

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
RICE COUNTY COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Commissioner's Room / Government Services Building
Tuesday, November 19, 2024 at 8:30 AM**

I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

(At each Committee of the Whole Work Session meeting, the floor will be open to solicit public comments on items on the agenda after they are presented. A Comment Card will need to be filled out in order to speak about any of the items. Public comments will be limited to (3) minutes for each person, subject to the discretion of the County Board Chairperson) Hoisington was the Chair to open the meeting.

II. COMMUNICATIONS: Suzy Rook and Joseph Johnson

- A.** Following a Northfield EMS/Northfield Area Fire & Rescue Services fundraiser earlier this year to supply all rescue personnel with protective vests (sponsored by the Defeat of Jesse James Days Committee), Commissioner Malecha, in his capacity as DJJD general chair, Northfield EMS' Brian Edwards and NAFRS Fire Chief Tom Nelson wondered if it is possible to get federal legislation to reimburse agencies for protective vests for all emergency responders.

Currently, the U.S. government offers reimbursement for law enforcement, a designation that includes correctional officers. Minnesota provides similar funding and recently adopted legislation to include all emergency responders, though procedural details are still being ironed out.

We have put together a small committee, which includes Joe Johnson, Sheriff Jesse Thomas, Suzy Rook, and the chiefs of other first responder agencies in Rice County to move this initiative forward. We ask that the Rice County Board of Commissioners be the first to officially back this work and authorize the chair to sign a letter of support.

Rice County Commissioners requested a Resolution be drafted and brought back to the next Rice County Board Meeting on November 26, 2024.

III. PARKS DEPARTMENT: Dennis Luebbe

- A.** Dennis Luebbe, discussed with each one of the Commissioners explaining that Barr Engineering is the original company to start the King Mill Dam. It's been discussed that it's been years since the Dam has had any major maintenance done to it. Barr will be providing the maintenance updates.
- B.** Great River Greening (GRG) is a non-profit conservation organization organized for the purpose of restoring natural areas and open spaces, and is funded by from the Outdoor Heritage Fund. Funding for the Cannon River Watershed Habitat Protection and Restoration Program has been approved, and includes a proposed \$288,900 contribution towards a partnership with Rice County to develop a management plan for portions of the Cannon River Wilderness Park. Earlier this fall, Jennifer Grommes, with GRG met with representatives of the Friends of the Cannon River Wilderness Park group, and county staff to assess the park area. Jennifer's management plan developed from this review includes enhancing 24 acres of the oak savanna area of the park, and 24 acres of buckthorn control. An 'in-kind' local match of at least \$4,000 of administrative, direct labor, or third-party labor hours is required under a proposed Cooperative Agreement. This Agreement can be formally approved on November 26th. Work could commence later this year, with the Agreement terminating on June 30, 2029.

IV. HIGHWAY: Dennis Luebbe

- A.** A public hearing has been scheduled for December 3rd at Buckham West from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. to discuss the County Road 9 Jurisdictional Study Project.
- B.** The following updates were given by Dennis Luebbe:
Decker Avenue Final Draft has been sent out. Now the surrounding townships will be brought together to discuss. More information will be brought back to a later meeting.
The I35 Interchange is complete, and a document will be coming out soon going through the steps taken to complete the project.
Dennis gave a shout-out to Myron Malecha for employee appreciation.
Bridgewater Twp. Is dealing with some right-of-way issues.
Working on a Safety Grant with the DNR.
Possible Road and Bridge tour to be held next spring.

V. SHERIFF'S OFFICE: Jesse Thomas

- A. Sheriff Jesse Thomas came forward to discuss his overall operations of the last few years and discuss his request for a raise for the upcoming year 2025. He is requesting an 8% increase.

VI. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE: Brian Mortenson

- A. County Attorney Brian Mortenson addressed the Board to discuss his last few years and what he has accomplished. He has asked for an 8.5 percent raise for the year 2025.

VII. SOCIAL SERVICES: Rick Gieseke

- A. Rick Gieseke gave a brief overview of the budget narrative for Community Services/Social Services. He stated that caseloads have increased 20%, and it doesn't look like they will return to pre-covid numbers. They no longer obtain NorthStar Care for Children's Act which eliminates some funding. Income maintenance and Adult Mental Health Protection and Adult services hired two case aids. Child and Family brought in 1 intake and 1 social worker. They will continue to monitor and go out for grants. Rick will be back December 3rd to discuss mandates.

VIII. ADMINISTRATION: Sara Folsted

- A. Motion by Steve Underdahl, seconded by Jeff Docken to go into Closed Session under MN Statute 13D.05 Subd.3 (C)(3) to develop or consider offers or counteroffers for the purchase or sale of real or personal property. Parcel Id's include the North 1/2 of 18.31.1.26.262, 18.31.1.26.267, 18.31.1.26.264, 18.31.1.26.263, 18.31.1.26.261, 18.31.1.26.266 and 18.31.1.26.272.

Result: Approved Jeff Docken, Steve Underdahl, Gerry Hoisington, Galen Malecha, Jim Purfeerst,
NAYS: None

Motion by Steve Underdahl, seconded by Jeff Docken to go out of Closed Session at 10:13 a.m.

Result: Approved Jeff Docken, Steve Underdahl, Gerry Hoisington, Galen Malecha, Jim Purfeerst,
NAYS: None

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Jeff Docken, seconded by Steve Underdahl, to adjourn the meeting.

RESULT: Approved, AYES: Steve Underdahl, Galen Malecha, Jeff Docken, Jim Purfeerst, Gerry Hoisington, NAYS: None