Jefferson County Finance Committee Minutes July 5, 2023

Committee members: Jones, Richard (Chair) Christensen, Walt Jaeckel, George (Vice Chair)

Kutz, Russell Drayna, David

1. Call to order – Supervisor Jones called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. Roll call (establish a quorum) – Finance Committee members present were Richard Jones, David Drayna, George Jaeckel, Russell Kutz, and Walt Christensen. Other supervisors in attendance were Steve Nass, Meg Turville-Heitz and Anita Martin. Staff in attendance were County Administrator, Ben Wehmeier; Finance Director, Marc DeVries; Assistant Finance Director, Tammy Worzalla; Budget Analyst I, Morgan Toutant; Corporation Counsel, Blair Ward; County Treasurer, Kelly Stade; Paralegal, Sarana Stolar; Economic Development Director, Deb Reinbold; Resource Conservationist, Joe Strupp; and GIS and Land Use Technician III, Gerald Kokkonen. Members of the public present were Emily McFarland and Steve Cheeseboro, City of Watertown.

3. Certification of compliance with the Open Meetings Law – County Administrator Wehmeier certified compliance with the Open Meetings Law.

4. Approval of the agenda – Motion by Christensen/Jaeckel to approve the agenda. The motion passed 5-0.

5. Approval of minutes for Finance Committee for June 13, 2023 – Motion by Jones/Jaeckel to approve the minutes for June 13, 2023. The motion passed 5-0.

6. Communications – None.

7. Public Comment - None.

8. Discussion and possible action on request from City of Watertown to forgive property taxes, interest and/or penalties on property at 100 Western Ave, Watertown, Wisconsin – Mayor McFarland and City Attorney Cheeseboro petitioned the Committee to forgive all or a portion of the taxes, interest and penalties owed by Zsa Zsa Sterwalt, so that the City could assume possession of the property at 100 Western Ave, Watertown for the purpose of tearing down the burned structure on the property and converting it into a memorial for the children that died there in a fire. Discussion ensued regarding whether the County even has the authority to forgive taxes, penalties or interest, and whether this practice was fair for the rest of the taxpayers. Motion by Jones/Jaeckel to send the matter back to Corporation Counsel, Treasurer and Finance Departments for further study to present the pros and cons of each potential option that the County has, and discuss at the next Finance Committee meeting. The motion passed 5-0.

9. Discussion and possible action on authorizing purchase of agricultural conservation easement – Supervisor Jaeckel asked why the County was considering a conservation easement for a parcel that is mostly wooded and was not currently being farmed. Motion by Christensen/Kutz to approve the purchase of a conservation easement and amend the budget of the Land and Water Conservation

Department for additional costs related to this transaction. The motion passed 4-1 with Jaeckel dissenting.

10. Discussion and possible action on loan guidelines for Jefferson County Housing Program – County Administrator Wehmeier explained where the County was in the process of finalizing a loan program that would offer subsidies to developers to attract housing development to Jefferson County. The program currently involves several banks with a total pool of \$5 million, with the County allocating \$1 million of ARPA funding toward the project. Wehmeier reviewed the loan guidelines with the Committee. Motion by Jones/Christensen to approve the loan guidelines. The motion passed 5-0.

11. Discussion and possible action on authorizing the County Administrator to apply to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development for Jefferson County to serve as a housing counseling agency – Wehmeier is seeking Board approval to become a housing counseling agency as defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. This would enable housing counseling services to be offered in Jefferson County and therefore better serve the residents of the County by localizing these services. Motion by Jaeckel/Kutz to approve the resolution and forward to the County Board of Supervisors. The motion passed 5-0.

12. Discussion and possible action on acceptance of proceeds from Nestle for sale of County property – Motion by Christensen/Jaeckel to accept the proceeds from Nestle for the sale of County property abutting to Highway 26 and Business 26 into the Capital Projects Fund and reserve these proceeds for future use. The motion passed 5-0.

13. Discussion and possible action on policy guidance regarding offers to purchase real property owned by Jefferson County – The Committee discussed possible policy guidance for unsolicited offers to purchase County property. Due to the uncertainty of future offers or nature of offers, or the strategic position of the County when certain offers are made, the Committee decided to continue to review any offers on a case-by-case basis at this time, pursuant to the current Board rules. No action was taken.

14. Discussion and possible action on contingency transfer to Administration for Strategic Planning services- Finance Director DeVries explained that the Board had approved carryover of \$100,000 for organizational and strategic objectives at its March 2023 board meeting and that this was an intended cost relative to that carryover. There is some housekeeping needed to move the funds from Other Contingency to Administration. Motion by Jones/Drayna to approve the contingency transfer of \$100,000 from Other Contingency to the Administration budget. The motion passed 5-0.

15. Discussion and possible action on claim by Tyler Jessup for damages related to a motor vehicle accident with a county highway department truck – Motion by Drayna/Jaeckel to deny the claim and forward the resolution to the County Board of Supervisors. The motion passed 5-0.

16. Discussion and possible action on claim by Frontier Communications for damages related to local copper exchange group – Motion by Jaeckel/Kutz to deny the claim and forward the resolution to the County Board of Supervisors. The motion passed 5-0.

17. Discussion and possible action on 2024 budget parameters and issues affecting the 2024 budget – DeVries shared the 2024 capital requests with the Committee. No action was taken.

18. Discussion and possible action on Courthouse/Sheriff/Jail improvement project and status of **2021A** and **2022A** bond funds - DeVries updated the Committee on the status of the bond funds and project costs vs budget. No action was taken.

19. Discussion and possible action on update on American Rescue Plan Act funding – DeVries discussed the status of the ARPA funding. No action was taken.

20. Discussion and possible action on determining the disposition of foreclosed properties, setting minimum bids for the sale of foreclosed properties and considering offers to purchase on foreclosed properties – Corporation Counsel Ward updated the Committee on the status of current foreclosures. No action was taken.

21. Convene in closed session pursuant to section 19.85 (1)(e) Wis. Stats. for deliberating or negotiating the purchase of public properties, the investing of public funds, or conducting other specified public business, whenever competitive or bargaining reasons require a closed session, for the purpose of discussion and possible action on setting minimum bids, selling and considering offers to purchase on tax foreclosed properties and other county owned properties and pursuant to section 19.85 (1)(g) Wis. Stats. to confer with legal counsel concerning strategy to be adopted by Jefferson County with respect to litigation in which it is or is likely to become involved for the purpose of discussion and possible action on claims against Jefferson County –The Committee voted by roll call to convene into closed session. The motion passed 5-0.

22. Reconvene in open session for action on closed session items if necessary – Motion by Jaeckel/Christensen to convene into open session. The motion passed 5-0. No action was taken on closed session items.

23. Discussion and possible action on 2023 projections of budget vs. actual revenues and expenditures – DeVries directed the Committee's attention to a budget narrative in the agenda package prepared by Morgan Toutant, Budget Analyst I. No action was taken.

24. Review of the financial statements and department update for May 2023-Finance Department - No action was taken.

25. Review of the financial statements and department update for May 2023-Treasurer's Office - No action was taken.

26. Review of the financial statements and department update for May 2023-Child Support – No action was taken.

27. Update on contingency fund balance – Before any action taken during the meeting, the balance of the 2023 general contingency is \$413,000 for general contingency, \$2,463,183 for other contingency and \$300,000 for vested benefit contingency.

28. Discussion of funding for projects related to the new Highway Facilities and sale of old Highway Facilities. Wehmeier updated the Committee on the progress of the old highway site.

29. Set future meeting schedule, next meeting date, and possible agenda items – The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 2, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. Potential agenda items will be

discussion and possible action on request from City of Watertown to forgive property taxes on property at 100 Western Ave, Watertown, Wisconsin.

30. Review of Invoices - After review of the invoices, a motion was made by Jaeckel/Drayna to approve the payment of invoices totaling \$5,277,696.66. The motion passed 5-0.

31. Adjourn – A motion was made by Jaeckel/Christensen to adjourn at 12:13 p.m. The motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Marc DeVries, Finance Director Jefferson County