

LINN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
CEDAR RAPIDS, LINN COUNTY, IOWA
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2024 9:00 A.M.

The Board met in session at the Linn County Jean Oxley Public Service Center. Present: Chairperson Running-Marquardt, Vice Chairperson Rogers and Supervisor Zumbach (arriving at 9:05 a.m.). Board members voting "AYE" unless otherwise noted.

Chairperson Running-Marquardt called the meeting to order.

Motion by Rogers, seconded by Running-Marquardt to approve minutes of October 14, 2024 as printed.

Motion by Rogers, seconded by Running-Marquardt to approve claims dated 10/11/24 for payroll deduction checks #71015820 - #71015824 in the amount of \$595.33, ACH in the amount of \$21,112.40, an EFT wire in the amount of \$50,414.73 and a Ceridian ER Funds Trust Wire in the amount of \$2,185,175.26, for a total of \$2,257,297.72.

The Board received updates from the following Department Heads:

Charlie Nichols, Planning & Development Dir. – Quarterly department goal: Work on improving communication between the department and homeowners acting as their own general contractors; budget is on track; assisting the Mt. Vernon City Council on current state of King's Chapel (temporary safeguards have been put in place); clerical staff remains extremely busy; Unified Development Code text amendments addressing required setbacks and allowing tiny homes to be constructed for uses as accessory dwelling units; Dows Preliminary Plat and proposed changes to Dows Farm Governing Plan; and permit activity year to date.

Chairperson Running-Marquardt clarified that Linn County has contracted inspectors for the City of Mt. Vernon and the city is the enforcer. Linn County has communicated many times with Cornell College and Mt. Vernon City Council. Both parties have been fully advised.

Britt Hutchins, Purchasing Dir. – fully staffed and budget on target; postage statistics; working with Elections for mailing absentee ballots; worked on bids for Health Dept., IT, Conservation, Engineering, Sheriff, LCCS, Facilities and Mental Health Access Center.

Steve Estenson, Risk Management Dir. – Reportable Injury Summary 2024 (Sheriff & Juvenile Detention have the highest incidents); 277 employees attended the Health & Safety Fair this year (Elected Officials and Dept. Heads encouraged employees to attend); the county employee's fitness centers no longer have a monthly fee; FEMA disaster projects are moving along (demo of County Home and Dows barns and Conservation's bike trails at Wanatee).

Chairperson Running-Marquardt thanked Estenson for making health and safety a priority for the employees of Linn County. She also recognized the work of the Safety Committee.

Discussion continued regarding recent disasters and homeowners' insurance that has been in the news lately. Estenson stated that Linn County must reapply for insurance every year.

Luke Fischer, Facilities Dir. – Working on strategic goals; classes staff has attended; budget on track; one vacancy; building preparations for Overflow Shelter; design meetings for Secondary Roads Headquarters; met with Alliant rep to discuss options for Interruptible power program, rebate programs and energy monitoring; moving to a cloud based Help Desk Ticket; involved in Correctional Center isolation cell buildouts; Conservation Geothermal extensions completed; added cameras and added security for elections; Sustainability office buildout (gathering quotes); Sheriff's Office roof is 90% complete; job description survey is in second phase of review; assisted with Health & Safety Fair; focusing on exterior lighting and identifying heating issue for buildings. Upgrade to lighting in the Davidson Bldg. (used Alliant rebate); and invited to Courthouse celebration meetings.

Joi Alexander, Communications Dir. – Quarterly department goal is Boards and Commissions vacancies and appointments; FY 25 KPI: Increase website accessibility compliance; Veteran Services name change; met with Recorder's Office to discuss passport renewals in office vs. online; Blue Bridge kiosk in place; working on a web page on the Secondary Roads Headquarters project; Covington Rd. project is taking longer than planned; created draft brochure for Sustainability Program; communications campaign & RFP for Mental Health Access Center (MHAC); Alliance for Equitable Housing (working with Cedar Rapids); General Assistance policy updates; Social Media: Hwy 30 turn lane project is complete (Facebook post) and working on an Instagram strategy; Courthouse 100 year anniversary planning meeting last week; working on FY24 PAFR; recent DOJ ruling on website accessibility, specifically PDF files may need converted as it mandates specific standards for making programs accessible to the public (compliance deadline April 24, 2026). Board Resolutions are not compliant as an example and there could be a budget impact.

Supervisor Zumbach asked that Alexander check into the State funding the MHAC communications campaign & RFP.

Chairperson Running-Marquardt stated that there is a barrier that needs to be eliminated as it relates to the MHAC and persons worried about insurance coverage. It's the private pay insurance individuals that know their plans and deductibles and costs for medications and visits that have that fear.

Public Comment:

Auditor Joel Miller commended Joi Alexander for her department's pro-active work with Elections during their preparation for the General Election. He noted that she is also a part of a group put together last week for planning for contingencies for elections and thanked her for that.

He also stated that he is speaking to the Board today to make the Board aware of outages yesterday and an email from IT sent this morning stating that everything is fine and recovered from yesterday. He stated that yesterday morning was not a good way to start a week when early voting starts tomorrow. He stated that they had staff in Accounts Payable that couldn't log in yesterday. It was off and on, couldn't read or respond to emails and lost time. They had trouble getting into systems in the morning and afternoon. The Real Estate Helpdesk was down all day and network and internet connections dropped continually throughout the day. The GIS program kept crashing and they lost edits that had been updated. Programs were slow, hit and miss. In Elections they knew they had problems at 7:21 a.m. at the Public Service Center. The DHCP server was down for the computers and phones. The IT Helpdesk was not staffed (it was back up by 7:35 a.m.). At the local storage facility, they had the same problems as the Public Service Center and had to restart the router to get reconnected. At another election's location, staff came in at 6:00 a.m. and couldn't work. Miller stated that they can't have this. They work in the Public Service Center and are in the public service industry. He has potentially 160,000 voters that may want to exercise their right to vote starting tomorrow. He is asking the Board to make it known that these things can not continue. He has personally contacted vendors and providers related to their internet and voice service. They have all been made aware that Oct. 16 – Nov. 16 is a very critical time. He met with the post office last week and they are instituting extra ordinary measures starting on Oct. 21 to basically ensure that the mail gets to us. Why? Because they don't want to be the headline saying that they somehow affected the outcome of any election. He encouraged the Board to think along those ways. He's thinking along those ways because he doesn't want to be the headline as to why people couldn't cast their ballot, why they couldn't call in and find out where their polling place was, why they didn't know what the hours were and why they didn't know where the satellites were. He doesn't think the Board wants to be the headline either. He reminded them that he fell on his sword two years ago because he made an error. He took the hit and the blame. He's not going to be so easily persuaded to take the blame for things that are under the Board's control for an office that reports to them, that office being IT. He suggested that IT come in and pre-check everything every day from now and through the election (and beyond) to ensure that the systems are up and running before the employees get to work (6 a.m. and 5 a.m. on election day). Things must work.

Adjournment at 10:22 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

JOEL D. MILLER, Linn County Auditor
By: Rebecca Shoop, Deputy Auditor

APPROVED BY:

KIRSTEN RUNNING-MARQUARDT, Chairperson
Board of Supervisors