

Minnehaha County Board of Commissioners

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From the Desk of Commissioner Dean Karsky:

Each year during the legislative session lawmakers consider bills that impact local government. In 2020, approximately 500 bills were brought forward. Included below are a few bills that affect county residents.

Veterans cemetery funding continues to be appropriated through SB 35. The legislation allows \$900,000 of federal funds to be received and allocated to the project. The Commission is in continued conversation with active members of the veterans' community and receives updates regarding project details.

SB 157 was brought forward at the request of Governor Noem to streamline zoning ordinances by requiring timelines for processing forms and filing appeals. The bill language is very close to already existing zoning ordinances in Minnehaha County and several other counties. Providing a predictable process that maintains opportunities for public input is important. If enacted, SB 157 will preserve local control and won't dramatically alter existing ordinances in Minnehaha County.

Since 2012, public safety costs continue to increase at a rate that significantly outpaces inflation each year in Minnehaha County. Other counties across the state face large increases in public safety expenses as well. Minnehaha County has undertaken significant efforts to support diversion to help contain the growth of public safety costs and continues to do so. Minnehaha County has been recognized nationally for these efforts. Despite these innovative measures, costs are still increasing at a rate of two to four times inflation. The Commission needs additional tools in our tool kit to solve problems locally.

Increasing public safety costs should not be borne solely by property taxpayers. Counties would like to exercise local control to enact a local option bed, board, or booze tax (entertainment tax). Taxing authority in SB 68 is similar to authority already granted to municipalities. The rate is capped at 1% for the consumer of the service or product. The tax would be \$1 on a \$100 hotel room or 5 cents on a \$5 beer.

A County Commission would have to vote to enact the tax which could be referred to the ballot if local voters collect the required number of signatures. Dollars raised from this tax are permitted to be spent on public safety costs and ambulance delivery. The legislative committee voted down allowing counties to exercise local control.

The County Commission continues to monitor the legislature each week and support legislation that helps our community grow and keeps decision making at the local level.

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