

REPUBLIC COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES

MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 2022

The Republic County Commission met in regular session on Monday, January 31, 2022, at 8:30am. Commissioners present were Doug Garman, Melvin Jeardoe and Edwin Splichal. Secretary Susan Aaron recorded the minutes. Deb Hadachek from the Belleville Telescope observed part of the meeting.

Commissioner Garman called the meeting to order and attendees pledged allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. Pastor Deb Hadachek, First Presbyterian Church of Beloit, offered morning prayer. Chairman Garman moved and Commissioner Splichal seconded to approve the agenda. Motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Splichal moved and Commissioner Jeardoe seconded to approve the January 24, 2022, minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

Travis Boyer, Deputy County Clerk, requested guidance on paying employees who are quarantined due to COVID, either for exposure or for sickness. After discussion, the commission decided that, effective this current pay period, employees will be paid for time off due to being quarantined if the employee provides documentation to their supervisor proving that they had been quarantined. Documentation may come from, for example, the county health department or the employee's doctor. With proper documentation, employees will not be required to use their personal sick leave to be paid for time off during their COVID quarantine period. Any and all prior policies regarding pay for quarantine due to COVID are ended.

Susan Aaron shared COVID statistics as of January 28, 2022, from the Republic County Health Department.

Susan Aaron, Solid Waste Secretary, presented Memorandums of Agreement between the Solid Waste Department and each of the cities of Belleville, Courtland and Munden for the commissioners' signatures. These MOAs apply to rates to be paid from January through June of 2022.

Deb Hadachek announced there will be a special hospital board meeting on February 10.

Luke Mahin, Republic County Economic Development (RCED), advised that unspent funds remain from the Demolition Assistance Grant from the Dane Hanson Foundation. There is an applicant pending approval if the time period for using grant funds is extended. Commissioner Splichal moved and commissioner Jeardoe seconded to approve applications for this demolition assistance grant if applicants meet all of the grant's requirements. The motion passed unanimously. Mahin thanked the commissioners and advised that the RCED board's continued approval is also required.

Mahin announced the annual RCED meeting will be February 21 at 6:30pm in the Cuba hall. Mahin also shared concern that local housing and rental availability is low.

Arlene Clayton expressed concerns over two roads that have washboard surfaces, one by the city tree dump and one near Republic.

Commissioner Splichal reported that he attended the North Central Kansas Regional Juvenile Detention Facility Board meeting on January 19.

Commissioner Jeardoe reported that he attended via Zoom the Pawnee Mental Health Services Board meeting January 25.

Ken Robbins, Highway, Transportation and Solid Waste Director, and Nathan Craig, Bridge Supervisor, joined the meeting. Robbins presented and discussed with Commissioners the following:

- All of the bypass at the intersection of Kyle Railroad and 190 Road south of Marble is in Kyle Railroad's right of way. We need their permission to close the road under the overpass. We are considering this closure while we wait for Kyle to remove or repair the overpass. A response is anticipated in a week or two.
- The freeze / thaw weather has slowed progress on projects.
- A repair requested by Freedom Township to a historical marker has been completed.
- Road closed signs on Union Road at bridge 6.5 are being moved and ignored. Repair of this bridge has been moved to a top priority.
- Mulching of trees began today in District 1 on 40 Road. Possibly tree removal, versus only mulching or side cutting, will be recommended.
- Work is being done on a conservation project north of K148 on 260 Road near Union Road. Extra material from this project has been offered to the county for road lift.
- Vandalism to closed Bridge P-10.7 has turned a 1-day project into a 1-week project and increased cost of materials by approximately \$2k.
- Bridge K-7.2 is close to being finished.
- Robbins is using a 2-mile route to test rock from two different sources to determine which rock wears better. Commissioner Jeardoe advised he had observed a county rock truck with a pup that was not tarped. He was assured that would be addressed.
- The crane is not currently in use.
- The Bridge crew is being reorganized. Chairman Garman inquired if the department has enough staff to which Robbins replied a firm 'no'. Both bridges and roads need more staff, at least 3 – 4 more. The Bridge crew especially is currently short staffed. Robbins is working on a proposal to define 'fully staffed'.
- Commissioner Jeardoe inquired as to which roads are due to be overlayed this year. Robbins responded that Scandia to Republic is scheduled for sealing. Overlay is scheduled for the asphalt road from Lincoln Road at 270 Road to King Road then 280 Road to the Narka city limits. Scheduling will be arranged with Hall Brothers.
- Robbins received an email from NextEra Energy regarding the High Banks Wind Project. NextEra seems ready to move forward, hoping to discuss the project with the county, begin preparations of roads and bridges this year, with construction to begin in 2023.

At 10:00am Chairman Garman moved and Commissioner Splichal seconded to open the Budget hearing for RFD Districts #1 and #2.

At 10:25am, with no one attending the hearing, Commissioner Splichal moved and Commissioner Jeardoe moved to close the hearing.

Justin Ferrell, County Attorney, and Trish Voth, Foulston Attorneys at Law, joined the meeting. Ken Robbins returned. Ferrell introduced Voth after which conversation ensued. Voth shared her 24-year background as a real estate lawyer with special focus on the Kansas wind and solar energy industry. Voth was involved with Kansas' first two utility-scale wind energy projects. She heads Foulston's wind and solar energy practice. Chairman Garman emphasized the county's desire to have a single point of contact to work with if Foulston was to be hired. Voth assured that that person would be her and that her availability is good. She also confirmed there are no 'skeletons' in her closet; there is no conflict of interest with NextEra if the county was to hire her and no ethical complaints have been filed against her.

Chairman Garman inquired how billing is handled. Voth responded that the Engagement Agreement to be made between the county and Foulston, typically is on a monthly billing and payment cycle. Foulston can be flexible. Ferrell advised he was asked by NextEra to set a meeting date with the commission. Robbins reiterated that NextEra appears ready to begin negotiations as soon as possible. Commissioners indicated there are several citizen concerns and logistical topics to be addressed. Chairman Garman stated he is in favor of hiring Voth with Foulston. Commissioners agreed that a proposal from Foulston is needed as soon as possible. Ferrell said there will be an Engagement letter by the next meeting, 2-7-22.

With all agenda items completed, Commissioner Splichal moved and Commissioner Jeardoe seconded to adjourn at 11:50pm.

The next regular meeting will be on Monday, February 7, 2022, beginning at 8:30am at the Republic County Courthouse.

ATTEST: _____
Kathleen L. Marsicek, County Clerk

APPROVED: _____
Doug Garman, Chairperson

Melvin Jeardoe, Member

Edwin Splichal, Member