

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

