

GRAND FORKS COUNTY SPECIAL MEETING – November 17, 2009 – 3:00pm

Topic: Future County Flood Policy

The Board met pursuant to adjournment with Commissioners Murphy, Knauf, Schmisek, Pic and Malm present.

Jim Campbell, Emergency Management Director, presented the flood policies for Traill, Walsh, Cass, Pembina and Richland Counties. See attached. All of the Counties used the Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP) for their flood fight. It is the same plan that we used in Grand Forks County. There is no County that used a stand alone plan. The LEOP is a multi-hazard plan.

Grand Forks County has never had a specific policy as to sand, sand bags and clay. The County has always furnished empty sandbags at no charge.

Commissioner Schmisek said he hoped they could have a general flood policy that fits into the overall emergency plan where we have some idea what we will provide the homeowner. Commissioner Schmisek does not think we should reimburse homeowners for expenses made by the homeowner prior to action by the County Commission. He also thinks we should have in our policy what is covered by FEMA so the County knows what they will get reimbursed.

Commissioner Malm asked Mr. Campbell if he knew if any of the Counties deviated from their policy. Mr. Campbell said it appears to him that each of these Counties operates on the flooding threat level.

Commissioner Knauf said everyone has a different and unique situation so it is difficult to cover each situation.

Peter Welte, States Attorney, said a policy could be written stating what is not reimbursable.

Chairman Murphy asked if the new elevation map will help. Mr. Campbell said Carol McMahon should be asked about the new 100 year flood plan map.

Commissioner Malm said he thinks we need to set a policy realizing if the emergency becomes too great we will have to deviate from the policy.

Commissioner Pic said we have two issues to deal with, the reimbursement for the 2009 clay dike issue and creating a flood policy for the future.

Commissioner Schmisek thinks that a permanent dike increases the value of the property.

Mr. Campbell said for the last twenty years the unofficial policy for Grand Forks County has been to supply empty sandbags. Then each spring when we look at doing an Emergency Declaration based on information from the National Weather Service it is determined what assistance the County will provide in addition to the empty sandbags. Mr. Campbell said he is not saying sand should not be supplied but we have to be very careful. If we have a policy in place that says one load of free sand, like we started out doing this year, we will get people in Grand Forks City limits demanding their one load of free sand, as well as individuals 40 miles west of Grand Forks, with neither property having a threat of flooding. Mr. Campbell also said we cannot base our policy on what FEMA is going to reimburse.

Mr. Campbell presented the chronological list of forecasts by the National Weather Service for the projected flooding in the spring of 2009. (See attached) Mr. Campbell said it reinforces the decisions the Commission made and the dates the Commission made those decisions.

Mr. Campbell offered to write a draft of a projected flood plan for Commission consideration at the first meeting in January.

Debbie Nelson, Finance and Tax Director, reported that Grand Forks County has spent \$287,527.18 on the 2009 flood fight. If all of the expenses are approved by FEMA they will pay 90% of that total, the state of North Dakota will pay 7% and the County's share will be 3% or \$8,625.82. FEMA will also accept in-kind match to offset the \$8,625.82 County share. The total volunteer in-kind match is \$141,007.27 which is far more than we need to offset our share.

Commissioner Pic asked when we would be considering the clay dike reimbursements from the spring of 2009 flooding. Mr. Campbell said he will have a recommendation at 3:00pm on December 1, 2009 and he will invite the 11 individuals whose reimbursement will be considered.

The meeting adjourned at 3:58pm.

William Murphy, Chair
Grand Forks County Commission

Debbie Nelson, County Auditor