

January 11th, 2022

The Morris County Commissioners met on Tuesday, January 11th, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. Commissioners Wayne Kohler, David Fox and Jim Barber were present. Bill Kassebaum, County Counselor, and Chelsey Schmidt, County Clerk, were present.

Others present: Billy Kryger, Pastor Berean Baptist Church

The commission meeting was moved to the downstairs meeting room at 9:02 a.m.

Candra Good, County Health Nurse, and Dr. Daniel Frese, County Health Officer, provided a report on COVID-19.

Those present for the discussion were: Donna Frese, Cherrie Baker, Dave Baker- Kansas State Representative, Lyndsey Laramore, Aron Dody- USD 417 Superintendent, Jan Sciacca- Council Grove Republican, Chris Rhodes, Andrew Steele, Billy Kryger and Tami Dragone.

Dr. Frese discussed the anticipated presence of the Omicron variant and while it is unknown if symptoms are less or more severe than the Delta variant, it has proved to be much more contagious and easily spread. He reported that hospitals across the state and region, including Morris County Hospital, are experiencing staffing shortages, staff fatigue, and extreme difficulties transferring patients to higher levels of care.

Candra Good reported that the Morris County Health Department has seen an increase of 74 new confirmed cases within the last five days. This increases Morris County's testing percent positivity to 57%. She reports that the current Morris County resident vaccination rate is 53%. The Morris County Health Department has adopted the new CDC guidance for isolation and quarantine. The new guidance consists of a 5-day isolation period and (if no symptoms are present) followed by a 5-day masking period.

Aron Dody reported that USD 417 has seen an increase of 17 new positive cases of students and/or staff since Saturday. The schools are experiencing staffing shortages as well and are having a difficult time keeping up with the demands for testing.

Candra Good agreed that the health department, hospital and school are all overwhelmed with the increasing demands for testing and contact tracing.

Dave Baker expressed his appreciation for the work and dedication of our county healthcare systems, county health officials, and Dr. Daniel Frese.

Lyndsey Laramore asked questions regarding the manner in which information is presented to the public. Discussion was held. Others with questions, comments, and discussion were Chris Rhodes, Andrew Steele and Tami Dragone.

Commissioner Fox explains that he has great respect for Dr. Frese and that it is his personal belief that masking is appropriate for our current situation, however, he feels that there is a high percentage of non-compliance with the mandate and that the mandate is not enforceable. He believes we have reached a point where patrons must decide to take personal responsibility and follow the guidance recommended by our healthcare officials on their own.

Commissioner Fox (Barber) moved to rescind the Morris County Mask Mandate. Motion carried, 2-1 with Commissioner Kohler opposing.

Commissioner Kohler (Barber) moved to adjourn the commission meeting and convene as the County Board of Health. Motion carried.

The commission meeting was adjourned at 10:02 a.m. to conduct a public health nuisance hearing.

The commission meeting resumed at 10:24 a.m. in the commissioner's meeting room.

The minutes from the public health nuisance hearing will be made available on the county website.

The commissioners reorganized for the year. Commissioner Barber (Fox) moved to elect Commissioner Kohler to serve as Chairman for 2022. Motion carried.

Commissioner Fox (Kohler) moved to elect Commissioner Barber to serve as Vice-Chairman for 2022. Motion carried.

Commissioner Fox (Barber) moved to designate the Council Grove Republican as the county's official newspaper for 2022. Motion carried.

Commissioner Barber (Fox) moved to designate all banks in the county and the State Municipal Investment Pool to serve as depositories for county funds for year 2022. Motion carried.

Commissioner Fox (Barber) moved to make the following appointments for county representation for 2022. Motion carried.

- Commissioner Fox - Flint Hills Regional Council
Chamber of Commerce/Tourism
- Commissioner Kohler - Greater Morris County Development Corporation
Morris County Hospital
LEPC
- Commissioner Barber- North Central Kansas Juvenile Detention Facility
Community Corrections Advisory Board
Twin Lakes WRAPS

Travis Schweger, Noxious Weed and Waste Management Director, gave report on the Noxious Weed and Waste Management Departments. Quotes are being obtained for installing LED lighting in the recycling bay. Discussion was held regarding installing an automatic door opener and the future need for the Transfer Station to have a scale.

Andrew Steele discussed the mask mandate.

Chris Rhodes discussed the mask mandate and government issued medical mandates.

Commissioner Fox (Barber) moved to approve payroll as presented in the amount of \$108,139.40. Motion carried.

Jeff Falter and James Blue with Flint Hills RECA discussed the estimated cost to move electrical lines and poles from the right-of-way for the Dunlap River Bridge Project. The estimated cost is a total of \$51,996.52. Morris County's responsibility will be approximately \$24,474.38 and Flint Hills RECA's responsibility will be approximately \$27,522.14.

Commissioner Barber (Fox) moved to approve the quote from Flint Hills RECA as presented. Morris County's cost to move electrical lines and poles for the Dunlap River Bridge Project will be approximately \$24,474.38. Motion carried.

Jeff Falter gave the following weekly road and bridge report:

- Hauled gravel to BB Ave. from 2700-2800 on the Burdick blade route
- Cleared snow and restocked brine tanks
- Boom mower was used to cut brush on Kahola Rd. and 500 Rd.
- Shoulder and ditch work done on DD Ave. from 200-400 and Kahola Rd. from 400-500
- Staff completed more MSHA training and CPR/First Aid training with Morris County EMS
- Employee evaluations were completed

Dr. Lora Siegle attended the meeting via telephone. She expressed her disappointment to the commission for rescinding the mask mandate.

Jay Simecka, County Sheriff, provided a report on the Sheriff's Office. Discussion was held regarding the need for replacement of the garage doors on the south side of the courthouse.

Chris Blackledge, Emergency Manager, visited with the commissioners about passing a disaster declaration for the windstorm damages incurred in the county on December 15th and December 16th, 2021.

Commissioner Fox (Barber) moved to approve Resolution 2022-04 declaring a state of local disaster emergency for Morris County, Kansas due to high winds on December 15th and December 16th, 2021. Motion carried.

Corrine Blosser, Register of Deeds, gave a report on the Register of Deed's Office.

Commissioner Fox (Barber) moved to approve the accounts payable vouchers as presented; in the total amount of \$313,988.42. Motion carried. The breakdown by fund is as follows:

General:	\$ 141,582.55
Road & Bridge:	\$ 19,228.26
Reappraisal:	\$ 1,189.84
Noxious Weed:	\$ 63,123.30
Solid Waste:	\$ 901.33
Morris County 911:	\$ 1,351.04
Bridge Bonds 2020A:	\$ 86,612.10

Commissioner Barber (Kohler) moved to approve the minutes from the January 4th, 2022 commission meeting as presented. Motion carried.

The commissioners received a letter of resignation from Dr. Daniel Frese as the Morris County Health Officer. The resignation is to be effective immediately.

Commissioner Barber (Fox) moved to accept Dr. Daniel Frese's letter of resignation from the position of Morris County Health Officer. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 3:37 p.m.

--Meeting minutes can also be found on the county website: www.morriscountyks.org

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

OF MORRIS COUNTY, KANSAS

Wayne Kohler, Chairman

ATTEST:

Jim Barber, Member

Chelsey Schmidt
Morris County Clerk

David L. Fox, Member