

Proceedings of the Mountrail County Commissioners

1. OPENING & ROLL CALL

The Board met in special session on Monday, March 13, 2023 at 4:00 P.M. via gotomeeting and Emergency/Community Room, Mountrail County Courthouse, Stanley ND with Commissioners Joan Hollekim, Jason Rice, Trudy Ruland, Wayne Olson and John DeGroot via gotomeeting. Also present via gotomeeting were Wade Enget, State's Attorney and Lori Hanson, Tax Director.

Chairman Ruland called the meeting to order.

2. APPOINTMENT SCHEDULED

8:15 A.M.

Discussion was held on approving a resolution in support of SB 2239 to maintain the existing NDPERS defined benefit main plan and opposing HB 1040 which closes the defined benefit program.

Moved by Comm. Hollekim, seconded by Comm. Olson, to adopt a Resolution for SB 2239 supporting legislation maintaining the existing NDPERS defined benefit main plan and opposing HB 1040 which closes the defined benefit program as follows:

WHEREAS, there is legislation proposed under Senate Bill #2239 relating to employer and employee contribution rates to support the existing public employees defined benefit main plan and to provide for participation in the public employees retirement system defined contribution plan, and

WHEREAS, Mountrail County and numerous political subdivisions have been in partnership with the State of North Dakota for over 50 years in the NDPERS and have shown their commitment to the retirement system, and

WHEREAS, the Mountrail County Commission recognizes there is an unfunded liability problem and has never opposed employer or employee contribution increases that the ND Legislature determined necessary or disagreed with past legislative efforts made to put the defined benefit plan on the road to recovery by reducing the multiplier from 2.00% to 1.75% and changing the Rule of 85 to the Rule of 90, and

WHEREAS, additional efforts are proposed under SB #2239 providing a cash infusion of \$250,000,000 in the 2023-2025 biennium and increased employee and/or employer contributions beginning in January of 2024 to reduce the unfunded liability in the main system retirement plan, and

WHEREAS, a defined benefit plan is a great tool for recruitment and retention of employees, especially in areas of North Dakota where there is a workforce shortage and where political subdivisions are in direct competition with the private industry in attracting qualified employees, and

WHEREAS, legislation under SB #2239 not only provides for participation in a defined benefit plan but also offers public employees the choice of participating in a defined benefit or a defined contribution plan, giving political subdivisions an even more attractive recruitment tool by allowing this choice, and

WHEREAS, the passage of SB #2239 would allow future State Legislatures a means to evaluate whether the implementation of contribution increases along with the cash infusion delivers a positive outcome for the continuance of the defined benefit program; and

WHEREAS, the passage of SB #2239 would allow political subdivisions to gauge whether employees prefer a defined benefit program versus a defined contribution rather than State Legislatures taking a more drastic approach of working towards the elimination of the defined benefit plan that not only benefits employees but the economy as a whole, and

WHEREAS, the Teacher's Retirement Plan, a successful defined benefit program, is on the road to recovery and there are other workable defined benefit programs administered through the State which demonstrates a defined benefit plan can be maintained and offered as a choice for all dedicated public employees across the State of North Dakota, and

WHEREAS, political subdivisions will have a financial obligation regardless of the outcome of the defined benefit plan; Mountrail County chooses to be part of a solution to make the existing plan solvent as the alternative to close the plan under House Bill #1040 proposes greater uncertainties to political subdivisions and their employees.

NOW THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED, the Board of Mountrail County Commissioners **supports Senate Bill # 2239** and their continued long-standing partnership with the State as a participant in the NDPERS Defined Benefit Main Plan.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Mountrail County Commissioners **opposes House Bill #1040** which closes the defined benefit program that has been offered as a benefit for decades to by far the State’s greatest assets, its employees. Upon roll call, all present voted yes. Motion carried.

Discussion was also held on House Bill #1166 pertaining to the Weather Modification Program.

Moved by Comm. Olson, seconded by Comm. DeGroot, to approve writing a letter for HB 1166 opposing legislation relating to requirements to cease cloud seeding; relating to state funding requirements for county weather modification operations and a prohibition on the use of state funds for weather modification; and a penalty subject. Upon roll call, all present voted yes. Motion carried.

3. ADJOURN

The Board adjourned at 4:11 P.M. to meet in regular session on Tuesday, March 21, 2023 at 9:00 A.M. Accepted and approved this 21st day of March, 2023.

Trudy Ruland, Chairman

Mountrail County Commissioner

Stephanie A. Pappa

Mountrail County Auditor