

Minutes of the Board of Ward County Commissioners Special Meeting

February 14, 2018

A special meeting of the Ward County Commission was called to order by Chairman Walter at 9:00 a.m. with Comms. Fjeldahl, Louser, Rostad and Weppler present. Also present were department heads: Betty Braun, Bob Barnard, Dana Larsen, Devra Smestad, Ryan Kamrowski, Amanda Schooling, and Leona Lochthowe.

Ryan Kamrowski appeared to schedule a date for the annual Ward County Equalization Board meeting. He proposed the date of June 1, 2018 at 8:30 a.m. Meeting should be in the first ten days of June.

Moved by Comm. Fjeldahl, seconded by Comm. Louser to schedule the Ward County Equalization Board meeting for June 1, 2018 at 8:30 a.m. Roll call; all voted yes; motion carried.

Genny Dienstman from the North Dakota Association of Counties appeared to give input regarding the HR Director position. She presented information about the structure of the position as well as information based on other counties of similar size and those that have HR Directors and/or HR Director/Risk Manager positions. She pointed out that it is important to be very clear about defining the role of that position versus what the commissioners are responsible for. Ms. Dienstman also said it is important to understand how the State's Attorney's office works in conjunction with the HR Department.

In addition, Ms. Dienstman reviewed the proposed job description and made some changes. She advised the group that a job description is a living document and is subject to change. In essence, it is the basis to hire a position but is not written in stone. The description should set out the essential job functions of what is required of the position. She highlighted some of the changes and additions she made to the first draft.

The commissioners responded with questions and discussion in regard to Ms. Dienstman's presentation. They also requested additional information about the counties she used in the presentation (Morton, McKenzie, Williams, Burleigh), specifically how many employees are in their HR Departments and how many people work in those particular counties. Chuck Horter, also from the North Dakota Association of Counties, appeared to clarify issues when called upon.

The department heads present were asked if they had any input. Dana Larsen, Highway Department, gave input regarding the relationship between HR and the State's Attorney's office. He also gave an example of work done in their office regarding an employee's VISA and mentioned it would be very helpful to have an HR person to be able to take that over as it was a detailed and lengthy process.

There was extensive discussion regarding the support positions proposed—a Payroll Technician to support the HR Director and a Senior Accountant to support the Auditor/Treasurer’s Office. It has been suggested that the positions be combined at present with the possibility of hiring an additional person once the workload has been evaluated for the 2019 budget year. Lora Johnson from the Auditor/Treasurer’s Office appeared and clarified her duties in relation to the newly suggested position.

Ms. Smestad recently attended a conference and relayed that many groups, when hiring a major position such as the HR Director, use outside organizations and in this case, specifically mentioned Eide Bailey. Genny Dienstman told the group that this is becoming a more common practice and the cost is dependent on the level of service requested. The Commissioners requested additional information regarding what using an outside agency will cost and the names of other agencies that provide the same services.

Dana Larsen was able to contact Morton, McKenzie, Williams and Burleigh Counties to get specific information about their HR Departments and how many people work in each county.

Burleigh – 3 HR employees, 350 employed in the county

McKenzie – searching for an HR Director, 200 employed in the county

Morton – 1 HR employee with assistance from the Auditor’s office, 270 employed in the county

Williams – 3 HR employees, 205 employed in the county

Moved by Comm. Wepler, seconded by Comm. Louser to advertise and hire a Payroll Technician/Senior Accountant as soon as possible at Level 19 to be supervised by the Auditor/Treasurer. Roll call; all voted yes; motion carried.

The question was posed about where the money will come from for the HR Director position. There will be savings in the amount of approximately \$11,000.00 from Colleen Houmann’s position to the new Payroll Technician/Senior Accountant position. The cost for the new HR position will be around \$100,000.00. This topic will be addressed at the next Commission meeting on February 20th.

At 10:30 a.m. with no further business, the meeting was adjourned.