

Meeting Minutes
NDACo Board of Directors
May 25, 2023
NDACo County Office Building

President Lee called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM and asked for a calling of the roll. A quorum was declared.

Members Present:	Steve Lee	Carrie Krause
Jayme Tenneson	Trudy Ruland	Mary Scherling
Nick Moser	Becky Hagel	Chad Peterson
Wanda Knutson	Kelly Vincent	Marcia Lamb
Lori Hanson	Kim Jacobson	Dana Larsen

Members Absent:	Chad Kaiser	Beau Anderson
Val McCloud	Kari Hatzenbuhler	Scott Ouradnik
Perry Turner	Steve Forde	

Also Present:

Aaron Birst, NDACo Executive Director
Genny Dienstmann, NDACo Staff
Michelle Tabbert, NDACo Staff
Jeff Eslinger, NDACo Staff
Alisha Adolf, NDACo Staff
Jason Horning, NDACo Staff
Kaitlyn Bakken, NDACo Staff
Linda Svihovec, NDACo Staff
Donnell Preskey, NDACo Staff
Lonny Bosch, NRG Technology Services President
Dwight Driscoll, NRG Account Manager

President Lee asked if there were any requests for changes to the agenda. There were no suggested changes. Tenneson moved to approve the agenda as printed. The motion was seconded and passed on a voice vote.

The Board Warm-Up Question was proposed, and each Board member was given an opportunity to respond. The question was: "ON a scale of A-B-C-D-F, how would you rate the 2023 Legislative Session and why?" The comments included:

- B: Counties faired pretty well; got infrastructure funding, equity funding on social services.
- B-: Biggest thing was the retirement issue; losing pension will be a big issue hiring in the future. NDACo team a B+; they did a good job.
- C+: NDPERS was a big hit; hard enough to hire the way it is; tax relief, education, mental health addressed. The Legislature worked as a team to get business done on a lot of issues but didn't feel they took enough time on bigger issues.
- D-: Appreciate what the legislators did, but they have a lot to get done in a limited amount of time. They spent so much time on bills that were neither important nor

urgent for the vast majority of citizens in this state. Social Services is a mess, had many coming to testify against bad bills and had to work so hard to get things done.

- D+/C-: Lost valuable time on issues that weren't important or matter to our state. There were some legislative games played, lessons learned, but you are never not surprised. We did a good job on the hill, that's why local government is so strong.
- No grade, but nonimportant items were exhaustive; hope in future they can spend more time on the dollars and cents and not ideology. Love the legislative website to monitor bills, watch hearings, but frustrating there isn't as much discussion in legislative conference committees now that they are recorded.
- C: Seemed like a chicken with head cut off feel at the Session. When they would get off track, no veteran legislators to reel them back in. Good intentions, but when you don't have strong leadership, get off course. Behind the scenes "gaming" which was harmful, putting amendments at the very end with no discussion, didn't represent the people on some of these issues. Term limits are concerning.
- Term limits are concerning—who is going to want to be a legislator? With property taxes, a lot of things failed in our favor and other bills that passed were mostly good. Not sure how the property tax credit will go but will need to work together with state. Redundancy on bills was frustrating and bogged down a lot of time that could have been spent better.
- Like a report card county staff a B, everything else a D-: Some of the legislators failed – social services; really scary to me. Republican caucus was all ultra right wing people getting in; scary. Election training as to why paper ballots should not be an option; mind boggling that this was even an issue. Last minute social service issue with trying to move all employees to the state was just wrong. Book ban issue, SIFF was disappointing that didn't get moved/removed. Roads are failing and now we will have to wait longer to get funding. Pension – why wasn't this dealt with decades ago; not gaining to get fully funded, why did they keep kicking it down the road, I don't think they made the right decision. What is the price tag they are going to push on counties to fix this issue?
- Giving Legislature an Incomplete. I thought legislators were going to punt the NDPERS pension, I gave them too much credit. Spoke to leadership on what they need to consider, felt it was not received – passed the biggest tax bill in the history of North Dakota. Local governments are going to be responsible for a big chunk of this. I feel social services got nothing; we do it better locally and they don't listen; biggest struggle. I'm not giving them an F because I can now get drunk on my horse.
- C: Focus on highway issues; I think the effort in this area was decent. Worked hard on these issues and seemed to have good support. As for funding, there were some losses, particularly with more buckets in front of Prairie Dog, but did get some permanent funding, flex transportation fund – not sure what that is going to look like. Have more trust in the NDDOT local government division; a lot of time wasted on bad bills. Feel like social services got a bad rap; I'm not as familiar with it, but watching some of the hearings, you can see it was bad.
- B+ on clerks issues we were satisfied. Invited to Supreme Court to share our concerns and open to our suggestions with the funding bill. With everything else, a D.
- D: Main recorders bill passed; working on wills – how we retain them. Was able to meet with legislators to educate them on how recorders offices handle documents. Election/ballot storage, pipeline issues had a good report with legislators we worked

with. Wasn't happy with how the pension bill went. Appreciate the efforts of NDACo legislative team.

- D: Overwhelming; first time I was close to legislative session, amazing how much work NDACo does in tracking all the bills. Happy with the clerk bill – but contract clerks were drug through the mud but received a letter of appreciation in the end. With social services, don't agree that state should be taking it over, do better local. So many more serious issues and the time wasted on unimportant bills, bad. Surprised at some of the behaviors and unprofessionalism at that level.
- We weren't North Dakota nice this session, I think the face of politics changed this session and not for the better. Actually, saw this before the session in caucus meetings, pushing agendas. Not just legislators, but also state department heads, it changed and it's not good.
- B: Vast majority of our work is killing bad bills and we killed a lot of bad bills. With two new majority leaders, don't think they were prepared very well in their roles. There is a "hard right" that is taking over the district chairs and we have lost 4-5 moderate conservative candidates to the ultra-conservative side. June 12th State GOP will select leader, current leader will be challenged by a strong right, could set the tone for Republican Party. State cannot afford to continue to fund current budget, especially if oil prices go down, will be problematic.

Aaron was asked to provide a high-level overview of the Legislative Session and Donnell went through some of the top priority bills. After discussion, the President next asked for consideration of the Consent Agenda. Krause moved to approve the Consent Agenda, including the NDACo minutes from the December 15, 2022, meeting, NDACo General Fund checks #37703 through #37800 and DJS Account checks #7831 through #7853 and ACH payments from November 2022 to March 2023. The motion was seconded and passed on a voice vote.

The Governance Report began with the announcement of the President's standing committee assignments for 2023. President Lee finished the Governance Report with a discussion of our state's second representative on the NACo Board of Directors. Marcia Lamb has decided to step down from this position, and President Lee would like to appoint Cass County Administrator Robert Wilson to this position. Motion made by Scherling to ratify the appointment of Robert Wilson as North Dakota's second representative on the National Association of Counties' Board of Directors. The motion was seconded and passed on a voice vote.

Aaron was next asked to report on initiatives that have resulted from the 2022 NDACo Strategic Planning Session. He shared his plan to contract for grant writing services to assist counties in applying for transportation and other grants. Aaron went on to explain that the need for more assistance in fiscal operations was identified in the planning session and that Teanna Hintz has been hired to fill that need.

Under Personnel Services, Teanna Hintz was introduced to the Board as the new accounting assistant.

Jayme and Aaron were called upon to begin the Dues Discussion. Aaron gave a brief overview of the dues process and how dues relate to core services. Jayme reviewed the materials prepared by staff, including a table showing the individual county dues level and

four overall dues amounts. Jayme moved to approve a 3% increase in dues for 2024 and for a study to be conducted to review the dues structure and determine if changes should be made to the dues formula. The motion to set the overall dues level at a 3% increase was seconded and passed on a voice vote.

Jeff provided a report on the 2023 County Day at the Capitol. He then continued with the 2023 Conference Planning Status Report. After sharing the logo and theme, he shared some changes planned for this year, including no more county door prizes or busing. Marketing plans for exhibitors and sponsors were explained. Aaron continued that we have chosen to contract with a Bismarck Events company, Funatix, to do the conference planning instead of hiring a meeting planner. He then explained plans to conduct all regional caucus meetings prior to the conference. Michelle finished by encouraging Board members to complete the Conference Room Request Form, indicating whether or not they wish to stay in the Association's room block at the Radisson.

Michelle continued with a summary of the County Tours scheduled for 2023, indicating dates have been set for the first three to be conducted prior to the Annual Conference and the last one to be scheduled after new leadership takes office in October.

Under County Financial Partnerships, Kim was asked to explain concerns the human service zone directors are having with Abacus. There has been feedback from counties Abacus is nonresponsive to questions, the cost plan meetings are chaos and repeated requests for information from the contractor continue, even though counties have repeatedly sent the information. It was suggested the contract be reviewed with Abacus and determine what steps need to take place to complete the cost allocation plans. Jason continued with an update on the Next Generation 911 program, and Kaitlyn finished with an update on the status of the GIS program.

Under Old Business, Linda was invited to talk about the updated Salary Survey and the analysis done for Cavalier County, specifically lessons learned and future plans. Nick expressed how the salary analysis is being used and how beneficial their county has found it to be. There was discussion in cautioning the Association completing these analyses for counties for a fee or no fee. Informing the counties of the enhancements that have been made to the salary survey should be made and having the counties access the information would be better. The Association could also put together spreadsheets templates that counties could use but should not make any salary recommendations. Another enhancement where they could generate their own report using the counties they want to compare could be investigated.

Aaron shared the relationship of NDACo and NRG Technology Services (NRG), and that NRG is the counties' IT provider. Dwight Driscoll gave a brief update of new projects and clients that NRG is working on for the upcoming year. Lonny Bosch gave an update on NRG Technology Services, explaining recent changes in staff and projects they are working on and the Know Before program was explained.

Marcia shared highlights from the National Participation Report, expressing her appreciation for her years on this and the NACo Board.

Under New Business, Aaron shared a brief update on NDPERS and stated we will be working with the state to determine the changes that will take place under the new defined contribution plan.

Aaron reminded Board members about the Leadership Training provided by Paul Laney, former Cass County Sheriff, that is being offered at the Association Office on June 14th. Participants will come in for dinner on the evening of June 13th and stay over for the training. More information will be coming from Michelle.

President Lee reminded the Board of the next meeting date of August 24, 2023. Having reached the end of the approved agenda, the President reminded everyone of their board meeting evaluation and declared the meeting adjourned.

Approved by: _____

Date: _____