

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Date: April 7, 2026

9:00 a.m.

Place: Commissioners Room, Courthouse, Caledonia, MN

Members Present: Cindy Wright, Eric Johnson, Kurt Zehnder, Robert Schuldt, and Greg Myhre

Others Present: Interim Auditor/Treasurer Polly Heberlein, Fillmore County Journal Reporter Charlene Selbee, The Caledonia Argus Associate Editor Katia Gorsuch, Finance Director Carol Lapham, Coordinator Brent Parker, EDA Director & Coordinator Support Allison Wagner, Public Health Supervisor Jordan Knoke, Public Health Educator Bri Ceaser, Engineer Brian Pogodzinski, Environmental Services Director Amelia Meiners, Larry Gaustad, Clayton Johnson, Dan Vesterse, Mike Moen, Teresa O'Donnell Ebner, Dean Mierau, Linda Griggs, Mary Denzer, Donna Buckbee, Steve Hartwick, Heidi Harms, John Haines, Cory Baker, Jackie Baker, Rebecca Christenson, Joan Redig, Scott Halteli, Cindy Crestwell-Hatleli, Bonnie Laumb, Ray Ronnenberg, Deb Hoskins, Michael Sieve, and Joyce Roffler

Presiding: Chairperson Myhre

Call to order.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion was made by Commissioner Wright, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, motion unanimously carried to approve the agenda.

Motion was made by Commissioner Zehnder, seconded by Commissioner Schuldt, motion unanimously carried to approve the meeting minutes from March 24, 2026.

Public Comment:

Cynthia Crestwell-Hatleli from Yucatan Township said there could be a balance between ag and what was necessary to preserve karst terrain. She said years of damage due to agricultural practices could be changed, but it was hard to put the environment back in its former state. She said the half mile density standard should be a minimum distance between mines. She said if the goal was to make sand more readily available throughout the County it would make more sense to spread out the mines. She said while she could see the benefits for cattle, she thought over time sand spread out over soil would cause a soil degradation issues.

Cynthia Crestwell-Hatleli read a public comment on behalf of her husband, Scott Halteli. He asked "Do we really need more sand mines to meet the needs of Houston County?" In his

opinion he thought sand from the river could be used for septic systems and dairy farms. One mine had trees growing out of it. He thought the County should exhaust the mines that were currently permitted before more were permitted. Hatleli said Winona had less sand mines than Houston County and asked if Houston County needed more sand. He thought the 267 people who signed the petition deserved another public hearing on the matter.

John Hayes from Houston said the whole sand mine ordinance had been a big time thing years ago. He said the half mile rule had been a compromise that had been come up with at the time. He said the purpose of a sand mine density ordinance was to spread out the mines. He thought mines should be properly reclaimed. He said he hoped the original compromise would be upheld today.

Mary Denstad from Yucatan Township questioned if laws were followed during the process. She said a couple of years had been spent trying to uphold the rule.

Rebecca Christenson from Yucatan Township said it was to the County's benefit to space out quarries. She said the County had at least 40 dairy farms and that they were continuing to decline. She said she lived directly below where a mine was proposed to be located. She said there was obvious sand migration from that area. Christenson asked the Commissioners to please bring back the half mile setback.

Donna Buckbee said she did not believe in the distinction between industrial and construction sand. She said the criteria did not change how sand worked in the environment. She asked the board to restore the half mile rule.

Joan Redig from Money Creek Township said she grew up on a farm in Winona County. She said she was concerned about the findings, and felt they were only an opinion. She said it was not economical to transport materials and said she was concerned about clustering. Redig said controlling the density of mines protected the beauty of the surrounding area.

Teresa O'Donnell said she lived in La Crescent and had grown up in Rushford. She said she was at the meeting to voice her concern about increasing mining in Houston County. She referenced the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and said as a City Council member of La Crescent she understood the effort that goes into comprehensive plans. She said planning involved establishing needs and also following the values of the people. O'Donnell referenced a few pages at the beginning of the County's Comprehensive Land Use Plan. She said beginning on Page 4 of the plan discussed balancing the needs of the community and environment. She also quoted, quotes from the public engagement section of the plan stating "Houston County is one of the most beautiful places on earth in my opinion..." "The peace and quiet, the beautiful bluffs..." She said she thought there was a way to make that happen.

Joyce Roffler from Yucatan Township said she thought a monopoly of mines already existed. She said there should be preservation of ag, bluffs, and environmentally friendly

landscapes. She said the terms density and setbacks were different. She said there were different risks with different sands.

Mike Sieve from Yucatan Township said he had moved to the area and believed it was the prettiest part of the State. He said he left where he had lived because he didn't like the use of the land. He said 50 years later a lot was being done to stop mistakes made 50 years ago. He asked the Commissioners to think about the future.

Linda Griggs from Yucatan Township asked the Commissioners to restore the half mile rule. She reviewed the timeline and said she did not like the process.

Jackie Baker said she was one of the applicants on the agenda that day. She said she was respectfully asking that the Commissioners restore the half mile density standards on behalf of her and her husband. She said a lot of time had went into the original rule. She said her family depended on the half mile density standards. Baker said removing the rule impacted her family. She said if a property owner had wanted a mine and had applied for a variance property owners in the area would have been notified. She said lack of public comment at the time when the rule was changed was due to lack of awareness. She said restoring the rule did not ban sand mining.

Dean Mierau said he owned a business in Fillmore County and that people came to the area because they loved it. He said as a business owner he was asking that the board take that into consideration. He said he had many first time customers in previous years who enjoyed the area.

Steve Hartwick said he was a 50 year resident of Money Creek Township. He said he was concerned about noise at mining operations. He said factors were compiled when two mines were close together. He said he knew that legally the County had only needed to give notice in the Argus but he thought when amending County Code the County should reach out to as many people as possible.

Clayton Johnson said he appreciated the time and consideration the County had given to shotgun vs. rifle. He said he found it interesting that the people he had heard speak at meetings who wanted to use a rifle wanted it for personal reasons in Johnson's opinion. He said those opposed to rifles were concerned about safety.

Dan Vesterse from Spring Grove said he attended the first public hearing on rifle vs. shotgun. He said at that meeting more people were in favor of shotgun only. He said many had also signed a petition for shotgun only. He thanked the Commissioners.

Mike Moen from Spring Grove asked that the Commissioners change the rule back to shotgun only in Houston County. He said his biggest issue was safety. Moen said property owners he had talked to had wanted it to be left as shotgun only. He said he did not think more deer would be killed if rifles were allowed.

APPOINTMENTS

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Schuldt seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve the consent agenda. The Commissioners thanked Carrie O’heron and Liza Jandt for their 82 years of combined service to Houston County. Approved items are below.

- 1) Accept retirement from Carrie O’heron effective May 29th, 2026, with 46 years of service.
- 2) Accept retirement from Liza Jandt Effective June 4th, 2026, with 36 years of service.
- 3) Change the employment status of McKinley Sisson, Jailer/Dispatcher from probationary to regular, effective April 21, 2026.
- 4) Review and approve payments. Payments are below.

REQUEST APPROVAL FOR PAYMENTS

2026/04/07 COMMISSIONER WARRANTS:

VENDOR NAME	AMOUNT
CALEDONIA OIL CO INC	4,636.70
CDW GOVERNMENT	4,923.78
CENTEC CAST METAL PRODUCTS	3,568.14
COMPUTER FORENSIC SERVICES LLC	48,301.41
DELTA DENTAL	7,939.64
GREAT LAKES SALT COMPANY	37,144.84
GROUNDBREAKING CONNECTIONS LLC	7,083.33
INSIGHT PUBLIC SECTOR	7,716.50
INTERSTATE BILLING SERVICES	19,202.37
IUOE LOCAL 49 FRINGE BENEFIT FUNDS	28,475.00
LIBERTY TIRE RECYCLING LLC	3,716.45
MASTER'S TOUCH INC/THE	6,739.29
MEDICA	258,219.76
MN DEPT OF CORRECTIONS	56,439.72
MN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY	2,679.11
OLYMPIC BUILDERS GENERAL CONTRAC	132,525.00
ONSOLVE INTERMEDIATE HOLDING COM	8,690.05
TRAFFTECH INC	8,421.64
VANGUARD APPRAISALS INC	3,040.00

VERIZON WIRELESS	2,678.52
ZIEGLER INC	7,553.37
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	659,694.62
42 VENDORS PAID LESS THAN \$2000.00	23,744.44
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	683,439.06
PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	17,843.77
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	701,282.83
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ACTION ITEMS

File No. 1 – The Commissioners discussed options and possible action to either move forward with a shotgun only ordinance or allow rifles in Houston County. Coordinator Parker said the conversation would guide him in the direction the Commissioners wanted to go. Commissioner Wright said for several months she had talked to people about shotgun only vs. rifle. She said she had talked to about 125 additional people not including those who attended the public hearings. She said about 75% of people she spoke to were opposed to rifles. Wright said she did not believe Houston County needed to do what other counties in the area were doing. She said she was in favor of creating an ordinance and was opposed to rifles. Commissioner Zehnder said a majority of people in his district wanted the rule to stay shotgun only. Commissioner Wright moved, Commissioner Zehnder seconded, motion carried three to two to create a shotgun only ordinance. Rifles would not be allowed to be used in Houston County under the ordinance. The Commissioners voted by roll. Commissioners Wright, Zehnder, and Myhre voted yes to move forward with creating a shotgun only ordinance. Commissioners Johnson and Schuldt voted no.

File No. 2 – Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Johnson seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for Scott Standish for a single-family non-farm dwelling on less than 40 acres in the Agriculture Protection District in Mayville Township.

File No. 3 – Commissioner Johnson moved, Commissioner Wright seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for Gabriel Howe for a single-family non-family farm dwelling on less than 40 acres in the Agriculture Protection District in Yucatan Township.

File No. 4 – Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Schuldt seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for Thomas and Colleen Niebeling for substantial land alteration and excavation in floodplain.

File No. 5 – The Commissioners discussed approving or denying a Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance on mine density standards for Burns & Hansen, P.A. on behalf of Cory and Jackie Baker, Scott Hatleli and Cindy Cresswell-Hatleli, and Rosemary Iversen. The Planning Commission had not recommended approval for the request. Environmental Services Director Meiners said going back to 2025 the County had received a proposal from G-Cubed for a text

amendment. The applicant needed to provide compatibility with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The notice was published in the Caledonia Argus. Coordinator Parker said the Townships in the County were emailed. He said Environmental Services Director Meiners had emails that were sent to Townships. Commissioner Wright said the County had received a petition. Commissioner Wright said she wanted the concerns in the petition to be reviewed and looked into in the same way the County looked into other petitions. Commissioner Wright said the year prior when she had voted on the matter there were things she did not know. She said the County’s inventory and enforcement of mines were things she wanted to know more about. Wright said she wanted more awareness to make people feel safe. Commissioner Wright said she was not saying it was not appropriate to approve the request, but she did not feel now was the time to do it. Commissioner Wright said she wanted more information. Commissioner Johnson said the half mile rule still applied to industrial. He said construction mines were a lesser mining operation. He said construction was less intense with not as much going out. He said Houston County’s current rule was the same rule Fillmore and Winona County had. Commissioner Johnson said at the time when the current text amendment was changed, he thought it was the reasonable thing to do, as he knew a lot of dairy farmers and people putting in sewers that struggled to find sand. Commissioner Johnson said a lot of concerns would be addressed in a CUP application process. Commissioner Zehnder said he had concerns because since his time as Commissioner he had looked at the Comp Plan as the “holy grail”. He said he wanted to keep the beauty of Houston County. Commissioner Schuldt said he kept hearing that people were not knowing about things. Commissioner Wright moved, Commissioner Schuldt seconded, motion carried four to one to table the matter until further research could be done. The Commissioners voted by roll. Commissioners Wright, Zehnder, Schuldt, and Myhre voted yes. Commissioner Johnson voted no. The matter was tabled.

File No. 6 – Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Johnson seconded, motion unanimously carried to award the 2026 Chloride bid to Bluff Country Brine. Bluff Country Brine’s bid was for \$1.538 for chloride delivered and \$1.68 for chloride delivered and applied. Abstract is below.

ABSTRACT OF BIDS						
HOUSTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA						
CALCIUM CHLORIDE QUOTE						
March 18, 2026 1:00 p.m.						
Item #	Item	Contractor	Bluff Country Brine Unit Price	Knife River Unit Price	Envirotech Services Inc Unit Price	Northern Salt Inc Unit Price
1	Delivered by tanker truck to Caledonia	Gallons	1.538	1.600	1.730	1.716
2	Delivered & Applied to various county roads	Gallons	1.680	1.760	1.930	1.820
	Minimum Transport load	Gallons	4,100.00	4,000.00	4,000.00	4,200.00
		Cashier's Check		Bond	Bond	Bond
		Total Gallons Est	54,000.00			
		Estimate Cost	83,052.00	40% County	60% Township/City	
		Budget 2026	100,000.00			
		Under Budget	(16,948.00)			

File No. 7 – Commissioner Johnson moved, Commissioner Zehnder seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve a quote for the replacement of overhead garage doors at the Spring Grove shop. The remaining doors would be replaced at a later time. Quotes are below.

Houston County Highway Department			
2026 Garage Doors			
Garage Door Location	Tri-State Doors	La Crosse Overhead Door	Overhead Door
Spring Grove Shop	31,950.00	35,158.00	38,789.00
		(25,918+9,240)	
Hokah Shop	7,778.00	7,739.00	8,562.00
Houston Shop	17,555.00	17,231.00	21,405.00
		(8,602+8,629)	
Discount for doing all doors	(2,500.00)	(4,900.00)	
Total Cost	54,783.00	55,228.00	68,756.00

File No. 8 – Commissioner Wright moved, Commissioner Zehnder seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve a quote from Addco Acquisition, LLC through their distributor Surefitter for message boards. Their quote was on the State Bid for \$25,122.

File No. 9 – Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Wright seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve changing the title and pay band of Jordan Knoke from Public Health Supervisor to Public Health Director (D-61 step 4) effective March 9th, 2026. This change was due to restructuring and not an open position.

File No. 10 – Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Wright seconded, motion unanimously carried to change the County’s current tax software to CPT (Counties Providing Technology).

File No. 11 – Commissioner Wright moved, Commissioner Zehnder seconded, motion unanimously carried to enter a three-year contract with Darktrace cyber security platform to further protect the County’s network and data.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

The Commissioners discussed recent and upcoming meetings including Township Annual Meetings, PUC Hearing, Public Health, Airport, ECB, EDA, Planning Commission, Houston County Collaborative, SELCO, and Township Association meeting.

Closing Public Comment:

Linda Griggs thanked the board for listening to all the people that showed up at the meeting. She said the question had been brought up as to why the rule had been changed in the first place. She said the 2015 rule had come about after hours of collaboration. Griggs said it had been a true compromise. She said Houston County did not need to mimic what Winona County and Fillmore County were doing. Griggs said she didn’t think too many people were complaining before the rule was changed. She thanked the board for keeping shotgun only in Houston County.

Donna Buckbee thanked the board. She said the family was a sweet family with nice children.

Mary Denzer thanked the board for their patience and for listening to concerns. She said she had been a potter for 52 years and lived near a proposed sand mine. She said there was a river nearby. She said construction sand and industrial sand were the same thing.

Steve Hartwick from Money Creek Township thanked the board for tabling the matter at the meeting. He said he wanted to know if Townships were notified of the change.

Joyce Roffler from Yucatan Township thanked the board for their work. She thanked the board for resolutions passed in recent months. She said she didn’t think the County had the staff to monitor all conditions and regulations. She thanked the Commissioners for listening.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Zehnder, seconded by Commissioner Wright, motion unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 11:13 a.m. The next meeting would be a workgroup session on April 14, 2026.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

HOUSTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA

By: _____
Greg Myhre, Chairperson

Attest: _____

Brent Parker, Coordinator