

REPUBLIC COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES

MONDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2023

The Republic County Commission met in regular session on Monday, December 11, 2023, 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 most of the meeting.

Commissioner Splichal called the meeting to order, and attendees pledged allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. Pastor Amos McCarthy, Belleville First United Methodist Church, offered morning prayer. Commissioner Garman moved and Commissioner Jeardoe seconded to approve the Agenda. Motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Jeardoe moved and Commissioner Splichal seconded to approve December 4, 2023, minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

Accounts payable vouchers were approved in the amount of \$479,704.38.

Frank Rytych shared information from when he was a commissioner about repairs performed on the courthouse windows and insight into repairs of the front courthouse steps. He also commended the commissioners on their handling of the High Banks Wind Project.

Sheriff Cox gave updates from the Sheriff's Office.

- The commercial grade double refrigerator has lost its charge so needs to be replaced. Cost to repair is \$1,300. Cost of a new one from Lowe's is \$2,800. Commissioner inquired about availability from Cole's Appliance to which the Sheriff answered that Cole's does not carry commercial grade refrigerators.

Commissioner Splichal moved and Commissioner Garman seconded to approve the purchase of the refrigerator from Lowe's. The motion passed unanimously.

- Melton Chevrolet will provide a quote to replace the 2016 Tahoe canine vehicle.
- The transmission went out on the Sheriff's 2018 Silverado.
- A trailer stolen in Republic County in 2019 has been recovered in Pawnee County, NE.
- A jailer has been hired.
- The Investigation Deputy position remains vacant at this time.
- Some components of the body camera equipment have been received, but waiting for the rest.
- Currently six inmates are in jail.
- Request for jailers' night shift differential to be increased from \$1.75/hr to \$2.00/hr to increase employee retention.
- Request permission to apply longevity for employees who have met those benchmarks prior to the current pay scale having been adopted.
- Department is doing well overall: Software systems are compatible with each other; new radios working well; personnel is going well; hope to acquire replacement vehicle in January 2024

Kay Shoemaker, Republic County Development (RCD), advised the commissioners that there will be no meeting of the RCD this month. Two loans have been repaid in full: NCK Feed & Ag LLC dba Panther Pause, and Belleville Chiropractic Clinic.

Ken Robbins, Director of the Highway, Transportation and Solid Waste departments presented the weekly report of concerns and department activities.

- High Banks Wind Project is now focused on reclamation. The laydown yard is being reduced. This week's meeting will be held at the new permanent offices in the former Rolling Hills building on 81 Hwy. Retolerencing of string roads is 66% complete. If favorable weather holds, it is anticipated that completion will be by the end of February 2024. The commercial operation date is 12/15/23.
- A concern arose late last week. Ham radio and TV reception are being interrupted according to one resident. Ken has spoken with both Trish Voth, the county's lawyer, and with NextEra representatives.
- Roads are still being worked after recent moisture.
- Bridge replacement on Xavier Road 2 miles south of Agenda is substantially complete.
- A dust palliative applied to 70 Road worked well. The new scarifier was used to help improve 70 Road.
- A squash culvert needs to be replaced on 70 Road.
- The hay harvest contractor paid for hay last week. 690 40lb small square bales of prairie grass were harvested. The contractor paid \$6 per bale for half of the bales totaling \$2,070.
- Following bridge inspection of 70 bridges this year, some weight limits have been adjusted and new signage reflecting the new limits are being placed.

Commissioner Garman engaged in follow up discussion on the fuel charges in the Agreement with Cloud County for handling of Republic County's solid waste. Further research will be done, and the discussion resumed.

At 9:18am Commissioner Splichal moved to enter executive session for 10 minutes to discuss non-elected personnel. Commissioner Jeardoe seconded, and Commissioner Garman made it unanimous. Attending the session were the commissioners and Robbins. The board reconvened at 9:28am taking no action.

Raymond Raney, Communications Director and Emergency Manager, updated the commissioners on wage changes for the Communications and Emergency Management staff. A new work schedule implemented in the Communications Department is helping to avoid loss of excessive vacation time.

Amy Mullis-Havel, EMS Assistant Director, presented two employee pay slips for signature then updated the commissioners.

- A part-time EMT has been added to the staff.
- Ty Sothers has completed Paramedic training.
- EMS received a \$3,000 grant for medical equipment.

At 10:10am Commissioner Splichal moved to enter executive session for 10 minutes to discuss non-elected personnel. Commissioner Jeardoe seconded, and Commissioner Garman made it unanimous. Attending the session were commissioners and Susan Aaron. The board reconvened at 10:20am taking no action.

Cindy Coons, County Treasurer, discussed employee wages for her department.

Raymond Raney rejoined the meeting to discuss salary and mitigation for potential changes in the Communications 911 Center staff. He would like to add a dispatcher to the staff. Options to share staff from other dispatch centers or for current county response personnel to fill in part time have been exhausted.

At 10:45am Commissioner Splichal moved to enter executive session for 40 minutes to discuss non-elected personnel wages. Commissioner Garman seconded and Commissioner Jeardoe made it unanimous. Attending the session were commissioners. Commissioner Splichal requested an additional 10 minutes. The board reconvened at 11:35pm, Commissioner Jeardoe moved to increase department heads' salaries and wages in 2024. Commissioner Garman seconded the motion which Commissioner Splichal made unanimous.

Commissioner Garman moved to pay the Road and Bridge Director \$10,000 of reimbursed funds from NextEra for extra duties performed during the NextEra High Banks Wind project to be paid in 2023. Commissioner Splichal seconded the motion which Commissioner Jeardoe made unanimous.

In previewing the next week's agenda, procedures to report issues or concerns with the High Banks Wind project were reviewed. The following information is on the county's website, republiccounty.org. A link to High Banks Wind Project Information is at the bottom of the Home page. If there is an emergency, call 911. To report a claim, complaint, issue or positive feedback, contact High Banks Wind directly. If you would like the county to know about it, either call 785-955-2928 or email highbankswind@kirkham.com. All input received will be promptly shared with High Banks Wind, and also someone on behalf of the County will review and respond as able (except abusive complaints might not all receive responses).

With all agenda items completed, Commissioner Garman moved, and Commissioner Jeardoe seconded to adjourn at 12:05pm. Motion passed unanimously.

The next regular meeting will be on Monday, December 18, 2023, beginning at 8:30am at the Republic County Courthouse.

ATTEST: _____
Susan E. Aaron, Commissioner's Secretary

APPROVED: _____
Edwin Splichal, Chairperson

Melvin Jeardoe, Member

Doug Garman, Member