

St. Louis County Board Meeting February 6, 2024

The following comments are a summary of observations at the St. Louis County board meeting, February 6, 2024. Public comments began at 9:30 a.m. The regular meeting began at 10:00 a.m. The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN All Commissioners were present.

Public Comment Period

Chester Cullen addressed the Board with his issue regarding property rights. 3-minute time warning. Time was extended for him to complete his presentation.

Melissa Bell spoke regarding the intentional violations of County zoning ordinance. In addition, she reminded the Board of the importance of following communications rules. She suggested that one of the board members violated the open meeting laws regarding the proper use of email and should be removed from public service. (Note: the name of this Commissioner was not mentioned during her comment.)

The meeting was convened at 10:00 a.m.

Chair Nelson introduced City of Duluth Mayor Roger Reinert. Mayor Reinert said that this was his first time attending a County Board meeting. He is in the process of visiting all our partner governments and near neighbors, including the Mayor of Superior, Wisconsin. The regional center cannot be disconnected from the region and expecting that people come to us. He extended his commitment to be a good partner and hopes the County Board will be a good partner to the City of Duluth also.

Chair Nelson invited the Mayor to attend a full meeting of the Board sometime in the future. Commissioner McDonald expressed appreciation for coming to the meeting. Commissioner Harla is looking forward to discussing the Intellects Station. Commissioner Grimm expressed her appreciation of the Mayor for his support of the Spirit Valley Women's Center. Chair Nelson commented that the press does not give the same attention to the Board meetings as it does to the activities of the Mayor.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda was passed by all present. Details were not discussed during the meeting, but there is a summary of the items in the published minutes.

Some of the items that may be of importance to the Duluth LWV include:

The establishment of a Local Mental Health Advisory Council.

An advance for financing approved County State Aid Highway Projects. Additional road and highway improvement projects were also approved.

Approval of continued American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to ameliorate negative financial impacts of COVI-19 on Congressionally chartered Veteran organizations with County property, in amounts no greater than amounts paid on their 2023 property taxes.

The specific 2024-2025 allocation of the tax forfeited mineral royalty's scholarship program funds in the amount of \$37,500 was detailed for each of the following post-secondary

institutions: Minnesota North College Mesabi Range, Minnesota North College Hibbing, Minnesota North College Vermilion, and Lake Superior College. The Center City Housing Corporation one-time financial grant contribution was approved. Recommendation that the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission support the inclusion of woody biomass as an eligible renewable energy source.

There were no items on the Regular Agenda.

Commissioner Reports

Commissioner McDonald provided the Board with a report on Camp Esquagama. He noted that the 2023 Camp had the most participants ever and the highest staff retention. Eleven staff members will be returning in 2024. Commissioner McDonald also discussed the Explorers Camp expansion improvements, including the installation of new generators, plans for the shower house, and capping the old well.

The Committee of The Whole addressed the following items:

Re-allocation of funds to support the alignment of the skillsets and positions for the Department of Health and Human Services. Chair Nelson suggested that details be kept regarding these expenditures.

Public Works purchases, along with other maintenance bids and contract awards, were presented. Environment and Natural Resources: A Rainy Headwaters-Vermilion Watershed project was presented through a video and Power Point about the Comprehensive Water Management Plan. This presentation and video are available through the YouTube St. Louis County Board channel and on nslswcd.org/rrhwvr The request is that the County Board support the plan. There was considerable discussion about the plan and the excellent presentation, along with compliments regarding all the collaboration and work that is going into this endeavor.

Central Management and Intergovernmental – 3 items:

A resource reallocation in the planning and zoning department

Consideration of the establishment of a Native American Affairs Standing Committee, with an amendment to add the three Commissioner member names to the consideration. There are many details that need to be discussed as this moves forward. However, it must be noted that this committee is not a temporary committee, but a part of this board moving forward into the future. There was a lot of positive support for this new Committee from the members of the County Board.

A closed session was requested for a discussion of litigation matters.

Commissioner Grimm encouraged a resolution of support of Essentia employees seeking Union Membership. In addition, she announced her pregnancy. Chair Nelson suggested that staying in their lane is important. Letters of support from the board members are appropriate, but a resolution might not be appropriate. Most of the board members said they would sign a letter of support.

Commissioner Harala had a number of “thank you’s” for a variety of community events including the LWV Duluth Citizens in Action event.

Commissioner Jugovitch congratulated Team Schuster of Chisom as National Curling Champion.

There were a few other sports-related congratulatory items before the meeting was adjourned by Chair Nelson.

Submitted by Katherine Kane

St. Louis County Board Meeting January 23, 2024

The following comments are a summary of observations at the St. Louis County board meeting, January 23, 2024.

OBSERVER NOTE: Because the microphones were not consistently in use and there were no captions for this meeting, the report is missing many Board member comments.

Public Comment Period

John Molder City Administrator, City of Hermantown welcomed the board to the City of Hermantown, and that they appreciate the partnership with the County. He gave a quick review of roadwork progress over the past year and of the goals for this year.

Chester Cullen addressed the board, for the allotted 3 minutes, with a property rights issue.

Sarah McCumber, Nurse Practitioner at Essentia Health, spoke to make the board aware of some of the issues with Essentia Health. She identified a group who wanted to be represented by the Minnesota Nurses Association. Filed a petition on November 27. They are hopeful that Essentia Health would be cooperative, but they have implemented a number of stalling tactics. This is important to the board because it impacts day-to-day work with patients. The group is not being heard by their employer in terms of working conditions are difficult. This does not contribute to good patient care or work-life balance.

Lynn Gynic, Nurse Practitioner at Essentia Health, spoke to the Board regarding burn-out resulting from high workload and working uncompensated work hours. We, at Essentia Health, are working to unionize. Essentia Management has employed a number of anti-union tactics and stalling tactics. Essentia wants to divide the APPs into a number of smaller bargaining units by site, even though the APPs work at multiple sites. The group wants to join the Minnesota Nurses Association. The group wants the board to be informed of this effort by the APPs.

The regular meeting began at 10:00 a.m.

The meeting was held at the Hermantown City Hall, Hermantown, MN

All commissioners were present.

Citizen Recognition

Commissioner Musolf introduced representative Mary Murphy.

Commissioner Jugovich read the plaque to be presented, renaming the Environmental Trust Fund to the Mary C. Murphy Trust Fund in recognition of her dedication of improving the lives of St. Louis County residents and all Minnesotans.

Representative Murphy received the dedication by stating that she started in politics when John Kennedy was President. She expressed her appreciation for being presented with this honor. She will be grateful for the opportunity to provide her advice on preserving the environment of St. Louis County moving forward.

Commissioner Musolf welcomed the Board to the City of Hermantown.

Regular Agenda

Suspension of the Regular Agenda for Representatives from ST Paper and Sofidel, an Italian company that is one of the largest producers of sanitary paper supplies (such as toilet paper, paper towels, napkins) in the world. The request is to amend current tax abatement financing agreement from ST Paper to Sofidel, resulting from the sale to Sofidel. Sofidel will retain all prior commitments made to employees and the community under the ST Paper tax abatement. The City of Duluth has passed the agreement, pending the approval of the County Board. 80 full-time jobs have been retained, along with the wage agreements. Sofidel has plans for expanding the mill, with a resulting expansion of the workforce. Details of this transfer of ownership are outlined in the meeting agenda. Sofidel was originally a customer of ST Paper, and it began to make sense to make this transition in ownership. The request was approved.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda was passed by all present. Details were not discussed during the meeting, but there is a summary of the items in the published minutes.

Return to the Regular Agenda

The following items of discussion were not included in the Published Minutes of this board meeting.

Item 1: inaudible

Item 2: Request for the release of severed mineral royalties to provide \$150,000 for college scholarships for students who attend St. Louis County Minnesota State colleges in Virginia, Hibbing, and Ely, and Lake Superior College in Duluth. Most of the discussion inaudible but it was acknowledged that this is an amazing opportunity and the message about these scholarships needs to be widely spread so families around the county are aware of the positive impact this investment for the education of county youth can have on our communities into perpetuity. The request was passed unanimously.

Item 3: Affordable Housing Aid for a Center City Housing development in the Ramsey neighborhood for those experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness. The annual funding identified by the state for critical investments in housing is approximately \$300,000. Proposed are 60 units serving single adults, at 30% of income. Center City has secured a significant loan amount and has requested funds from the County. This is the 19th project Center City has in Duluth. Due to soil issues, the project is anticipated to finish in 2025, later than originally planned. Board comments were mostly inaudible. Commissioner Grimm noted that the biggest issue is a shortage of available housing, more than mental health or other issues.

Item 4: Thank you to the Board for the financial support of the Depot. The request before the board is to use the approved budget dollars to support the addition of a maintenance work position. Board discussion was mostly inaudible.

Item 5: Establish Voting Judges with a pay rate of \$13.50/hour. There are familiar recurring names and new volunteers. Motion approved unanimously.

Item 6: One voting member and one alternate to the Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission. Currently Commissioners Grimm and Harala, with Boyle as the alternate. Discussion inaudible.

Item 7: Request for funding of an open permanent position of a GIS resource in the Public Records and

Property Valuation. It is not identified in the budget, but there is a funding stream for the position as ongoing support for efficient assessments using current GIS technology to deliver services and continue the identification of work on every parcel in the county. This is particularly needed given the large landmass of the county. The position pays for itself in the value added. Resolution adopted unanimously.

Meeting adjourned after 1 hour 36 minutes.

Submitted by Katherine Kane

St. Louis County Board Meeting January 9, 2024

The following comments are a summary of observations at the St. Louis County board meeting, January 9, 2024.

OBSERVER NOTE: Because the microphones either not turned on or not properly functioning and there were no captions for this meeting, the majority of this summary was drawn from the published Official Proceedings of the Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the County of St. Louis, Minnesota, held on January 9, 2024.

Public Comment Period

One citizen addressed the board, for the allotted 3 minutes, with a property rights issue.

The regular meeting began at 10:00 a.m.

The meeting was held at the Biwabik Town Hall, Gilbert, MN

6 out of 7 commissioners were present; Chairman Nelson was absent due to a schedule conflict. He was giving a speech about the Northern Lights Express (NLX) at Mille Lacs Band of Objibwe's annual meeting.

Commissioner McDonald introduced Biwabik Township Supervisors Walter Hautala and Jim Paris. Supervisor Hautala thanked the Board of Commissioners for the resurfacing of township roads. He also asked for assistance from the Board of Commissioners for assistance with bringing broadband into the area.

Commissioner McDonald note that he had just been appointed to the Governor's Taskforce on Broadband and should soon have more information about broadband programs.

Citizen Recognition

Commissioner McDonald posthumously recognized Byron Moren of Ely, a confidant of Senator Amy Klobuchar regarding St. Louis County. He invited everyone to enjoy the YouTube Videos Mr. Moren posted regularly and gave a brief biography of Mr. Moren and his long career as a teacher. Mr. Moren's daughter, Peggy Stolley thanked the board for their recognition, noting that her father was an inspiration to all of St. Louis County.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda was passed by all present. Details were not discussed during the meeting, but there is a summary of the items in the published minutes.

Consideration of a resolution for a bid award for a multi-use pedestrian/bike trail between the City of McKinley and the City of Biwabik, even though the item had not been presented to the Committee of the Whole.

A county highways 77 and 115 project bid connecting Cook and Tower bid was awarded.

A county highway 115 project bid was awarded.

Additional bids, not discussed during the recorded meeting, were approved. These are listed in the official minutes of this meeting.

The recorded portion of the meeting was adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

Of Interest to the League of Women Voters of Duluth (included in the official minutes but not discussed during the recorded meeting).

Official St. Louis County authority delegation per a change Minnesota statute regarding the school board annual delegation of authority to make electronic funds transfers.

The establishment of an Absentee Ballot Board, as required by Minnesota statute, for the purpose of uniformity in the processing of accepting, counting, and rejecting absentee ballots in St. Louis County. Resolved was the establishment, by the County Board, of an Absentee Ballot Board consisting of sufficient number of Election Judges, and may include Deputy Auditors, to perform duties required by Minnesota statute. And it was further resolved that the County Board appoints the Absentee Ballot Board judges for the 2024 election cycle at a rate of \$13.50 per hour with funding available from an Auditor/Elections fund. And further resolved that the County Auditor and/or Clerk of the County Board may make election judge appointments to fill vacancies should they occur.

The LWV-Duluth Environmental Action Committee may be interested in a topic regarding the sale of tracts of timber, included as the last item on page 7 of the official minutes.

In the County Board meeting prior to this, there was a discussion about whether or not County Commissioners should have representation on the St Louis County Historical Society since the County was a significant funder of the Historical Society. The decision was tabled for further investigation. In the 01/09/24 Commissioners' meeting, this item was brought up. As a result of further investigation, it was noted that the Historical Society Bylaws set aside two voting seats on their board for County Commissioners, but there is no statutory requirement for this. After a brief discussion that there was a good channel of communication between the two boards, and as long as there is an appropriate mechanism to track the county investments in the Historical Society, it was inappropriate for there to be any representation on the Historical Society board, whether as voting or non-voting members.

Submitted by Katherine Kane

St. Louis County Board Meeting January 2, 2024

The following comments are a summary of observations at the St. Louis County board meeting, January 2, 2024

- Public comments began at 9:30 a.m.
- The regular meeting began at 10:00 a.m.
- The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN
- 7 out of 7 commissioners were present.

Public Comment Period One citizen addressed the board, for the allotted 3 minutes, with a property rights issue.

The Annual Meeting was convened at 10:00 a.m. by Nancy Nilsen, County Auditor-Treasurer. The first order of business was the election of the Chair of the County Board of Commissioners for 2024. By unanimous vote, the 2024 Chair is Keith Nelson of the Sixth District. In Chairman Nelson's acceptance, he said that the goal for this year is to help the people of the state of Minnesota and of the United States understand what we do with regards to critical mineral mining and clean water.

By unanimous vote, Commissioner Annie Harala of the First District was elected Vice-Chair.

Observer Note: The public interests of the Standing Committees and the Subcommittees of the St. Louis County Board of Commissioners, as well as Commissioner Representatives to other entities, are closely related to the public interests of the League of Women Voters of Duluth. We should reach out to these Commissioners with discussion points, questions, comments, and requests related to common public interests. The Chairs and Subcommittee members for 2024 are listed on the next page. Representatives are listed in the Regular Agenda section.

The next order of business was the appointment of the Chairs of the Standing Committees. It was noted by Chairman Nelson that each of these Committee chairs are in a role that they wanted and with which they have talents and capabilities.

- Health and Human Services: Patrick Boyle of the Second District
- Public Works and Transportation: Keith Musolf of the Fifth District
- Finance and Budget: Annie Harala of the First District
- Central Management and Intergovernmental: Paul McDonald of the Fourth District
- Public Safety and Corrections: Ashley Grimm of the Third District
- Environment and Natural Resources: Mike Jugovich of the Seventh District

The following Subcommittees are comprised of the members listed below. Chairman Nelson said that he wanted to change the make-up of the subcommittees by eliminating alternates, either by including them as regular members or moving the existing alternates to other subcommittees. He also stated that there are no Chair appointments, but each subcommittee should select the chair at their first meeting.

- NLX/Depot: Commissioners Boyle, Harala, Nelson
- Opioid Remediation: Commissioners Boyle, Grimm
- Depot Operations: Commissioners Boyle, Grimm. Commissioner Jugovich suggested that consideration should be given to whether this subcommittee should continue. Chairman Nelson suggested that the decision should be made at the first meeting.

- The Purchasing Rules and Regulations subcommittee is discontinued due to the excellent work of Commissioners Harala, Musolf, and Nelson in the prior year.
- Commissioner McDonald proposed a Tribal Relations Committee. Chairman Nelson agreed that it was a good idea, long overdue. He will consult with each of the Commissioners and have a decision by the next meeting.

At the conclusion of the County Board Meeting, the election of HRA Board Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary were approved and the minutes of the December 12, 2023, were approved.

The Regular Agenda had 33 Resolutions, summarized below.

- The first three Resolutions regarding the 2024 County Board Meeting, the Committee as a Whole meeting, and Workshop schedules were approved with the understanding that changes may occur as the year progresses.
 - Chairman Nelson suggested that each Board Meeting include the recognition of a member of the community who has made a significant contribution to St. Louis County. This is particularly important for meetings in the various county localities.
 - Chairman Nelson wants to reduce the number of Workshops with the introduction of Committee Chair and Administrator Report presentation at the end of the Committee of the Whole meetings that address timely items of interest to the Board. The first presentation will be at the next scheduled meeting.
- The 4th Resolution was to schedule the date and time for the Legislative Delegation Dinner.
- The 2024 County Board Workshop meeting schedule was approved.
- The County Board Workshop meeting schedule was approved with the understanding that changes may occur as the year progresses.
- The remaining resolutions were the appointment of Commissioners as representatives to St. Louis County associations, agencies, alliances, councils, commissions, and boards. These will be listed in the posted meeting minutes. However, these appointments might be of special interest to the League of Women Voters of Duluth:
 - Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency: Commissioners Jugovich, McDonald, Nelson
 - Arrowhead Health Alliance: Commissioners Boyle and Grimm
 - AMC District 1 Policy Committees
 - Environment & Natural Resources: Commissioners Jugovich and Nelson
 - General Government: Commissioners Harla and McDonald
 - Health & Human Services: Commissioners Boyle and McDonald
 - Public Safety: Commissioner Grimm
 - Transportation & Infrastructure: Commissioner Muslof
 - Community Health Services: Commissioners Boyle, Grimm, Harala, and Jugovich
 - Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Leadership Group: Commissioners Grimm and Harla
 - Election Canvassing Board: Commissioners Harla and Nelson
 - Northern Counties Land Use Coordinating Board: Commissioners Harla (alt), Jugovich, McDonald, Musolf
 - Planning Commission: Commissioners Jugovich and Nelson. There was some discussion as to whether it was appropriate for a County Commissioner to be involved with this Duluth City entity.
 - Public Health and Human Services: Commissioners Boyle and Grimm

- Rainy Headwaters – Vermilion River Watershed Plan Policy and Implementation: Commissioner McDonald
- Seaway Port Authority: Commissioners Boyle, Jugovich, Nelson (alt)

The Committee of The Whole Agenda also addressed the following items:

- Public Works & Transportation Committee Awards of Bids and Grant Agreement were all unanimously approved without discussion or objection.
- There was some discussion and objection to the Finance & Budget Committee Bid Awards. At issue was the use of American Rescue Plan Act Funding for two projects that had already been scheduled. The majority of the Commissioners saw this as an opportunity to mobilize both projects together and complete the work a year ahead of schedule. The Board had discussed and approved this in a previous closed meeting and the bids were already out and ready to be awarded. Two of the commissioners questioned the use of these funds for road construction and noted that the decision had not been made in a public-facing Board meeting. Final vote for both projects was 6 to 1, with Commissioner Grimm opposing. It was noted by Commissioner Grimm that a full discussion did not take place on camera, in compliance with public facing discussion, transparency, and accountability.
- Central Management and Intergovernmental Committee established a St. Louis County Absentee Ballot Board to ensure the integrity of absentee ballots. There was also a discussion about appointing two individuals to the Northeast Minnesota HOME Consortium Advisory Committee. Both were unanimously approved without discussion or objection.

The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will be held on January 9, 2024, at the Biwabik Township Hall in Gilbert, MN.

Submitted by Katherine Kane

St. Louis County Board Meeting December 19, 2023

The following comments are a summary of observations at the **St. Louis County board meeting, December 19, 2023.**

- The regular meeting began at 9:30 a.m.
- The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN
- 7 out of 7 commissioners were present.

Several citizens addressed the Board to ask questions about and express opposition to the proposed changes to Section 1: Time and Place of Meetings and Section 7: Public Comment of the Standing Rules and Bylaws of the St. Louis County Board of Commissioners (per below as the last item under the Regular Agenda section of this summary.)

The Consent Agenda was approved without objection.

The Regular Agenda began with the presentation of a summary of the 2024 Budget Proposal for 2024 that was approved by all 7 Board members. The presentation included the following key points:

- *Mission* The mission of the county is to promote health and safety, ensure sound infrastructure, embrace natural resources, and support an environment where communities prosper.
- *Strategic Focus Areas* Economic development and Substance use and mental health.
- *Operational Analysis* Ensure infrastructure and operational needs are addressed. Analyze evolving needs of community. Review internal policies, procedure, protocols. Think differently about how to recruit and retain talent. Reassess the needs of organization and citizens. Explore key initiatives.
- *Overview* Strong business planning. Compliance with statutory requirements and commitments to customer service and program effectiveness. Significant inflationary impacts. Strategic investments to maintain and enhance critical programs. Critical investments in workforce and staffing. Incorporation of legislative funding initiatives that significantly reduce levy reliance. Planning for near-future capital needs. Ramifications to land sales revenue stream. Preservation of strong financial position.
- *Investment Areas (Costs) as a percentage of the total budget of \$491,590,952* Public Works 27%, Public Health & Human Services 25%, Public Safety 16%, General Government 13%, Internal Service Funds 9%, Debt Service 3%, Enterprise Funds 2%, Conservation of Natural Resources 2%, Economic Development and Culture & Recreation 1%, Pandemic Response Funds 1%, Health & Sanitation <1%
- *Funding Sources (Revenues) as a percentage of the total budget of \$491,590,952* Levy 34%, State Revenue 21%, Other Revenue 18%, Fees, Licenses & Permits 12%, Federal Revenue 10%, Transportation Sales Tax 4%, Use of Fund Balance 1%
- *Additional Information and the detailed budget* www.stlouiscountymn.gov/budget

The Regular Agenda also addressed the following 4 items:

- *Public Works & Transportation* State resolution authorizing the purchase of ten tandem axle diesel trucks from Nuss Truck Equipment, Inc. using State of Minnesota contract pricing. Passed by all 7 members.

- *Finance and Budget -Statewide Affordable Housing Aid Funding of Homeless Shelter Gaps* resolution approving a contract with CHUM for additional staffing support for the Warming Center, AEOA for staffing the new RTH Family Shelter and full capacity of the Hibbing Home on the range and Bill's House in Virginia. Passed by all 7 members.
- *Public Safety and Corrections Committee Addition of 2 Emergency Communication Specialist Training Positions* resolution authorizing the additional FTEs to improve recruitment, retention, and effectively maintain sufficient staffing levels in the 911 Communications Division. Passed by all 7 members.
- *Central Management & Intergovernmental Committee amendments to the Standing Rules and Bylaws of the County Board* resolution approving changes. The changes that were objected to during the Public Comment were the changes to Section 1 Time and Place of Meetings and Section 7 Public Comment. Two Board members also had reservations concerning these changes, thus this was passed by 5 of the 7 members, with Patrick Boyle of the Second District and Ashley Grimm of the Third District not in agreement. In summary:
 - One controversial proposed change to Section 1 was from a start time of 9:30 a. m. to a start time of 10:00 a.m.
 - A second controversial proposed change to Section 7 was that the opportunity for public comment remains at 9:30. Thus, the public comment time is prior to the new 10:00 Board meeting start time. Left unanswered was the question as to whether or not Board members would be present to listen to the public comments.
 - A third controversial proposed change to Section 7 from an allotment of 5 minutes for an individual to present their comment to an allotment of 3 minutes to present a comment.
 - a fourth controversial proposed change was that if the number of citizens wanting to comment exceeds the number able to be heard within the one-half hour public comment period, more public comment will be allowed after the conclusion of all County business conducted on that day. Thus, individuals could have to wait for any amount of time, from just a few minutes to up to an entire business day to present their comments.

The meeting was adjourned. The next Committee of the Whole meeting will be on January 2 at the St. Louis County Courthouse starting at the new time of 10:00 with Public Comments held prior to the meeting, starting at 9:30.

Submitted by Katherine Kane

St. Louis County Board Meeting April 25, 2023

The following comments are a summary of observations at the **St. Louis County Board Meeting, April 25, 2023.**

- * The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 a.m. The meeting was held at the Normanna Town Hall, Duluth, MN. 7 out of 7 commissioners were present.
- * Dennis Gunsolus, Normanna Township supervisor, welcomed the commissioners, provided a brief history of the township, and described the self-sufficiency of the township.
- * Commissioner Annie Harala read a proclamation declaring April 23-29, 2023, as “National Crime Victims’ Rights Week” in St. Louis County. County Attorney Kim Maki stated that the county has a 7-member Victim/Witness group that assists victims. The county engaged with 2300 victims in 2022.
- * Two citizens addressed the board on items not on the agenda. 1) The sister of a man who was the victim of an unprosecuted (so far) homicide in Virginia stated that their family received no information on victim rights from St. Louis County and that the county has not engaged with them. 2) A resident of Fredenberg Township stated her frustration with the county’s lack of transparency and response to residents’ concerns about the conditional use permit process regarding a gravel pit in their area.
- * Two public hearings were held: 1) The board unanimously approved a resolution for the issuance of an Off-Sale Intoxicating Liquor License to Grand View Restaurant, LLC dba Grand View Bar and Grill (Midway Township). 2) The board unanimously approved a resolution to receive citizen comments on the 2023 Action Plan for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME), and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding recommendations and amendment to the 2020 Action Plan. (Note: Total monies equal \$3.2 million that will go toward projects outside the city of Duluth and include building/rehabbing 3 single-family homes, providing more funding for Range Transitional Housing, and infrastructure projects.)
- * The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously.
- The Regular Agenda had one item from the Public Safety & Corrections Committee: A resolution declaring a “State of Local Disaster” in St. Louis County, Minnesota. Resolution passed unanimously. (Note: The Fifth District and Sixth District are most impacted by recent flooding. The declaration will allow the county to pursue funding for repairs, which are estimated to be \$500,000 to \$5,000,000.)

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

Submitted by Gwen Thorson

Saint Louis County Board Meeting March 7, 2023

- * The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 a.m.
- * The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN.
- 7 out of 7 commissioners were present.

- * Three citizens addressed the board on items not on the agenda. 1) M.B. stated that a permit for a gravel pit in Fredenberg Township was given in error, that the county doesn't want to admit or correct their error. It was also stated that the county has failed their obligation to inspect the pit. 2) C.C. reiterated concern about the gravel pits in Fredenberg Township, the county's lack of inspection and transparency, and his belief that the town is not being protected. 2) B.A. stated that the county is not following their ordinance and that commissioners are not working "for" the people.

- * The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously.

- The Regular Agenda had three items from Central Management & Inter-governmental Committee: **1)** Approve the establishment of employee resource groups in partnership with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Leadership Group consistent with the recommendations developed by the Center for Economic Inclusion. Motion passed unanimously. New artwork representing the St. Louis County BIPOC Leadership Team was unveiled, which includes the following caption: *"The BIPOC Employees Resource Group provides a supportive and safe place for individuals who identify as BIPOC. The BIPOC Leadership Team's goal is to collectively support leadership to promote a sense of belonging and to create an inclusive and positive work environment."* **2)** Approve the 2023-2025 Civil Service Basic contract and authorize execution of the agreement with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Motion passed 5/5 (2 abstentions). **3)** Approve the 2023-2025 Merit Basic Unit Contract and authorize execution of the agreement with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Motion passed unanimously. *Both AFSCME contracts include a 3% increase in each year and a one-time cash payment of \$400 in the first year of the contract. Also, these two bargaining units include the majority of county employees, with 1100 members.

- Commissioner Boyle recognized the St. Louis County Depot, which won a state award, "Outstanding Marketing Campaign" at the Explore Minnesota Tourism Awards.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Submitted by Gwen Thorson

Saint Louis County Board Meeting February 7, 2023

- * The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 a.m.
- * The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN.
- 7 out of 7 commissioners were present.

- * Newly elected St. Louis County Sheriff Gordon Ramsay greeted the Board and informed them of the Sheriff Department’s intent to focus on strategic planning. He has recently been spending time with his staff, visiting with police departments in the county and introducing himself to county department heads.

- * Two citizens addressed the board on items not on the agenda. 1) C.C. expressed general concern about the gravel pits in Fredenberg Township. 2) B.A. stated that he is looking forward to returning his “No New Gravel Pits” signs to his property when the snow leaves. He described ongoing problems with existing gravel pits in Fredenberg Township: noise, dust, road damage.

- * The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously.

- The Regular Agenda had two items: **1)** From Central Management & Inter-governmental Committee—Accept the report and recommendations developed by the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Leadership group and the Center for Economic Inclusion. Approved unanimously. Work will continue toward implementation of the recommendations. Jim Gottschald, Director of Human Resources & Administration stated that the process “will be a journey” and the long-term goal is to impact citizens and businesses. Commissioner Grimm stated that a goal is to make St. Louis County a place where people want to work and stay. It is hoped that the county will provide a welcoming environment where everyone is treated the same (including all people of color, those with special needs/disabilities). **2)** Item pulled from the Consent Agenda: Authorize a lease agreement in an amount not to exceed \$56,000 per year with Sterling Properties, LLLP for the former safety deposit area and available adjacent spaces located in the lower level of the Wells Fargo building, 230 W. Superior St., Duluth, MN, and authorize a sublease agreement with the St. Louis County Historical Society for use of this space for active storage. Approved unanimously, with a condition that other county public spaces be used for display of some artifacts. This will allow for more people to see and appreciate local historic items. The Wells Fargo site is a safe place (i.e. secure, climate controlled, etc.)

The meeting adjourned at 10:26 a.m.

Submitted by Gwen Thorson

Saint Louis County Board Meeting January 3, 2023

The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 a.m.

The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN.

7 out of 7 commissioners were present. Annie Harala, First District Commissioner, was welcomed as she begins her first term in office.

Nancy Nilsen, County Auditor-Treasurer convened the meeting and requested nominations for the election of the Chair of the County Board of Commissioners for 2023. Patrick Boyle was elected unanimously.

Chair Commissioner Boyle requested nominations for the election of Vice-Chair of the County Board of Commissioners. Keith Nelson was elected unanimously.

Chair Commissioner Boyle appointed Chairs of the following Standing Committees: Health and Human Services—Paul McDonald, Public Works and Transportation—Keith Musolf, Finance and Budget—Keith Nelson, Central Management and Inter-governmental—Ashley Grimm, Public Safety and Corrections—Annie Harala, Environment and Natural Resources—Mike Jugovich.

Three citizens addressed the board on items not on the agenda. 1) M.B. expressed concern about a gravel pit in Fredenberg Township and states that the permit is invalid. 2) C.C. agreed with the previous two speakers regarding gravel pits and is concerned that the “bad” operators are not penalized. 3) B.A. stated that the county has not followed the ordinance in place regarding the inspection of gravel pits (re: Fredenberg Township).

The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously.

Separate resolutions for the adoption of the 2023 County Board meeting schedule, Committee of the Whole meeting schedule, and County Board Workshop meeting schedule passed unanimously.

Resolutions of appointment of commissioners to 32 various commissions, boards, committees, etc. were conducted. (e.g. Arrowhead Regional Corrections Executive Board, AMC Indian Affairs Task Force, Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission, St. Louis River One Watershed/One Plan Policy Committee)

The Regular Agenda had one item: Resolution to designate the “Duluth News Tribune” as the official publication for St. Louis County. This resolution was revised to include the “Cook Herald” for publication of the delinquent real estate tax list. The resolution passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Submitted by Gwen Thorson

Saint Louis County Board Meeting December 14, 2022

The following comments are a summary of observations at the **St. Louis County Board Meeting, December 14, 2022.**

The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 a.m.

* The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN.
7 out of 7 commissioners were present.

A presentation was made to Nathan Bentley, “mayor” of Bentleyville. Mr. Bentley stated that “Bentleyville” has had a \$22 million impact on the area’s economy. It has coordinated a food and toy drive for the area and provided 30,000 free hats to area children in need. St. Louis County recognized Mr. Bentley for his company’s ability to access PPE for the county’s early response to COVID-19 in 2020.

Six citizens addressed the board on items not on the agenda. 1) E.W. stated her concern about the childcare “crisis” in the area. People are on waiting lists for long periods of time (i.e. over one year).

2) D.Z. thanked the Board for running for office, especially Commissioner Frank Jewell.

3) J.C. requested that the county fund childcare and suggested use of COVID relief monies, increasing the proposed budgeted amount.

4) M.B. wants inspections of gravel pits and more transparency from the county about the process (re: Fredenberg Township).

5) B.A. stated that the county has not followed the ordinance in place regarding the inspection of gravel pits (re: Fredenberg Township).

6) C.C. agreed with the previous two speakers regarding gravel pits.

* The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously.

The Regular Agenda had one item: 2023 Budget and Property Tax Levy.

County Administrator, Kevin Gray, provided a summary of the proposal: The mission of St. Louis County is “to promote health and safety, ensure sound infrastructure, embrace our natural resources, and support an environment where communities can prosper.” Citizens can find additional information at www.stlouiscountymn.gov/budget

The proposed budget is \$452,751,620.

Proposed “costs” include the following:

Public Health & Human Services: \$116,409,780 (26%), Public Works: \$112,314,277 (25%), Public Safety: \$75,185,333 (17%), General Government: \$61,014,252 (13%), Internal Service Funds: \$43,763,913 (10%), Conservation of Natural Resources: \$10,842,155 (2%).

Proposed “revenues” include the following:

Levy: \$163,366,729 (39%), State revenues: \$84,796,310 (19%), Other revenue: \$75,823,428 (17%), Fees/Licenses/Permits: \$58,039,465 (13%), Federal revenue: \$45,961,291 (10%),

Transportation

sales tax: \$18,150,000 (4%), Use of fund balance: \$6,614,397 (1%).

Commissioner Nelson, Chair of the Finance Committee, feels that St. Louis County is among the top 3 Minnesota counties for budget management.

The motion to approve the 2023 Budget and Property Tax Levy passed unanimously.

* The meeting adjourned at 10:02 a.m.

Following the Regular Meeting, the Board moved on to the business of the St. Louis County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA). Then, following a recess, the Board moved on to the business of the Committee of the Whole.

Submitted by Gwen Thorson, LWV Duluth member

St. Louis County Board Meeting November 1, 2022

The following comments are a summary of observations at the **St. Louis County Board Meeting, November 1, 2022.**

- * The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 a.m.
- * The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN.
- 6 out of 7 commissioners were present.

- * One citizen addressed the board on items not on the agenda; that is, concerns about the county process related to establishment of a gravel pit in their neighborhood (Fredenberg Township). The most specific concern expressed today was the county's failure to communicate adequately with citizens. The citizen requested a meeting or some other form of appropriate notification.

- * The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously.

- The Regular Agenda had no items.

- * The meeting adjourned at 9:38 a.m.

- **Following the Regular Meeting, the Board moved on to the business of the Committee of the Whole:**
 - A) The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously.
 - B) The Regular Agenda had several items.
 1. From Health & Human Services Committee: The Board voted unanimously to a) approve 3 additional temporary financial worker positions for pending upsurge in healthcare referrals AND b) approve adjustment of staffing team model for the Duluth Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) and the Transition Assertive Community Treatment (TACT) programs in PHHS. (*Note: These programs relate to alcohol and drug treatment.)
 2. From Public Works & Transportation Committee: The Board voted unanimously to approve a resolution awarding a bridge construction project to Redstone Construction, LLC of Mora, MN.
 3. From Finance & Budget Committee: The Board voted unanimously to approve resolutions to a) approve a contract with Architecture Advantage, LLC of Duluth MN for the planning, analysis, predesign, design, construction bid documents preparation, project administration, project commissioning and close out for the Depot mechanical, electrical, plumbing infrastructure improvement project (approximate cost: \$600,000); b) approve the 2022 third quarter budget changes; c) approve the 2023-27 Capital Improvement Plan amendment (*Note: \$320 million over 5 years); d) approve the use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for warming shelter staffing gaps
 4. From Environment & Natural Resources Committee: a) The Board voted unanimously to delay approval of a resolution to approve commencement of the

cancellation process of contracts for purchase or repurchase of tax-forfeited lands now in default and approving disposal or sale of any abandoned personal property that may remain on site. (*Note: The county hopes to meet with one of the individuals to arrange an alternative to default, then revisit this resolution in 2 weeks.) b) The Board voted unanimously to approve the purchase of a baler for the St. Louis County Recyclables Processing Facility.

Submitted by: Gwen Thorson, LWV Duluth member

St. Louis County Board Meeting October 25, 2022

- * The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 a.m.
- * The meeting was held at the Proctor City Hall, Proctor, MN.
- 7 out of 7 commissioners were present.

- * Four citizens addressed the board on items not on the agenda; that is, concerns about the county process related to establishment of a gravel pit in their neighborhood (Fredenberg Township)—land use plan, permitting, inspection, zoning, transparency and trust.

- * The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously.

- The Regular Agenda had two items from the Finance & Budget Committee:
- 1) The Board unanimously approved entering into a subscription agreement with Arctic Wolf Networks, Eden Prairie, MN, for managed information security services, in the amount of \$240,000/year. The purpose is to provide enhanced cybersecurity of the county's vast data information system.
- 2) The Board unanimously approved sponsorship of a Department of Employment & Economic Development (DEED) Grant Application for the Crane Lake Township Contamination Clean Up Project. The county, as required, will serve as the administrative and fiscal agent for this grant which will provide monies for cleanup of an area that will be used for camping and a Voyageurs National Park Visitor Center.

- * The meeting adjourned at 9:57 a.m.

- **Following the Regular Meeting, the Board moved on to the business of the Committee of the Whole:**
 - A) The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously.
 - B) The Board unanimously approved establishment of a Public Hearing to Consider Off-Sale Intoxicating Liquor License (Embarrass Township) (November 15, 2022 at 9:45 a.m.)
 - C) The Regular Agenda had one item from the Health & Human Services Committee: The Board voted unanimously to approve a resolution appointing three members to the Heading Home Advisory Council.
 - D) Commissioner Jewell announced a reminder that this date was the 20th anniversary of the death of U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone.

Submitted by: Gwen Thorson, LWV Duluth member

St. Louis County Board Meeting October 4, 2022.

- * The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 a.m.
- * The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN.
- 7 out of 7 commissioners were present.
- * The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously.

- * A public hearing pursuant to a resolution adopted on June 28, 2022, for determination of cartway alignment for the Michael Clement cartway (Unorganized Township 56-16) petition was initiated. However, the hearing was closed because much more work needs to be done.

- The Regular Agenda had one item (from Public Works & Transportation Committee):
Award of a Quote: Emergency Slide Repair Project located on County State Aid Highway 61 between Nordling Road and Pine Park Road in Duluth Township. The low quote in the amount of \$365,000, from Northland Constructors, was approved unanimously. The area where work will take place is on a 200 ft. strip of land along Scenic Highway 61, damaged after heavy rains in spring 2022. Some movement is occurring in the pavement and a temporary repair is necessary, before permanent repair can be done in spring 2023.

- * Two citizens addressed the board on items not on the agenda: 1) Concerns about perceived county bias regarding inspections of businesses and permitting process. 2) County's failure to communicate with its citizens.

- * The meeting adjourned at 10:08 a.m.

- **Following the Regular Meeting, the Board moved on to the business of the Committee of the Whole:**
 - A) The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously.
 - B) From Public Works & Transportation Committee: 1) Awarding a precast concrete culvert purchase and 2) Awarding authorizing purchase of untreated salt from Morton Salt, Inc. and alternative deicers from Envirotech Services, Inc. (approximately \$1,000,000+) Both resolutions passed.
 - C) From Finance & Budget Committee: 1) Approval of 2023 health and dental plans. 2) Accepting proposals from and awards the employee long-term disability and life insurance coverages to National Insurance Services. 3) Authorizing the IT Department to purchase standardized equipment from the State of Minnesota Contract Release C-1046(5) (*Amount=\$780,000; will include 2300 computers which have been difficult to acquire.*) All 3 resolutions passed.
 - D) From Environment & Natural Resources Committee: Awarding a contract to G Men Environmental Services, Inc. for the demolition of tax-forfeited structures within the city of Virginia. (*Amount=\$198,000*) Resolution passed.

Submitted by: Gwen Thorson, LWV Duluth member

St. Louis County Board Meeting, April 12, 2022

The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 a.m. at the Duluth Government Services Center, Duluth, MN.

6 out of 7 commissioners were present. Commissioner Frank Jewell was absent.

Commissioner Ashley Grimm read the proclamation declaring “Telecommunicators Week, April 10-16, 2022” in St. Louis County, which honors its Emergency Communications Specialists, Technical Staff and Administrative and Support Staff for their dedication and courage in performing one of the most important jobs in our society.

Ryan Stauber, a county telecommunicator and union steward, addressed the Board stating that his union was disappointed and dissatisfied with the results of a job and class compensation audit, which was authorized in their contract in 2020 and completed in March 2022. He stated that the audit did not reflect employees’ daily duties and pay is not on par with other telecommunicators in the state. He requested a review of telecommunicators’ compensation.

St. Louis County Sheriff, Ross Litman, presented “911 Life Saver Awards” to several individuals who were involved in 5 separate events in 2021. The events included a water rescue involving an overturned vehicle, a CPR procedure for an apparent cardiac event, a water rescue involving a person found floating, an infant rescue, and a rescue during a fire.

The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously.

The Regular Agenda had two items: 1) Request for approval of 2021 fourth quarter budget changes was approved unanimously. 2) Request for a letter of support for “Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) Program Legislation” was approved unanimously.

Following the Regular Meeting, the Board moved on to the business of the Committee of the Whole. The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously except for one item, “Public Sale of State Tax Forfeited Properties. Commissioner Nelson requested that staff update details in the “sales book” and that this item be addressed at the next meeting, in Hoyt Lakes, on April 26. Establishment Public Meetings was approved unanimously. There was one item on the Regular Agenda, a resolution awarding an ATV trail construction project to Veit & Co., Inc., of Rogers, MN, which was approved unanimously.

Submitted by: Gwen Thorson

St. Louis County Board Meeting, April 5, 2022

The Regular Meeting began at 9:32 a.m. at the Duluth Government Services Center, Duluth, MN.

6 out of 7 commissioners were present. Commissioner Frank Jewell was absent.

Commissioner Patrick Doyle read the proclamation declaring “Public Health Week, April 4-10, 2022” in St. Louis County, in appreciation of the work of staff and community partners.

“Public Health Partnership Awards” were presented to 39 community partners (e.g. AAD Shriners, AICHO, Central Housing, CHUM, DECC, ISD 709, Essentia Health, Health Equity Northland, etc.). St. Louis County Health Division Director, Amy Westbrook, mentioned the importance of partnerships to the health of individuals, families, and communities. New collaborations formed in the pandemic will help support public health in the future.

The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously. The Regular Agenda had no items. Meeting adjourned at approximately 10:15 a.m.

Following the Regular Meeting, the Board moved on to the business of the Committee of the Whole. Significant was the presentation of the Preliminary 2022 Commissioner Redistricting Plan by Auditor Nancy Nilsen. Auditor Nilsen said that a team consisting of herself, Assistant Attorney Sandstad, GIS Specialist Ryan Stovern, GIS Specialist Tyler McAlear, and Elections Supervisor Phil Chapman developed the plan. It was determined that the county was required to redistrict based on review of statutory requirements. The Auditor’s Office reviewed multiple options, taking into account statutory principles and guidance. The recommended plan shifts Brevator Township from Commissioner District 5 to Commissioner District 7. This will allow the county to achieve the objective of more equal population between districts and will keep Fond du Lac’s contiguous reservation lands in one Commissioner district (District 5). Citizens can view additional information or leave comments by visiting the St. Louis County website redistricting page at: www.stlouiscountymn.gov/redistricting.

Submitted by: Gwen Thorson

Saint Louis County Board Meeting March 8, 2022

The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 a.m. The meeting was held at the Duluth Government Services Center, Duluth, MN. 7 out of 7 commissioners were present.

County Administrator, Kevin Gray and Director of Human Resources and Administration, Jim Gottschald acknowledged the death of former county employee, Dennis Frazier. Mr. Frazier worked in Child Protective Services and was active in labor relations (AFSCME).

The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously, except for Item #8, establishment of a public hearing for April 26, 2022, at 9:35 a.m., in the Hoyt Lakes City Hall, Hoyt Lakes, MN, to consider the proposed 2022 County Commissioner Redistricting Plan; and further, authorize required publication of the notice of intent to adopt the redistricting plan in the county's official newspaper of record. Commissioner Jewell requested that Item #8 be pulled for further discussion because of questions he received from LWV Duluth.

The Regular Agenda had no items, except for discussion of Item #8 from the Consent Agenda. County Auditor,

Nancy Nilsen, provided the following comments for clarification:

- 1) St. Louis County gained only 5 people, according to the 2020 census; so no significant changes in commissioner districts are anticipated.
- 2) The County cannot take action until information is received from cities and townships who have a deadline of March 29, 2022.
- 3) The County will present a proposed redistricting plan to the commissioners at their Committee of the Whole meeting, on April 5, 2022. at the Duluth Government Services Center.
- 4) After the April 5 presentation, maps will be posted on the county's website and available in the auditor's office (Rm. 214, 100 N. 5th Ave. W.) during regular business hours.
- 5) Written public comment will be accepted until April 22. People can submit their comments to the attention of the Board clerk, Phil Chapman in the auditor's office or to Mr. Chapman at (chapmanp@stlouiscountymn.gov) Comments will be forwarded to the commissioners.
- 6) Notice of the public hearing will be posted on the county's website, on county bulletin boards and for 3 consecutive weeks in the Duluth News Tribune.
- 7) Verbal comments will be accepted at the public hearing on April 26.
- 8) After the public hearing and the plan's adoption, maps will be available on the county's website and in the auditor's office, and will be published in the Duluth News Tribune.

The resolution to adopt the public hearing was approved unanimously.

Following the Regular Meeting, the Board moved on to the business of the Committee of the Whole. Significant was the presentation of the "Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Update" by the Center for Economic Inclusion. The Center has been working closely with the county. To date, they have conducted 27 workshops for 648 employees (33 % of the county workforce).

Submitted by: Gwen Thorson,

St. Louis County Board Meeting, February 8, 2022

The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 a.m. The meeting was held at the Duluth Government Services Center, Duluth, MN. 7 out of 7 commissioners were present.

Three public hearings were conducted:

- 1) Resolution to consider the issuance of an Off-Sale Intoxicating Liquor License to Side Lake Store, LLC dba R & B Side Lake Store, French Township. Passed unanimously.
- 2) Resolution to consider the issuance of an Off-Sale Intoxicating Liquor License to Country Corner Bar, LLC dba Country Corner Bar, LLC, Culver Township. Passed unanimously.
- 3) Resolution to consider the request for tax abatement financing regarding the City of Duluth - Cirrus Aircraft's conversion and expansion plan at the Duluth International Airport. Passed unanimously. NOTE: Cirrus Aircraft plans to convert the former (now empty) Northwest Airlines/AAR maintenance building. Expansion will mean an increase of 80 new jobs. Cirrus is requesting a \$600,000 tax abatement over 10 years from the County and will also request a \$600,000 tax abatement over 10 years from the City of Duluth.

The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously. Item #4, bid to Mesabi Bituminous, Inc., was sent back to administration for more work.

The Regular Agenda included 3 items:

- 1) From the Environment & Natural Resources Committee - Commissioner Jugovich, Chair: Sale of certain state tax forfeited lands to the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. Approved unanimously. (NOTE: The land parcels are in the Brookston and Culver areas.)
- 2) From the Central Management & Intergovernmental Committee - Commissioner Jewell, Chair: Request for sponsorship of Ashawa Ski Club trail grooming equipment. Approved unanimously. (NOTE: Sponsorship by the County is needed for the club to accept a grant, which would be in the amount of \$15,000, approximately.)
- 3) Commissioner Nelson initiated a motion for reconsideration of a resolution passed at the Board meeting on February 1. Motion approved 4:3. (Nelson, McDonald, Jugovich, Musolf in favor; Jewell, Boyle, Grimm opposed.) Commissioner Nelson initiated a motion to amend the original resolution to contract with SISU Healthcare IT Solutions for the time period February 1 - December 31, 2022, to support the increased capacity of skilled registered nurses to assist PHHS with COVID-19 response efforts, to coordinate with regional facilities, evaluate and assess facilities for risk, providing training for the prevention and control of COVID-19, and provide direct clinical services to St. Louis County residents for up to \$450,000 funded with the first \$225,000 paid from American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds and the second \$225,000 paid from Public Health Initiative funds. Motion passed 4:3. (Nelson, McDonald, Jugovich, Musolf in favor; Jewell, Boyle, Grimm opposed.)

Meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Submitted by: Gwen Thorson,

St. Louis County Board Meeting February 1, 2022

The Regular Meeting began at 9:31 a.m.

The meeting was held at the Duluth Government Services Center, Duluth, MN.

6 out of 7 commissioners were present. (Commissioner Musolf was absent due to illness.)

One citizen, Nancy Watkins, of Rice, MN, addressed the Board, announcing that she is taking over as Co-Chair of the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) division of the Vermilion Lake Association and thanked the Board for their support.

The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously. Item #13, request for Sponsorship of Pathblazers Snowmobile Club Trail Grooming Equipment Purchase was pulled for separate consideration.

The Regular Agenda included a resolution moved by Commissioner P. Boyle, supported by Commissioner A. Grimm, to contract with SISU Healthcare IT Solutions for the time period January 1-December 31, 2022, for up to \$450,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to support the increased capacity of skilled registered nurses to assist PHHS with COVID-19 response efforts, to coordinate with regional facilities, evaluate and assess facilities for risk, providing training for the prevention and control of COVID-19, and provide direct clinical services to St. Louis County residents. Administration requested that the resolution be amended to change the beginning contract date to February 1, 2022. There were no objections. Commissioner Nelson moved to amend, supported by Commissioner Jugovich, the resolution to state that the first \$225,000 for this program be paid from ARPA funds and the second \$225,000 by paid from Public Health Initiative funds. Following contentious discussion and input from PHHS Director Linnea Mirsch, the amendment was withdrawn and the resolution passed. Commissioner Nelson expressed interest in reconsideration of the resolution at the next Board meeting, so Commissioner Musolf could offer input and vote.

Item #13 (from the Consent Agenda), request for Sponsorship of Pathblazers Snowmobile Club Trail Grooming Equipment Purchase was discussed. Commissioner Jewell, supported by Commissioner Boyle, moved that St. Louis County make application to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for the Federal Recreation Trail Program and to sponsor the purchase of snowmobile trail grooming equipment on behalf of the Pathblazers Snowmobile Club at no cost to the County; that if the County is awarded a grant, the County agrees to accept the grant, and may enter into an agreement with the State of Minnesota for the above referenced project. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Submitted by: Gwen Thorson

St. Louis County Board Meeting, January 4, 2022

The Annual Meeting began at 9:35 a.m. The meeting was convened by Nancy Nilsen, Auditor-Treasurer.

Paul McDonald was elected Chair of the County Board of Commissioners for 2022. Patrick Boyle was elected Vice Chair of the County Board of Commissioners for 2022.

Chair Commissioner McDonald named the committee chairs for the following standing committees:

- Health and Human Services: Patrick Boyle, 2nd District
- Public Works and Transportation: Keith Musolf, 5th District
- Environment and Natural Resources: Mike Jugovich, 7th District
- Finance and Budget: Keith Nelson, 6th District
- Public Safety and Corrections: Ashley Grimm, 3rd District
- Central Management and Intergovernmental Relations: Frank Jewell, 1st District

The Consent Agenda was approved.

The Regular Agenda included multiple items, including approval of

- 1) the 2022 County Board meeting schedule,
- 2) the 2022 Committee of the Whole meeting schedule,
- 3) the 2022 County Board Workshop schedule, and
- 4) resolutions of appointment for approximately 25 related boards, committees, commissions, etc. (e.g., Arrowhead Regional Corrections Executive Board, Arrowhead Regional Development Commission, Election Canvassing Board, Duluth International Airport Joint Zoning Board, St. Louis County Historical Society Board of Governors, Seaway Port Authority), and
- 5) awarding bids for legal publications for St. Louis County for 2022.

After the Annual County Board Meeting, the St. Louis County Housing and Redevelopment Authority convened.

Submitted by: Gwen Thorson,

Saint Louis County Board Meeting December 14, 2021

The Regular Meeting began at 9:35 a.m. The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Government Services Center, Duluth, MN. 7 out of 7 commissioners were present.

- Several citizens addressed the board on a variety of issues not on the agenda, including the following: efforts of the Gary-New Duluth community at maintaining their veterans' memorial and work in developing a skate board site; comments about the proposed use of body cameras by the sheriff's department—with cautions to develop clarification about the terms of usage and need for transparency, and need for cognizance about concerns of people of color; a concern about the proposed increase in property taxes; a concern that a private property boundary was violated; and a concern about the security of voting machines.
- Public Hearing was held pursuant to a resolution adopted on November 16, 2021, to consider the suspension/revocation of liquor license(s) for failure to pay real estate or personal property taxes when due. Resolution passed unanimously. (This resolution applies to Boondocks Saloon & Grill, Gnesen Township.)
- Public Hearing was held pursuant to a resolution adopted November 16, 2021, to consider the issuance of an Off-Sale Intoxicating Liquor License to KRL Hospitality Corporation dba Sportsmens Inn, Gnesen Township. Motion passed unanimously.
- The Consent Agenda passed unanimously. One item was pulled from the agenda for further discussion and approved separately (Discussion was for clarification about the “language” of the motion.)

There were 2 items on the Regular Agenda.

- 1) Finance & Budget Committee (Commissioner Keith Nelson, chair): Request for approval of 2022 Budget and Property Tax Levy. The request was approved unanimously. The total budget is \$463,409,827. The budget focuses on the county's emphasis on economic development, substance abuse and mental health, managing the impact of COVID, timely infrastructure work, and investment in technology, etc. Note: Prior to approval, concerns about working with the St. Louis County Historical Society on its budget were discussed.
 - 2) Public Safety & Corrections Committee (Commissioner Ashley Grimm, chair): Request to authorize the purchase and implementation of body worn cameras in the St. Louis County Sheriff's Office. The request was approved unanimously.
- The board meeting recessed at 11:35 am. for a brief meeting of the St. Louis County Housing and Redevelopment Authority and reconvened about 11:45 to report results. The board recessed, once again, at 11:55 am. for a lunch break.

The observer was unable to attend the conclusion of the Board meeting which occurred after lunch. (Following the lunch break, the board met for a Committee of the Whole Meeting, which was immediately followed by the conclusion of the Regular Board Meeting.)

Submitted by: Gwen Thorson

St. Louis County Board Meeting November 2, 2021

The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 a.m. The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Government Services Center, Duluth, MN. 7 out of 7 commissioners were present. No citizens addressed the board on an issue not on the agenda.

- Public Hearing was held pursuant to a resolution adopted on September 28, 2021 to obtain public comment and amend County Ordinance No. 51, Rules and Regulations Governing the Sale, Possession and Use of Tobacco and Tobacco-related Device—to bring the county in line with state law (especially as it relates to the legal age of 21 for tobacco use, etc.). Resolution passed unanimously.
- The Consent Agenda passed unanimously. There were no items on the Regular Agenda.

The meeting adjourned at 9:42 am.

Following the Board Meeting, the Board convened a Committee of the Whole Meeting at 9:45 am.

The Consent Agenda passed unanimously.

The Regular Agenda included the following:

1. The Finance & Budget Committee proposed a resolution authorizing a 7-year contract with Paymentus to provide online and IVR payment solutions for property taxes, which passed unanimously. A resolution to approve the 2021 3rd quarter budget changes also passed unanimously.
2. The Public Safety & Corrections Committee proposed a resolution to approve the reallocation of one FTE Deputy Sheriff position to one FTE Deputy Sheriff Sergeant position assigned to the Lake Superior Drug & Violent Crime Task Force, which passed unanimously. This is due to the “skyrocketing” occurrence of opioid overdoses and deaths in the last 6 months.
3. The Central Management & Governmental Affairs Committee held a closed session, at the request of the county attorney, for litigation purposes.

Following regular business of the Committee of the Whole, two presentations were held:

1. Public Health & Communications staff announced the current status of COVID-19 in the county and receiving an Emmy Award for COVID-19 information provided to the public.
2. Bond Sales Summary & Rating Report was provided indicating sale of \$25,650,000. Bonds will fund construction of 3 new maintenance facilities. The county has a AA+ rating.

Following the meeting and lunch, commissioners toured the St. Louis County Depot.

Submitted by: Gwen Thorson

St. Louis County Board—April 6, 2021

The following comments are a summary of observations at the St. Louis County Board Meeting on April 6, 2021.

The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 a.m.

The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Government Services Center, Duluth, MN. 7 out of 7 commissioners were present (Commissioners Jewell and Grimm participated virtually.)

Commissioner Patrick Boyle acknowledged “National Public Health Week” and the efforts of county personnel in managing the COVID pandemic—especially, testing and vaccination efforts. He stated that 24,000 doses of vaccine have been administered, so far. St. Louis County Director of Public Health, Amy Westbrook, stated that “public health” is a broad area and acknowledged he many partners involved (e.g. social services, safety, etc.)

No citizens addressed the Board on any issue not on the agenda.

The Consent Agenda passed unanimously.

There was one item on the Regular Agenda presented by the Central Management & Intergovernmental Committee: a resolution declaring a continued State of Local Emergency and rescind all previously adopted related resolutions and policies. (Note: Only “a couple” of things were removed from the original authorization. This was an update of status.) Resolution passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:46 am.

Submitted by: Gwen Thorson

St. Louis County Board—April 13, 2021

The following comments are a summary of observations at the St. Louis County Board Meeting on April 13, 2021.

The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 am.

The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Government Services Center, Duluth, MN.

6 out of 7 commissioners were present (Commissioner Jewel and Grimm participated virtually. Commissioner Musolf was absent)

Commissioner Mike Jugovich announced “National Telecommunicators Week,” April 11-17, 2021. He acknowledged the efforts of county personnel in responding to over 212,000 calls for help in 2020 and the work of the county to link 180 public safety agencies in responding to those calls. Jason Lukovsky, coordinator of the Sheriff’s Department 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Division, also addressed the Board.

No citizens addressed the Board on any issue not on the agenda.

A PUBLIC HEARING was held to consider the issuance of an Off-Sale Intoxicating Liquor License to Minno-ette Inc. dba Minno-ette, Inc., Fredenberg Township. The resolution passed unanimously.

The Consent Agenda passed unanimously.

There was one item on the Regular Agenda presented by the Environment & Natural Resources Committee: a resolution regarding the conveyance of state tax forfeited land to the City of Hermantown for road right-of-way purposes. Resolution passed unanimously. (Note: This will allow the City of Hermantown to insure future access to Stebner Road.)

The meeting adjourned at 9:48 am.

Submitted by Gwen Thorson,

St. Louis County Board Meeting: March 10, 2020

The Regular Meeting began at 9:35 a.m. The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN.

7 out of 7 commissioners were present.

St. Louis County Director of Public Health, Amy Westbrook, gave a public health update regarding COVID-19. She stated that St. Louis County is getting direction from the state's Department of Health on a daily basis. Ms. Westbrook also stated that citizens can get information about COVID-19 using an informational phone line and on the county's website. Her department is also responding to media requests and planning for the "basics" if citizens are quarantined: food, medications, shelter.

Nine citizens addressed the board on an issue not on the agenda. Each citizen spoke in support of refugee resettlement in St. Louis County.

The Consent Agenda passed unanimously, except one item which was removed and subsequently passed as part of the regular agenda. There were two items on the Regular Agenda presented by the Central Management & Intergovernmental Committee. First, was a resolution regarding the establishment of a public hearing for 9:40 a.m., May 26, 2020, at the Buhl Senior Center, to consider the Cartway petition of Timothy R. Westby a/k/a Tim Westby on behalf of SW2, LLC (Unorganized Township 63-15). There was discussion about the effect of realignment on adjacent businesses and information about reappraisals being completed prior to the hearing. Resolution passed unanimously. The committee's second resolution involved the "Utilization of Paid Leave during a Public Health Emergency Policy." Jim Gottschald, Director of Human Resources, provided background information. This is a rewrite of a 2009 policy and will allow employees to go into a negative sick leave balance. It will allow more flexibility of the use of paid sick leave and will not require a new tax levy or a need for new monies. It would also allow for the advancement sick leave (which employees may pay back later). Resolution passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 am.

Submitted by: Gwen Thorson

St. Louis County Board Meeting, January 14, 2020

The Regular Meeting began at 9:32 a.m.

The meeting was held at the Midway Town Hall, Duluth, MN.

7 out of 7 commissioners were present.

The Consent Agenda passed unanimously.

There were no items on the Regular Agenda.

The meeting adjourned at 9:49 am.

The board went directly to a meeting of the “Committee of the Whole.” Most of this meeting centered around discussion of Public Auction of a Timber Stand Improvement and Decorative

Product Harvest Lease on State Tax Forfeited Land, which will allow a small business to thrive and will allow for good forest management. The Commissioners also voted unanimously to authorize the submission of the 2020 Pay Equity Report to the State of Minnesota, which indicates that the county is in compliance.

Submitted by Gwen Thorson,

St. Louis County Board Meeting, January 7, 2020

The Regular Meeting began at 9:34 a.m.

The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN.

7 out of 7 commissioners were present.

The meeting was called to order by Nancy Nilsen, County Auditor, so the Board of Commissioners could elect a chair and other committee chairs, etc. Mike Jugovich was elected chair and Beth Olson as vice chair. Before Commissioner Jugovich accepted the gavel as chair for 2020, Patrick Boyle, reviewed 2019 accomplishments during his tenure as chair.

There were no citizens to address any items not on the agenda.

The Board held 2 public hearings, in succession, re: issuance of liquor licenses: 1) Trail's End Resort and 2) Vermilion River Tavern. The Board unanimously approved the granting of these licenses

The Consent Agenda passed unanimously.

The Regular Agenda began with a proposal for written consent to resettlement of refugees in St. Louis County. (Note: This was a response to President Donald Trump's executive order that requires states and counties to consent or opt out of resettlement consideration.) Following testimony from the public (that lasted for over 3 hours) and input from commissioners, the proposal was tabled until the County Board meeting on May 26, 2020, in Buhl. The vote was 4 to 3, with Commissioners Jugovich, McDonald, Nelson and Musolf voting in favor of tabling and Commissioners Jewell, Olson, and Boyle voting against the motion to table the resolution.

The meeting continued, with the Board voting on other organizational items (e.g. meeting schedule, appointment of commissioners to a variety of boards and commissions).

Submitted by Gwen Thorson

, St. Louis County Board Meeting, December 17, 2019

The Regular Meeting began at 9:35 a.m.

The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN.

7 out of 7 commissioners were present.

Three citizens addressed the board regarding items not on the agenda. 1) Todd Youngberg, who has a long-standing property dispute with the county, stated that the county violated state statute and his property was “taken” for use by the CN railroad as a right-of-way, and he “had no right to speak to a judge” to resolve this issue. 2) Timothy Alvar, is the owner of property in the Cloquet Valley State Forest which he had hoped to use for logging. He claims that the county has “changed” property lines (based on different documentation) and this has limited his ability to use all of his land. This has been a 3-year dispute. 3) Lynn Goerd, spoke in favor of the resettlement of refugees in St. Louis County.

The board voted unanimously to approve the sale of 3 parcels of surplus fee land - two parcels in Angora Township and one in Portage Township.

A public hearing was held to consider a proposed Class “B” Land Exchange for certain lands owned by The Conservation Fund. This was approved unanimously and was considered a “fair value exchange” (approximately \$420,000).

The Consent Agenda passed unanimously.

The primary items on the Regular Agenda were the proposed budgets from the Finance & Budget Committee: 1) 2020 Arrowhead Regional Corrections Budget and 2) 2020 Budget and Property Tax Levy. The ARC budget was approved 6 to 1 following contentious discussion (Commissioner Keith Nelson dissenting). The ARC is composed of 5 counties: St. Louis, Lake, Cook, Carlton and Koochiching—with St. Louis contributing 80% of the \$28 million total budget. Commissioner Nelson advocated for a female offender program, and stated that St. Louis County does not have a proportionate voice on the ARC board (3 of 8 votes), given its greater contribution. Commissioner Jewell, also chair of the ARC board, spoke in support of the ARC’s work and the proposed budget. 2) The 2020 Budget and Property Tax Levy, amounting to \$407 million, passed unanimously. The board also went on to discuss the 2019 transfer of shoreline lease sale proceeds from the Land Department to the Environmental Trust Fund/Shoreline Sales fund, minus reimbursement costs AND to approve “2020 St. Louis County Legislative Priorities.”

The Human Resources Director requested a closed session of the Committee of the Whole for labor negotiation purposes. It was requested that the County Board convene a closed session at the conclusion of the December 17 Committee of the Whole meeting.

Submitted by Gwen Thorson

St. Louis County Board Meeting, November 5, 2019.

The Regular Meeting began at 9:35 a.m. The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN. 6 out of 7 commissioners were present. Commissioner Keith Musolf was absent.

Prior to a public hearing, the “consent agenda” and “regular agenda,” an Employee and Retiree Longevity Recognition was held for several individuals.

There was also a presentation, “Toward Zero Deaths,” by Holly Kostrzewski, NE Minnesota TZD Regional Coordinator. Two employees were recognized for their work in this program, which focuses on several factors that may result in death: speed, distraction, failure to use seat belts, drugs and alcohol.

Citizen, Todd Youngberg, also addressed the board regarding items not on the agenda. Mr. Youngberg has a long-standing property dispute with the county, and feels the county “stole” his property for use by the CN railroad as a right-of-way.

Three public hearings were held: 1) To consider the adoption of the fee schedule for various county services for the year 2020. (This relates to landfill, planning and zoning, public works - snowplowing.) 2) To consider issuance of an Off-Sale Intoxicating Liquor License to Arrowhead Lodge Resort and Outfitters, LLC d/b/a Arrowhead Lodge and Resort, Kabetogama Township. 3) To consider the issuance of an Off-Sale Intoxicating Liquor License to Britt Lounge Bar and Grill, LLC d/b/a Britt Lounge Bar and Grill, LLC, Unorganized Township. All 3 resolutions passed unanimously.

The Consent Agenda passed unanimously.

There was one item on the Regular Agenda. The Finance & Budget Committee presented a campaign funding request by the Northeast Entrepreneur Fund, Inc., dba Entrepreneur Fund ENVEST. The request was for \$200,000 which would be used for small business loan funding. Following extensive discussion and the failure of 2 amendments (one, to reduce the amount to \$100,000 and a second, to identify to recipients that the money is coming from mining and timber funds), the request was approved 5 to 6 (Commissioner Nelson dissenting.)

The meeting adjourned at 10:53 a.m. At the conclusion of the Board meeting, the Committee of the Whole convened.

Submitted by: Gwen Thorson

St. Louis County Board Meeting: October 8, 2019

The Regular Meeting began at 9:35 a.m. The meeting was held at the Hermantown City Hall, Hermantown, MN.

6 out of 7 commissioners were present. Commissioner Pal McDonald was absent.

Prior to a public hearing, the “consent agenda” and “regular agenda,” welcoming remarks were made by Mayor Wayne Boucher and City Administrator, John Mulder.

A public hearing was held pursuant to a resolution adopted September 24, 2019, to solicit public input prior to considering a proposed tax abatement for the City of Duluth—First Street Lofts Project. Following the hearing, the board approved a \$300,000 subsidy which will allow this housing project to proceed. (The site is located at Lake Avenue and 1st Street and will involve the use of existing buildings, with the commercial spaces remaining on the lower level. It will allow for the creation 47 housing units, 5 of which will be affordable housing for households earning no more than 80% of the area median income. The City of Duluth has already authorized contribution of \$400,000. The developer has also acquired 50 parking spaces across the street. The project will support labor and construction is expected to begin later this fall and conclude in 2021. Rent will range from \$750 for a studio to \$1,550 for a 2-bedroom unit.

The Consent Agenda passed unanimously.

There was one item on the Regular Agenda. The Central Management & Intergovernmental Committee proposed to reschedule the public hearing for SW2, LLC/Timothy R. Westby cartway petition (Unorganized Township 63-15). It was agreed to move this hearing to December 3, 2019.

The meeting adjourned at 10:02 a.m.

At the conclusion of the Board meeting, the Committee of the Whole convened. Its Consent Agenda and establishment of public hearings were passed unanimously. Significant decisions were 1) Authorization of the addition of 1.0 FTE Public Health Nurse and 1.0 FTE Social Worker for purposes of meeting contract obligations for MSHO/MSC+ programs. (UCare and Blue Plus will provide reimbursement for these positions.) 2) Awarding a bid for an aggregate crushing project in West Central St. Louis County which will result in closing one pit, mixing materials from 2 pits that will provide some recycled material and allow for some off-season employment. (Cleaning of the closed pit will allow for its sale at a later date.) 3) Acceptance of a donation of close to 1600 acres from the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association. (The Forest Management Program of St. Louis County intends to keep these lands intact and keep development at bay, while maintaining habitat and access to the area.)

Submitted by Gwen Thorson

St. Louis County Board Meeting: October 1, 2019

The Regular Meeting began at 9:53 a.m. The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN. 6 out of 7 commissioners were present. Commissioner Frank Jewell was absent.

Prior to the “consent agenda” and “regular agenda,” two citizens addressed the board on items not on the agenda. T.Y. addressed the board about his anger related to the county’s sale of property to the CN railroad. He feels that the property was his and that the county acted illegally when doing this transaction. St. Louis County health educator, Alicia Randall, informed the board about substance abuse prevention efforts, including “drug take back day” on October 26.

The Consent Agenda passed unanimously.

There were four items on the Regular Agenda: The Finance & Budget Committee proposed that 1) the new St. Louis County transportation building located on County Road No. 15, in the City of Cook be designated as the “David M. Skelton Transportation Building” and 2) the County Bridge No. 347 over the Black Duck River located on County Road No. 180 in Camp Five Township be designated as the “James ‘Ding’ Holter Memorial Bridge.” These resolutions passed 5 to 1. The Central Management & Intergovernmental Committee proposed 3) the election of five (5) members to the newly established Ash River Sanitary District Board of Directors. This item passed unanimously. The committee also proposed 4) the new St. Louis County Government Services Center—Virginia be designated as the “Elizabeth Prebich Building.” This resolution passed 5 to 1. Commissioner Beth Olson was the only dissenting vote on items 1, 2 and 4 saying she felt the individuals honored were deserving of the recognition but voted on principle and wanted a policy on naming before voting on any of them. She stated that a whole lot of people in our community are left out, because they did not have the opportunity to be in positions where they can make some of that transformative change. She went on to say, “A lot of people of color, native people, and women as well, who have not been in high positions and been able to get to those places, yet. ...As we put things down in history, we’re going to miss a whole lot of people who have made significant contributions to our community that maybe don’t rise to the level of our attention right at this moment.”

The meeting adjourned at 11:07 a.m.

At the conclusion of the Board meeting, the St. Louis County Housing and Redevelopment Authority met briefly, prior to lunch and a tour of Ikonics, 2302 Commonwealth Avenue in Duluth.

Submitted by: Gwen Thorson

St. Louis County Board Meeting, September 10, 2019.

The Regular Meeting began at 9:35 a.m. The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN.

7 out of 7 commissioners were present. The 5th District Commissioner position has been filed by Keith Musolf, after a special election on August 13, 2019.

Prior to the “consent agenda” and “regular agenda,” State Representative Mary Murphy (District 3B) addressed the board on an item not on the regular meeting agenda. She recommended that the SLC Board not discard what is happening with corrections in the region (including and beyond St. Louis County), with counties working together; and the value of NERCC to the state of Minnesota. (Note: Commissioner Nelson was scheduled to request that the board create a resolution to notify the ARC Board of Commissioners of the desire to withdraw from the Joint Powers Agreement—at the Committee of the Whole meeting, following this regular meeting.)

No action was taken at this meeting regarding consideration of bids received for the “sale of surplus fee owned land” and authorized the sale of the land to the party submitting the highest bid (Hermantown).

The Consent Agenda passed unanimously.

There was one item on the Regular Agenda: 1) The Finance & Budget Committee proposed that efforts be made to purchase locally under St. Louis County Purchasing Rules and Regulations. Purchasing Director, Donna Viskoe, addressed the board. Discussion included comments about the examination that has been done regarding Amazon purchases vs. local purchases. (Sometimes, local purchases will not be possible, if a specific product is necessary and not available locally.) The resolution was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:56 a.m.

At the conclusion of the Board meeting, the Committee of the Whole met briefly, prior to lunch and a tour of the Duluth Seaway Port Authority, 1200 Port Terminal Road, Duluth, MN.

Submitted by Gwen Thorson

St. Louis County Board, April 2, 2019

The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 a.m. The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN. Six out of Seven commissioners were present. The 5th District Commissioner position remains vacant.

Prior to the “consent agenda” and “regular agenda,” Commissioner Frank Jewell announced the names of many employees from several departments in honor of their longevity with St. Louis County and other names of employees who are retiring. Commissioner Jewell also announced that April 1-7, 2019 was “Public Health Awareness Week.” He named four recipients of “Public Health Achievement Awards:” 1) Ely Community Care Team, 2) Dr. Laura Palombi, 3) Dementia Friendly Duluth, and 4) Ashley Grimm. One citizen, a representative of the SLC Anti-Nepotism Task Force, addressed the nepotism issue.

The Consent Agenda passed unanimously. There were four items on the Regular Agenda: 1) The Public Works & Transportation Committee presented a resolution authorizing acceptance of the bid by Ulland Brothers, Inc., of Cloquet, MN, for culvert replacement and surfacing projects located in Aurora and White Township. The bid was \$2,024,000 and was 15% underestimate. The resolution was approved unanimously. 2) & 3) The Environment & Natural Resources Committee presented two resolutions related to applications of repurchase of state tax forfeited land (non-homestead). Both were tabled until April 16, while the county creates a policy related to conditions that owners must meet during the process of repayment. 4) The Central Management & Intergovernmental Committee presented a resolution that would authorize the establishment of a nepotism policy. The purpose of the policy would be to eliminate actual bias or the perception of bias in hiring, would be veteran-friendly, would include all citizens in the application and hiring process (including family), and would include language to clarify hiring (i.e. SLC employee would not hire a family member if they would be the direct supervisor). The resolution was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m. At the conclusion of the Board meeting, the Committee of the Whole met briefly, prior to lunch and a tour of the Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative, 2424 W. 5th Street, Duluth.

Submitted by Gwen Thorson

St. Louis County Board Meeting, March 19, 2019

The Regular Meeting began at 9:42 a.m.

The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, MN.

5 out of 7 commissioners were present. The 5th District Commissioner position remains vacant.

Commissioner Frank Jewel was not in attendance, but in Washington, D.C. on county business.

Prior to the “consent agenda” and “regular agenda,” citizens were allowed to address items not on the agenda.

One citizen, a former SLC employee, expressed concerns about his perception of bias in county hiring and advancement opportunities. Ken Buehler also addressed the board, inviting them to a March 11 reception at the Depot’s railroad museum and reminding them of the inclusion of funding for rail service between Duluth and the Twin Cities (“Northern Lights Express”) within the governor’s proposed state budget.

The Consent Agenda passed unanimously.

There were two items on the Regular Agenda: 1) The Finance & Budget Committee presented a resolution authorizing the apportionment of the 2018 Land and Minerals Department’s net proceeds in the amount of \$958,441.76 (Fifty percent of the total monies are distributed according to where timber activity occurred and therefore, not equally divided among individual towns/cities, school districts, and the county. Of that 50% portion, 40%

goes to the county, 40% to school districts, and 20% to towns/cities.) The resolution was approved unanimously. 2) The Central Management & Intergovernmental Committee presented a resolution to support passage of legislation to fund the Good Food Access Fund. This fund supports rural communities and smaller communities getting access to “good food” (includes loans, promotion of locally-grown food, farmers’ markets, etc.) The resolution was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:03 a.m.

At the conclusion of the Board meeting, Commissioners visited Life House Youth Center, 102 W. 1st Street, Duluth.

The Committee of the Whole meeting followed that visit.

Submitted by Gwen Thorson

St. Louis County Board Meeting, February 12, 2019

The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 a.m. The meeting was held at the Proctor Area Community Center, Proctor, MN.

Six out of seven commissioners were present. The 5th District Commissioner position remains vacant.

Prior to the “consent agenda” and “regular agenda,” citizens were allowed to address items not on the agenda. One citizen expressed concerns about the 5th District Commissioner vacancy and the length of time it will take to be filled, about county hunting leases, and about the amount of money spent on Camp Esquagama.

The Consent Agenda passed unanimously, except for 2 items (related to individuals being appointed to a board/commission) brought down for discussion. Those items were later approved in a five to one vote.

There were two items on the Regular Agenda: 1) The Central Management & Intergovernmental Committee presented a resolution for acceptance of the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party settlement in the amount of \$28,000 regarding the Pete Stauber E-mail lawsuit. The agreement also ends the possibility of future litigation. The resolution was approved unanimously. 2) The Environment & Natural Resources Committee presented a resolution authorizing acceptance and disbursement of “Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Aid.” The county’s allotment from the State is \$710,820. County staff have made specific funding recommendations for \$657,000. The resolution was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00.

The **Committee of the Whole** convened immediately following the Board meeting. The consent agenda was passed unanimously. The Finance & Budget Committee presented a resolution to establish a Public Hearing to Consider Off-Sale Intoxicating Liquor License (Fredenberg Township: Eagle’s Nest Resort) on Tuesday, March 12, 2019 at 9:40 AM. The regular agenda had 2 items: 1) The Public Works & Transportation Committee presented 3 resolutions regarding the awarding of bids for scrub sealing (\$2,171,000), 6” pavement markings, and maintenance striping (\$488,000). 2) The Finance & Budget Committee presented a resolution awarding the purchase of 54 fleet vehicles (i.e. replacement vehicles for the motor pool, public works, and public safety) in an amount just under \$1.6 million. All bids went to 3 St. Louis County vendors.

Submitted by Gwen Thorson

St. Louis County Board Meeting, February 5, 2019

The Regular Meeting began at 9:30 a.m. The meeting was held at the St. Louis County Court House, Duluth, MN.

six out of seven commissioners were present. The 5th District Commissioner position remains vacant.

Prior to the “consent agenda” and “regular agenda,” citizens were allowed to address items not on the agenda. Four SLC social workers and a retired SLC social worker expressed their concerns about the county’s interest in contracting with a private agency to provide social services to the elderly without the involvement of current workers in a conversation. Other concerns related to a need for cooperation with their union, a concern that other service options were not considered, and the need to redefine the role of social workers. Henry Banks also addressed the board, requesting money (\$500) that would assist in funding a bus trip to St. Paul for citizens to talk to legislators about an African heritage project in the community.

A public hearing was held to submit public input prior to considering a tax abatement in the amount up to \$860,000 for the Hermantown Marketplace Sewer Trunkline project. Following the hearing, the board unanimously approved the resolution. The \$6 million total cost will fund several projects, in different locations. The balance of money will come from sales tax and assessments.

The Consent Agenda passed unanimously.

There were two items on the Regular Agenda: 1) The Finance & Budget Committee presented a resolution for funding to the St. Louis County Historical Society for the Joseph P. Gomer Educational Exhibit and Curriculum Project. The request was for \$10,000 to be used as “seed money” to a) develop a traveling exhibit, b) tell Joe’s story at the Bong Museum, c) enhance the airport display, and d) work with the Duluth Transit Authority to mark Joe’s regular bus stops and a bus seat. (The total cost for the project is approximately \$60-70,000, with remaining funds to come from other sources.) 2) The Central Management & Intergovernmental Committee issues were discussed at a closed session of the Committee of the Whole, at the request of the County Attorney.

Submitted by Gwen Thorson, LWV Duluth member

