

July 25th, 2024, Steele County Commission Meeting

The Steele County Commission meeting was called to order at 8:00 am. Present were Commissioners Perry Brown, Brandon Krueger, Brandon Oxton and Chris Grandalen. Also present, Auditor Jana Flaten and Ben Gates. Commissioner Strand attended via Zoom.

The 2025 budget was discussed. Laurie Tuite with the JDA came to discuss their current budget and the 2025 budget. Numbers are the same from 2024. No new changes.

Isabella Hermanson with the Soil Conservation came to talk about the 2025 budget and to explain why they are asking for 2.5 mils. They have had some big purchases in the last year to update old pieces of equipment. They needed to update the planter that is over 30 years old, then needed a new trailer to pull the planter along with a new truck to pull the new trailer, as the old one was old and not able to be pulled. There are also some items that need to be fixed at the building like the broken garage door and the refrigerator system in the tree shed, which will need to be replaced soon. The Soil Conservation is quadrupling the number of tresses getting planted from previous years. They need to update things in dire need as well. The Commissioners are happy to hear trees are getting planted and have no problem going up to the 2.5 mils for the 2025 budget.

Gates gave a brief rundown of the salary schedule for the Commissioners. He also presented them with a new step and grade sheet with the 4% COLA. Commissioners would like to see a split between COLA and wages and not have it lumped together as it is currently. Gates will work with Flaten to get this done.

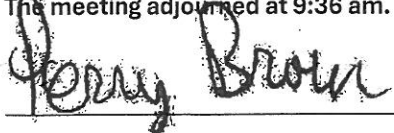
Auditor Flaten discussed healthcare benefits and that we are one of the 13 counties that offer 75% (paid by the county) or below for family healthcare. Most other county pay for a family plan fully or are closer to 85% paid for. She discussed raising the percentage the county pays to compete better with other counties. In doing so, it will make a huge difference in hiring or having someone stay for longer periods of time. Flaten will get together the prices and organize the numbers and email them later today.

Auditor Flaten also discussed having a holding account to hold the carryover money from the Capital fund project account. We currently have a budget for outside work for the courthouse and have not used a lot of it but instead of budgeting for it every year just carry it over to the holding account. That way we don't need to continue to budget large sums of money year after year.

Ottertail Power will be doing maintenance on wind towers and would like to handle the road maintenance while the project is going on, with the guidance of the county and permission of the county and Riverside township. A motion was made to let Ottertail use the designated haul road during the project by Commissioner Oxton, seconded by Commissioner Krueger. No further discussion, all members voted aye. Motion carried. Gates will reach out to Riverside and discuss this with them.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Commissioner Strand, seconded by Commissioner Grandalen. No further discussion, all members voted aye. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 9:36 am.



Chairman Perry Brown



Auditor Jana Flaten