

WEEKLY REVIEW



BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
October 5, 2021

This document is a weekly review of the Board of County Commissioners meeting, Tuesday, October 5, 2021. Information related to agenda changes, Consent Agenda, and Public Comment are on the [County website](#).

Scheduled Business

Benton County Travel Policy Update – Matt Rasmussen, Deputy County Administrator

County Administration staff is working to update the existing Business Travel Policy, including the following major changes: 1) Switch to per diem for meal costs, issued in advance of travel; 2) Issue advance travel meal per diem via pre-paid debit card; and 3) Eliminate special exclusion boundary for elected officials. Currently, meals are purchases by travelers utilizing a County-provided credit card, which requires that all travelers obtain and return to their supervisor detailed receipts for meal costs. Since said costs must still fall within per diem limits, there is a significant amount of staff time auditing receipts and making payroll deductions if a traveler exceeds the allotted per diem amount or maximum tip percentage. In order to issue advanced per diem payments more effectively, staff is proposing to utilize pre-paid debit cards with the appropriate per diem amount loaded onto the card and issued to the traveler at the start of their travel. In order to begin setting up to utilize the card system, the County entered into an agreement with Rapid Investments Inc., d.b.a. Rapid Financial Solutions, as the card issuer for this program (Resolution 2021-218). Training for the new system began last week. When reviewing the current boundaries for when travel is authorized (exclusion boundary), staff noted that while the boundary for employees is clearly defined as inside Benton and Franklin Counties, the boundary for elected officials is a somewhat arbitrary ellipse that is difficult to determine actual cut off points. It makes sense to utilize the same boundary for all travelers; therefore, staff is proposing to eliminate the special boundary for elected officials. The draft policy was emailed to all elected officials and department heads on April 27, 2021. Staff has worked extensively with the Auditor's Office and the Prosecutor's Civil Division on the proposed updates. Other than those two departments, comments were minimal other than to support the proposed changes. Additional procedures are being finalized by the Auditor's Office who will monitor issuance of the pre-paid cards. Cards will actually be distributed by each department once they have been authorized by the Auditor's staff. **The Board moved and seconded to approve the Benton County Business Travel and Expense Policy as presented and rescind Resolution 2015-041 and Resolution 2011-294, effective November 1, 2021. Motion carried.**

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