

WADENA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

January 06, 2026

The Wadena County Board of Commissioners' Meeting was held on Tuesday, January 6th, 2026 in the Wadena County Courthouse Small Courtroom at 415 Jefferson St. S., Wadena, Minnesota.

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by County Auditor/Treasurer/Interim County Administrator/Clerk of the Board Heather Olson and all present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present were: Commissioners Murlyn Kreklau, Bryan Winkels, Ron Noon, Bill Stearns, and Jon Kangas; County Attorney Kyra Ladd, County Auditor/Treasurer/Interim County Administrator Heather Olson, County Engineer Anthony Maule, Planning & Zoning/Building Services Administrator Deana Malone, Dan Sartell with Friends of Wadena County Youth (FOWCY), Building Services Lead Sean Uselman, Nicole Stracek from Wadena Pioneer Journal, Trinity Gruenberg from Verndale Sun, Matthew Johnson from Review Messenger, and University of Minnesota Northeast Regional Director Tony Hansen.

Nominations and Election of 2026 Board Chairperson and Vice Chairperson:

Commissioner Winkels nominated Commissioner Noon as Board Chairperson for 2026. Being there were no other nominations the ballot was closed and a vote was taken. Commissioner Noon was appointed as the Board Chairperson for 2026 by unanimous decision.

Commissioner Noon nominated Commissioner Winkels as Board Vice Chairperson for 2026. Being there were no other nominations the ballot was closed and a vote was taken. Commissioner Winkels was appointed as Board Vice Chairperson for 2026 by unanimous decision.

Amend/Approve the Day's Agenda:

Motion by Commissioner Winkels to approve today's Agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner Stearns. Motion carried unanimously.

Citizen Comments: There were no citizen comments at this meeting.

Consent Agenda:

- Auditor Warrants for Approval in the amount of \$343,124.84
- Human Services Warrants for Approval in the amount of \$27,672.78
- 2026 Feedlot Agreement
- Friendly Rider Expense Contracts MOU
- Approve and Sign Contract for Services to Update County Comprehensive Plan
- Accept Draft Condensed Minutes of the Planning Commission - December 18, 2025
- Employment Update
- Designation of 2026 Depositories and Investments

- Electronic Funds Transfer Authority
- Appointment of County Extension Committee Members

Motion by Commissioner Stearns to approve the Consent Agenda after pulling the following items for further discussion: the 2026 Feedlot Agreement, the Contract for Services to Update the Comprehensive Plan, the Draft Condensed Minutes of the Planning Commission, the Designation of 2026 Depositories, and the Appointment of County Extension Committee Members. The Motion was seconded by Commissioner Kangas and carried unanimously.

2026 Feedlot Agreement: There was a brief discussion of the department within the county that is responsible for this agreement and what qualifies as a feedlot.

Motion by Commissioner Winkels to approve the Feedlot Agreement as presented, seconded by Commissioner Kreklau. Motion carried unanimously.

Contract for Services to Update County Comprehensive Plan: Commissioner Kreklau requested clarification on the funding source for this Agreement for Services. Planning & Zoning/Building Services Administrator Deana Malone answered that it would come out of grant funds and have no effect on general revenue.

Motion by Commissioner Stearns to approve and sign the Contract for Services to Update the County Comprehensive Plan, seconded by Commissioner Winkels. A roll call vote was taken: Kreklau - nay, Noon - aye, Stearns - aye, Winkels - aye, Kangas - nay. Motion carried 3 to 2.

Accept the Draft Condensed Minutes of the Planning Commission: Commissioner Kangas expressed his concerns over parcel splits as shown in the Draft Condensed Minutes. Planning & Zoning/Building Services Administrator Deana Malone addressed Commissioner Kangas' concerns stating that what is being presented for acceptance are the minutes in which a draft document was discussed and that the said document is still a work in progress.

Motion by Commissioner Kreklau to accept the Draft Condensed Minutes of the Planning Commission as presented, seconded by Commissioner Stearns. Motion carried unanimously.

Designation of 2026 Depositories and Investments: Commissioner Kreklau inquired as to using banks outside of Wadena, acknowledging that interest rates are very important to the budget. County Auditor/Treasurer/Interim County Administrator Heather Olson stated that her office does conduct interest rate comparisons and briefly discussed the roles of the financial institutions contained on the list.

Motion by Commissioner Kreklau to approve the Designation of 2026 Depositories and Investments, seconded by Commissioner Stearns. Motion carried unanimously.

Appointment of County Extension Committee Members: Commissioner Stearns noted that there are no committee members from Districts 3 and 5 currently listed on the Extension Committee Recommendation Memo.

University of Minnesota Northeast Regional Director Tony Hansen explained the current committee composition stating that the Board of Commissioners may appoint someone from those Districts. If this is done a current member up for reappointment would be asked to step back and take on an ‘at large’ status.

A lengthy discussion was held ultimately resulting in a consensus of the Board that the Commissioners from Districts 3 and 5 would seek representatives for the committee and review this topic at a later date. University of Minnesota Northeast Regional Director Hansen will put together an informational packet outlining the committee’s schedule and responsibilities and aid as needed in the search.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS:

Friends of Wadena County Youth (FOWCY) Discussion: FOWCY representative Dan Sartell was present and requested Board permission to work with the County Engineer to find a new contractor to bring water into the fairgrounds event center since the contractor hired in October 2025 did not complete the work. Mr. Sartell suggested getting updated cost estimates for the entire project, to include plumbing, HVAC, construction, and remodeling work and, at the very least, connect the water to the building and complete the bathrooms before the Fair next summer. Members of 4H have completely removed the kitchen equipment and fixtures and are working to secure bids for new equipment. Mr. Sartell stated he has been working with a commercial construction and project management company that has agreed to give him a “ball park” estimate. Once this estimate is received he would like to meet with County Engineer Maule and the Commissioners to review the numbers and decide where money can be sourced before engaging a general contractor. Mr. Sartell expressed concern that the current plans will exceed the resources available.

County Engineer Anthony Maule stated he would work with FOWCY to determine if the existing plumbing permit for the 4H building water line is transferable or still valid. He also emphasized the need for an updated cost estimate from a consultant and suggested bringing in a project manager to oversee procurement and ensure compliance with state law because of the change of use that occurred by adding offices and the required sprinkler system and HVAC to the building, making the original project estimates obsolete.

A lengthy discussion was held over the course of action to take. Concerns were voiced over the financial implications. County Attorney Kyra Ladd reminded the Board and all present of state statutes governing the bidding process and the County’s Procurement Policy. County Auditor/Treasurer/Interim County Administrator Heather Olson also voiced the same concerns as well as potential expense.

Motion by Commissioner Stearns to have County Engineer Anthony Maule assist the Friends of Wadena County Youth prepare bid documents for bidding this proposal out using the architecturally drawn and engineered plans for the remodel, including bringing water back to the building. Motion seconded by Commissioner Kreklau.

Chairman Noon called for order in the meeting. A roll call vote was taken: Kangas - nae, Winkels - nae, Stearns - aye, Noon - aye, Kreklau - nae. Motion failed 3 to 2.

Highway Department Annual Purchases: County Engineer Anthony Maule presented the Highway Department's request for authorization to make annual purchases of materials and services included within its 2026 budget, explaining the process and budgetary considerations.

Motion by Commissioner Kreklau to approve the Highway Department's Annual Purchases as presented, seconded by Commissioner Winkels. Motion carried unanimously.

A break was taken from 10:20 a.m. to 10:26 a.m.

MPCA Feedlot Delegation Agreement: Planning & Zoning/Building Services Administrator Deana Malone began the discussion on the Delegation Agreement for Soil and Water to do the Feedlot Program for the County. This is the standard agreement as has been done in previous years. A discussion was held of allocation of funds for the feedlot program with County Auditor/Treasurer/Interim County Administrator Heather Olson noting that Wadena County is the fiscal host only for these passthrough funds.

Motion by Commissioner Kreklau to approve the MPCA Feedlot Delegation Agreement as presented, seconded by Commissioner Winkels. Motion carried unanimously.

2026 Official Wadena County Newspaper: County Auditor/Treasurer/Interim County Administrator Heather Olson reviewed the bids received with the Board, noting that one newspaper submitted 2 conflicting bids so neither bid is included in those areas of the bid statement. The bids and decision criteria were discussed in detail including that subscriber numbers are included with the bids.

Motion by Commissioner Kangas to approve the bid as presented for the 2026 Official Wadena County Newspaper for first publication of the 2026 Wadena County financial statements to the Wadena Pioneer Journal at \$5.50 per column inch, with the understanding that the statements and related information will be published exactly as submitted, not subject to reentering of any of the data by newspaper staff and proof copy to be approved by Auditor/Treasurer prior to publication. Motion seconded by Commissioner Winkels and carried unanimously.

Motion by Commissioner Kangas to approve the bid as presented for the 2026 Official Wadena County Newspaper for second publication of the 2026 Wadena County financial statements to the Review Messenger at \$4.95 per column inch, with the understanding that the statements and related information will be published exactly as submitted, not subject to reentering of any of the data by newspaper staff and

proof copy to be approved by Auditor/Treasurer prior to publication. Motion seconded by Commissioner Kreklau and carried unanimously.

Motion by Commissioner Kangas to approve the bid as presented for the 2026 Official Wadena County Newspaper for publication of the Legal Notices and publication of the Delinquent Tax Notice in 6-point Helvetica to the Review Messenger at \$4.95 per column inch, with the understanding that a proof copy of the Legal Notices and Delinquent Tax Notice be approved by the Office of the Auditor/Treasurer prior to publication. Motion seconded by Commissioner Kreklau and carried unanimously.

Commissioner Committee Assignments for Review: County Auditor/Treasurer/Interim County Administrator Heather Olson handed out the proposed 2026 Committee Assignments for the Commissioners to review and re-visit at the next meeting.

Commissioner Reports:

Commissioner Winkels - None to report

Commissioner Kangas - None to report

Commissioner Stearns - 12/29 TWCC Special Mtg

Commissioner Noon - 12/29 TWCC Special Mtg

Commissioner Kreklau - 12/18 KRLS Budget

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:02 a.m. by Commissioner Winkels, seconded by Commissioner Kangas. Motion carried unanimously.

Heather Olson, County Auditor/ Treasurer
Interim County Administrator/Clerk of the Board
Wadena County, MN

Ron Noon, County Board Chairman
Wadena County, MN