



# Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

7B  
Agenda Item #

**Requested Meeting Date:** September 8, 2020

**Title of Item:** 2021 Legislative Priorities Discussion

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY	<b>Action Requested:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft) <i>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing*
<b>Submitted by:</b> Jessica Seibert		<b>Department:</b> Administration
<b>Presenter (Name and Title):</b> Jessica Seibert, County Administrator		<b>Estimated Time Needed:</b> 5 minutes
<b>Summary of Issue:</b>  <p>Staff have begun the process of compiling the 2021 legislative priorities for Board approval. A copy of the 2021 draft priorities is attached for reference. At this time, the Board is being asked to provide feedback and staff direction if there are particular areas of interest to the Board that may require research.</p> <p>The final draft will be brought before the Board for approval on September 22, 2020.</p>		
<b>Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:</b>  		
<b>Recommended Action/Motion:</b> Discussion/direction only.		
<b>Financial Impact:</b> Is there a cost associated with this request? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$ Is this budgeted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <span style="margin-left: 50px;">Please Explain:</span>		

# 2021 Aitkin County Legislative Priorities by Department

## Administration

1. Aitkin County and the Association of MN Counties support the state of Minnesota providing financial compensation to all units of local government for court ordered refunds due to state determined values or state required assessment practices.
2. Aitkin County supports promoting legislation that preserves tax base in response to increased property tax appeals, utility tax refunds, and potential “dark store” assessing practices.

## Assessor

1. Repeal of the Statute that requires field appraisers to have the AMA license. This is Minnesota Statute 270C.9901. Requiring all appraisers to be AMA certified creates an additional hardship to find qualified appraisers in rural counties. The county supports appraisers who are not AMA licensed to be restricted from assessing income producing commercial industrial properties. They would be allowed to assess all other classifications of property. This will improve the pool of candidates for rural Minnesota counties
2. Simplification of the property tax system. We should support legislation that would reduce the number of classifications of property in Minnesota. When assessors spend lots of time classifying property, they have less time available to value property. The complexity makes the system difficult for most people to understand. After recent legislative changes, Minnesota now has a total of 68 classifications which is the most of any State in the US.
3. Increased safety of field employees. Change State Law to grant assessors access to location data of more predatory offenders. Field staff are required to do physical inspections of all real estate in the county. Not knowing where dangerous criminal live puts staff in the field at risk.
4. Change the Disabled Veterans Market Value Exclusion to a state administered refund program. If this change would take place, the costs of the program would be spread over the whole State instead of shifting the tax burden on local governments.
5. Any new program mandated by the State should be funded by the State.

## Attorney's Office

1. Additional sustainable (on-going) funding for County Attorneys for child protection.
2. Additional sustainable (on-going) funding for County Attorneys for the state judiciary's shift of a substantial amount of court administration duties to the County Attorneys' Offices.
3. Increased penalties for damage to pipelines.

## Community Corrections

Aitkin County supports the following MN Association of Community Corrections Act Counties (MACCAC) legislative policy positions:

1. Long term, Minnesota needs a clear vision for correctional services that addresses the role of prisons, community supervision and the state's role in funding. This is particularly important since counties provide local jail incarceration and the vast majority of community supervision, which are key alternatives to prisons. The legislature is chronically underfunding Minnesota community supervision. Action is required this session to preserve effective community supervision that protects Minnesota citizens. Minnesota Community Correction Act counties are in need of a supplemental budget appropriation of 4% for each year of the current biennium to address the state's share of their operating adjustment.
2. Community Corrections Act (CCA) Jurisdictions - Supporting the expansion of CCA counties with state funding and the removal of systemic/statutory requirements that act as barriers to counties in choosing the delivery system that best meets their individual needs.
3. Structural Change in Distribution of Funds - Future funding should be allocated using an equitable and transparent model that considers the need of each county.
4. Justice Reinvestment - bring the Justice Reinvestment Initiative of the Council of State Governments to the state of Minnesota.
5. Juvenile Justice Reform - Juvenile reform should continue and focus on: eliminating racial and ethnic disparities, reducing collateral consequences facing justice-involved youth; and modifying the current requirement for juvenile sex offenders to register as predatory offenders.

## Economic Development

1. Funding for the Border to Border Grant fund be set at \$1,000,000.00. For communities that are un-served by the State of MN definition, the current 50/50 match be lowered to a 30/70 match. This would allow more Border to Border Broadband grant funds to be utilized in areas that are most in need.
2. Increased funding for the State Grant In Aid (GIA) trails for ATV use. ATV riding is a fast growing family activity and current GIA funding is not keeping up for trail construction or maintenance.

## Environmental Services

1. Aitkin County and MACPZA support increased Natural Resources Block Grant (NRBG) funding and continued flexibility for the use of the funding. Aitkin County and MACPZA also support administering and allocating current NRBG funding for mandated state programs through the Minnesota Department of Revenue, similar to County Program Aid. Allocations for mandated state programs through the NRBG should not be considered grants.
2. Aitkin County and MACPZA support modifications to the SSTS licensing programs to ensure tests are consistent with course materials and Minnesota Rules 7080-7083.

3. Aitkin County and SWAA support allocating 100 percent of the revenue generated by the Solid Waste Management Tax (SWMT) to state and county waste management activities, including increased funding for SCORE (Governor's Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment) grants to counties.
4. Aitkin County and SWAA support efforts to make improvements that would maximize the e-waste recycling program. Additionally, SWAA supports the use of manufacturer payments to fully reimburse county collection and recycling costs. Furthermore, SWAA supports reducing end-of-life costs to consumers through increased manufacturer responsibility.
5. Aitkin County and SWAA support requiring the MPCA to issue, and/or reissue all demolition land disposal facility permits, in a timely manner, in accordance with the MPCA's 2005 Guidance Document (as listed on the MPCA website) until such guidance are otherwise modified by new Rule or Statute.

## Health & Human Services

1. Aitkin County supports state and federal investments in technology modernization at the Departments of Health and Human Services. These investments will improve the efficiency of county staff that enter information into the systems and enhance customer service. This includes the following:
  - A. Aitkin County supports the funding necessary for the Minnesota Eligibility Technology System (METS) to function properly and reliably, and alleviate excessive burdens on tax payers and improve services provided to customers.

Aitkin County supports a health care eligibility system that serves as a sustainable platform for performing health care functions and fully integrates with other health and human services technology systems. Including review of other platforms, inclusion of county employees in the process and a clearly defined roadmap with goals and timelines documented.
  - B. Aitkin County supports legislation that would require field tests of any new technology system prior to statewide implementation.
2. Aitkin County supports Direct Care and Treatment Cost of Care Policy Changes. This includes development of a review process for discharges and subsequent financial responsibility for Does Not Meet Criteria (DNMC) days. Additionally, tools need to be developed to work in partnership with counties to reduce DNMC days at direct care and treatment facilities.
3. Aitkin County supports Substance Abuse Disorder (SUD) Reform: this includes changes to the current county assessor certification process for comprehensive assessments to assure timely access to assessment and treatment.
4. Aitkin County supports restoration of federal funding to local public health for emergency preparedness and response.
5. Aitkin County supports expanding telemedicine in health care, mental health, substance use disorder settings and allowing phone or video use for targeted case management visits.

## Highway Department

1. Local Road Improvement Program/Local Bridge Bonding Program - Aitkin County supports immediate funding of the Local Road Improvement Program and the Local Bridge Bonding Program to fund regionally significant local road and bridge projects throughout the state.

2. Increase in Highway Funding -  
Aitkin County supports long term, sustainable transportation funding increases distributed through the Highway User Tax Distribution Fund by increases in the state gas tax and license tab fees. Aitkin County also supports dedicating the existing sales tax revenue on motor vehicle parts to the Highway User Tax Distribution Fund.

## Human Resources

1. Limit a presumption that PTSD Workers Compensation are employment-related.
2. Oppose inclusion of 911 Dispatchers and Probation Officers in the PERA Correctional Plan.
3. Change the frequency of reporting for pay equity from every three years to every five years.
4. Simplify the process and shorten the timeline (no longer than 6 months) for Minnesota counties who are interested in exiting the Minnesota Merit System. Allow counties to exit at any time throughout the calendar year.
5. Clearly state in the law that County Boards (and city/township/school) are allowed to discuss non-union wages and benefits in closed session too, in addition to union negotiations strategy.
6. Oppose any new state-mandated time off benefits such as the Paid Family and Medical Leave benefit program, funded by employees and employers. Public employers currently provide generous leave accrual banks. Allow public employers and unions to negotiate paid time off benefits without a state mandate.

## Land Department

1. Support changes to MS 282 (Tax Forfeited Land Laws): As directed by the county board, the county auditor may lease tax-forfeited land under the terms and conditions prescribed by the county board for the purposes of investigating, analyzing, and developing conservation easements that provide ecosystem services. And The county auditor, under the terms and conditions prescribed by the county board, including reversion in the event of nonuse, may convey conservation easements as defined in section 84C.01 on tax-forfeited land.
2. Continue forest road grants to counties to maintain county-administered forest roads to counties that have appointed land commissioners.
3. The burden of blighted properties within City limits is falling onto County governments. Counties have little influence on how a City may or may not enforce blight issues prior to a property forfeiting. Final property cleanup is often deferred to Counties after years leading to forfeiture. Failure to act in a timely manner is exacerbating the blight issues. Cities should retain the administration of tax forfeited properties after forfeiture.
4. Secure funding needs to be in place to deal with derelict tax forfeited properties.

5. There should be an increase to the maximum \$12,000 lease amount to accommodate cell tower lease agreements. Counties are not able to enter cell tower agreements. Language should include the lease value and lease term to be determined by the county board as well as reverter language for non-use. (282.04 TIMBER SALES; LAND USE, LEASE, PARTITION, EASEMENT. Subdv 1(d))
6. Environmental education is extremely important to our region. Efforts to support curriculum and RELC's (i.e. Long Lake CC) is vital to acquiring/protecting lands for our future.
7. Legislation to support use of Outdoor Heritage (Legacy) funds to support updating forest inventory on County/State lands – how can we protect/enhance habitat if we have irregular data on what we currently have?
8. Support state funding to local government units for beaver control.

## Recorder's Office

## Sheriff's Office

1. Pursue legislation that would prohibit firearms in county buildings where court services occur.

## Treasurer's Office

1. Under Return of state fees - Suggest adding Marriage License fees to be retained by the county as the state receives most of the revenue but all the work is done in my office.
2. Have Mobile Homes returned to tabs issued by the DVM rather than being taxed thru the property tax system or raising the value threshold for them to be taxed thru the property tax system.