

LINN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
CEDAR RAPIDS, LINN COUNTY, IOWA  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2021 9:00 A.M.

The Board met in session at the Linn County Jean Oxley Public Service Center.  
Present: Chairperson Walker, Vice Chairperson Rogers and Supervisor Zumbach. Board members voting "AYE" unless otherwise noted.

Chairperson Walker called the meeting to order.

Motion by Rogers, seconded by Walker to approve minutes of Oct. 4, 2021, as printed.

The Board received updates from the following Elected Officials:

Jerry Vander Sanden, County Attorney, stated that it has come to his attention that the Board is considering moving the Civil Division from the Public Service Center to the Juvenile Justice Center. He stated that there is no way that the Civil Division can be as effective and efficient serving the people they give legal advice to from some remote location. It is not practical or workable and he asked the Board to consider his request to leave them in the Public Service Center.

The Board thanked Vander Sanden for his thoughts and clarified that the Juvenile Justice Center is just across the street and that nothing has been set in stone.

Vander Sanden continued to notify the Board that his plan is to retire at the end of 2021, noting that he has served over 38 years in the County Attorney's Office. Looking back on his career, he stated that he has accomplished everything that he set out to do (and then some) and stated that his wife and grandchildren are the reason for this decision. He wants to devote his time to his wife and family. He continued to say that the Board has two options: 1) Appoint someone to finish out the last year of his term; or 2) hold a special election. He strongly advised that they appointment his Frist Assistant, Nick Maybanks to finish out his term (through 2022) and gave the reasons for that recommendation. Vander Sanden stated that Maybanks has the full support of local law enforcement agencies as well as the entire County Attorney staff. He also stated that a precedent has been set when Denver Dillard and Harold Denton retired to appoint their first assistants.

Supervisor Zumbach thanked Vander Sanden for his service and as a new grandparent, he completely understands his reasoning. He will consider his comments.

Supervisor Rogers congratulated Vander Sanden and recognized his challenges and accomplishments.

Chairperson Walker stated that he is not one for standing in the way of tradition and will consider his advice when they get to that point. He also wanted to acknowledge Vander Sanden's wife, Denise, and a meeting they had involving a sincere conversation (that he will never forget) when he and Jerry were in a disagreement. No matter how hard he insists, he does not know everything and that was a great reminder. He also thanked Vander Sanden for his service and everything he has done for him in helping him as a leader in the community.

Sharon Gonzalez, Treasurer, stated that law enforcement was called this morning to remove a gentleman from the building (escorted out without incident); completed another Tax Sale; they have dropped the amount of wait time since reopening in June; there was hardly anyone in the lobby the last week of September and online registrations/property tax payments are up 30%; property tax collections went smooth this year; staying busy with used car sales and working on videos and instructions for the website.

Supervisor Rogers thanked Gonzalez for the amazing work they do. The pandemic has changed behaviors and he appreciate the challenges that they have faced.

Joel Miller, Auditor - Deputy Betsworth reported that they are advertising for the Deputy Auditor Tax Manager for the third time and are working with HR on some additional advertising packages; the Accounts Payable team is sailing along as GovSense has smoothed out; Payroll has another division of the Sheriff's Office transitioning to the new payroll software with only Jail and Rescue remaining.

Chairperson Walker recognized Betsworth for recent emails coming from her helping to guide employees and what great customer service she provided.

Auditor Miller stated that the electronic time keeping program started in 2004 with another software package and they have never had the entire county on an electronic time keeping system. This new system will include everyone and that was one of his goals when he came into office. He also stated that every time there is an opening in his office, they take a fresh look at credentials. The Deputy Auditor Tax Manager is

one of those positions. He is requiring a CPA, which has been valuable with Betsworth's position. The November City/School Election is underway with a possible City Runoff. They are starting to receive absentee ballot requests and early voting begins October 13 (Elections Office and Lindale Mall; two satellite locations: Wellington Heights Church on Oct. 23 and IBEW on Oct. 24). They are actively seeking Republican precinct election officials for two person teams to go into Health Care Facilities (need a party balance). Looking for guidance from Secretary of State on four new laws including the enhanced power of Poll Watchers and the checking of the ballot drop box four times a day; held an Auditor Election Advisory Panel meeting last week with representatives of various stakeholders; Absentee request forms have been published in the Penny Saver the last two weeks and will continue for the next two Wednesday's.

Discussion continued regarding the political climate and is that affecting filling positions in the Auditor/Elections office. The recent law regarding technical infractions is also another factor (\$10,000 fine for the Auditor no matter who made the infraction).

Miller stressed his goal to bring more transparency to the Elections process including putting voting machine tapes on line and anything that will bring more transparency to the process.

Supervisor Rogers noted that the Board will be looking to the Auditor regarding options and processes to following once Vander Sanden has submitted his resignation.

Supervisor Zumbach applauded Miller for waiting to hire the right person in his Deputy position and noted that the city of Prairieburg has made their sidewalk upgrade near the voting location.

Public Comment: Don White, 602 Blue Herron Crt. NE, stated that he has a great deal of gratitude for what the Board does after sitting through today's meeting. It opened his eyes up to what their job is.

White stated that he is saddened by what is happening in Palo. The Palo community leaders have been poisoned by outside groups years in advance of any discussions of large-scale solar in the area. The entire Palo City Council already made up their mind to not support large-scale solar in their community but an application has not been submitted yet. Opposing large-scale solar without seeing an actual proposal, robs the hard working, long-time residents of the Palo community of golden opportunities. This is negligence in their fiduciary duty to Palo citizens. Last night he watched the Sept. 22 video of the Palo Mayor reading their letter of opposition to large-scale solar to the Board of Supervisors. He is at today's meeting to set the record straight with facts, data and his personal experience with Palo leaders. The Mayor stated that Palo is already experiencing negative side effects in the community from large-scale solar. Specifically, he said, "Palo homes are staying on the market much longer now". This is in stark contrast to reality. White stated that his nephew who lived a block away from the Palo Community Center sold his home this summer the same day it was listed for a \$75,000 profit. A detailed home seller's report that he has for Palo does not support the Mayor's statement either. The Mayor also stated, "Community meetings now require law enforcement presence". This is entirely their making. He read a part of his Sept. 12 Gazette guest editorial to the Board titled "A Call for Civility in Solar Discussions".

Adjournment at 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Approved by:

STACEY WALKER, Chairperson  
Board of Supervisors