

WADENA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

January 20, 2026

The Wadena County Board of Commissioners' Meeting was held on Tuesday, January 20th, 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, Murlyn Kreklau 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, Human Resources & Human Services Director/Deputy County Administrator Jennifer Westrum and Administrative Services Supervisor Amie Gendron via Zoom.

Amend/Approve the Day's Agenda:

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

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

Consent Agenda:

- Auditor Warrants for Approval in the amount of \$559,950.78
- Human Services Warrants for Approval in the amount of \$42,715.62
- 2026 Building Committee Charter
- 2025 2nd Half Allocation for Wadena Historical Society
- 2025 Allocation for Menahga Historical Society
- Employment Update

Motion by Commissioner Winkels to approve the Consent Agenda after pulling the Building Committee Charter for further clarification, seconded by Commissioner Kangas. Motion carried unanimously.

Building Committee Charter Review: The board discussed the structure of their building committees. The Building Services Committee was deemed unnecessary and eliminated during the last Board meeting as routine maintenance issues are now handled through a ticketing system. Previously the Building Committee met separately from regular Board meetings but included the full board, as well as other members, for major construction decisions. The discussion concluded that building matters should be brought to regular commissioner meetings rather than to a separate committee, and as such the Board chose to eliminate the Building Committee.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS:

Public Hearing for Housing Tax Abatements: The public hearing was opened at 9:15 a.m. and a request for public comment was made.

Update on 4H Building/Event Center: County Engineer Anthony Maule gave an update on the remodel project as requested by the Board, stating that cost estimates for the project currently approved by the Department of Labor and Industry are \$1.0 - \$1.4 million, exceeding the available budget of approximately \$365,000. He then continued with a recap of the meeting held on January 14th between himself, Commissioner Winkels, the Widseth Architect, and representatives from the Friends of Wadena County Youth, where they discussed a scaled back project that included only the most important needs of the building. These needs were identified as new flooring/kitchen appliances, a heating/cooling system, insulation, and bathroom upgrades. The Widseth architect indicated these items could likely fit the project's available budget and that he would be checking with DLI if the current approved plans (less the office addition and storage addition) are useable to move forward. He also noted that any alterations to the building beyond simple repair or replacement of interior finishes/furnishings would most likely trigger the need for fire suppression.

Options were discussed at length by the Board including ADA requirements, water hook ups, entrances, exits, and fire suppression. It is the general consensus and intention of the Board to reduce the project scope down to making the bathrooms ADA compliant, adding heating and cooling, tiling the kitchen and adding fire suppression.

The Public Hearing on Proposed Property Tax Abatement was Closed at 9:46 a.m.

Human Services Statistical and Annual Collection Reports: Via Zoom Administrative Services Supervisor Amie Gendron reviewed the December 2025 caseload summaries and the affecting factors for the Board.

Human Resources & Human Services Director/Deputy County Administrator Jennifer Westrum announced that Woodview Oak Ridge has given notice of their 30-day intent to terminate the Hope Center contract which may prompt the county to consider hiring a part-time employee or issuing an RFP for a new operator. She thanked Woodview Oak Ridge for their collaboration and commitment to helping people in Wadena County and stated a proposal would be presented February 3rd for Board consideration.

Administrative Services Supervisor Amie Gendron continued, reporting on the Human Services budget utilization for 2025, with expenditures at 105% and the overall Human Services Fund coming in under budget at 99.2%.

The Board recognized Human Resources & Human Services Director/Deputy County Administrator Jennifer Westrum, Administrative Services Supervisor Amie Gendron and the Human Services staff for their phenomenal work.

Human Services Annual Collections Report: Administrative Services Supervisor Amie Gendron presented the Annual Collections Report explaining the tracking sheet and the retentions, highlighting a net collected amount of \$685,160 of which the county retains a total of \$105,464.

Housing Tax Abatement: County Auditor/Treasurer/Interim County Administrator Heather Olson requested Board approval of the Housing Tax Abatement for parcel 10-011-4010 to be split for a new home to be built.

Motion by Commissioner Kangas to approve the Housing Tax Abatement for parcel 10-011-4010, seconded by Commissioner Kreklau. Motion carried unanimously.

2025 Polling Place Accessibility Grant: County Auditor/Treasurer/Interim County Administrator Heather Olson announced that her Election staff member and the County Engineer had secured Accessibility Grant dollars in the amount of \$9,868.69 to be used towards ramps at the front of the courthouse. These ramps must be replaced during the Hwy 71 project.

Motion by Commissioner Winkels to approve accepting the Accessibility Grant dollars for \$9,868.69 for 2025 Polling Place Accessibility Grant to be used towards the front ramps of the courthouse. Motion seconded by Commissioner Stearns and carried unanimously.

Approve Agreement for Services ProWest and Associates to Upgrade Address Process to ArcGIS Pro: Planning & Zoning/Building Services Administrator Deana Malone presented the project quote from ProWest to upgrade the addressing process for the county using ArcGIS Pro. The current software used for the addressing process for the county is no longer supported and there is no other option to download the outdated software for continued use so the addressing process will now need to be integrated to ArcGIS Pro. The quote to perform the necessary work to make this conversion totals \$2,988.49 and can be paid from the GIS Assigned Fund 2793 and will not affect the General Revenue Fund balance.

Motion by Commissioner Kreklau to approve and authorize staff to sign the Project Estimate for services agreement with ProWest & Associates to upgrade the addressing process for the county using ArcGIS Pro. Motion seconded by Commissioner Winkels and carried unanimously.

Commissioner Reports:

Commissioner Kreklau - KRLS, 01/20 Soil & Water

Commissioner Stearns - None to report

Commissioner Noon - 01/14 Management Team

Commissioner Winkels - 01/13 IT Committee, 01/14 Management Team and Event Center Meeting,
01/15 Court Coordination and Planning/Zoning Committee

Commissioner Kangas - 01/13 IT Committee, 01/15 WCR Juvenile Center

Motion by Commissioner Winkels, seconded by Commissioner Kangas, to enter into a closed session per MN Statute § 13D.05, Subd. 3(d) for attorney-client privilege discussions at 10:13 a.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Open session of the Wadena County Board of Commissioners resumed at 10:45 a.m.

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Kreklau, seconded by Commissioner Winkels. 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