

# COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ST. LOUIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

February 20, 2024

Location: St. Louis County Courthouse, Duluth, Minnesota

Present: Commissioners Harala, Boyle, Grimm, McDonald, Jugovich and Chair Nelson

Absent: Commissioner Musolf

Convened: Chair Nelson called the meeting to order at 10:28 a.m.

---

## CONSENT AGENDA

Harala/Boyle moved to approve the consent agenda. Item #2, Authorization to Apply and Accept Funding from the DOJ, OJP, BJA, CDC and SJI Released by the Institute for Intergovernmental Research and Contract with Well Being Development [24-70] was removed from the consent agenda for separate consideration. The motion passed. (6-0, Musolf absent)

- Minutes of February 6, 2024
- Authorization to Apply and Accept FY2023 HUD NOFO Planning Grant Funding for St. Louis County Continuum of Care and Authorize PHHS to Contract with Community Partners [24-69]
- Authorization to Apply and Accept the Minnesota PLSS Monument Grant Program for Land Survey PLSS Restoration Maintenance [24-71]
- Acquisition of Right-of-Way for Intersection Improvement Project on CSAH 21 in Embarrass Township; CP 0021-590660 [24-72]
- Acquisition of Right-of-Way for Intersection Improvement Project on CSAH 103 & CSAH 109 in the City of Mountain Iron; CP 0103-677359 [24-73]
- Abatement List for Board Approval [24-74]
- Authorization to Apply for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Voucher Program [24-75]
- Joint Powers Agreement with the Minnesota Internet Crimes Against Child Task Force [24-76]
- Mutual Aid Agreement with the Bureau of Indian Affairs [24-77]
- Sale or Disposal of Abandoned Personal Property on State Tax-Forfeited Land [24-78]

---

## Health & Human Services Committee

Boyle/McDonald moved that the St. Louis County Board authorizes Public Health and Human Services (PHHS) to apply and accept \$100,000 from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance through the Institute for Intergovernmental Research for the period of March 1, 2024, to May 31, 2025; and further, authorizes PHHS to contract with Well Being Development to manage the project and provide administration of the work plan for the period March 1, 2024, to May 31, 2025. [24-70]. Commissioner Boyle commented that Commissioner McDonald completed the Reaching Rural Fellowship, so the project qualifies for funding. After further discussion, the motion passed. (6-0, Musolf absent)

Boyle/Harala moved that the St. Louis County Board authorizes the reallocation of a 1.0 FTE Social Services Specialist I position (Position code 0931-003, Pay Grade B13, Step 1) to a 1.0 FTE Planner position (Pay Grade B20, Step 1) in the Public Health and Human Services Department, resulting in an annual increase of \$11,310, to be accounted for in Fund 230, Agency 232001, Object 610100. [24-79]. County Administrator Kevin Gray commented that the change is part of Director Mirsch's initiative to do a comprehensive assessment on how the county can best deliver services to citizens. The motion passed. (6-0, Musolf absent)

---

### **Public Works & Transportation Committee**

Jugovich/McDonald moved that the St. Louis County Board authorizes the purchase of thirty-one (31) fleet vehicles from North Country GM, of Hibbing, MN, at the State of Minnesota Contract Pricing of \$1,246,726.63. [24-80]. Commissioner Harala commented that she was pleased that the vehicles were purchased from a local vendor. Commissioner Nelson noted that sales tax is \$3,402.86 for each vehicle. Commissioner Jugovich said that since the COVID pandemic, the county has been forced to use the state contract for purchasing vehicles due to the lack of local inventory and he was pleased that a local vendor has been able to supply the vehicles. The motion passed. (6-0, Musolf absent)

Jugovich/McDonald moved to award a bid to Northern Industrial Erectors, Grand Rapids, MN, in the amount of \$1,227,750 for project 5731BI-1, fabric building installation for salt/sand domes and cold storage buildings at the Culver, Kugler, and Whiteface maintenance facilities. [24-81]. Commissioner Boyle commented that would be supportive of using Transportation Sales Tax funds for these type of projects in the future. The motion passed. (6-0, Musolf absent)

---

### **Central Management & Intergovernmental Committee**

McDonald/Harala moved that the St. Louis County Board authorizes the appropriate county officials to execute the Supplemental Labor Agreement permitting flexible work schedules for employees in the Public Works Engineering Division with exclusive representatives of AFSCME Council 5, on behalf of the Civil Service Basic bargaining unit. [24-82]. Commissioner McDonald commented that the flex schedule would not be used during the heavy construction timeframe. The motion passed. (6-0, Musolf absent)

---

### **Public Safety & Corrections Committee**

Grimm/Harala moved that the St. Louis County Board authorizes the allocation of the one-time Public Safety Aid in the amount of \$3,423,415 to be accounted for in the Attorney's expense budget (\$905,000) and the Sheriff's expense budget (\$2,518,415), with funds transferred from the 2023 Public Safety Aid fund balance, Fund 100, Object 311764. [24-83]. County Attorney Kim Maki commented that the Attorney's Office has had trouble recruiting and retaining attorneys. St. Louis County Undersheriff Jason Akerson provided the Board with an overview regarding how the Sheriff's Office will use the funding. Among the uses include mental health support for staff, getting everyone in the county on the same records management system, and conducting a staffing needs study. After further discussion, the motion passed. (6-0, Musolf absent)

---

## Environment & Natural Resources Committee

Jugovich/Nelson moved that the St. Louis County Board approves the 2024 Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention Aid; and further, that the appropriate county officials are authorized to execute contracts negotiated by the Planning and Zoning Director and a representative of the County Attorney in order to implement the aid program, payable from Fund 100, Agency 109999, Grant 10910, Year 2024 or its designated fund. [24-84]. Commissioner Harala temporarily stepped out of the meeting from 11:19 a.m. to 11:22 a.m. St. Louis County Planning and Zoning Director Ryan Logan noted that this is the eleventh year of funding. Zach Burnside, Invasive Species Program Coordinator of Wildlife Forever, discussed the Clean Drain Dry Initiative. In 2023 they developed a risk analysis process to identify the most critical public access points. John Uteck, Aquatic Invasive Species Program Coordinator of the North St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District, provided the Board with a handout and gave the Board an update of how the funding was used in 2023. Nancy Watkins, AIS Co-Leader of the Vermilion Lake Association, updated the Board on how the association worked at landing sites to train boaters on how to keep their boats clean and briefly discussed how funding will be used in 2024. After further discussion, the motion passed. (6-0, Musolf absent)

Board letter [24-85] - Commencement of termination of contract C22180059 for repurchase of state tax-forfeited lands was returned to Administration. No Board action taken.

Jugovich/Nelson moved that the St. Louis County Board approves commencement of termination of the contracts for purchase or repurchase of state tax-forfeited lands listed, according to the provisions of Minn. Stat. §§ 282.01, subd. 5, 282.40, and 559.21; and further, that the St. Louis County Auditor is authorized to sell or dispose of any abandoned personal property left remaining on the parcels described herein after making reasonable effort to provide at least 28 days' notice to the former owner, taxpayer, or any current occupants. [24-86]. Steven Waschbisch, of Aurora, commented that he fell behind in his taxes two years ago due to health issues and indicated that he would be able to pay \$600 a month. Mr. Waschbisch requested that his contract be extended. Commissioner Nelson asked if this could be moved to a future date to allow staff to work with citizens. Land and Minerals Director Julie Marinucci recommended that the Board hold the same dates; changing the approval dates would create notice issues. After further discussion, the motion passed without recommendation. (6-0, Musolf absent)

---

## COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION ITEMS AND REPORTS

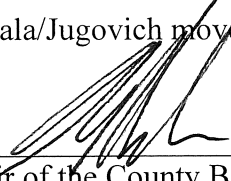
Commissioner Harla noted that Lake Superior College will be hosting a donor dinner on February 29<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Commissioner Harala said she appreciated spending time in Washington, D.C. with Administrator Gray and Commissioner McDonald and commented that it was beneficial to discuss issues with other counties across the country.

Commissioner McDonald commented that after meeting with other counties in Washington, D.C., St. Louis County is ahead of the curve. Commissioner McDonald mentioned that Ely recently hosted a successful Film Festival.

Chair Nelson handed out copies of letters that were sent to the Governor of Minnesota and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) regarding the hauling of solid waste from the old Gilbert dump to the Keewatin Industrial landfill. Commissioner Nelson said this practice deviates from MPCA policies and past practices and is asking for the regulatory agency to respond. Commissioner Nelson said

he had a phone conversation with the Deputy Commissioner of the MPCA last Friday and was told they could potentially have a written response to the county this week. Commissioner Nelson noted that the initial letter was sent to the MPCA on January 5, 2024.

At 12:08 p.m., Harala/Jugovich moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed. (6-0, Musolf absent)



---

Keith Nelson, Chair of the County Board



---

Phil Chapman, Clerk of the County Board