

**Logan County Commissioners Work Session
December 17, 2024**

Present: Mike Brownell, Joe McBride, Jerry Sonnenberg, Alan Samber, Jim Yahn, Debbie Unrein, Marilee Johnson, Michelle Alcorn, Caitlin Baseggio, Jeff Rice and Jennifer Crow.

Chairman Brownell called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS SESSION – Commissioner McBride moved to approve the minutes of the December 10, 2024 Work Session as written. Commissioner Sonnenberg seconded, and the motion carried, 3-0.

REVISIONS TO THE WORK SESSION AGENDA – Commissioner Sonnenberg added discussion of the Ambulance meeting that was held yesterday and appointment of members to a committee. Alan Samber asked if the Board would like to discuss the Road and Bridge box culvert under new business.

REVIEW AND APPROVE SCHEDULE OF COUNTY BILLS – The Board met with Debbie Unrein to review the Logan County schedule of bills dated December 17, 2024. All bills were approved as presented. Chairman Brownell asked about a bill for an OEM meeting Sedgwick County was to host in October. The meeting was set up by Jerry Casebolt before he left. The county will be reimbursed by the State. The title of the meeting had to do with animal activist which caught the Board’s attention. The new ambulance has arrived. It was over budget at \$383,000 with the equipment. Chairman Brownell commented that Josh Klein has had trouble with equipment at the landfill. The transmission went out on the water truck. The Road and Bridge mechanics will replace it. There is no estimate available yet. Also, the undercarriage on the older track loader needs to be rebuilt. The estimate for that is \$30,000. If the undercarriage on the older loader is rebuilt, it will become the main loader, and the newest loader will be used as a spare and traded as soon as possible as it has been problematic.

REVIEW OF BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA – There was no discussion.

ALCORN’S MAIL PROBLEM – Commissioner Sonnenberg reported that in his conversations with other counties they actually allow RV’s and campers for short-term use only while other permanent construction is on-going. This was Arapahoe, El Paso, and Elbert Counties. None of them allowed permanent RV living and none of them had any issues with the post office delivering mail.

County Attorney Alan Samber noted that the Division of Property Tax guidelines and statutes that Peggy Michaels must go by as far as classifying land as improved, would require that any sort of residential improvement be permanently affixed. Looking at the “To whom it concerns letter” that Eric and Michelle Alcorn wrote, they indicate that the RV is not movable and it will not be moved unless the land is sold. The idea that they’re going to take it with them if they ever leave and sell that property, suggests strongly it’s personal property and not real property. The Assessor doesn’t feel like she can classify it as improved land on the basis of moving the RV there, putting it on the concrete slab, skirting it, and hooking it up to water and sewer. Michaels doesn’t feel that Division of Property Tax guidelines will allow it.

The Post Office is using the Assessor’s records that indicate its unimproved vacant land. Unless the Assessor’s records show that it’s improved residential land or any other kind of land, but improved with a residential improvement, the post office claims that’s their rationale for not authorizing the mailbox at that location. On the US Postal Service website, they have something called the Local Postal Consumer and Industry Affairs Office in Denver. That office is called the Consumer Affairs of the United States Postal Service. Alan suggests the Alcorn’s contact this office.

Commissioner Sonnenberg asked if there should be one more attempt to talk to the local postmaster. Mrs. Alcorn indicated that they have had conversations with the local postmaster with no additional action available to them. The Alcorn's were told by the USPS Consumer Affairs Office in Denver to mail their letter to Washington, DC. They have not heard anything back. Apparently, now the local post office does not want to transfer mail from their old address to her P. O. Box.

Commissioner Sonnenberg suggested that the Board weigh in with a letter to them. He offered to draft the letter for the Board's signatures.

The Board discussed mobile homes and manufactured homes and permanently installed on a piece of property. Alan Samber stated that usually when either of these types of homes are installed, there's a process called purging the title and the title becomes purged with the land. There is no longer a separate certificate of title for the mobile home. When you sell the land and the manufactured home together, you would use a typical quit claim or warranty deed and sell it as real property instead of personal property. One of the requirements is that the wheels or the axles and the hitch must be removed for it to be considered permanent. According to the statute and the case law, it has to lose its mobility character. Commissioner Sonnenberg noted that you could potentially put the wheels and hitch back on and drive off. But in this scenario for some reason, they view RVs as different than a mobile home.

RV's are defined differently in the taxation laws and have their own definition. Manufactured homes are homes that are built off site and are moved to your location. They have certain building code requirements that those kinds of structures have to comply with, whereas the RVs don't meet those requirements because they're typically not used as permanent living quarters.

Commissioner Sonnenberg will work with the Alcorn's to write a letter to the USPS to try to help them with their problem.

AMBULANCE MEETING – Commissioner Sonnenberg stated that the informal ambulance committee had their second meeting yesterday. The general consensus is to create a formal committee and allow them to seek out solutions and look at options. Commissioner Sonnenberg sent an email to Kevin Blankenship which suggested three members from the city, probably the city manager, mayor and the fire chief, three members from the county, Josilyn Lutze, the County's Emergency Manager as well as two County Commissioners. We may want to see Josilyn, as a separate member and three different members from the county. One member will be included from each rural fire department, Fleming, Merino and Peetz, Crook, and the Rural Fire Board. Any of the fire chiefs could designate someone in their place if they can't attend daytime meetings because of their regular jobs. Ned Resch, the CEO from Sterling Regional Medical Center will also be invited.

The committee members would elect their own chairperson, or since the county funds the ambulance, one of the commissioners could be the chair. Commissioner McBride suggested that Commissioner-Elect Jim Yahn should be the committee chairperson. Carol Brom and Traci Yahn are community members who have been active in EMS for many years also attended the meeting. This will be a 15- or 16-member advisory board to the County Commissioners.

Chairman Brownell noted that fees are some of the first things that should be discussed. Logan County Ambulance fees are much lower than surrounding area ambulance companies. The IGA gives the County sole authority to determine fees. Commissioner Sonnenberg stated that the county also wants to cancel the contract with Wakefield, the company that does the billing and collections for the ambulance service. The county has 60 days to give notice to cancel that contract. The county will need to find a new vendor for that process. Apparently, Wakefield isn't as aggressive as they need to be.

Alan Samber suggested that the County put together an RFP for collection agency services in order to get some competition from service providers and select the provider that has the most attractive package to the County and then enter into a contract with that firm.

Commissioner Brownell reported that Morgan County Ambulance just changed collection agency services. Yuma County Ambulance and Sidney, Nebraska Ambulance are also using different agencies. All of those providers could be invited to bid on the RFP for Logan County Ambulance collections.

It was suggested that the Fire Chief or the EMS providers that did the presentation at the meeting on Monday could help determine the fees. Commissioner Brownell commented that Morgan County Ambulance Service recently updated their fees. The Board commented that it might make sense to keep the ambulance committee together after the district is formed with at least a part of the group to make sure the ambulance fees are staying current. Commissioner Sonnenberg will work on getting rate increases together for the meeting Friday.

Logan County Ambulance EMTs and ALS employees are the lowest paid among providers That is something that will need to be taken care of in the near future. They are paid way below what Yuma, and Morgan Counties and Sidney, Nebraska ambulance pays their people. Logan County Ambulance recently lost a long-time employee because of that.

Sidney, Nebraska starts their people at more than Logan County Ambulance people with 15 years of experience are making. The City of Sterling sets the salaries, but the County funds them. Nine people are on the ambulance staff, the County pays for six of them. Both ambulances were called out at the same time with no backup 450 times this past year. There was a substantial number of calls that there were three ambulances out at the same time. It is difficult to do this with staffing and usually people with basic EMS training are on the third ambulance unless they switch with another call.

The Board discussed a notice of termination letter to Wakefield. Sixty days' notice is required. If a new company is not in place yet, it is not critical, it would just be delaying the collection efforts. The statute of limitations on collections is probably three years. Alan Samber will look at this again and work on an RFP. The Board did not make a decision on a termination letter.

PURCHASE OF BOX CULVERTS – Alan Samber asked for clarification on the purchase of box culverts before the end of the year. Commissioner Sonnenberg stated that originally the County planned to purchase the culverts and have them installed by the first of the year. It was discovered that they did not go through the proper bidding process, which delayed the project. Alan asked why the County does not purchase the culverts directly instead of going through Alan Krier. He is in touch with Mike Burri about this.

If the money is not spent this year, it can be rolled over into next year. The Board agreed to put out an RFP for the project to include the installation of the box culverts after the first of the year. The RFP will need some work, drawings and specifications for bidders.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.