

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
RICE COUNTY COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Commissioner's Room / Government Services Building
Tuesday, August 16, 2022 at 8:30 AM**

I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

(At the beginning of each Committee of the Whole Work Session meeting, the floor will be open to solicit public comments on items on the Agenda. Public comments will be limited to two (2) minutes for each person, subject to the discretion of the County Board Chairperson)

II. FINANCE: Paula O'Connell

- A. Mona Kaiser, from Buckham West Senior Center spoke on behalf of what they are looking like for the future. Buckham West is a non-profit organization that provides Rice County's senior population with services that promote their health and independence. They offer a full range of educational, recreational and health related programs. Buckham West has a mission to promote the physical, emotional, intellectual, economic and social well-being of older adults and to promote their participation in all aspects of community life in Faribault and surrounding areas.
- B. Lynne Pederson spoke on behalf of FiftyNorth. Last year, the funds received from Rice County went to support general operations. A full programming schedule is being offered, including activities at the center and online. There are 59 fitness classes per week, art classes, groups, a gallery, lifelong learning classes, and an array of group offerings. Due to COVID-19, it has caused a rapid decrease in memberships. Currently, they are seeing a stream of new members joining. The emphasis at FiftyNorth will continue to offer new and existing programs that meet today's needs of members and the community.
- C. Erica Staab-Absher, Executive Director, spoke on behalf of the Hope Center. The mission of the Hope Center is to create zero tolerance for sexual and domestic violence through healing, outreach, prevention and education. The goals for the Hope Center for the year of 2023 will consist of the following goals: Continue to collaborate with their system partners and provide the above-named assistance to domestic and sexual assault victims in Rice County. They plan to continue with monthly Blueprint and SMART multidisciplinary meetings initiated and convened by Hope Center. They will continue to participate in County initiatives-wide, including the Rice County Coordinated Justice Council, the Fatality Review Committee, and continue to lead and guide the Rice County Trauma Response Team. And last but not least, they will continue to respond to the hospital for sexual assault forensic exams, domestic violence related injuries, collaborate with local law enforcement, provide 24-hour hotline for victims of violence, offer free prevention programming to community members and schools, and provide for the needs of individuals who need their services.
- D. Marguerite Moran spoke on behalf of the Lonsdale Public Library. Marguerite stated that they were hit pretty hard during COVID. Instead of learning a new way to cope, they are finding a way to accept the changes and move forward. The library continues to modernize to meet changing community needs. In 2021, all public and staff computers have been updated. As of July 5th, Lonsdale is now a fine free library. After further investigation, evidence shows that removing late fees helps with equal access and builds goodwill while not hurting timely returns. Ongoing 2023 priorities focus on reorganizing to make the most of current space while advocating for a new facility. They will continue to find new ways to build awareness of the library and its offerings in an everchanging city. They will try to expand pre-literacy offerings and focus on what makes the library unique.
- E. Steve Pahs, District Manager for Rice County Soil & Water Conservation District, discussed some of the accomplishments they had in 2021. One of their accomplishments consisted of \$17,235 for cover crop incentives on 147 acres, 5 water and sediment control basins, and one grassed waterway. Their education and outreach efforts reached 2,478 people via social media and held 9 speaking engagements. As far as the goals for 2023, Steve says they will be focusing on goals for the Cannon and Zumbro Watershed plans, which make up most of Rice County. They will also be finishing up work on the plan for the Lower MN Watershed-East. Efforts at increasing soil health practices like cover crops and reduced tillage will continue. SWCD will continue to offer trees, shrubs and native plants for sale, and will pursue pollinator habitat programs. They will continue to provide drainage ditch inspection services for Rice County, which will provide a convenient way for landowners to address all their drainage maintenance needs.
- F. Don Hauge, Executive Director of Southeastern MN EMS. SE EMS regional system serves Freeborn,

Mower, Fillmore, Houston, Winona, Olmsted, Dodge, Steele, Rice, Wabash and Goodhue counties in Southeastern Minnesota. They are governed by a joint powers board consisting of one county commissioner from each of the eleven counties in their region. EMS Regional System has been committed to providing education and support to EMS providers. Fire Departments, Police Departments, as well as the public. The main focus is to make sure that education is provided to make sure they have the most up-to-date skills. Don states that after the pandemic, they took up much of their time and efforts by providing PPE from our Healthcare Coalition and the State Cache. First responders have been trained to deal with Opioid overdoses by providing training and Naloxone to our Emergency Response Agencies in the Region through State and Federal Grants. Don states that, with the help of the county, it allows their emergency providers, which are essential to the health and safety of our communities, to stay well informed and trained to meet upcoming challenges.

- G. Susan Garwood, Executive Director of the Rice County Historical Society, zoomed in to discuss topics regarding the Historical Society. Sue stated that because of 2021's activities being a mess from the pandemic, the new goals will remain in effect for the year 2022. Some of the common goals to look at would be meet seasonally, maintain buildings and grounds, finish the HRA project, repair school threshold, finish stripping and painting the school, update and implement a prioritized long-range building and maintenance plan, and implement the MNHS 2022 Awarded Faribault House Grant. Sue states that the Historical Building is busting at the seams. They tend to focus on later working towards expanding or possibly moving into a new building down the line. Nothing had been discussed at that time.
- H. Jeff Wyant, Senior Services Director of SEMCAC talked about what their program does and what they see for the future. SEMCAC is a nutrition program offered Monday thru Friday, noon service meal service for persons that are 60 years of age or older. The mission is to promote the independence, dignity, good health, and nutritional well-being of older persons. This program is for any person, regardless of race, color, gender, religion, disability, or national origin. Benefits and outcomes of this program provide low-cost, nutritional support which is very important for the senior community. This service offers an effective way to help keep health care costs manageable. They measure their success by the outcomes reported by the seniors they serve. The goal for 2023 is to avoid closing meal sites or limiting the number of meals due to funding cuts. Instead, they are looking to expand their menu with new menu items. They will also be looking for a new location in Northfield to provide congregate meals as our partnership with the Senior Center has been terminated.

III. **HIGHWAY: Dennis Luebbe**

- A. Dennis Luebbe, Director of the Highway Department, talked about some of the upcoming projects as well as the status of some of the current projects. Dennis stated it's that time of season the fall mowing project will begin. 3000 acres of land is covered in Rice County. Construction updates include baseline road, which is moving along well, and CASA 15 is mostly paved, and the Cedar Lake Blvd pavement is finished. The Historical Society parking lot will be paved sometime next week. MNDOT Trunk Hwy 21 to County Road 99 split will have road work done in a week. CASA 4 job for Lonsdale area held their public hearing. This project is scheduled to start next year. The Public Safety Center project is looking at ways to reduce the cost of the pond. They will advertise the end of the month or early September. Hoping to complete some projects this year. In regards to the 6-legged roundabout MNDOT is requesting the possibility to keeping 35W and County Road 19 open during the construction. This is still in the works and more to come on that topic. The City of Northfield wants to add emergency signals on the street lights on Hwy 3. This would also go into Lonsdale. A second meeting with interchange and County Road 9 is discussing a communication plan. Looking into a brand or logo, working with the chamber who will represent the City of Faribault. The recent TIFF projects that passed for building affordable housing will be on County Road 45. Catholic Devine Mercy construction will also begin on County Road 45. This is where further talk will need to be discussed about approaching change in that area. Ped crossings, speed zone changes. All these will need to be discussed further. Transportation Committee will be scheduling a meeting in October.

IV. **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Dave Miller, seconded by Steve Underdahl, to adjourn the meeting.

RESULT: Approved, AYES: Jeff Docken, Dave Miller, Steve Underdahl, Galen Malecha, Jim Purfeerst,
NAYS: None