

The Barnes County Commission met in a Special session for the North Dakota Association of Counties / North Dakota County Commissioners Association Presidents' Tour on Wednesday, July 12, 2017 with Mike Metcalf, John Froelich, and Rodger Berntson present. Cindy Schwehr and Bill Carblom were unable to attend. Chairman Metcalf called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Special Guests in attendance included:

- Bruce Strinden – President, ND County Commissioners Association / Morton County Commissioner
- Randi Suckut – President, ND Association of Counties / Wells County Commissioner
- Devra Smestad – 1st Vice President, NDACo / Ward County Auditor / Treasurer
- Terry Traynor – NDACo Assistant Director of Policy & Programs
- Jeff Eslinger – NDACo Communications Manager
- Donnell Preskey Hushka – NDACo Government / Public Relations Specialist

Discussion included:

- Budget concerns, specifically, due to the legislative changes that repealed the 12% State Paid discount, putting the burden back on the County property taxpayers, while shifting specific Social Services costs to the State, leaving the County to pick up the difference.
- Delayed State responses to Barnes County's 911 re-addressing project.
- Statewide Interoperable Radio Network (SIRN) equipment needs are being developed, but Barnes County needs to know sooner, rather than later, what will be required, as our equipment has reached end-of-life, and we need to plan for replacement costs now.
- Replacement of the current jail with an adequate facility is needed in the future.
- Implementation of Marcy's Law will cost the County additional money, as the revenue from the fines previously had been going to Abused Persons Outreach Center (APOC), and now part of that will be directed to the State. The Commission continues to support APOC, and has already committed to covering the difference via the General Fund.
- BreatheND and the Universal Vaccination program lost State support during the legislative session, as well. If the same level of service and support for these programs is to be maintained, but burden for this will fall on the local taxpayer.
- Taxpayer notification requirements instituted by the legislature will essentially move up the property tax calendar process, as well as create an additional run of "estimated" property tax statements. For Barnes County, this will cost us time and money for gathering the information from the taxing entities (schools, fire districts, park districts, cities, townships, and county entities), printing out an additional 15,000 statements (which are only estimates and should not be paid from, even though they will look a lot like the regular tax statements), and mailing of these notices (staffing, software changes, paper, postage and envelopes).
- Behavioral Health and crime due to Drug & Alcohol-related issues is a common theme across the State. There are not nearly enough resources to deal with the problems.
- Lack of coverage by the State Highway Patrol is an issue, due to budget cuts. They've asked for more officers, but the funding isn't there to support it, which puts more of the burden on the local Sheriff departments to cover Interstate and State highways.
- The changes to the property assessors training requirements have pros and cons: the pros are the improved consistency in training and applying the assessment principles in a fair and equal manner; the cons are fewer assessors, which puts more of the burden on the County.
- Passage of the marijuana bill has resulted in development of a system to implement the process by the State Health Department. On the local level, this means developing zoning regulations to handle any possible requests for grow farms or distribution centers.

With no further business, John Froelich made a motion, seconded by Rodger Berntson, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. After a short break, the guests toured the Courthouse.

Mike Metcalf, Chairman
Barnes County Commission

Beth M Didier
Barnes County Auditor