

McLean County Commission Proceedings – Special Meeting
Monday, June 28, 2021

A special meeting of the Board of Commissioners was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Chairperson Barry Suydam. Present were Commissioners Cottingham, Steve Lee, and Barry Suydam. Also present were: Auditor Beth A. Knutson; Chief Deputy Auditor Lori A Foss; DES Manager Noelle Kroll; Sheriff JR Kerzmann; Lieutenant Justin Krohmer; Washburn Fire Chief Clayton Verke; Washburn Commission President Larry Thomas; Alyson Teigen and Suzy Jacobson of Washburn; and Ralph Mancini of BHG News Service.

Kroll presented information on the county's current burn ban that is in place until November 1, 2021, in which ignition of fires, including fireworks, are automatically banned whenever the North Dakota Rangeland Fire Danger Rating is Very High, Extreme and/or a Red Flag Warning has been issued for the area. She reported she had contacted fire chiefs throughout the county and reported that they were fine with leaving the burn ban as it currently stands. She presented weather data for the upcoming week along with comments received from county citizens. She reported that she has also visited with States Attorney Ladd Erickson who stated that if the current burn ban is changed, he feels that cities should be allowed to make their own rulings on the issue.

Cottingham stated that he would like it left as it stands. Lee spoke as a county citizen residing in a rural area that is in a period of extreme drought which makes him supportive of a complete ban on fireworks. Thomas commented that he agrees with Cottingham. Verke commented that he feels that a ban will happen automatically given the right conditions, his main concern is enforceability and penalties. Teigen questioned if this would be a one-time action or if fireworks would be banned every year going forward. Lee commented that he felt it would be a one-time occurrence to be reevaluated annually. Sheriff Kerzmann commented first as a resident of the western half of county where conditions are extremely dry and rain has been lacking. He stated that fires are being ignited simply by lightning strikes in the area. On behalf of his department, he said enforcement would be an issue due to an increase in other criminal activities such as alcohol offenses, fights, etc. due to the influx of people into the area from other areas. Jacobson expressed her concerns as a business owner operating a firework stand stating that they have already started selling fireworks and in past years they have abided by the burn ban restrictions in place by monitoring the fire danger ratings.

Moved by Lee, seconded by Cottingham, to ban fireworks in McLean County for the current year and the current year only in all areas where the county has jurisdiction. Discussion followed including clarification that the ban would not apply to cities as they have their own governing authority. Lee spoke in support of his concerns referencing a comment made by Sheriff Kerzmann that the recreational areas of the county will most likely see an increase in incoming traffic and activity from other counties that have firework bans already in place. Cottingham stated that he feels that the current burn ban is adequate as it automatically restricts fireworks in the event the North Dakota Rangeland Fire Danger Rating reaches the defined rating or warning level. Roll Call Vote: Aye: Lee. Nay: Cottingham and Suydam. Motion failed.

There being no further business, the chairperson declared the meeting adjourned at 3:16 p.m. until the next regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, July 6, 2021. The commission minutes and agenda can be found on the county website at <http://www.mcleancountynd.gov>.

Barry Suydam, Chairperson

Lori A Foss, Chief Deputy Auditor