Board for \$25,000 in annual support, the same amount since 2019. Mr. McClean stated that the grants they have received have really subsidized their efforts. The Board thanked them for their report and took their request and budget under advisement.

District Judge Tamara Yon met with the Board regarding the position vacancies in the County Attorney's office. She noted the critical nature of the issue and how vital the office and attorneys are to the justice system, especially to a county like this that has a lot of cases and workload. 27 MN counties are seeking to hire attorneys at this time so she understands and empathizes with our situation, but she has high concern for public safety as well. She asked that the Board reconsider their hiring strategies and think hard about candidates and wages for these positions. Commissioner Peterson commented that the committee is working hard to fill these positions and thanked her for addressing the Board. He also apologized for not responding to an earlier email from her.

County Engineer Mike Flaagan presented the following items:

Mr. Flaagan introduced Lindsay Saner of the Kimley-Horn Co. and Mark Wagner from MnDOT. They discussed and presented the county road safety plan, which focuses on non-state aid roads. The next plan will take a proactive approach and will use systematic risk analysis to identify location-specific safety concerns, such as shoulders, visibility, curves, and intersections. It was noted that 67% of severe crashes occur on local roadways. The Highway Safety Improvement Program provides funding for projects such as wider than normal road striping, rumble strips, roundabouts, shoulder widening, and intersection lighting. The Board thanked them for their report.

Engineer Flaagan noted that Kittson County has hired a new County Engineer but he is still seeking registration with the State. Kittson County would like to contract for Engineer services in the meantime, and he noted the proposed agreement reflects a reduction in service and also pricing. Motioned by Commissioner Sorenson, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, to approve an agreement with Kittson County to provide Highway Engineering services effective August 6th, 2024, at a cost of \$3,500/month. Motion carried.

Mr. Flaagan noted that Red Lake and Pennington counties have received petitions for the cleaning of J.D. #1 and J.D. #31. It was noted that Commissioners Peterson, Lawrence, and Nelson sit on the committee. After discussion, there was a motion by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, to hold a Hearing for J.D. #1 on September 3, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. in the Justice Center Board Room. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, to hold a Hearing for J.D. #31 on September 3, 2024, at 10:30 a.m. in the Justice Center Board Room. Motion carried.

County Sheriff Seth Vettleon presented the following items:

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to approve the transfer of Dylan Gustafson from Part-Time Corrections Officer to Full-Time Corrections Officer effective August 14th, 2024. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, to approve the request by Full-Time Corrections Officer Adrien Verbout to transfer to Part-Time Corrections Officer effective August 19, 2024. Motion carried.

The Sheriff read aloud his letter to the Board regarding the county attorney's office vacancies. He discussed a changing workforce and hiring tactics, need for competitive wages, workloads, and stated that one assistant county attorney will only be able to handle the most immediate issues. He believes the answer to the situation is competitive wages and that we must act now to avoid tragedy and liability. TRF Police Chief Marissa Adams also addressed the Board regarding her concerns for the office. The Board thanked them for their discussion and noted the staffing issue is of utmost concern to the Board.

Ag Services/Solid Waste Coordinator Grant Nelson noted that a Solid Waste plan describes how a county handles its solid waste, recyclables, etc., and the current plan will expire in 2026. He noted that such a plan must be in place in order for a county to receive SCORE funding. The MN Pollution Control Agency allows a regional solid waste plan, so a six-county plan is being proposed. The NWRDC is willing to draft the new plan at a cost of \$50,000, of which SCORE funds could be utilized. Motioned by Commissioner Sorenson, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, to approve an agreement with the NW Regional Development Commission to create the 2026-2036 regional solid waste plan at a cost of \$50,000. Discussion followed with Mr. Nelson further discussing SCORE funding and his recommendations. Following discussion, the motion was carried. The six counties will continue to discuss the \$50,000 cost and how it will be split among the group. He will report back to the Board at a later meeting.

Regional Extension Director Lisa Loegering discussed a proposed, three-year Memorandum of Agreement between the University of MN and Pennington County for the county Extension program and staff. All 87 MN counties use the same MOA and she noted that counties provide 25% of the overall budget along with in-kind office space, computers, internet, etc. The agreement reflects increases due to salaries and fringe, travel, and professional development, also 3% general increases for 2026 and 2027. Along with a full-time educator, the county also has an annual intern and a summer coordinator. The county employs one full-time Extension office manager. The Board thanked Ms. Loegering for her report and will address the MOA at a meeting in September.

Auditor-Treasurer Items: None.

County Coordinator Items:

Motioned by Commissioner Sourdif, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to accept the resignation/retirement of Tamra Pautzke as Full-Time Crime Victim Advocate effective August 12, 2024. Motion carried.

Coordinator Erickson updated the Board on the County Attorney's office and noted that statute allows the county to seek professional services without advertising for bids. He will be contacting area law firms to which may be interested and willing to assist our attorney's office and also act as interim county attorney.

County Attorney Items: N/A

Committee Reports / Commissioner Updates:

Commissioner Sourdif stated that a member of the NW Regional Library Board has resigned and they are researching the proper channels to fill the vacancy.

Motioned by Commissioner Sourdif, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to adjourn the Board meeting to August 27th, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. Motion carried.

ATTEST:

Kevin Erickson, County Coordinator
Pennington County

Seth Nelson, Chairman
Board of Commissioners