



# Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

7A

Agenda Item #

**Requested Meeting Date:** August 27, 2019

**Title of Item:** Discuss 2020 Legislative Priorities

<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)	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing* <small>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</small>
<b>Submitted by:</b> Jessica Seibert, County Administrator		<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 2020 legislative priorities for Board approval. A copy of the 2019 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 10, 2019 prior to the AMC Policy Conference.</p>		
<b>Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:</b>		
<b>Recommended Action/Motion:</b> Discussion only.		
<b>Financial Impact:</b> Is there a cost associated with this request? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$ Is this budgeted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>Please Explain:</i>		

# 2019 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.
3. Aitkin County supports legislative changes allowing counties to appoint the following positions: Auditor, Treasurer, and Recorder.

## Assessor

1. Repeal of the Statute that requires field appraisers to have the AMA license. This is Minnesota Statute 270C.9901. This law should be repealed because small rural counties have no need for this level of licensure. It will likely exacerbate a shortage of rural appraisers that perform assessment functions. The County Board passed a resolution supporting this back in 2014.
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 the last legislative session, Minnesota has expanded the total number of classifications to 68 which is the most in the US by a wide margin.
3. 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 criminals live puts the staff at risk. The Stearns County Assessor is proposing a legislative change to grant assessors access to the locations of Level 2 offenders.
4. 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.

# Community Corrections

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

- 1. Effective supervision and offender programming in the community are key to reducing prison growth, while producing preferable offender outcomes.** It is intended that changes in Department of Corrections (DOC) policies related to Intensive Supervised Release (ISR) eligibility criteria and Supervised Release (SR) revocation criteria have already impacted caseload and programming resources in CCA counties, and will continue to do so at an increasing rate in the future. These changes are grounded in good correctional practice and are not an issue in principle, but there has been NO commensurate increase in state funding to address the associated caseload/workload increase or to develop local housing, treatment and other resources that are needed to successfully implement these changes in the community.
- 2. Community corrections supervision must address both short and long-term issues in order to reduce recidivism and protect public safety over the long term.** Research shows that the use of offender risk and needs assessment, case planning, and targeting interventions specific to client needs yields improved public safety. These supervision methods cannot be implemented effectively without increased financial support at the state level. Minnesota counties will not be able to sustain current efforts to utilize proven evidence-based practices without increased state funding. The recent Minnesota Management and Budget Results First Cost-Benefit Analysis highlighted great return on taxpayer investment through the use of evidence-based community interventions.
- 3. Increased emphasis on pre-trial services will require additional correctional resources.** MACCAC recognizes the research-supported national trend to move away from cash bail in favor of proven practices that more effectively address public safety. The Minnesota State Judiciary has followed suit and implemented statewide changes in pre-trial bail evaluation methods meant to standardize assessments and release decisions. These changes will place additional demands on county resources, and call for commensurate state funding.
- 4. Community Corrections Act agencies have benefitted from progress made in the last three biennia towards improved funding of basic services.** However, over the last decade and a half, statewide funding for community corrections has not kept pace at the level required to provide effective correctional practices proven by research to keep incarceration rates low, reduce recidivism, and increase public safety.
- 5. Community Corrections Act (CCA) Jurisdictions**  
MACCAC supports the expansion of CCA counties with full and ongoing state funding. MACCAC supports the removal of systemic or statutory requirements that act as barriers to counties in choosing the correctional delivery system that best meets their individual needs.
- 6. Distribution of Funds**  
Future funding should be allocated using an equitable and transparent model that considers the need of each county.
- 7. Mental Health and Substance Abuse**  
MACCAC supports legislation to provide a continuum of effective mental health and substance abuse services for offenders suffering from these issues. This should include providing adequate and effective mental health treatment in a timely manner, access to substance abuse assessments followed by the appropriate type and length of treatment, and strong collaboration between the criminal justice, public health, and social service partners. MACCAC also urges the legislature to address the urgent need for appropriate treatment and residential settings for juveniles with serious mental health issues.

## 8. **Sex Offender Supervision**

MACCAC supports legislation that takes a strong statewide approach to sex offender supervision by effectively monitoring overall behavior and activities of offenders using risk assessment and evidence based practices that enhance public safety.

State funding must be increased for local implementation of any enhanced state standards for the supervision of sex offenders, particularly those offenders that may transition to the community from the state Minnesota Sex Offender Program (MSOP). Additionally, MACCAC supports the following principles related to sex offender supervision:

- Residency restriction laws do nothing to address offender treatment or overall risk reduction, which are paramount to protecting public safety.
- Lengthy probation terms (in excess of the current 12-year average) are not consistent with correctional best practices and will have costly caseload impacts for counties.
- Juvenile sex offender registration requirements should focus on the appropriate group of the most serious offenders.

## 9. **Probation Length**

MACCAC recognizes that a robust discussion and evaluation of probation lengths is needed as part of a broader review of sentencing policy and potential new practices.

## 10. **Human Trafficking**

MACCAC supports ongoing efforts to treat victims of human trafficking with trauma specific and trauma sensitive services rather than subjecting them to the criminal justice system. MACCAC also supports ongoing efforts to prosecute offenders who are subjecting these victims to exploitation. MACCAC further supports continued education and awareness efforts to eliminate human trafficking.

## 11. **Re-Entry**

MACCAC supports the development and implementation of comprehensive initiatives and expanded transitional housing to assist juvenile and adult offenders' reintegration back into their communities and reduce recidivism and its public costs.

# 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. SWAA supports 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 efforts.
2. MACPZA supports modifications to the SSTS licensing programs to ensure tests are consistent with course materials and Minnesota Rules 7080-7083.
3. MACPZA supports 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.
4. MACPZA supports state funding to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for purposes of establishing ordinary high water and 100 year flood elevations on public waters.

## Health & Human Services

1. Aitkin County supports the need to reallocate dollars originally associated with Anoka Metro Regional Treatment Center (AMRTC) to invest in a mental health infrastructure.
2. Aitkin County supports legislative language to eliminate the cost sharing responsibilities associated with AMRTC and reallocating to community mental health resources.
3. Aitkin County supports DHS transparency in time study formulas.
4. Aitkin County supports increased housing options and services for children/teens with behaviors.
5. Aitkin County supports improving reliability and systems of the DHS MN Choices program.

Specific to the AMRTC Issues- here is additional information:

Proposals to use the county cost share associated with the Anoka Metro Regional Treatment Center (AMRTC) to invest in mental health infrastructure and services are likely to continue to come forward. Recall that Governor Dayton's budget proposal suggests directing a portion of the current county cost share to a grant program for counties to build and expand community-based mental health infrastructure. This week, the Minnesota Hospital Association introduced similar legislation that would direct \$10 million of the cost share to hospitals, nonprofits and/or counties for infrastructure investments. We also know that NAMI is likely to come forward with a proposal to direct that funding.

In order to best position counties, AMC and MACSSA will be introducing a bill to sunset the existing county cost share and to direct the current cost share to counties for mental health investments. The county lobbying team will be working this week to coordinate bill drafting and recruit legislative authors.

### ISSUES:

1. When an individual is receiving care at the Anoka-Metro Regional Treatment Center (AMRTC) or a Community Behavioral Health Hospital (CBHH) and no longer requires the high level of care these programs provide, counties are responsible for 100 percent of the cost.
2. While the recent increases in county shares have facilitated more proactive discharge planning on the part of counties, they have also created significant financial pressure on county budgets and highlighted

barriers related to finding community placements for people once they no longer need care at a state-operated facility.

3. Currently, all of the revenue collected from counties for cost of care goes back into the state's General Fund, where it supports the entire range of state-funded priorities rather than specifically helping to address the underlying issues leading people to stay in state-operated facilities when they don't need that level of care.

## 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.
3. Revise M.S. 163.06 Subd. 6, to allow all counties, regardless of the number of townships or market value, the ability, by resolution, to expend the funds provided in subdivision 4 in any unorganized territory or portion thereof in such county.

## Human Resources

1. Require the State Bureau of Mediation Services to create a neutral informational flyer, posted on their website, that employers and union representatives can share with new hires outlining the 3 options that employees now have for union membership following the Janus v. AFSCME supreme court decision, including the full share, fair share, and (new) **non-paying dues member** option, all of which entitle the employee to the benefits contained under the collective bargaining agreement. These options need to be clearly and openly communicated to all employees. No employer should have to fear receiving or defend a costly Unfair Labor Practice charge for openly sharing the new **non-paying dues member** option with current employees and new hires.
2. 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.
3. Employers are required to promote the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program annually and to every new hire. Remove this mandate. Allow information to be placed on the intranet.
4. Pay Equity – eliminate the need for pay equity reporting for all employers that have a uniform wage scale and no employees placed either below the MIN or above the MAX.
5. Require the State to go through all of the mandates that require county staff training, and have the State develop a condensed online video training library –partnering with OSHA and the federal government as necessary– so the counties can access a free training library 24/7/365. The trainings can be shown to existing staff and to new hires during orientation, and would ensure all MN counties had access to the same training info, law changes, legislative updates, etc. -- and would provide efficiencies and reduce local

costs because all staff could take the training in a staff meeting or at their desk (instead of traveling long distances across the State to obtain the required trainings).

6. Develop a system to allow county HR staff, with training, electronic access to the BCA system for running immediate/onsite criminal background checks to expedite recruitments. Currently, we are required to mail requests and it can take a week or more to receive the results.
7. 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.
8. Public Employee Insurance Program (PEIP) groups (Aitkin County offers PEIP) are exempt from the health insurance bidding law which requires employers to bid every 60 months. PEIP also offers dental insurance and life insurance. Recommend the State offer a short-term disability, long-term disability, and vision plan, also exempt from the bidding law and that pools MN public-sector employees benefits together to obtain the best purchasing power.
9. State Unemployment – Update eligibility criteria to ensure employees who voluntarily resign or retire are not later deemed eligible for unemployment benefits charged to the employer, if they have not held subsequent employment. Example: Employee voluntarily resigned, was brought back temporarily to train in new hire, then filed for unemployment and was approved. Update eligibility to include an end date for eligibility when hours are reduced so the claim does not continue to accrue for multiple years on end (LLCC). Update eligibility to ensure employees who resign instead of going through an investigation, following alleged crimes being committed against the employer (i.e. theft), should not be eligible to receive unemployment. Update eligibility criteria so that limited term jobs, seasonal/summer temps jobs, and election clerks do not trigger unemployment eligibility.

## Land Department

1. Outdoor Heritage (Legacy) funds to support RELC's (i.e. Long Lake CC) – if we're acquiring/protecting lands for our future, it would seem like educating our youth about the "outdoors" should be a priority.
2. 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?
3. Address tax-forfeited blight clean-up costs.
4. Support state funding for beaver control.

## Recorder's Office

1. Set minimum deed tax to \$3.30 from \$1.65 (considerations equal to \$1,000 and \$500) so it matches when a Certificate of Real Estate Value is required. Alternately, repeal minimum deed tax so offices do not have to collect \$1.65 when no money is changing hands.
2. Require that deed in fulfillment of contracts reference contract recording information and consideration to ensure proper deed tax is being collected on fulfillment. Allow Certificate of Real Estate for fulfillment to be "reused" from contract if no terms have changed (currently one needs to be filed with contract and with deed).

## 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.