

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Date: January 6, 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, Interim Administrator Carol Lapham, Coordinator Brent Parker, EDA Director & Coordinator Support Allison Wagner, Engineer Brian Pogodzinski, Financial Assistance Supervisor Karen Kohlmeyer, Fiscal Supervisor Heidi Harms, Accountant Sheila Schroeder, Social Worker Kelly Rohland, IT Director Andrew Milde, Interim County Attorney Suzanne Bublitz, Clayton Johnson, Roger Pearson, Dan Vesterse, Steve Bauer, Todd Rohweder, Bob Borowiak, Michael Sieve, Larry Gaustad, Bonnie Laumb, and Karen Colsch

Presiding: Coordinator Parker, Chairperson pro tem

Call to order.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Parker requested nominations for 2026 Board of Commissioner Chairperson. Commissioner Zehnder nominated Commissioner Myhre for 2026 Board Chairperson. Commissioner Johnson nominated Commissioner Wright for chairperson. Commissioner Johnson also nominated Commissioner Schuldt for chairperson. Commissioner Zehnder motioned, Commissioner Schuldt seconded motion carried three to two to make Commissioner Myhre 2026 Board of Commissioner Chairperson. The Commissioners voted by roll. Commissioners Wright and Johnson voted no. Commissioners Zehnder, Schuldt, and Myhre voted yes. Commissioner Schuldt nominated Commissioner Wright as 2026 Board of Commissioner Vice Chairperson. There were no other nominations for vice chairperson. Motion was made by Commissioner Schuldt, seconded by Commissioner Zehnder, motion carried unanimously to make Commissioner Wright 2026 Board of Commissioner Vice Chairperson. The Commissioners voted by roll. All Commissioners voted yes.

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

Motion was made by Commissioner Wright, seconded by Commissioner Zehnder, motion carried unanimously to approve the meeting minutes from December 30, 2025.

Public Comment:

Clayton Johnson was against allowing rifles to be used in Houston County for deer hunting. He referenced a study and shared what he had found with the Commissioners. He said members of the public had thought a public hearing was going to be held in August 2025 on the matter.

Steve Bauer shared with the board a petition with 250 names on it. He said those who had signed the petition were against using rifles in Houston County for deer hunting because of safety concerns.

Dan Vesterse from Spring Grove said he was 55 years old and had owned land in Black Hammer Township for 40 years. He said he came from a big hunting family. He recalled a story from 1989 where he had been stopped by the local game warden at the time and he had asked why rifles were not allowed for deer hunting in Houston County. He said the warden had said it was a safety issue due to the terrain. Vesterse said he was in the US Army. He said the amount of ricocheting from rifle bullets was unbelievable. He was against using rifles in Houston County for deer hunting.

Bob Borowiak questioned why rifles were needed for hunting in Houston County's hill country. He said he had been hunting and climbing the County's hills for 65+ years. He said if people could not hunt a deer with shotguns today, they did not need to be in the woods.

Michael Sieve from Yucatan Township said he killed his first deer in 1969. He said he was very interested in deer management. He asked: "When are we going to give these deer a chance?" He said guns were "good these days". He said "enough is enough" for the deer.

Mike Moen said he had hunted for over 60 years. He asked about the new rifle season.

APPOINTMENTS

Houston County recognized staff for years of service to the County. Awardees are listed below.

Employee Recognition Awards

30 Year Award

Sheila M Schroeder 5/17/1995

25 Year Award

Suzanne M Bublitz 5/31/2000

Ann E Diersen 1/31/2000

Holly J Gleason 10/25/2000

Shawn L Peter 7/17/2000

Luke T Sass 2/29/2000

20 Year Award

Duane D Brownlee Jr 10/17/2005

Andrew J Milde 11/30/2005

15 Year Award

Kelly J Petersen 6/28/2010

10 Year Award

Joann B Curley 5/4/2015

Michael R Meiners 3/16/2015

Leah N Milde 1/12/2015

Danny M O'Heron 12/14/2015

Kelly J Rohland 5/11/2015

Haleigh L Sierzant 5/15/2015

A public hearing was scheduled for 9:05 a.m. to implement new real property protection fees, pursuant to Minn. Statute 480.50 Subd. 6. The hearing was inadvertently missed on the agenda, and no public hearing was held.

Interim Auditor/Treasurer, Heberlein, opened the sealed bid for the official County newspaper 2026. The County had received one bid on time from *Caledonia Argus*. A second bid had been received, but it was received after the deadline. Heberlein opened the bid from the *Caledonia Argus* and read the rate amounts line by line to Commissioners. The bid amounts are below.

Caledonia Argus

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER FOR 2026 Official proceedings of the County Board and all notices required to be published in the county's official paper. Charge per inch (based on a 7 point type, Arial font, with 8 point leading) \$ 3.00

MISCELLANEOUS NOTICES that are not required to be published in the Official Paper (per column inch). Legal Rate \$ 3.00 Display Rate \$ 3.00

FIRST PRINTING OF 2025 FINANCIAL STATEMENT Charge per inch (based on a 7 point type, Arial font, with 8 point leading) \$ 3.00

PUBLICATION OF SAMPLE BALLOT INFORMATION Charge per inch (based on a 7 point type, Arial font, with 8 point leading) \$ 3.00

PUBLICATION OF TAX FORFEITURE INFORMATION Charge per inch (based on a 7 point type, Arial font, with 8 point leading) \$ 3.00

PUBLICATION OF DELINQUENT TAX LIST: Charge per inch (based on a 7 point type, Arial font with 8 point leading) \$ 3.00

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Johnson moved, Commissioner Zehnder seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve the consent agenda. The Commissioners gave a round of applause for Kelly Petersen thanking her for her years of service to the County. Approved items are below.

- 1) Consider adopting Resolution No. 26-01 and designating 2026 Official Newspaper. Resolution is below.

RESOLUTION NO. 26-01

2026 OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER

January 6, 2026

WHEREAS, Minn. Statute § 375.12 Subd. 1, requires a county to solicitations of bids annually at the first regular meeting for an official paper;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Houston County Board of Commissioners, that the following publications have been designated as the Official Newspaper for publication of minutes, public notices, and other routine county business, with the accepted rates for publication expenses:

Caledonia Argus

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER FOR 2026 Official proceedings of the County Board and all notices required to be published in the county's official paper. Charge per inch (based on a 7 point type, Arial font, with 8 point leading) \$ 3.00

MISCELLANEOUS NOTICES that are not required to be published in the Official Paper (per column inch). Legal Rate \$ 3.00 Display Rate \$ 3.00

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PUBLICATION OF DELINQUENT TAX LIST: Charge per inch (based on a 7 point type, Arial font with 8 point leading) \$ 3.00

- 2) Consider adopting Resolution No. 26-02 Account Powers Granted for Merchants Bank N.A. Resolution is below.

RESOLUTION NO. 26-02

**ACCOUNT POWERS GRANTED
MERCHANTS BANK N.A.**

January 6, 2026

BE IT RESOLVED, the Houston County Board of Commissioners authorizes County Auditor/Treasurer Polly Heberlein the authority to open any deposit or share accounts in the name of Houston County and further authorizes Auditor/Treasurer Heberlein, Finance Director Carol Lapham and Board Chairman to endorse checks and orders for the payment of money or otherwise withdraw or transfer funds on deposit with this Financial institution.

- 3) Consider adopting Resolution No. 26-03 Account Powers Granted for ESB Banking. Resolution is below.

RESOLUTION NO. 26-03

**ACCOUNT POWERS GRANTED
ESB BANKING**

January 6, 2026

BE IT RESOLVED, the Houston County Board of Commissioners authorizes County Auditor/Treasurer Polly Heberlein the authority to open any deposit or share accounts in the name of Houston County and further authorizes Auditor/Treasurer Heberlein and Finance Director Carol Lapham, and Board Chairman to endorse checks and orders for the payment of money or otherwise withdraw or transfer funds on deposit with the requirement of two signatures with this Financial institution.

- 4) Accept the resignation/retirement of Kelly Petersen, Appraiser, effective February 2nd, 2026, with thanks for her 15 years of service to the residents of Houston County.

ACTION ITEMS

File No. 1 – Commissioner Johnson moved, Commissioner Zehnder seconded, motion carried unanimously to authorize for additional fees in association with MN Statute 480.50 Personal Information in Real Property Records. (This item would need to be revisited on a future agenda as the public hearing on the matter was inadvertently missed on the agenda, and no public hearing was held.)

File No. 2 – Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Wright seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve Resolution No. 26-04 Authorization to Use Alternative Method to Disseminate Bids and Requests. Resolution is below.

RESOLUTION NO. 26-04

AUTHORIZATION TO USE ALTERNATE METHOD TO DISSEMINATE BIDS AND REQUESTS

January 6, 2026

WHEREAS, Minn. Statute § 331A.03 Subd. 3(b), allows a county to use its website or recognized industry trade journals as an alternative to disseminate solicitations of bids, requests for information and requests for proposals;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Houston County Board of Commissioners, that the County of Houston will continue to use the Houston County website, www.co.houston.mn.us as an alternative means to disseminate solicitations of bids, requests for information, and requests for proposals for transportation related construction and maintenance projects.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any dissemination by alternative means must be in substantially the same format and for the same period of time as a publication would otherwise be required under Minn. Statute § 331A.03 Subd. 3.

File No. 3 – Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Wright seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve and sign 2026 to 2028 law enforcement contract with the City of Spring Grove. The Commissioners voted by roll. All Commissioners voted yes. Commissioner Johnson asked the Sheriff to provide quarterly reports to the Commissioners on the Sheriff's office as a whole including budget information, overtime, and number of those in jail.

File No. 4 – Commissioner Wright moved, Commissioner Zehnder seconded, motion carried to approve Resolution No. 26-05 Designating the County Coordinator as Clerk of the Houston County Board of Commissioners. Resolution is below.

RESOLUTION NO. 26-05

A RESOLUTION DESIGNATING THE COUNTY COORDINATOR AS CLERK OF THE COUNTY BOARD

PURSUANT TO MINNESOTA STATUTES § 375.49

WHEREAS, the County Board of Commissioners is authorized under Minnesota Statutes § 375A.06 to establish the position of County Coordinator and to assign to that position such administrative and executive duties as the Board deems appropriate; and

WHEREAS, Minnesota Statutes § 375.49, subdivision 2, expressly permits the County Board to delegate duties traditionally performed by other county offices, including administrative and clerical functions, to the County Coordinator; and

WHEREAS, the County Board finds that assigning the duties of Clerk of the County Board to the County Coordinator promotes efficiency, consistency, accountability, and effective administration of county operations; and

WHEREAS, the County Board desires to clearly designate the County Coordinator as Clerk of the Board to ensure proper preparation of board agendas, minutes, resolutions, official records, and related statutory duties;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Houston County Board of Commissioners hereby designates the County Coordinator to serve as Clerk of the County Board, effective January 6th, 2026; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that as Clerk of the County Board, the County Coordinator is authorized and directed to perform all duties customarily and statutorily associated with the office of Clerk of the Board, including but not limited to:

- Preparing and maintaining official board records, minutes, and resolutions;
- Attesting to board actions and maintaining the official seal, where applicable;
- Ensuring compliance with applicable state statutes, administrative rules, and record-retention requirements; and
- Performing such additional clerical and administrative duties as may be assigned by the County Board; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this designation shall remain in effect until modified or rescinded by subsequent action of the County Board.

Adopted by the Houston County Board of Commissioners on this 6th day of January **2026**.

File No. 5 – Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Johnson seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve Resolution No. 26-06 designating 2026 Annual Appropriations included as part of the 2026 Operating Budget. The Commissioners voted by roll. All Commissioners voted yes. Resolution is below.

RESOLUTION NO. 26-06
2026 ANNUAL APPROPRIATIONS

January 6, 2026

WHEREAS, The Houston County Board of Commissioners approved the 2026 Annual Budget on December 30th, 2025;

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Houston County Board of Commissioners, that the following appropriations will be made in 2026 as appropriate from the County Revenue Fund:

ORGANIZATION	2026 BUDGET
SE Minnesota Initiative Fund	\$3,938
SEMAAA	\$2,000
SELCO	\$203,283
Emergency Medical Service	\$10,000
SEMCAC - Senior & Caregiver Advocacy	\$3,500
SEMCAC - Senior Nutrition	\$2,500
SEMCAC - Transportation Program (Donation Rides)	\$1,500
SEMCAC – Rolling Hills Transit	\$5,000
Houston County Food Shelves	\$7,500
Historical Society	\$37,500
Historical Society - Matching Funds (Maximum)	\$5,000
Southern MN Tourism/Historic Bluff Country	\$942
Agricultural Society	\$20,000
Agricultural Society - Prior Year Financials Additional	\$4,000
RRSWCD	\$129,000
Bluff Country Minnesota Multi-County Housing and Redevelopment Authority	\$3,000
SE MN EMS	\$5,000
TOTAL	\$443,663

File No. 6 – Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Wright seconded, motion unanimously carried to review and approve payments. Payments are below.

2026/01/06 COMMISSIONER WARRANTS:

<u>VENDOR NAME</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
AMC/MACA	16,200.00
ARTHUR J GALLAGHER RISK MANAGEMENT	6,398.00
	<u>22,598.00</u>
1 VENDOR PAID LESS THAN \$2000.00	125.00
	<u>22,723.00</u>
PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	18,733.39
	<u>41,456.39</u>

File No. 7 – The Commissioners discussed the committees they would like to serve on in 2026. Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Wright seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve 2026 Board of Commissioners Committee appointments.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Coordinator Parker updated the board about an upcoming AMC technical training day. He said he would look into having a public hearing regarding the use of rifles for deer hunting.

The Commissioners discussed recent and upcoming meetings including a Southern Medical JPC meeting.

Commissioner Johnson said he wanted to clarify that a public hearing regarding using rifles in Houston County for deer hunting had not been held in 2025 because the board had learned rifles would not be able to be used until the 2026 hunting season. It had been the general consensus of the board to wait on making a decision on the matter in 2025 as changes would not go into effect until 2026.

Commissioners Johnson and Wright shared that they had attended former Houston County Commissioner Teresa Walter’s funeral. She had served as a public servant through the County and as a township officer.

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 10:23 a.m. The next meeting would be a workgroup session on January 13, 2026.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

HOUSTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA

By: _____
Greg Myhre, Chairperson

Attest: _____
Brent Parker, Coordinator