

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROSEAU COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

December 1, 2005

The Board of Commissioners of Roseau County, Minnesota met in the courthouse in the City of Roseau, Minnesota on Thursday, December 1, 2005, at 8:30 a.m. for the Roseau County Truth in Taxation Public Hearing. Commissioners present were Orris Rasmussen, Alan Johnston, Mark Foldesi, and Russell Walker. Commissioner Jack Stone was excused. County employees present included Auditor Anne Granitz, Deputy Auditor Martha Monsrud, County Engineer Brian Ketring, Social Services Director Dave Anderson, Sheriff Jule Hanson, Assistant County Attorney Lisa Hanson, Assessor Lorna Sandvik, Emergency Manager Gracia Nelson, Environmental Officer Jeff Pelowski, and County Coordinator Teresa Harren. Also present were the following citizens: Michelle Slater, Larry and Eleanor Gustafson, Eddy Kryska, Jim Jenson, Udell Lunde, Peter Beito, Floyd Haugen, Norma Haslerud, Etta Muirhead, Harry Muirhead, Iden Magnusson, Paul Starren, William Starren, Clint Gross, Mike Lorensen, Tim Johnson, Rick Kerner, B. Mielke, and Jon Jenson. Also present were members of the media.

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by County Board Chairman Orris Rasmussen. A motion was made by Commissioner Walker, seconded by Commissioner Foldesi, and carried by unanimous vote to approve the agenda as written.

Auditor Anne Granitz presented an overview of information on how property taxes are calculated, why property taxes vary from year to year, the current property tax classification rates, a breakdown of Roseau County net tax capacities by property type, tax comparison examples, and reviewed the 2006 proposed budget and levy.

The Board acknowledged the receipt of correspondence received from Glen Bergland.

Chair Rasmussen opened the meeting for public comment and questions. Pete Beito asked why the levy has increased so much in the past two years. Commissioner Johnston responded that it is a combination of a number of things including unfunded mandates, increased cost to do business, and flat/reduced funding from various funding sources.

Jon Jenson questioned why the Board could not make cuts. The Board explained that a number of cuts will be made. It was also acknowledged that for every citizen that request their taxes cut, there are a hundred that want the county to provide more services. The Board is caught between doing its job of providing services to county residents and holding the line on expenses.

Rick Kerner asked what kind of increased costs are due to less state funding. The Board discussed the crisis in state transportation funding and the impact on county government. Social Service Director Dave Anderson noted that every service provided by Roseau County Social Services is mandated. He noted that costs such as out-of-home placement for at-risk children are a key uncontrollable expense. Mr. Anderson further noted that for every dollar that the Roseau County levy generates for services, \$18 is generated in state and federal funding.

Pete Beito asked why the agriculture tax burden has increased while the commercial tax burden has not. County Assessor Lorna Sandvik responded that the state sets the classification rates. Ms. Sandvik further noted that land values like other property values are dependent upon sales of like property. Commissioner Johnston noted that large commercial interests put pressure on state legislators to reduce their tax rates. Commissioner Johnston further stated

that it is very difficult to find comparable sales for commercial properties such as window manufacturers or recreational vehicle manufacturers which impacts property values.

Floyd Haugen stated that he went to his township Board of Equalization Hearing and was denied and that he went to the County Board of Equalization Hearing and was denied and that his taxes have gone up 42% and his son's have gone up 59% and it is not right.

Etta Muirhaed asked a question related to the Roseau City Center. The question was deferred to the City of Roseau Truth in Taxation Hearing.

Mike Lorensen asked why the levy went up 18% again this year when he was told last year that it would not. Mr. Lorensen also wanted to know what was in the General Fund/Unallocated. Auditor Anne Granitz reviewed line items included in that fund. Mr. Lorensen was advised that he can review the entire budget at his convenience.

Rick Kerner asked a specific question regarding the valuation of his property. Assessor Lorna Sandvik met with Mr. Kerner and reviewed his Truth in Taxation statement.

Udell Lunde asked why the tax on two pieces of agricultural property could vary so much. Commissioner Johnston and Foldesi discussed agricultural tax credits and the impact they have on agricultural property valuations. Assessor Lorna Sandvik agreed to review Mr. Lunde's statement.

Jim Jenson asked why the budget has increased. The Board noted the decrease in funding and increase in costs.

Commissioner Rasmussen discussed how things have changed in Roseau County over the past ten years.

Pete Beito asked why Roseau County went union and why they allow union contracts to dictate their employee wage. The Board explained that the Board did not choose to union and that employees have the right to unionize. It was further stated that while the Board is in a two-year contract with its union employees and a two-year agreement with its non-union employees, and that the union did not impact wage negotiations.

Tim Johnson asked what increase in wages employees have received. The Board responded that they received a 3 ½% per year for two year increase that was paid upfront in 2005. Mr. Johnson stated that he is on a fixed income and does not understand why the Board can't give employees a zero wage increase and deny step increases.

William Starren stated that what has happened is that we are no longer a people for the people by the people and that it is people at the state level that dictate what we have to do locally.

A question was asked regarding what Roseau County is doing to increase economic development. The Board did not respond.

Chair Rasmussen noted that the year 2006 Levy and Budget are scheduled to be approved at the County Board meeting on December 13, 2005.

Upon motion carried, Chairman Orris Rasmussen adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m. The Board will convene its next regular meeting at 8:30 a.m. on December 13, 2005.

Attest:

Teresa Harren
County Coordinator

Date: _____

Orris Rasmussen
Board Chairman