

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Date: January 27, 2026

9:00 a.m.

Place: Commissioners Room, Courthouse, Caledonia, MN

Members Present: Cindy Wright, Eric Johnson, Kurt Zehnder, 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, Interim Attorney Suzanne Bublitz, Holly Dvorak, Kathy Solum, Dayva Goetzinger, Tammy Diersen, Kristina Hauser, Deb Wray, Charlie Wray, and Sheila Schroeder

Presiding: Chairperson Myhre

Call to order.

Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Motion was made by Commissioner Wright, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, motion carried unanimously to approve the meeting minutes from January 20, 2026.

Public Comment:

Dayva Goetzinger from Jefferson Ridge said she was a concerned citizen of Houston County. She was concerned about the proposed MariBell Transmission project and said she wanted to hold Dairyland Power and MISO accountable. She said other Counties such as Crawford County had passed resolutions demanding answers. She said an official independent monitor had found that MISO is assuming a view of the future that is extremely unlikely, and would lead to uneconomic investment. She said it was unfair of them to take the land. Goetzinger said the project would decrease their land value. She said she had health concerns and three little kids. She asked Houston County to please help.

Sheila Schroeder from Wilmington Township said she was there representing concerned landowners being impacted by the MariBell Transmission line. She said it was unfair because they had years to plan the project and the landowners only had two months. She said the Schroeder's had four lines that would be affected by the project. She said it would change the County's character and the landscape. She was concerned about the amount of voltage that would be

overhead. She said the landowners believed the existing land would be worthless. She said Dairyland and MISO should prove the need with documentation.

Holly Dvorak from Winnebago Township said she did not own land that would be directly impacted by the line, but lived about a football field away. She said we lived in the driftless area. She said she believed in the County's one per quarter, quarter rule. She said the County had made it through and escaped the glaciers and survived all this time, and that we should not succumb to those wanting to destroy our beauty.

Kristina Hauser asked if it was possible for Houston County to do a moratorium as an option in relation to the transmission project. She said the County did moratoriums for other things.

Tammy Diersen from Houston County said the MariBell Transmission project went across all the best farm land. She said she was concerned about health effects. One of her concerns was noise. She said other countries had studied the matter and found negative effects. Diersen said heavy equipment would wreak havoc on township roads. She said it would impact funds needed for road maintenance. She said she was concerned about wildlife in the area, and the impact the project would have on tourism for Houston County. She asked where the need was for the line. She said the companies had more power than they knew what to do with.

Kathy Solum from Mound Prairie Township said she was in favor of rifle hunting. She confirmed that the first public hearing on the matter would be on Wednesday, February 4th, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the basement of the Houston County Justice Center.

APPOINTMENTS

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Johnson seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve the consent agenda. The Commissioners gave a round of applause for Danny O' Heron thanking him for his years of service to Houston County. Approved items are below.

- 1) Approve authorization for establishment of the 2026 Houston County Absentee Ballot Board and approval of Resolution No. 26-06. Resolution is below.

**RESOLUTION NO. 26-06
AUTHORIZATION FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
2026 HOUSTON COUNTY ABSENTEE BALLOT BOARD
JANUARY 27, 2026**

WHEREAS, Houston County is required by Minnesota Statutes 203B.121, Subd. 1 to establish an Absentee Ballot Board, and

WHEREAS, this board will bring uniformity in the processing of accepting or rejecting returned absentee ballots in Houston County; and

WHEREAS, the Absentee Ballot Board would consist of a sufficient number of election judges as provided in sections 204B.19 to 204B.22 and may include deputy county auditor-treasurers trained in the processing and counting of absentee ballots;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Houston County Board of Commissioners hereby authorizes Houston County Auditor-Treasurer to establish a County Absentee Ballot Board that would consist of a sufficient number of election judges as provided in sections 204B.19 to 204B.22 and may include deputy auditor-treasurers to perform the task.

- 2) Accept the resignation/retirement of Danny O’Heron, Recycling Center Lead, effective April 9th, 2026, with thanks for his 10 years of service to the residents of Houston County.

ACTION ITEMS

File No. 1 – Commissioner Johnson moved, Commissioner Zehnder seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve a 2026 property tax abatement of \$5,450 for Larry Ledbhr.

File No. 2 – Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Wright seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve the 2026 unpaid green acre payback amounts to be added as a special assessment tax (parcel-specific) and adopt Resolution No. 26-07. Resolution is below.

**Resolution No. 26-07
HOUSTON COUNTY ASSESSOR
RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ASSESSMENT OF PROPERTIES
FOR UNPAID SPECIAL CHARGES**

WHEREAS the following properties (“Properties”) in Houston County have unpaid special charges in the amounts below:

Unpaid Special Charges

Owner	Parcel #	Amount	Reason
Clint Meyer	11.0218.000	\$2,219.92	Green Acres Payback
Clint Meyer	11.0223.000	\$2,662.42	Green Acres Payback
Nicholas Booker & Dean & Angela Happel	12.0035.000	\$22.20	Green Acres Payback
Nicholas Booker & Dean & Angela Happel	12.0038.000	\$180.32	Green Acres Payback
Nicholas Booker & Dean & Angela Happel	12.0043.000	\$18.45	Green Acres Payback
Ralph & Kathleen Hammel and Robert	13.0314.000	\$492.54	Green Acres Payback

R & Kandice Hammel			
Ralph & Kathleen Hammel and Robert R & Kandice Hammel	13.0326.001	\$17.64	Green Acres Payback
Robert & Kandice Hammel and Ralph & Kathleen Hammel	13.0320.000	\$122.87	Green Acres Payback
Robert & Kandice Hammel and Ralph & Kathleen Hammel	13.0321.000	\$640.34	Green Acres Payback
Robert & Kandice Hammel and Ralph & Kathleen Hammel	13.0325.000	\$200.48	Green Acres Payback
Robert & Kandice Hammel and Ralph & Kathleen Hammel	15.0329.000	\$172.59	Green Acres Payback
Darci Gerard	15.0319.000	\$152.98	Green Acres Payback

WHEREAS, the owners of these Properties have been notified of the delinquencies and the County’s intent to collect these charges through assessment; and

WHEREAS, the delinquent bills remain unpaid, and the owners have not worked out other payment arrangements; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Sections 273.111 subdivisions 9-16, the Houston County Board of Commissioners hereby approves assessing the Properties for delinquent charges in the amounts set forth above; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Houston County Board of Commissioners hereby approves and directs the Houston County Assessor to certify the above-mentioned charges to the Houston County Auditor for collection with property taxes payable in 2026.

File No. 3 – Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Wright seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve a competitive search for a 1 FTE Appraiser. (Note: Depending upon qualifications/MN DOR certifications the successful candidate could be hired as an Appraiser Trainee B22, Certified MN Appraiser B23, Certified MN Appraiser-Income B24).

File No. 4 – Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Johnson seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve a competitive search for a 1 FTE Recycling Center Lead (B23).

File No. 5 – Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Wright seconded, motion unanimously carried to review and approve payments. Payments are below.

REQUEST APPROVAL FOR PAYMENTS

2026/01/27 COMMISSIONER WARRANTS:

VENDOR NAME	AMOUNT
ADVANCED CORRECTIONAL HEALTHCAR	7,726.02
BOARD OF WATER & SOIL RESOURCES	17,873.30
CALEDONIA OIL CO INC	3,340.00
GREAT LAKES SALT COMPANY	13,177.06
INTERSTATE BILLING SERVICES	8,813.59
MINNESOTA ENERGY RESOURCES	10,958.26
MNCCC	45,314.82
	<u>107,203.05</u>
36 VENDORS PAID LESS THAN \$2000.00	21,340.59
	<u>128,543.64</u>
PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	28,770.09
	<u>157,313.73</u>

REVIEW LICENSE CENTER PAYMENTS

2026/01/16 AUDITOR WARRANTS:

VENDOR NAME	AMOUNT
DELTA DENTAL	7,687.38
IUOE LOCAL 49 FRINGE BENEFIT FUNDS	26,605.00
MEDICA	254,631.40
MN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY	2,681.41
	<u>291,605.19</u>
5 VENDORS PAID LESS THAN \$2000.00	3,814.79
	<u>295,419.98</u>

REVIEW LICENSE CENTER PAYMENTS

2026/01/20 AUDITOR WARRANTS:

VENDOR NAME	AMOUNT
MN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY	2,677.32
	<u>2,677.32</u>

REVIEW LICENSE CENTER PAYMENTS

2026/01/21 AUDITOR WARRANTS:

VENDOR NAME	AMOUNT
WELLS FARGO BANK	1,212,625.00
	<u>1,212,625.00</u>

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Coordinator Parker shared with the board notes from a Department Head meeting. Parker said he would work with Attorney Bublitz to see if a moratorium in relation to the MariBell Transmission project was a possible option for the County.

Two upcoming public hearings on the use of rifles for deer hunting in Houston County would take place in the basement of the Houston County Criminal Justice Center, Caledonia, MN. These would be Special County Board Meetings with the only business being the public hearings. They would take place on February 4, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. and March 3, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

One upcoming public hearing, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § 375A.1205, Subdivision 1 to consider making the positions of Auditor / Treasurer and Recorder positions appointed would take place in the Historic Courthouse County Board Room 222, Caledonia MN on February 3, 2026 at 9:05 a.m.

The Commissioners discussed recent and upcoming meetings including a Planning Commission, Department Head, Joint Board of Health, Finance, and SELCO meeting.

Closing Public Comment:

None.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Zehnder, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, motion unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 a.m. The next meeting would be a regular meeting on February 3, 2025.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

HOUSTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA

By: _____
Greg Myhre, Chairperson

Attest: _____
Brent Parker, Coordinator