

# WADENA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

January 13, 2026

The Wadena County Board of Commissioners' Meeting was held on Tuesday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 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 Chairperson Noon and all present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present were: Commissioners Bryan Winkels, Ron Noon, Bill Stearns, and Jon Kangas; County Attorney Kyra Ladd via Zoom, County Auditor/Treasurer/Interim County Administrator Heather Olson, County Engineer Anthony Maule, Solid Waste Supervisor Wade Miller, Solid Waste Director Chris McConn, Planning & Zoning/Building Services Administrator Deana Malone, University of Minnesota Northeast Regional Director Tony Hansen, University of Minnesota Extension Program Leader, Youth Development Jan Derdowski, and developer Jeff Schindeldecker. Commissioner Murlyn Kreklau was not present at today's meeting.

## **Amend/Approve the Day's Agenda:**

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

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

## **Consent Agenda:**

- Auditor Warrants for Approval in the amount of \$164,485.12
- Human Services Warrants for Approval in the amount of \$90,928.80
- 2026 Committee Charters:
  - 2026 CHAMP Charter
  - 2026 Compliance Fund Charter
  - 2026 Insurance Committee Charter
  - 2026 Opioid Settlement Committee Charter
  - 2026 Park Board Committee Charter
  - 2026 Personnel Committee Charter
  - 2026 Planning Commission Committee Charter
  - 2026 Public Health Advisory Committee Charter
  - 2026 Transit Advisory Committee Charter
  - 2026 Wadena County Early Childhood Coalition Committee Charter
  - 2026 Wadena County Emergency Planning Committee Charter
  - 2026 Wadena County Trauma-Informed Wellness Committee Charter
  - 2026 Board of Adjustment Committee Charter
  - 2026 Safety and Security Committee Charter
  - 2026 Vehicle Fleet Update by Department
  - 2026 Todd Wadena Community Corrections Subsidy Request
- Employment Update

Commissioner Winkels noted for transparency that the Wadena County Early Childhood Coalition is his employer.

The 2026 Fleet Vehicle Update by Department was quickly examined for vehicle age and potential upcoming needs for replacement, as well as the grant-provided Friendly Rider busses coming in the next few of years.

Motion by Commissioner Winkels to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Commissioner Stearns. Motion carried unanimously.

### **REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS:**

**Extension Committee Responsibilities:** University of Minnesota Northeast Regional Director Tony Hansen presented the University of Minnesota Extension Committee Document of Responsibilities and Information as was requested by the Board on January 6, 2026 to aid in the recruitment of County Extension Committee members from Districts 3 and 5. U of M NE Regional Director Hansen suggested that if new committee members cannot be found in the next few weeks then a short-term appointment for current committee members be approved to allow meetings to continue this year. The Commissioners agreed to consider this option as it would take a person with specific experience to fulfill this role and that person may be hard to find.

U of M Northeast Regional Director Tony Hansen was joined by U of M Extension Program Leader, Youth Development Jan Derdowski to request feedback on the previously submitted U of M Extension Lease Agreement Draft for the use of the 4H/Event Center building. County Attorney Kyra Ladd added that this lease was shared with the commissioners and is a very complex issue due to all the moving parts involved. Commissioner Noon stated that it will hopefully be ready to be included on the agenda in the next few weeks.

**Friends of Wadena County Youth (FOWCY) Discussion:** Commissioner Winkels began this discussion by stating he was informed the cost of the project as it sits at this time is estimated to be \$1-1.4 million. He suggested reverting to the original, smaller scope project that would include tiling the kitchen and updating bathrooms rather than including offices and sprinkler systems. According to County Engineer Anthony Maule the current arrangement of County Extension and Veterans Services being located within the Highway building has been working well.

There was much discussion of scaling back the project, what needs to happen to do so and costs if this were to be the direction chosen, as well as the prior board action approving the additional \$60,000 in funding for the sprinkler system. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *In this instance the board is referencing the motion passed 4 to 1 on June 10, 2025 in which it was approved to spend up to \$60,000 to add the necessary sprinkler system to the offices to begin the change of use to the office at the 4-H building, with funds coming from the Fair Fund until exhausted.*

Board Chair Ron Noon appointed Commissioner Winkels, Commissioner Stearns and County Engineer Anthony Maule to a fact-finding committee to meet with FOWCY and the architectural firm Widseth, Smith, Nolting and Associates for the purpose of communicating with the Department of Labor and Industry and determining if it is possible to proceed with the revised plans under existing approvals.

Motion by Commissioner Stearns to authorize this fact-finding committee to incur initial meeting charges with the architectural firm Widseth, Smith, Nolting and Associates to be capped at \$2,000 and taken from the Fair Fund. Motion seconded by Commissioner Winkels. A roll call vote was taken: Stearns - aye, Noon - aye, Winkels - aye, Kangas - nay. Motion carried 3 to 1.

A break was called from 10:03 a.m. to 10:10 a.m.

**Update on Nimrod Road Discussion:** County Engineer Anthony Maule presented an area survey exhibit provided by Benson and Associates showing right of way needs of the intersection of CSAH12/26. He gave a brief history on the process leading up to the present day, noting that the survey was requested and paid for by Sleepy Hollow developer Jeff Schindeldecker. The survey and right of ways were discussed in detail.

Motion by Commissioner Winkels to acknowledge the Bensen and Associates survey named *Jeff Schindeldecker, Prjct 2024-620A, Sec 32 T137N R33W, Wadena County MN* as is and the desire to work on conveyance for the transfer of the parcels identified in the survey as Tract B and the Nimrod Avenue Description to the City of Nimrod for public use, allowing that the City of Nimrod covers all attorney and recording expenses associated with the conveyance. Said legal documents shall be brought back to the board for approval. Motion seconded by Commissioner Kangas and carried unanimously.

**Approve Grant Agreement with BWSR and DRNR for 2026-2027:** Planning & Zoning/Building Services Administrator Deana Malone presented this grant to the board requesting board approval for the biennial assistance funding for the County's SSTS and SSTS Fix-it Grant, Shoreland Ordinance, Local Water Management and Wetland Conservation Act. It is a standard agreement which requires Board approval and which the Director for SWCD will sign if approved.

Motion by Commissioner Kangas to approve the Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources and the Department of Natural Resources Block Grant Program Grant Agreement and for the Director of SWCD to sign the agreement, seconded by Commissioner Stearns. Motion carried unanimously.

**Solid Waste Update:** Solid Waste Director Chris McConn and Solid Waste Supervisor Wade Miller presented the Annual Solid Waste Update to the board, reporting on their operations, including recycling rates, 2025 accomplishments and potential future improvements.

**Sourcewell Ballot:** County Auditor/Treasurer/Interim County Administrator Heather Olson asked for a board vote in the Sourcewell Board of Directors election ballot. Commissioner Bryan Winkels had previously agreed to be nominated for this position and an official board motion is needed to complete the ballot.

Motion by Commissioner Stearns to nominate Bryan Winkels to the Sourcewell Board of Directors, seconded by Commissioner Kangas. Motion carried unanimously.

**February 17, 2026 Board Meeting Schedule:** County Auditor/Treasurer/Interim County Administrator Heather Olson informed the board of the conflict with the February 17, 2026 board meeting and the upcoming County Administrator interviews, requesting to move that meeting to February 24, 2026. The Commissioners agreed on this date change.

**2026 Commissioner Committee Assignments:** County Auditor/Treasurer/Interim County Administrator Heather Olson asked the Commissioners for any changes as the Commissioner Committee Assignments were reviewed.

The Building Services Committee was discussed. This committee was created for the purpose of communicating about internal services such as garbage removal and maintenance issues, all of which are now taken care of through a ticketing system and the Management Team. Consequently, the Board decided to eliminate this committee.

It was noted that some committee assignments are in a liaison/non-voting capacity and also that a Ditch Committee Charter needs to be created. The Commissioners will advise Administration of the changes needed and the final version will be posted on the county website once completed.

**Interim County Administrator Report:** County Auditor/Treasurer/Interim County Administrator Heather Olson reminded all staff listening and the Board to include both herself and Administrative Executive Assistant Betsy Heller in any Board meeting-related emails.

**Commissioner Reports:**

Commissioner Stearns - None to report

Commissioner Noon - None to report

Commissioner Winkels - 01/06 Subdivision Ordinance Amendment Review Meeting, 01/08 Old Wadena, 01/11 Ag Society

Commissioner Kangas - 01/09 Rd 18 Bridge project Zoom Mtg

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Winkels at 11:45 a.m., seconded by Commissioner Kangas. Motion carried unanimously.

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

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Ron Noon, County Board Chairman  
Wadena County, MN