

Meeting Minutes
NDACo Board of Directors
December 11, 2025
NDACo County Office Building

President Kaiser called the meeting to order at 9:12 AM and declared a quorum based on the ILG Board roll call just taken.

Members Present:	Chad Kaiser	Trudy Ruland
Becky Hagel	Scott Ouradnik	Jarret Van Berkorn
Aaron Mork	Don Flaherty	Tiffany Harr
Erica Johnsrud	Kim Jacobson	Kelly Palm
Dana Larsen	Shirley Murray	Robert Wilson
Joshua Frey		

Members Absent:	Tony Grindberg	Jamee Folk
Neal Messer	Stanley Dick	Nick Moser
Howdy Lawlar		

Also Present:	Aaron Birst, NDACo Executive Director
	Genny Dienstmann, NDACo Staff
	Michelle Tabbert, NDACo Staff
	Angie Wentland, NDACo Staff
	Jason Horning, NDACo Staff
	Sara Cote, NDACo Staff
	Jeff Eslinger, NDACo Staff
	Donnell Preskey, NDACo Staff
	Linda Svihovec, NDACo Staff
	Michael Casey, NDACo Staff

The President asked if there were any requested changes to the agenda. There were no suggested changes. Frey moved to approve the agenda as printed. The motion was seconded and passed on a voice vote.

The Board Warm-Up Question was proposed, and each Board member was given an opportunity to respond. The question was: "What impacts did you see from the 3% caps this last budget cycle?" The comments included:

- Already dipping into reserves. Health Unit is going to have the biggest impact with use of reserves.
- Not a lot of impact in our county, but our First District Health was impacted with the federal funding issues and cap. Health insurance increases are also a major concern as the increase was over 9%.
- Human Service Zones in relation to indirect cost funds and shared costs has amplified that there needs to be a higher level of education on the importance of these costs and having a good understanding of what indirect cost plans entail.

- Being a small county, there are not a lot of options in raising other funds, so we needed to shift funds from road and bridge to the general fund. Health insurance costs were high and had to use reserves to cover some of our operating costs. We also had to postpone a vehicle purchase in the Sheriff's Office. Approved adding a birthday holiday to give non-monetary benefits; looked at Christmas Eve holiday in certain circumstances, depending on where it falls in the week, may give employees an additional holiday.
- County is at minimum staffing, so unable to cut staff to reduce budget. Health insurance costs and equipment for the road department are our main concerns. We should be ok for this budget cycle but gravely concerned about the next budget cycle.
- Not much of an impact this budget cycle, but future budgets are very concerning.
- Items we previously paid for out of general fund, we realized we could allocate to individual levies, so we made some changes to that. We had decent reserves to help balance the budget and took steps to mitigate deficit spending. Moved one mill from road and bridge to general fund. We've had to tighten up our budget process and will know a lot more what this looks like a year from now.
- Ward County reserve would not cover our payroll, so we don't have much of a cushion for future budgets. When your health district is a multi county unit, need to make sure all units agree on their salary increases. Also adjusted their health insurance plan where more costs would be transitioned to employees to reduce premium amounts. Had to allocate funds from road department to general fund.
- With growth in our county from data centers, we did not need to utilize any of the 3% or use reserves for this budget cycle. From the cities' perspective, they were able to reduce their mills thereby helping our citizens. Need to examine how tax increment finance districts are handled, as larger cities/counties may be utilizing these and they can affect future budgets.
- Both counties I represent have had to use reserves and one county also used their 3% cap amount to balance their budget. One of the counties is already losing services as the city will no longer provide a partnership for law enforcement which has been contracted in the past. The increase in costs is higher than funds available, so the county will be losing a deputy. Need to get creative in sharing employees, looking at work schedules and other options to find ways to reduce costs.
- Budget for this year, we were able to make it work, but it is the years looking forward that are concerning. We did use a portion of our reserves to balance the budget. Concerning, we don't know what things will look like in the future and the effects of the cap.
- Main concerns are future budgets, especially if gross production gas changes occur as we have a low tax base. Had to delay purchases in road and sheriff's departments.
- Health insurance costs are a big factor as well as costs in our jail. All costs are increasing and the 3% won't be able to keep up with those costs.
- Groups like domestic crises had to cut funding out of our budget as well as others. In addition, good opportunity to visit with department heads and what it

will look like to run departments; areas we can change or tighten up as change is going to happen. Reserves will be used to balance budget.

- First year for our county will be ok, but many departments are using their reserves. The future is what is concerning, because we are going to see the effects of this and it won't be good.

The President next asked for consideration of the Consent Agenda. Ruland moved to approve the Consent Agenda, including the NDACo minutes from the August 28 and October 27, 2025, meetings, the Delegate Council minutes from October 28, 2025, NDACo General Fund checks #38719 through #38801 and DJS Account checks #8007 through #8041 and ACH payments made from July to October 2025. The motion was seconded and passed on a voice vote.

The President called on Linda and Donnell to begin the Legislative Services Report with a presentation on the Impacts of Caps. Donnell provided updates on the activities of the interim committees that affect counties.

The President directed the Board members to the Governance Report, inviting Genny to do a review of the Board Policies. Board members were asked to review, sign and return the 2025 Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement before leaving today's meeting. Kaiser announced his appointments to the Finance Committee and Governance Committee. Jacobson followed with a summary of the Board Member Self-Evaluation results and an explanation of this year's Board Governance Appraisal (for members who've served longer than a year on the Board) and New Board Member Appraisal (for members who've served less than a year on the Board). Jacobson explained that both appraisals would be completed online, with links being sent after the Board meeting. Board members completing the Governance Appraisal were encouraged to take more time and provide more comments while completing the appraisal.

The President then directed the Board's attention to the 2026 Budget, and President asked Aaron, Genny and Angie to explain the proposed budget. Aaron explained the process used to develop and review the budget, Angie and Genny highlighted various categories and items, responding to questions. Flaherty moved approval of the 2026 NDACo Budget as presented by the Finance Committee. After receiving a second to the motion and further discussion, it passed on a unanimous voice vote.

Under County Financial Partnerships, Jason provided an update on the activities of the Next Generation 9-1-1 Program. Sara followed with an update on the Indirect Cost Reimbursement Services.

Under Member Services, Jeff was next invited to present the 2025 Conference Report. Attendance and registrations were highlighted, and the financial results were shared. A summary of conference feedback was noted. After further discussion and answering questions from Board members, it was stated a slide show of conference photos would

be shown during lunch. Aaron continued with a recap of the County Commissioners Summit that was held on December 9th.

President Kaiser asked Aaron to provide an update on the County Tours. He highlighted the counties visited in 2025 and the proposed counties to be visited in 2026 and 2027. He explained that the commitment by the Presidents and NDACo staff to participate in four separate Tours is difficult and that beginning in 2026 the President and 1st Vice President will share the responsibility to participate, with each taking two of the Tours. Also, other Board members were encouraged to attend any of the county tours coming up in 2026.

Kaiser asked Wilson to continue with the National Participation Report. Wilson highlighted areas NACo is focusing on and initiatives that can be adopted by states to bring some of their programs to the local level. Aaron then reminded the Board NDACo offers scholarships for officials to attend a NACo conference. Michael Casey then presented on the CEG Program.

The President and Aaron then reviewed the proposed 2026 Board meeting dates. It was moved by Larsen to approve the following Board meeting dates for 2026: April 30, August 27, October 12 & 13 and December 10. The motion was seconded and passed on a voice vote.

Having reached the end of the approved agenda, the President reminded everyone of the board meeting evaluation and declared the meeting adjourned at 11:48 AM.

Approved by: _____

Date: _____