

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Date: March 10, 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, 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, Interim Attorney Suzanne Bublitz, Kathy Solum, Cindy Crestwell-Hateli, Scott Hateli, Steve Hartwick, and Ben Katz

### Board Workgroup Session

The Commissioners discussed possible future action regarding a rifle ordinance in Houston County. Coordinator Parker said the Commissioners had received feedback both for and against using rifles for deer hunting in Houston County. Commissioner Schuldt said Winona and Fillmore Counties were not doing an ordinance and that rifles would be allowed in those surrounding counties. Commissioner Johnsons said the legislature had passed the use of rifles with the DNR's approval. He said the original rule had been enacted because the deer population at the time had been scarce and they wanted to build the deer population. Commissioner Johnson said this was no longer the case. Commissioner Johnson said he didn't want to take away people's right of choice when it came to what gun they could use especially if the surrounding counties were allowing rifles. He said hunting zones crossed county lines. He said there was also some confusion on if the DNR would enforce a local ordinance. Commissioner Wright said from a public health perspective it could be looked at in both directions. She did not think Houston County should make their decision based primarily on what the surrounding counties were doing. Commissioner Zehnder said he still wanted to talk to more of his constituents before making a decision. Commissioner Myhre said he thought the board should vote on the matter at an upcoming meeting. No official decisions were made.

The Commissioners discussed recent sand mine density concerns from residents with Environmental Services Director Meiners. Text amendments had been made to the Zoning Ordinance for mineral extraction in March of 2025. Environmental Services Director Meiners said when the application to amend the ordinance had come in her office had been required to review it in a certain time period. They had an obligation to process it. The amendments that had been made included adding definitions of construction minerals and industrial minerals. Mine density

standards language was also modified. The ½ mile setback was still in place for industrial use. The text amendment took away the density requirement for construction minerals. Commissioner Johnson said the previous rule, before it was amended in March of 2025, did not define end use. After Houston County had made their rule other counties had started to define industrial vs. construction therefore the County amended their rule. Commissioner Johnson said dairy farmers used construction sand for bedding and construction sand was used for mound systems. He said river sand could not be used for these things. There were no frac sand mines in Houston County. Commissioner Wright asked about health and safety for people and the environment. Environmental Services Director Meiners said Houston County was not the only agency that monitored for health and safety. MSHA or Mine Safety Health Administration looked at operations of quarries. The DNR required permits within certain distances from trout streams. The matter would be discussed further at an upcoming Planning Commission meeting.

The Commissioners discussed a recent Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) audit with Coordinator Parker, Engineer Pogodzinski, and Environmental Services Director Meiners. Houston County was required to have a MS4 permit because of the County's right of way near La Crescent, and La Crescent's proximity to a major metro area, La Crosse. MS4 did not apply to most communities, and it was mostly required of metro areas. The County had not been audited for 17 years. Pogodzinski said everything was being done correctly in the field. However, after the audit the County found out there would need to be some changes to make sure the County was in compliance. The County would need to pass a new ordinance regarding the MS4 in order to resolve concerns. Staff would work on the ordinance and bring it back to the board for review at a later time.

Engineer Pogodzinski discussed with the board a policy regarding trees in city boulevards. He had been working with the Attorney's office on the policy for some time, and it would come back to the board for final approval.

The Commissioners reviewed with Coordinator Parker a resolution Fillmore County had passed regarding the Department of Natural Resources proposing to expand the designated trout streams additional miles upland from existing buffers. In Fillmore County employees, landowners, and commissioners had questions about the proposed expansion and had not heard back from the department. Fillmore County was opposed to the proposed expansion beyond the existing trout streams already designated unless they could be an active part of the process according to a recent ordinance they had passed. Houston County Commissioners said they too were starting to get calls from Houston County residents with similar concerns to Fillmore County. Commissioner Wright said she would like to have more information on the matter. The Commissioners asked how many miles would be affected in Houston County. County staff would look into the matter and report back to the board.

The Commissioners discussed the County's quarter, quarter rule. The townships had been asked to discuss thoughts on the rule at their upcoming annual meetings. Results of those discussions would be discussed at the Township Association spring meeting in April. The

Commissioners discussed that the Zoning office was busy, and did not have time to study the matter currently.

Environmental Services Director Meiners said the Residential Clean Sweep Event would take place on Saturday, April 25, 2026 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Houston. She asked if Commissioners wished to volunteer at the event again as they had done the year prior.

The workgroup session ended at 10:26 a.m.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

HOUSTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Greg Myhre, Chairperson

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Brent Parker, Coordinator