

MOWER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION

November 1, 2022

The Mower County Board of Commissioners in and for the County of Mower, Minnesota, met in a Work Session on November 1, 2022 at 2:56 p.m. at the Government Center, 201 1st Street NE, in Austin, Minnesota.

All members present, viz: Chair Jeff Baldus, Vice-Chair Mike Ankeny, John Mueller, Jerry Reinartz and Polly Glynn. Also in attendance were County Administrator Trish Harren, Executive Assistant Denise Barthels, and Mike Carlson

Mower County HRA Executive Director Mike Carlson appeared before the Board to present an overview of the Mower County HRA program. Mower County HRA is an affordable housing program that owns and manages low-income housing units in the smaller rural towns of Mower County. The housing programs are Federally funded including a HUD voucher program. The Mower County HRA is a local unit of government and is a taxing authority. The HRA tax levy pays for the operating costs not covered by Federal rental subsidy funding. Current challenges faced by the Mower County HRA include finding maintenance persons to perform minor and routine repairs at the units. As well, the units are aging and in need of more extensive maintenance. Occupancy rates are high but there is a short-wait list for vacancies. Tenants in these housing units are having an increasingly difficult time accessing services due to work force shortage which are impacting provider ability to find employees who will work out county. As well the lack of public transportation in greater Mower County is a challenge. Several small towns have expressed interest in conducting a housing study to determine housing gaps. Mr. Carlson advised that it is important to review housing wholistically. Mr. Carlson noted that when he was hired, the housing complexes were relatively new, so his job has been primarily managing exiting units and programs and less in housing development. Mike Carlson has resigned and the Mower County HRA is actively recruiting a replacement.

County Administrator Trish Harren informed the Board that she had received notice that the asking price on the Austin Daily Herald building had been reduced. The Board discussed pros and cons of the site, the building, the price, and possible uses.

County Administrator Trish Harren informed the Board that there is a need to update the rental policy and application for use of the 4-H building at the fairgrounds. Historically the agreement has been between the University of Minnesota Extension and the user. However, for liability reasons, they can no longer enter into rental agreements. A new Rental Policy and Rental Agreement has been drafted and will be brought to the Board for approval at the next meeting. Extension will still manage rentals, but Mower County will be the entity that enters into the rental agreement.

Commissioner Ankeny reported that the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) is looking for a commissioner to serve as the Extension Representative on the AMC Board.

Lastly, Commissioner Mueller noted he received had a call from a constituent that was concerned about the need for a Conditional Use Permit for portable goat structures on their property. Commissioner Mueller indicated this is an example of the need to review the zoning ordinance for possible revisions.

The work session concluded at 4:15 p.m.

THE MOWER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

BY: _____
Chairperson

Attest:

By: _____
Clerk/Administrator

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