

MEETING OF THE WORTH COUNTY CONFERENCE BOARD AUGUST 8, 2022

Opening:

The Worth County Conference Board met at the Courthouse, Northwood, IA, on Monday, August 8, 2022 at 11:00 AM.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Mark Smeby at 11:00 AM. There was a quorum present.

Present:

Supervisors: A. J. Stone, Enos Loberg, Mark Smeby

Mayors: Doug Moehle, Mark Thoma

School Board Representatives: Kari Osheim

Assessor: Cindy Thompson

Others present: Chief Deputy Assessor: Judy Stevens, Assessor Office staff: Andrea Myli

Absent:

Mayors: Nick Bailey, John Bork, Rick Scholbrock, Timothy O'Keefe, Corey Pulju

School Board Representatives: Kyle Tabbert, Bradley Christianson, Jean Schilling, Kim Severson

A motion was made by AJ Stone and seconded by Douglas Moehle to approve the agenda as distributed.

Business Discussion:

Communication

Assessor Thompson requested that the Board enter closed session due to the sensitive nature of the information to be discussed, particularly regarding other employees and departments in the Courthouse. She was informed by Supervisors Smeby and Stone that the meeting did not meet the legal requirements for closed session and therefore, would remain open.

Assessor Thompson began by stating that a lack of communication between departments in the Courthouse has caused several problems which could have been easily resolved by better communication. Concerns regarding the Assessor's Office have been predominantly handled by the Board of Supervisors, who have made decisions without the awareness of the other two governing units of the Conference Board. Assessor Thompson stated the reason for this meeting was to provide information to the other two governing units so they might understand why there are communication problems.

She noted that repeated staffing shortages in the position of real estate clerk in the Auditor's office over a period of thirteen months and a lack of cross-training have resulted in at least three occasions where splits/transfers and consolidations could not be completed. This made it difficult for the Assessor's office to meet deadlines and fulfill obligations set by the Iowa Department of Revenue. She also feels that the transfer of an employee from the Auditor's office to the Assessor's office under the prior Assessor created tension with both the Auditor's office and the Recorder.

Assessor Thompson stressed that lack of communication has resulted in overreach from the Board of Supervisors and the Auditor's office into the daily running of the Assessor's office and that she feels harassed by their interference. She brought past examples to the Conference Board's attention. She felt that many of these incidents were misunderstandings that could have been cleared up easily by a phone call, email or conversation. She stated that she is very willing to work to improve communication but efforts need to be made by all parties involved and asked for the support of the Conference Board moving forward. Supervisor Stone agreed that there are communication problems within the Courthouse and assured the Assessor of the Board's support. Supervisor Stone also stated that the Board of Supervisors controls the budget and spending in the county and are not in charge of Human Resources problems. Supervisor Loberg suggested forming a subcommittee within the Conference Board to address future Human Resources issues such as incident reports.

Assessor Handbook

Assessor Thompson asked the Conference Board for their input on the Assessor’s Office handbook/policies and procedures. Mayor Mark Thoma said he felt some polices should be addressed and changes made at both the County and Assessor level. The Conference Board agreed that the Assessor should continue working on a full handbook.

Credit Card

Mayor Mark Thoma suggested that the Assessor go to the bank and get her department credit card back with no change to the current Worth County policy. He recommended that the caveat included in the Assessor handbook requiring employees to use personal funds for food and beverage expenses be removed. Mayor Thoma moved that the Assessor get a credit card. Kari Osheim seconded.

Motion carried as follows:

- Mayors: Mark Thoma - Aye
- Douglas Moehle - Aye
- Supervisors: Enos Loberg - Aye
- AJ Stone - Aye
- Mark Smeby - Aye

Structure

The Conference Board discussed the need for a subcommittee to address any future Human Resources issues. Supervisor Loberg suggested that any future questions and concerns regarding the Assessor’s Office be forwarded to the subcommittee for evaluation. The subcommittee will then decide whether or not a full conference board meeting is required to address the issue. It was agreed in general discussion that the subcommittee contain one mayor, one school board member, and the Chair of the Board of Supervisors. Membership will rotate on an annual basis with yearly election of officers. The first election will be held at the Conference Board’s annual budget meeting in early 2023.

Conference Board New Members

Assessor Thompson asked the board what kind of orientation should be implemented for new Conference Board members. Chairperson Smeby suggested that all new members receive a copy of the ISAA Conference Board Guidelines. Supervisor Loberg suggested that all new members also receive a copy of “Politics in the Assessor’s Office” by Wilson & Pechacek, P.L.C. New members will also receive a summary of Iowa Code outlining the duties of the Assessor and the duties of the Conference Board.

Follow Up

Mark Thoma asked if Assessor Thompson felt her harassment complaint had been adequately addressed by the board. Assessor Thompson responded that, with improvements in communication and the formation of a subcommittee, she feels the problem will resolve. Kari Osheim related that, by definition, harassment is “any aggressive pressure or intimidation” and based on the experiences shared by Assessor Thompson felt that her use of the term was appropriate. She stressed the importance of face-to-face conversations and supported the formation of a subcommittee as a less aggressive way to handle future issues.

IT Director Joel Rohne suggested that a workflow meeting between the Assessor, Auditor, Recorder and Treasurer’s offices might be beneficial.

Supervisor Stone motioned to adjourn. Supervisor Loberg seconded. Meeting adjourned at 12:06 p.m.

CHAIRPERSON

ATTEST:

CLERK, CONFERENCE BOARD