

REGULAR MEETING OF THE KOOCHICHING COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Held on Tuesday, April 21, 2020 9:45 a.m.
Via Teleconference

MEMBER PRESENT IN BOARDROOM: None

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: Commissioners Pavleck, Sjoblom, Skoe, McBride, Adee

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE VIA TELECONFERENCE: Kathy LaFrance, Perryn Hedlund, Nathan Heibel, William Schmitke, Darrin Kittelson, Matt Gouin.

2020/04-21 Motion by McBride, seconded by Pavleck to approve the agenda with additions and deletions. Voting yes by roll call: Pavleck, McBride, Sjoblom, Skoe Adee. Motion carried.

000 Public Health and Human Services Director provided a COVID-19 update of current statistics, noting that we have not reached the peak yet as numbers continue to climb. There are no new cases reported for Koochiching County and the one case reported has since recovered. There are tests available in the County and testing right now is being done per the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) guidelines. Priority testing is done for those that exhibit symptoms and those that have been in contact with someone who has had a positive test. There is still a test shortage, so MDH is very conservative on who is being tested and as more tests become available more people can be tested. People will be screened to see if they meet the criteria to receive a test.

2020/04-22 Motion by Sjoblom, seconded by Pavleck to approve the minutes from the April 14, 2020 regular meeting. Voting yes by roll call: Pavleck, McBride, Sjoblom, Skoe Adee. Motion carried.

2020/04-23 Motion by Skoe, seconded by McBride to adopt the following resolution extending the Koochiching County Declaration of Emergency for an additional 30 days:

WHEREAS Koochiching County, MN is suffering from the direct and indirect impacts of the COVID- 19 Pandemic; and

WHEREAS extensive impact to individuals, businesses, schools, first responders, hospitals, and other services countywide; and

WHEREAS subject matter experts and local public health have determined that the protective measures that must be undertaken to reduce the impact of COVID-19 will be above and beyond local capabilities and resources; and

WHEREAS Koochiching County Department of Emergency Management has partially activated its Emergency Operations Center and is assisting in mobilizing resources, public information, and operational coordination; and

WHEREAS Koochiching County Department of Emergency Management requests that the

Koochiching Board Chair extends Koochiching County in a State of Local Emergency due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Chair of the Koochiching Board of Commissioners hereby declare a STATE OF EMERGENCY in Koochiching County, Minnesota for an additional 30 days, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic which began on March 24th, 2020, and requests coordination for the application of any state or federal assistance that may be available. Voting yes by roll call: Pavleck, McBride, Sjoblom, Skoe Adee. Motion carried.

2020/04-24 Motion by Skoe, seconded by Pavleck to authorizing postponing the May 6th timber auction scheduled to be held in Littlefork until a later date due to the current COVID – 19 health situation. Voting yes by roll call: Pavleck, McBride, Sjoblom, Skoe Adee. Motion carried.

000 On April 17th the Governor issued Emergency Executive Order 20-38 expanding outdoor activities. Koochiching County currently has six boat landings/parks closed. The City of International Falls voted to reopen their landings effective Friday, April 24th. DNR Kuttles Access remains open to the public and if the County opens its landings this could relieve some pressure and help spread people out as long as people follow the Governors Emergency Executive Order 20-38 and the outdoor recreation guidelines. It was noted that the Governor has closed all public and private campsites and camping. Board member commented that if we are following state guidelines it would seem the landings should be open, although he has reservations because it depends how people react. There was discussion regarding the time frame needed to prepare the sites to reopen and the Land Commissioner commented he could have them open by April 24th. The DNR has outdoor recreation guidelines that will be posted, and the County Sheriff said they would increase patrols and monitor the sites. An email message from a constituent was read and the public was asked for any comments. William Schmitke from the Iron Range commented that if they wait to reopen the landings after the catch and keep sturgeon fishing season this may help to reduce the number of people using the landings. There was discussion regarding the Lake of the Woods landings and whether they have been reopened. DNR Conservation Officer Darrin Kittelson gave credit to the Board for initially closing the landings and informed the Board the sturgeon fishing season right now is catch and release, the keep season starts on Friday, April 24th through May 7th. The catch and release dates then extend from May 8th through May 14th, adding there is concern that area businesses may be providing an area for people to camp and this would be a concern and the DNR is seeing some of this already. Board member commented if they approve the landings be reopened this should be reviewed at the next Board meeting to receive information if the public is adhering to the Governors Emergency Executive Order 20-38 and the outdoor recreation guidelines published on the DNR website.

2020/04-25 Motion by Pavleck, seconded by Sjoblom to approve reopening all County boat landings along the Rainy River effective on April 24th. Voting yes by roll call: Pavleck, McBride, Sjoblom, Skoe Adee. Motion carried.

000 The Environmental Services Department Director provided an update on the transfer station operations including hours of operations and safety measures that have been put in place. The hours of operation they are open to the public have been reduced to Monday, Wednesday, and

Friday from 9:00 a.m. to Noon and they are encouraging the public to bring full loads, rather than just one bag of garbage. Board members raised concerns about putting more people close together in a shorter time frame and were informed that during open hours traffic is being managed at the gate, limiting the number of people entering the facility at the same time. Board members commented they have received emails and phone calls expressing opinions about the reduces hours compared to other counties. There was discussion as to when hours would be able to be expanded and were informed that during these times, it is hard to predict, and the County has taken the lead from the Governor and the State stay at home orders and then make adjustments as they receive new information. Board member agreed it was a good idea to encourage customers to bring larger loads, but the hours make it difficult for the public to get there and recommended hours be modified to add an afternoon one day a week and a plan to phase in more hours. There was also discussion of a concern of increased traffic due to the warmer weather. The Environmental Service Director commented he is sensitive to serving the public and the decision to decrease hours is not taken lightly, operators are working from 6 am to 2 pm and handling commercial sold waste in the mornings. They have a decrease of help at the transfer stations as STS and the ODC are no longer assisting with recycling and other duties and that puts more work on the operators. He is open to making changes to the operations if the Board has concerns.

000 The Board Chair called for public comment and there was none.

2020/04-26 Motion by Pavleck, seconded by Sjoblom to adjourn the meeting at 10:45. Voting yes by roll call: Pavleck, McBride, Sjoblom, Skoe Adee. Motion carried.