

**ALGER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING**

May 14, 2012

Minutes are subject to corrections and approval

Pursuant to recess, the Alger County Board of Commissioners convened in the conference room of the county building at 4:00 p.m. on the above date.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Doucette with the following Commissioners present: Commissioners Mattson, Pullen, Rondeau, VanLandschoot, and Doucette. Absent ó none.

The board of commissioners said the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public comment session was open. There was no public comment from the floor; thus, the public comment session was closed.

It was the consensus of the board to look at the minutes and make a motion at Monday's regular board meeting. The agenda was presented.

John Basse from Pathways gave a presentation on their insurance carrier, Employee Benefits Agency, Inc., on how they use them and being self-insured. He handed out to the board members and discussed their Deficit Spending Reduction Plan saying that this is a smaller version of what he filed with the state. He said that the plan goes from a current deficit reduction action from staff reductions in 2009, to not insuring current staff retirees, to reduction of services provided to counties. John said that on the back of the document he put in the plan on how they handled the retiree health insurance benefit and the MERS benefit. He said that this plan is the same plan that applies for everybody, including retirees. He said that the retirees have been receptive to the plan because it is also for the current staff. He said that the experience with Employee Benefits Agency, Inc. has been very well, that they work with them, and that they give them the proposals that they want. John said that they have paid a very minuscule fee for administration over the last couple of years, being a couple percent. He said that the biggest age group of users is 45 ó 50 years of age and that they have a \$130,000 stop loss on their policy. He said that all of the employees really like working with them. John said that the employees pay \$17 to \$50 per month for their health insurance. He said that Pathway's policy is to share the cost with everyone and are working on graduated expenses with the employees. Commissioner Doucette asked from 1 to 10 what do they rate Employee Benefits Agency. John said that they really are good. Pathways is also using Employee Benefits Agency as a third party administrator. He said that they can tweak things to work. He said that last year they went from a 15% increase on insurance down to zero. John said that Employee Benefits Agency is a good outfit and that they will come up with some innovative strategies. He said that they would hustle for the county. Commissioner Mattson said that he checked with LMAS Health Department and they also use them and spoke very highly of them.

Terri Grout from the Alger County Conservation District was present and said that they obtained a small Micorps start-up grant which will enable them to do some preliminary macro invertebrates and basic chemical monitoring with the Bohemian Creek north of Lammi's and Slapneck Creek just north of M94, which will enable them to apply for a larger two to three year grant later. She discussed some events coming up and will stick some brochures in the commissioner's boxes. She wanted to ask the board for a resolution or a letter of support for a grant proposal for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). She said that this is pretty big money and is a no-match grant. She said that there are several categories to apply for. One is a Non-Point Source Pollution Reduction, that is culvert replacement, and that they will try to put in another application for Invasive Species Removal. She said they are not allowed to combine them into a single project. She is asking to submit a letter of support for either or both applications depending on whether she has time to put both of them in. She said there would be no money involved. The deadline is in three weeks. It was the consensus of the board to approve the letter of support.

There was discussion on a laptop computer which is for communication with the computer system in the EOC (Emergency Operations Center) and externally via internet. This unit will allow the Emergency Manager better data communication and planning when away from the EOC and if the EOC becomes untenable, the Emergency Manager will be able to take the Emergency Action Guidelines, Emergency Operations Procedures, AOG & SOG's the emergency contact lists to the site of the secondary EOC. The grant request for \$3,000 was accepted by the State of Michigan and Steve is requesting the board for approval to purchase the laptop. It was the consensus of the board to authorize Steve Webber with Emergency Management to purchase a laptop from Compudyne in the amount of \$2,785. There will be a recommendation at next Monday's board meeting on where the monies will be taken from.

There was discussion about a need for most of the Alger Fire Departments which do not have sufficient radio communication for field operations. A lack of radio communications may become a serious issue this coming summer as they prepare for the forest fire operations, as well as in the future and for structure fires. They would like to purchase 60 radios. The grant request of \$15,000 was accepted by the State of Michigan and Steve is requesting the board's approval using the MIDEAL (state bid process). It was discussed that if they were successful in the bid process, they wish to use any unspent monies for the acquisition of additional portable radios until every firefighter of the eight Alger Fire Departments has communication. It was the consensus of the board to authorize Steve Webber with Emergency Management to acquire bids for VHF radios in the amount of \$15,000. There will be a recommendation at next Monday's board meeting on where the monies will be taken from.

There was discussion that during the February 9th Snow and Ice Storm Homeland Security Exercise, a critical need for electrical generators was identified by the LEPC and EOC operatives. They are looking for two generators. Steve discussed on where they wanted to put the generators. The grant request of \$8,000 was accepted by the State of Michigan and Steve is requesting board approval to go out on bids for the acquisition of 15KW portable generators. It was the consensus of the board to authorize Steve Webber with Emergency Management to go out on bids for two generators in the amount of \$8,000. There will be a recommendation at next Monday's board meeting on where the monies will be taken from.

There was discussion on Employee Benefits Agency, Inc. Commissioner Pullen asked if Commissioner Doucette had the letter. He said he would like to go ahead with this and bring them in as a third party administrator. He said that it gives the employees 24/7 assistance. He said that the employees will be taken care of. It was discussed that some of the commissioners were supposed to get comments from other entities that use Employee Benefits Agency. Commissioner Mattson said that he checked with LMAS and spoke very highly of Employee Benefits. It was the consensus of the board to move forward to hire Employee Benefits Agency, Inc. to be Alger County's insurance provider and third party administrator.

There was discussion on the state's audit with unemployment benefits for the year 2009. The state's determinations were for Howard G. Masters, Pamela Johnson, Allison Thomma, Janet Morrison, Michael Rozek, Joseph Cilc, Brad Heikkila, Patrick Suboski, and Lynne Maki. The clerk explained that unemployment benefits were not paid on Lynne Maki because on the state's website, it excluded magistrates. The other employees were contracted employees paid out of accounts payable and those went through board bills. According to the State of Michigan, the courts have developed a test called the "economic reality test" to determine if a person is an independent contractor, or is actually an employee. According to the Determinations that based on a field audit review in 2011, the Agency concluded that the services performed by the individuals ARE "employment" as defined in Section 42(5) of the MES Act and remuneration earned in payment for the employment IS wages as defined in Section 44(1) of the MES Act. It was discussed that the county provides equipment and some supplies to perform their services. The clerk said that she emailed the state to ask for some direction. The state replied to ask the county's auditor. According Jim with Anderson Tackman (the county's auditor) Alger County should be adding those individuals as employees through payroll. There was much discussion on what ripple effects this could have. Jim said that if the IRS came in and did an audit and found those Determinations, they would hold the county liable for not taking action. It was the consensus of the board to authorize the chair to acquire a legal opinion from Cohl Stoker Toskey & McGlinchey in Lansing on those unemployment benefits.

There was discussion on the Friend of the Court contract between William W. Carmody, Chief Judge of the 11th Judicial Circuit Court and Anne B. McNamara, Attorney at Law dated on 04/13/12. The contract is in consideration for performance of the duties as aforesaid Judge Carmody agrees to pay to Anne B. McNamara the sum of \$24,750 per annum, payable in monthly installments per county. Alger County's is one (1) monthly payment of \$1083.37 and eleven (11) monthly payments of \$1083.33 for a total of \$13,000. The terms of the appointment commence on January 1, 2012 and end on December 31, 2012. There was discussion that there was a judicial meeting where Judge Carmody asked for raises for two Schoolcraft County employees that were denied by Alger and Luce counties at the judicial meeting. It was the consensus of the board to authorize the chair to send a letter denying the raise to Anne McNamara.

There was discussion about what authority the judicial committee may have. The resolution was also discussed and what the resolution says. Commissioner Mattson described what happened at the judicial meeting with the members sitting on the judicial committee and asked what authority they have binding the counties, including raises. It was the consensus of the board to have the committee follow the resolution and that it is the committee's responsibility to do that.

There was discussion on a letter that was received from Christine Krueger, M.D. resigning as the Chief Medical Examiner of Alger County effective as of May 31, 2012. It was the consensus of the board to authorize the clerk to advertise for a medical examiner. The clerk is to check with the Prosecutor's office as to the state mandates for this position and for previous ads. It was discussed to place the ad in the Action Shopper, Munising News and possibly the Mining Journal.

There was discussion for the treasurer to purchase two computers in the amount of \$2,452. The treasurer said that one computer will come from the Limestone Summer Tax Fund in the amount of \$1,226 and the other computer will be split between the foreclosure fund and the treasurer's office. It was the consensus of the board to authorize the treasurer to purchase the two computers from Compudyne.

There was discussion on the Board of Commissioner's website regarding their emails and telephone numbers. They are to be added to the website by the treasurer.

Discussion was held regarding the county applying for a visa credit card and why the county would need one. It was the consensus of the board to authorize the treasurer to apply for a visa credit card through Citizens Bank with a limit of \$500.

Old business was next. There was none.

It was the consensus of the board to approve the appropriation to Pathways for their quarterly mental health payment in the amount of \$8,305 (101-649-969.000).

It was the consensus of the board to approve the appropriation to NorthCare Network substance abuse payment in the amount of \$12,436 (101-631-969.000).

It was the consensus of the board to approve payment of all of the board bills as recommended by the audit committee with the exception of two. One bill was for Anne McNamara with her raise attached. This was discussed on a previous agenda item. Her original pay of \$979 was approved. The other was from District Court for an ad to the Munising News regarding District Champs. That bill was Judge Luoma's and was brought back to District Court.

It was the consensus of the board to approve the financial reports for all funds. A full 30-page report is available upon request with the treasurer.

There were no miscellaneous financial matters.

There were no resolutions.

Committee reports were next. Commissioner VanLandschoot discussed that he will be attending the AMCAB meetings. Commissioner Doucette said that he and Commissioner Mattson attended a community corrections meeting and that they got community corrections rolling. It was discussed that in 2013 they wanted to start charging for services. He said that they will be asking around to see what would work and how much to charge. Commissioner Doucette said that he would like board permission for the clerk to send out second notices on cost allocation monies. There was discussion on the cost allocation letter from MGT and that the letter was sent without the board authorizing MGT to send out the letter. Commissioner Doucette said that they are nowhere with the courthouse union contract and discussed what has been happening. He said that he was thinking about calling in Attorney Cannello to negotiate the contract and that he wants the legal fees to come out of their contract. He said that there has not been a lot of discussion with the court regarding the new union and that the court departments still have a lot to figure out.

Correspondence was read, discussed, and will be filed.

Board comments were next. Commissioner Rondeau said that the Brownfield conference with MAC (Michigan Association of Counties) was very informative. There was discussion on what a TIF (Tax Increment Financing) was. There was much discussion on the Brownfield Authority and what could happen in the City and about sawmills in Rock River. He talked about the individuals in Chatham that are building an Oasis gas station. Commissioner Rondeau talked about the signs he put up for the ice caves. There were no further comments.

Staff comments were next. There were none.

Public comment session was open. There was no public comment; thus, the public comment session was closed.

This meeting is now adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Jerry Doucette, Chairman
Alger County Board of Commissioners

Mary Ann Froberg
Alger County Clerk