

**MEETING OF THE RUSK COUNTY  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
OCTOBER 24, 2017  
7:00 P.M.**

Meeting called to order by Chair Peter Boss at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call. Present – 18. Excused – 1. Present: Biller, Rathsack, Hauser, Knops, Stout, Tatur, Lieffring, Swoverland, Pedersen, Schneider, Gierke, Fisher, Hanson, Mai, Willingham, Hraban, Platteter, Boss. Corporation Counsel, Rich Summerfield. Excused: Schmitt.

Introduction and brief bio of Raymond Capaul by Chair Boss.

Invocation by David Willingham of Island Lake Church of Christ.

Pledge of Allegiance led by Raymond Capaul.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion by Gierke, second by Knops to approve minutes from September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Motion carried by aye vote.

Boss read proclamation.

**CATHOLIC CHARITIES BUREAU, INC. PROCLAMATION**

**WHEREAS** Catholic Charities Bureau, Inc. is celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of its founding, in 1917, as St. Joseph's Children's Home, an orphanage which served children of Northern Wisconsin including Rusk County.

**WHEREAS** since its founding in 1917 by Bishop Joseph Koudelka, Catholic Charities Bureau, Inc. has expanded its services to include affordable housing for senior citizens and persons with disabilities, rehabilitation facilities providing access to employment and independent living for persons with intellectual disabilities, volunteer programs providing talented senior citizens with opportunities for community service, home health care and supportive services for persons with health related issues, and programs for children with special needs, and families in crises.

**WHEREAS** in 2017 Catholic Charities Bureau, Inc. provided essential human services to persons in need, through 60 programs located in 74 communities in Northwest Wisconsin and the Arrowhead Region of Minnesota.

**WHEREAS** Catholic Charities Bureau, Inc. currently operates services of Barron County Developmental Services serving people in need in Rusk County.

**WHEREAS** Catholic Charities Bureau, Inc. through the leadership of Bishop James Powers, its Membership, its Board of Directors, volunteers, and staff will continue to extend and expand programs and services to people in need in the next century of its operation.

**WHEREAS** over the past century many outstanding citizens of Rusk County have voluntarily served on the Board of Directors of Catholic Charities Bureau, Inc. through its affiliated agencies.

**THEREFORE**

**NOW, THEREFORE, I, PETER BOSS, Chair of the Rusk County Board of Supervisors, extend sincere appreciation to the officers and Board Directors of Catholic Charities Bureau, Inc., offer congratulations for a century of service fulfilling the Catholic Charities Bureau Mission, "... to meet the critical issues of our society through the use of our gifts and resources by mobilizing the Christian community in partnership with private and public enterprise.... To create an environment of human dignity based on justice, mutual respect, understanding, and trust...", and shall continue to collaborate with Catholic Charities Bureau, Inc. to create and expand services to assist people and families in need to become contributing, self-sufficient members of our community**

**RESOLUTION 17-26 ENGAGEMENT OF VON BRIESEN & ROPER, S.C., AND CRUEGER DICKINSON LLC, TOGETHER WITH SIMMONS HANLY CONROY LLC, AS COUNSEL IN RELATION TO CLAIMS AGAINST OPIOID MANUFACTURERS**

**WHEREAS**, Rusk County ("County") is concerned with the recent rapid rise in troubles among County citizens, residents, and visitors in relation to problems arising out of the use, abuse and overuse of opioid medications, which according to certain studies, impacts millions of people across the country; and

**WHEREAS**, issues and concerns surrounding opioid use, abuse and overuse by citizens, residents and visitors are not unique to County and are, in fact, issues and concerns shared by all other counties in Wisconsin and, for that matter, states and counties across the country, as has been well documented through various reports and publications, and is commonly referred to as the Opioid Epidemic ("Opioid Epidemic"); and

**WHEREAS**, the societal costs associated with the Opioid Epidemic are staggering and, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, amount to over \$75 billion annually; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Institute for Health has identified the manufacturers of certain of the opioid medications as being directly responsible for the rapid rise of the Opioid Epidemic by virtue of their aggressive and, according to some, unlawful and unethical marketing practices; and

**WHEREAS**, certain of the opioid manufacturers have faced civil and criminal liability for their actions that relate directly to the rise of the Opioid Epidemic; and

**WHEREAS**, County has spent millions in unexpected and unbudgeted time and resources in its programs and services related to the Opioid Epidemic; and

**WHEREAS**, County is responsible for a multitude of programs and services, all of which require County to expend resources generated through state and federal aid, property tax levy, fees and other permissible revenue sources; and

**WHEREAS**, County's provision of programs and services becomes more and more difficult every year because the costs associated with providing the Opioid Epidemic programs and services continue to rise, yet County's ability to generate revenue is limited by strict levy limit caps and stagnant or declining state and federal aid to County; and

**WHEREAS**, all sums that County expends in addressing, combatting and otherwise dealing with the Opioid Epidemic are sums that cannot be used for other critical programs and services that County provides to County citizens, residents and visitors; and

**WHEREAS**, County has been informed that numerous counties and states across the country have filed or intend to file lawsuits against certain of the opioid manufacturers in an effort to force the persons and entities responsible for the Opioid Epidemic to assume financial responsibility for the costs associated with addressing, combatting and otherwise dealing with the Opioid Epidemic; and

**WHEREAS**, County has engaged in discussions with representatives of the law firms of von Briesen & Roper, s.c., Crueger Dickinson LLC and Simmons Hanly Conroy LLC (the "Law Firms") related to the potential for County to pursue certain legal claims against certain opioid manufacturers; and

**WHEREAS**, County has been informed that the Law Firms have the requisite skill, experience and wherewithal to prosecute legal claims against certain of the opioid manufacturers on behalf of public entities seeking to hold them responsible for the Opioid Epidemic; and

**WHEREAS**, the Law Firms have proposed that County engage the Law Firms to prosecute the aforementioned claims on a contingent fee basis whereby the Law Firms would not be compensated unless County receives a financial benefit as a result of the proposed claims and the Law Firms would advance all claim-related costs and expenses associated with the claims; and

**WHEREAS**, all of the costs and expenses associated with the claims against certain of the opioid manufacturers would be borne by the Law Firms; and

**WHEREAS**, the Law Firms have prepared an engagement letter, which is submitted as part of this Resolution (“Engagement Letter”) specifying the terms and conditions under which the Law Firms would provide legal services to County and otherwise consistent with the terms of this Resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, County is informed that the Wisconsin Counties Association has engaged in extensive discussions with the Law Firms and has expressed a desire to assist the Law Firms, County and other counties in the prosecution of claims against certain of the opioid manufacturers; and

**WHEREAS**, County would participate in the prosecution of the claim(s) contemplated in this Resolution and the Engagement Letter by providing information and materials to the Law Firms and, as appropriate, the Wisconsin Counties Association as needed; and

**WHEREAS**, County believes it to be in the best interest of County, its citizens, residents, visitors and taxpayers to join with other counties in and outside Wisconsin in pursuit of claims against certain of the opioid manufacturers, all upon the terms and conditions set forth in the Engagement Letter; and

**WHEREAS**, by pursuing the claims against certain of the opioid manufacturers, County is attempting to hold those persons and entities that had a significant role in the creation of the Opioid Epidemic responsible for the financial costs assumed by County and other public agencies across the country in dealing with the Opioid Epidemic.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:** County authorizes, and agrees to be bound by, the Engagement Letter and hereby directs the appropriate officer of the County to execute the Engagement Letter on behalf of the County; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:** County shall endeavor to faithfully perform all actions required of County in relation to the claims contemplated herein and in the Engagement Letter and hereby directs all County personnel to cooperate with and assist the Law Firms in relation thereto.

The County Clerk shall forward a copy of this Resolution, together with the signed Engagement Letter, to the Wisconsin Counties Association, 22 E. Mifflin Street, Suite 900, Madison, Wisconsin, 53703.

Submitted by Chair Boss: S/Boss.

Motion by Hauser, second by Willingham to adopt. Fisher commented regarding concerns in accuracy of resolution and this issue not being one of significance here in Rusk County. Boss responded by sharing information regarding the opioid crisis presented at WCA Conference and that this is an epidemic that is nationwide. Discussion on lawsuit and the money not going to the counties, manufacturers and addictive qualities of opioids, costs may not have directly affected the county yet, but it has certainly affected our citizens. Tatur echoed Boss’s comments and stated this is a way to get counties a seat at the table in management of this epidemic. Platteter gave some statistics on opioid deaths nationwide. Motion carried. Resolution adopted by aye vote.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING**

Public hearing on Northwest Regional Housing Program opened at 7:16 p.m.

Sheldon Johnson informed board that he is required to hold this hearing and read over opening paragraph of handout provided to the board. Johnson spoke regarding the income eligibility requirements in place. Homeowners who did not have insurance are still eligible to apply for grant funds, which will be available until the end of 2018. This is a Community Development Block Grant funded program. Johnson listed eligible CDBG EAP activities: housing assistance (rehabilitation, homebuyer assistance & lead-based paint), general housing needs and funding availability (\$850,000 available in the county), activities proposed as part of the housing program including potential residential displacement (full or partial displacement activities including rental assistance) and citizen input regarding CDBG EAP housing activities and need. Tatur asked about Douglass County being in charge of this. Johnson clarified what is taking place in regards to Douglass County.

Public hearing on Northwest Regional Housing Program closed at 7:23 p.m.

#### **PRESENTATION**

Criminal Justice Collaboration Council (CJCC): Bill Stewart thanked board for allowing the CJCC to be a part of tonight’s meeting, gave brief background on himself and asked the members of the CJCC to stand. Stewart referred to the handouts provided to board members prior to the meeting and gave an explanation of the crisis’s facing the criminal justice system in Wisconsin and the desire of the CJCC to get to the bottom of the issues. Stewart went through the background of CJCC and all the different programs that are a part of the council. Discussion on program effectiveness and that the CJCC is working on ways to better our community through addressing the criminal justice system and the way cases are handled. Stewart also explained the mission of CJCC and their ultimate goals.

Lori Baltrusis, UW Extension Area Extension Director, introduced herself and was present to observe and hear some of the issues in Rusk County. She has been meeting with Ted East, Administrative Coordinator, to work on a job description for a 50/50 position here in Rusk County.

East comments regarding CJCC and the collaboration it has allowed.

#### **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE MOTION**

Library Plan: Tatur gave explanation of plan update, stated it does not contain any major changes. Motion by Tatur, second by Gierke to approve library plan. Motion carried by aye vote.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Lieffring to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Next meeting: November 14, 2017 at 9:00 a.m.