

Sioux County Board Minutes



Sioux County Board of Commissioners

Harrison, Nebraska

September 5, 2019

The Sioux County Board of Commissioners met at the Sioux County Courthouse meeting room September 5, 2019 at 1:00 p.m. with the following present: Commissioners Hal Downer, Josh Skavdahl and J.W. Geiser. Also present was County Clerk Michelle Zimmerman. Motion made by Geiser, seconded by Downer to approve the agenda. On roll call vote, Downer, yes; Geiser, yes; Skavdahl, yes. Motion carried. The pledge of allegiance was recited. Josh Skavdahl opened the meeting in prayer. Reference was made to the Open Meeting Laws posted in the meeting room.

A public hearing was opened at 1:00 to hear public comment on the 2019-2020 Sioux County Budget.

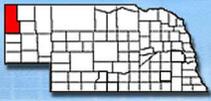
Members of the public wishing to address the board were asked to come forward with their concerns.

Jack Buhr addressed the board stating that the board has spent time crunching numbers, now the point is how much to spend. I think you did it upside down. I think we take what we've got and figure out how to spend it best. The increase is unreasonable, unconscionable, with an 18% increase in the current calf market and real estate markets being flat. The change in valuation is in personal property. Sioux County is probably as pure of a ranching economy as anywhere in the state. There are not many off-farm jobs. We can't let tax move contrary to where the revenue comes from. Use the current tax rate, with the valuation, then spend according to that. Commissioner Skavdahl advised that FEMA money will be coming in, but we have to complete the work, and may not be reimbursed for 18-24 months. There is \$200,00 to \$300,000 worth of work to be reimbursed for. Buhr stated that if you increase the tax rate to pay for that, you're not going to roll it back. Skavdahl said they have very high hopes that they will be able to. Buhr said that is a lot of money. An 18% increase with a market that we have now, and a decline in personal property, timing is terrible. If you need to raise money for FEMA work, borrow it. It's a bankable transaction.

Commissioner Geiser stated that we are talking major damages from storms, and we're trying to get things back where they should be. He'd like to get to a point where we can move forward, instead of just maintaining. We're going backward now, we have had fairly significant blizzards and floods in the last three years. Buhr stated that it didn't get run down overnight, it happened over quite a few years. We don't have the resources to do it like you're proposing, do it at a rate we can afford. Roads are pretty bad in many places and we have to live with what we've got, spend money the best way we can. We can't move at that pace, cannot take an increase like that, it's not good management.

Jodi Thomsen addressed the board stating that her concern is that already our taxes are high. You are going to lose your community if your kids don't come back. The tax is more than our sons make in wages. In a good year, it takes 80-100 calves to pay for our property taxes in a year. Thomsen questioned the hiring of another deputy, and how many people the county is providing health insurance for. They are still not seeing road graders. I'm certain I didn't say raise taxes, but I had complained we just wanted a loader to fix the culvert with a giant hole in it, but it still isn't fixed. Thomsen would like to see about expanding the tax base. The Village of Harrison needs to pay for fire protection and the deputy. Ranchers do not have a high standard of living. County Attorney Edmund responded that that has been discussed, and can be looked at again.

Joe Falkenburg asked about health insurance for county employees. It was explained that the county pays 80% of the premium and the employee pays 20%.



Sioux County Board Minutes



Dan Jordan said that Sioux County has one of the lowest tax rates in the State of Nebraska. If we need more money, we can do that, but it's still going to be one of the lowest. Jordan said I think you're doing a good job, doing what you can with what you've got.

County Attorney Edmund advised those in attendance of the history of levies over the past several years. We had three or four years that we didn't change the tax asking. At that time, we weren't keeping up. Jodi Thomsen stated that the roads were better maintained in 2001. Jack Buhr stated there is a lesson in how flat the values are. Agriculture is paying the taxes. Jodi Thomsen said, so one year the rancher makes money, we up the taxes? The board was asked if cuts had been made, they said yes, two full-time positions have been cut in the road department, and the extension office has been cut as well.

Jory Geiser stated that the biggest gripe is the county roads. You can't fix something without money. It just takes that much more money to fix the roads. Geiser thinks the Sheriff and weed budgets should be looked at. If 18% increase is going to make or break you on the ranch this year, it probably was going to anyway.

Discussion was held with Bryan Lange regarding working on his county road. Liability issues and obtaining liability insurance was discussed. One of the commissioners would have to approve the work done.

Joe Falkenburg asked the reason to not borrow money rather than raise taxes. Once you make a tax, you never lose it. Falkenburg questioned whether there is an agreement with the Village for police services. Sheriff McCumbers replied that the incident case number has tripled in the last two years, from trespassing and DUI numbers increasing dramatically. Most of the increase is happening at the south end of the county. Falkenburg suggested putting a report in the paper so taxpayers see what the sheriff's office is doing. McCumbers stated that we don't have a daily paper, and that he doesn't have time to write press releases. They are busy with law enforcement, but have log books.

John Geiser supported raising the tax, saying you can't gripe about the roads without giving extra money, we need new gravel on the roads. Go to the school board and some of the other places where big chunks come from. If it doesn't educate the kids, we don't need it.

Commissioner Geiser stated there are three kinds of people, those that want lower taxes with no road repairs, those that want to tax more and want the roads fixed, and those that want to lower taxes and fix roads. Jodi Thomsen stated that we pay a lot of taxes and want roads fixed with the money the county has.

Jory Geiser stated, can we budget more to roads? Then yes, that's what I want, the whole 18% increase to go to the roads.

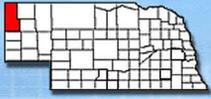
The public hearing was closed at 2:00 and the board convened into regular session.

RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION AND APPROPRIATIONS

WHEREAS, a proposed County Budget for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020, prepared by the Budget Making Authority, was transmitted to the County Board on the 5th day of September, 2019.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Commissioners of Sioux County, Nebraska, as follows:

SECTION 1: That the budget for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020, as categorically evidenced by the Budget Document be, and the same hereby is, adopted as the Budget for Sioux County for said fiscal year.



Sioux County Board Minutes



SECTION 2: That the offices, departments, activities and institutions herein named are hereby authorized to expend the amounts herein appropriated to them during the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2019, and ending June 30, 2020.

SECTION 3: That the income necessary to finance the appropriations made and the expenditures authorized shall be provided out of the unencumbered cash balance in each fund, revenues, other than taxation, to be collected during the fiscal year in each fund, and tax levy requirements for each fund.

Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote. The 2019-2020 Sioux County Budget will require a Property Tax Request of \$1,413,626.00, resulting in a proposed tax rate of .215842. Motion made by J.W. Geiser to approve the 2019-2020 budget, seconded by Hal Downer. On roll call vote: Downer, yes; Geiser, yes; Skavdahl, yes. Motion carried. Commissioner Skavdahl added that with the situation the county is in with the FEMA work and potential reimbursement, hopefully we will have a sizeable cash reserve this year, and hope the levy can come down.

A motion was also made by Hal Downer, seconded by J.W. Geiser, to approve an additional one percent increase in the base limitation of restricted funds. Roll call vote, Downer, yes; Skavdahl; yes; Geiser, yes. Motion carried.

Jill Balcom was present to ask the county to financially support Purple Pride. Commissioner Geiser expressed concerns regarding a breakdown in the organization. He would like a plan and how it's going to be done. Skavdahl said that as a representative of the taxpayers, he can't support it this year without more information. Commissioner Downer asked if the scholarships are available to kids living in the south end of the county, as those parents are taxpayers as well. Balcom replied, no, it is only for Sioux County High School graduates. Balcom was advised that nothing will be contributed this fiscal year.

The previous road mowing contract was reviewed. Commissioner Downer moved, seconded by Skavdahl that due to exigent circumstances on Monroe Canyon, Jory Geiser-JoryCorp, was authorized to mow along the road. On roll call vote, Downer, yes; Skavdahl, yes. Geiser abstained. Motion carried. The board will advertise for countywide mowing along county roads.

Discussion was held on raises for Noel Santistevan and Sarah Sanderson. Motion made by Downer, seconded by Geiser to approve a .50 per hour raise for Santistevan. On roll call vote, Downer, yes; Geiser, yes; Skavdahl, yes. Motion carried. Motion made by Geiser, seconded by Downer to approve a 3% raise for Sarah Sanderson, based on the library board's approval. On roll call vote, Downer, yes; Geiser, yes; Skavdahl, yes. Motion carried.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 P.M. The Sioux County Board of Commissioners will meet October 1, 2019.

/s/J.W. Geiser
Vice Chairman of the Board

/s/Michelle J. Zimmerman
Sioux County Clerk