NORTH DAKOTA
County NEWS
Official Publication of the North Dakota Association of Counties

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Online version at www.ndaco.org/county-news

November-December 2026

NDACo Annual Conference Brings County Leaders Together

Maxine Herr | NDACo Communications Specialist

County officials, staff, state agency partners and vendors from across North Dakota gathered Oct. 11-13 at the Bismarck Event Center for the North Dakota Association of Counties Annual Conference & Expo. With the theme "Counties: 250 Years in the Making," this year's conference recognized the role counties have played in shaping local government and looked ahead to the work still to come.

The three-day event featured educational workshops, networking opportunities, awards and discussions on issues affecting county government. Keynote speaker Danny Adams brought humor and energetic audience participation to his presentation, "Laughter Is Medicine," highlighting the value of connection and humor.

Workshop topics included data center planning and zoning, innovative approaches to housing, emergency management, human resources, artificial intelligence and public safety communications. Attendees also connected with 84 exhibitors offering products and services for county government.

The conference recognized county employees and leaders through the Excellence in County Government Awards, Institute of Local Government training hours awards, and student scholarship presentations. Attendees also participated in discussions and voting on legislative resolutions to help shape county policy for the upcoming legislative session.

The conference concluded with Dale Lennon's presentation, "The Team: Building a Culture of Success," reinforcing the importance of shared purpose and collaboration in county government.

As counties look toward the next 250 years, the conference offered opportunities to share ideas, strengthen connections and prepare for the challenges and opportunities ahead.



NDACO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BACK ROW L TO R: Nick Moser, Cavalier County Commissioner – President, Stanley Dick, Cavalier County Commissioner – outgoing NACo Board; Josh Frey, Towner/Nelson County State's Attorney – ND State's Attorneys Association; Dana Larsen, Ward County Engineer – 3rd Vice President; Robert Wilson, Cass County Administrator – NACo Board; Neal Messer, Stark County Commissioner – NDCCA President; Don Flaherty, Dickey County Tax Director – ND Association of Assessing Officers FRONT ROW L TO R: Jarret Van Berkom, Burke County Commissioner – Region 2; Becky Hagel, Foster County Commissioner – 2nd Vice President; Erica Johnsrud, McKenzie County Auditor/Treasurer – ND County Auditors and Treasurers Association, Treasurer; Trudy Ruland, Mountrail County Commissioner; Tiffany Harr, Eddy County Clerk of District Court/Recorder – ND County Clerks of District Court Association; Shirley Murray, Sheridan County Auditor – ND County Auditors and Treasurers Association, Auditor; Chad Kaiser, Stutsman County Sheriff - Past President. Not pictured: Kim Jacobson, Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone Director – 1st Vice President; Clint Wold, McKenzie County Commissioner – Region 1; Aaron Mork, Nelson County Commissioner – Region 4; Tony Grindberg, Cass County Commissioner – Region 5; Jamee Folk, Mercer County Commissioner – Region 7; Scott Ouradnik, Slope County Commissioner – Region 8; Kyle Kirchmeier, Morton County Sheriff – ND Sheriffs and Deputies Association; Kelly Palm, Griggs County Recorder/Clerk of District Court – ND County Recorders Association

NDACo Association Chooses New Leadership

Maxine Herr | NDACo Communications Specialist

The North Dakota Association of Counties elected new leadership to its Board of Directors at its Annual Conference on Oct. 13 in Bismarck. County officials from every county in the state gathered to participate in professional development on topics important to counties, network with other officials and focus on future potential legislation.

The newly elected officers on the NDACo Board of Directors are:

- **Cavalier County Commissioner Nick Moser** was elected President
- **Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone Director Kim Jacobson** was elected 1st Vice President
- **Foster County Commissioner Becky Hagel** was elected 2nd Vice President
- **Ward County Engineer Dana Larsen** was elected 3rd Vice President
- **Stutsman County Sheriff Chad Kaiser** became Past President

In addition to these officers:

- **McKenzie County Commissioner Clint Wold** was recently elected by Region 1 to represent them on the Board.
- **Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier** was elected by the ND Sheriffs and Deputies Association to represent them on the Board.



Past President Stutsman County Sheriff Chad Kaiser passes the gavel to new President Cavalier County Commissioner Nick Moser.

Each member of the NDACo Board of Directors represents a Member Association or Commissioner Region. A full list of Board Members, including photographs, can be found on our website at www.ndaco.org/board.



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Board Member PROFILE



KYLE KIRCHMEIER
Morton County Sheriff
NDACo Board Member
Representing the ND Sheriffs & Deputies Association

What is your favorite thing about being a County Sheriff? I enjoy the interactions with the public on a daily basis, and seldom are two days the same.

Family: My wife and I celebrated our 40th Anniversary; we have one great son and daughter-in-law and two awesome grandchildren.

Other things you are involved in: I'm serving my third term as Morton County Sheriff and am on the November ballot for a fourth. I'm Vice President of the ND Sheriffs and Deputies Association, a member of Mandan Rural Fire, a board member of the Mandan Rural Fire District, and a member of the Morton County Road Commission. I retired from the ND Highway Patrol in 2014 as Southwest Region Administrative Commander after 29 years of service and served with the ND National Guard's 191st MP Company in the 1980s.

Favorite movie or movie genre: I like adventure movies and watching TV shows from the 1980s, such as The A-Team or Emergency 51 when time allows.

Music: What are you listening to right now? Classic Rock (Boston) and some country, along with Christian music.

Philosophy of life and/or work: Sometimes we need hard days to know who is family, who is a friend, who is a partner, and who is a passenger in our lives.

Favorite quote: "Speak softly and carry a big stick." - Teddy Roosevelt, Jr.

Anything else you'd like to add? I also enjoy my wife's cooking (maybe a little too much at times).

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Nick Moser, President ..... Cavalier
Kim Jacobson, 1st Vice President .. Agassiz Valley
Becky Hagel, 2nd Vice President ..... Foster
Dana Larsen, 3rd Vice President ..... Ward
Chad Kaiser, Past President ..... Stutsman

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Jarret Van Berkom, Region 2 ..... Burke
Aaron Mork, Region 4 ..... Nelson
Tony Grindberg, Region 5 ..... Cass
Jamee Folk, Region 7 ..... Mercer
Scott Ouradnik, Region 8 ..... Slope
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Tiffany Harr, Clerks ..... Eddy
Erica Johnsrud, Treasurers ..... McKenzie
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Shirley Murray, Auditors ..... Sheridan
Kelly Palm, Recorders ..... Griggs

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Robert Wilson (Cass) ..... NACo Board
Neal Messer (Stark) ..... NDCCA President

NRG Technology Services Staff

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NDCCA
NORTH DAKOTA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION

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Tracey Dolezal, Vice President ..... Dunn
Glenda Collier, Treasurer ..... Eddy
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LEADERSHIP VIEWPOINT

FROM the COUNTIES

Making North Dakota Counties Great

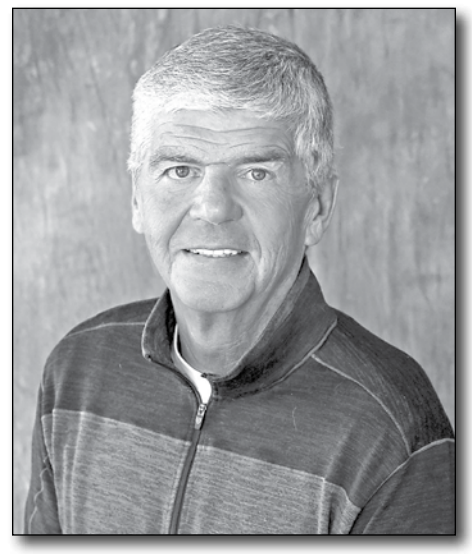


Nick Moser | NDACo President
Cavalier County Commissioner

Fall is in the air, leaves are dropping, and frost is thick on my windshield as I write this column. Along with the fall season comes harvest, hunting, and the NDACo Annual Conference which was held October 11-13. If you did not attend the conference, you missed out on a wonderful time. As always, the Association put on an excellent conference, and I would like to thank all our staff for the time and hard work that they put into this year's *Counties: 250 Years in the Making* Annual Conference. What you see as an attendee is only part of what goes into this conference. The work behind the scenes may go unnoticed; so, I would like to personally thank all the staff for making North Dakota counties great. This past year has come with many obstacles for counties including 3% caps, planning and zoning updates, policy making and many others. The conference hosted excellent training sessions to gather people for information and discussion to help overcome and address our concerns about these issues. I would like to ask each of you that attended the conference to go back to your counties and seek out an individual that was unable to attend and tell them about your experience and suggest attending next year's conference. I am looking forward to serving all of you as the newly elected NDACo President. Thanks for all that you do for North Dakota counties.

FROM the COMMISSIONERS

Greetings from Stark County



Neal Messer | NDCCA President
Stark County Commissioner

As we begin our new association year, I'm looking forward to working with all of you to tackle the common challenges we face and work together in helping find solutions that all will benefit from. The strength of our association comes from the people like you who are willing to serve and share ideas, goals and solutions. Thank you to all who step up to the plate and make our association great!

Thank you to everyone who attended the 2026 Annual Conference October 11–13. It was great to see many new faces, and we appreciate your participation and the time you take to get involved. Hopefully, you will continue to attend.

Our final county tour of 2026 was held on October 27th and 28th with visits to Sioux, Grant, Morton, Burleigh and Emmons Counties. These visits are incredibly valuable, giving us the opportunity to hear directly from county officials, discuss local priorities, and learn more about the issues impacting our counties. The conversations and ideas shared during these tours make a real difference.

We're also looking forward to the Commissioner Summit in early 2027 and are excited to share more details soon.

Thank you for your continued dedication to North Dakota's counties. I look forward to another year of working together, sharing ideas, and finding solutions that help our counties succeed.

NORTH DAKOTA County NEWS

Aaron Birst, Managing Editor
Maxine Herr, Editor

Clearwater Communications, Layout/Design

ND Association of Counties
PO Box 877
Bismarck, ND 58502-0877
Ph 701-425-0808
Website: *www.ndaco.org*

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NDACo
NORTH DAKOTA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

FROM the ASSOCIATION

A Stronger Future



Aaron Birst | NDACo Executive Director

I cannot thank all of you enough for joining us in Bismarck for our annual conference. A big shout out also to our incredible sponsors. Piggybacking on Coach Lennon's presentation, you cannot be a great team without both sides of the ball doing their part. We cannot have a conference without our attendees, and we cannot pay for it without our supportive sponsors. This was my 20th conference, and I always leave with mixed emotions. Overwhelmingly, my batteries are recharged (even though we are all dragging at the end) from chatting with all of you. Every conversation is personally impactful. Whether it's getting an update on the county budget or an update on how the family is doing, the relationships we build over time fill an important part of my life's journey and hopefully yours too! Which is why meeting over the computer is great and all, but to create and maintain those personal relationships it is incredibly important to still meet in person, which conferences provide. (As an aside, my photo cutout will not be taking my place at these conferences even though I see he is making the rounds in Bismarck.)

On the other side of the coin, every conference ends knowing some long time public servants will no longer return. This year we had a handful of county officials retire after 30- to 40-plus years of service. Just think about that for a second. North Dakota is 137 years old. Which means some county officials have been serving our great state for close to a third of its existence! (Not trying to make anyone feel old.) That kind of dedication is what makes things work in our government. Although we said goodbye to some good friends at the close of our conference, I see plenty of new energy ready to rise to meet the next chapter in North Dakota's history. Thank you all, and now let's get back to work recharged!

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Purchasing Pulse

NDBuys and Sells

Sherry Neas | Office of Management and Budget, State Procurement Office



The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) buys and sells. OMB operates the State Procurement Office with the online NDBuys system to provide information about state contracts and advertise solicitations.

OMB also operates State Surplus Property. Most government entities know that they can purchase affordable used state and federal property at affordable prices. Did you know your entity can also dispose of its unneeded items through State Surplus Property?

Subsection 2 of North Dakota Century Code section 54-44-04.6 provides:

Political subdivisions may provide their surplus property to the Office of Management and Budget for disposition.

State Surplus Property must notify eligible entities that property is available on a regular basis, and the state property is transferred to eligible entities at fair market value. If no government entity or eligible nonprofit purchases the property, the surplus property is made available to the public. The law also provides for "share back" of the proceeds with the disposing entities, less the administrative cost of the sale. Entities may also dispose of eWaste at State Surplus Property (fees may apply).

State Surplus Property has an online system, called AssetWorks, used to report surplus property. AssetWorks uploads the surplus property description and photos to the Surplus Property webpage: www.omb.nd.gov/surplus.

- Public Sales = property that can be purchased by anyone.
- Restricted Sales = property only available to government or eligible nonprofits.
- GovDeals = an online auction where North Dakota state surplus property is sold.
- GSA Auction = an online auction where federal surplus property is sold.

Everyone likes a good deal, and your surplus property may be another entity's treasure! The online AssetWorks system lists the city where the property is located, so there is no need to transport the surplus property to Bismarck. Just like Facebook Marketplace or eBay, you upload a description and photos of the property, and the information is loaded to the State Surplus Property website.

Contact Randy Mosset, State Surplus Property, at 701-328-9665 or surplus@nd.gov for more information about how they can help you sell unneeded furniture, equipment and supplies through State Surplus Property, where ND sells!





After the Polls Close

Michael Howe | North Dakota Secretary of State

There's still work to do after the polls close on Election Day. Officials follow procedures to close polling locations, tabulate results, securely store ballots, and certify the results. These steps are in place to protect the security of ballot tabulation and election results reporting in North Dakota. On election night, votes are reported as unofficial results. The results remain unofficial until the county and state canvassing boards verify them.

REPORTING RESULTS

After polls close, a bipartisan election board at each polling site certifies results using a canvass report, which provides an accounting of the votes cast for each contest. The election board reviews numbers from voter check-ins, ballots cast, and remaining ballots to ensure they balance.

Each ballot tabulator used at the polling location has an encrypted USB that stores the results of the votes cast. At each polling location, the election board secures the encrypted results USB and ballots and delivers them to the county auditor. The county auditor follows a process to import results to a computer with no internet connection. The imported results are compared to canvass reports to ensure accuracy. Ballots are delivered to the county recorder for storage for 22 months.

The county auditor then continues the process by using a one-time-use USB to transfer the results to the ND Secretary of State on another device via a secure, monitored connection. During the entire process, ballot tabulators and encrypted USBs used to tabulate results never touch a system connected to the internet. Results are verified at multiple levels in the process to ensure they are accurate and have not changed.

CANVASSING

Between Election Day and the county canvassing board meeting, which takes place 13 days after the election, voters who marked a set-aside ballot can provide proper identification to the county auditor to have their ballot counted. Also, during this period, voters who cast absentee ballots with signature mismatches on the ballot application or ballot envelope can cure the issue.

The county canvassing boards review resolved set-aside ballots, absentee ballots with cured signatures, and each precinct's election results before certifying them. If city or school elections are held in conjunction with the county election, the appropriate officials for those entities are notified of the results. The state canvassing board meets within 17 days after Election Day to review and certify the county results, making them the official election results

OATHS AND TAKING OFFICE

Elected officials take office between December 1 of the current year and May 1 of the following year, unless otherwise specified by home rule charter.

- Dec. 1 - Elected county commissioners take office
- Jan. 1 - Elected district court judges, county recorders, state's attorneys, sheriffs, clerks of court take office
- Apr. 1 - Elected county auditors take office
- May 1 - Elected county treasurers take office

Before beginning their duties, elected officials are required to take an oath of office under North Dakota Century Code Ch. 15.1-09. Completed oaths of office are filed with the county auditor.

Election officials and the North Dakota Secretary of State are your trusted source for election information. If you have elections-related questions, visit vote.nd.gov, email soselect@nd.gov, or call 701-328-4146.





Left to right: Jessica Alonge, Stutsman County Auditor; Linda Chadduck, 2026 Election Hero Award Recipient; Michael Howe, North Dakota Secretary of State

Chadduck Named 2026 North Dakota Election Hero

On Oct. 20, North Dakota Secretary of State Michael Howe awarded the 2026 Election Hero Award to Linda Chadduck of Jamestown due to her 37-year career as a Stutsman County employee and the unofficial election coordinator for most of her tenure. Since retiring, Linda has served as an inspector, contributing to the success of local elections. The Secretary of State names an Election Hero each year to celebrate the importance of election teams, poll workers, state leaders, and the many people who work to provide safe, secure, and accessible elections.

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NRG TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

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Matthew Levorson	Security Engineer
Jeff McDowell	Systems Engineer
Erik McGurren	Security Engineer
Amber Schriock	Service Manager
Kay Ternes	Sales Administration
David Weiand	Systems Engineer

Citizens Defeat Requests to Exceed Cap in Two Counties

Donnell Preskey | NDACo Government/Public Relations Specialist

Voters in Divide and Traill County rejected the ballot measure in those counties requesting to exceed the 3% budget cap. The vote in Divide County failed with just 46% support and Traill County received only 38% of the yes votes. This was the first time since the legislation went into effect that any county has gone to voters to seek approval to exceed the budget limitation.



The appetite by citizens to vote against any tax increase was seen across the state in other measures. Eight other measures sought to increase levies for roads, NDSU Extension, Veterans Services and the Historical Society; which all failed. Only one measure in Dickey County to increase the levy for Senior Citizens Services passed.

COUNTY RACES

The General Election brings quite a bit of turnover across our counties. Voters elected 48 new commissioners in 34 counties with 19 incumbents defeated. With all the sheriffs on the ballot, there were 22 contested races. Voters elected 10 new sheriffs with two defeated incumbents. No incumbent auditor or treasurers were defeated in the nine counties with contested races. There will be six new auditors and three treasurers who will replace officials who either retired or decided not to seek re-election.

You can view a deeper summary of the General Election on the NDACo Legislative Blog at ndcounties.blog.

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Beyond the Classroom Grid: How Teen CERT is Building North Dakota's Young Responders

Alison Vetter | ND Department of Emergency Services

Emergency responders have deep roots in their local community schools, but a powerful partnership is quietly transforming high school health classes in North Dakota. By turning students into ambassadors for disaster preparedness, emergency services are using the Teen CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) program to achieve a dual victory: strengthening family resilience and building a pipeline for the next generation of first responders.

The CERT program is a nationally recognized initiative begun by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and administered by the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services. Teen CERT is an extension of that enterprise, aimed specifically at improving the preparedness of teenagers and their families.

Teen CERT is a program that can bring structure to otherwise ad-hoc appearances in schools by first responders, strengthening the bonds between emergency services and schools. Teen CERT teaches kids how to be safe in emergencies through lessons and hands-on training led by local emergency responders, all the while exposing students to possible fulfilling careers or long-term volunteer service in the public safety sector.



Teen CERT teaches kids how to be safe in emergencies through hands-on training led by local emergency managers.

Participants learn the basics of disaster preparedness, fire suppression, disaster medical operations and first aid, and search and rescue. Units are taught by local emergency responders like Emergency Managers, Law Enforcement, Fire Fighters, Dispatch, and EMTs.

See how Jamestown and Valley City schools chose to implement Teen CERT in their high school health classes by scanning the QR code.

Reach out to Larry Regorrah, lregorrah@nd.gov or 701-328-8100, for more information.

Two Ballparks, One Mission: Safer North Dakota Roads

Leah Kelm | Vision Zero Outreach Coordinator - Southeast

For the third year, Vision Zero honored law enforcement officers from across North Dakota whose outstanding dedication to impaired driving enforcement helps save lives and make our roadways safer.

DUI Enforcement All-Star Nights returned to eastern North Dakota this year, with recognition events held at Grand Forks Spitfires and Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks games. Honorees were nominated by supervisors within their agencies in recognition of their exceptional commitment to impaired driving enforcement. The events provided an opportunity to celebrate officers, deputies, and troopers for their work protecting communities across the state.

Through proactive enforcement, these law enforcement professionals identify and remove impaired drivers from the road, often working nights, weekends, holidays and overtime during high-visibility campaigns. Every traffic stop and impaired driving arrest helps prevent potential tragedies and make roads safer for everyone.

Every life lost to impaired driving is more than a statistic. It is a person, a parent, a child, or a friend whose story was cut short by a 100% preventable crash. These events highlight the critical role of enforcement and recognize those dedicated to preventing these tragedies.

2026 DUI ENFORCEMENT ALL-STARS

Deputy Casey Ahmann | Ramsey County Sheriff's Department
Corporal Russell Anthony | Devils Lake Police Department
Deputy Chany Chany | Cass County Sheriff's Office
Deputy Jacob Davis | Stutsman County Sheriff's Office
Trooper Joshua Dura | North Dakota Highway Patrol
Sergeant William Earl | Ramsey County Sheriff's Department
Trooper Trevor Elfman | North Dakota Highway Patrol
Deputy Kimberly Eversvik | Ramsey County Sheriff's Department
Officer Brody Farmer | Wahpeton Police Department
Officer Conner Heyerman | West Fargo Police Department
Detective Chris Huard | Wahpeton Police Department
Officer Joshua Husebye | Devils Lake Police Department
Corporal Ryan Hutton | Cass County Sheriff's Office
Officer Leah Jans | Fargo Police Department
Officer Alex Jundt | Grand Forks Police Department
Deputy Joachim Kazmierczak | Grand Forks County Sheriff's Office
Officer Shelby Layman | Fargo Police Department
Officer Joshua Marlow | Fargo Police Department
Trooper Trevor Mishler | North Dakota Highway Patrol
Trooper Ryan Mugan | North Dakota Highway Patrol
Officer Austin Myogeto | Wahpeton Police Department
Sergeant Kayla Olson | Jamestown Police Department
Corporal James Opp | Grand Forks Police Department
Trooper Shane Rothenberger | North Dakota Highway Patrol
Trooper Thomas Steenstrup | North Dakota Highway Patrol
Officer Timothy Sul | University of North Dakota Police Department
Officer Bailey Tulius | West Fargo Police Department
Sergeant John Vetsch | Walsh County Sheriff's Office
Deputy Jacob Zielinski | Stutsman County Sheriff's Office

Turning the Page:
How a County GIS Team Introduces New Possibilities

Maxine Herr | NDACo Communications Specialist

A stroll through a park can inspire the best ideas. For Bonnie Foster's GIS team at McKenzie County, it spurred a transformative partnership.

When the county's GIS team learned about the McKenzie County Library's Walk and Wonder storybook project—a partnership with Watford City Parks and Recreation and the Rough Rider Center—they saw an opportunity to add an interactive digital component. They built an online map that allows children and families to explore the storybook as they move through the park, clicking on locations, turning the pages and following the story.

What started as a fun project also became a chance to demonstrate how GIS can be used in unexpected ways while opening the door to new possibilities for the county.

SCAN TO WATCH

Scan the QR code to watch the story and see how a children's book, a park and a little GIS creativity came together.

> GIS doesn't do GIS people any good.
> **GIS does the end users good.**
> *– Bonnie Foster,*
> *McKenzie County GIS Coordinator*



The McKenzie County Sheriff's Office deputies join the library's weekly Storytime, a new partnership that has produced a great response from deputies and the community.

Connecting County Agencies

Maxine Herr | NDACo Communications Specialist

The McKenzie County Library has made collaboration with county agencies a hallmark of its programs—from donating books to the Correctional Facility and helping with the County Superintendent of Schools' annual county spelling bee to launching a summer "Dinosaur Dig" reading program with clean fill dirt donated by the McKenzie County Road and Bridge Department.

"The partnerships we've developed with other McKenzie County departments are an important part of the library's role within the community. They allow us to stay connected, informed, and engaged throughout the county while creating opportunities to share resources, support one another, and better serve the county as a whole," said McKenzie County Library Director Irene Sealy.



Juvenile Detention Discussions Highlight Statewide Capacity and Funding Challenges



Lisa Jahner | NDACo Juvenile Justice Program Manager

Secure juvenile detention is used for a small number of youth, but maintaining access to that capacity is a statewide challenge. For many North Dakota counties, accessing detention depends on whether a bed is available, sometimes hundreds of miles from home. That reality has prompted a series of discussions among county and city officials, law enforcement, and juvenile justice partners about the future of juvenile detention in North Dakota.

North Dakota needs sufficient secure juvenile detention capacity to respond when it is necessary, but maintaining that capacity is expensive, utilization varies across jurisdictions, and the counties operating juvenile detention facilities are providing a service that extends well beyond their own borders. Recent limitations on detention bed availability, including reduced access to beds at the North Dakota Youth Correctional Center (YCC), have further highlighted the challenges of maintaining reliable detention capacity across the state. The discussions have also reinforced the importance of ensuring that secure detention is used only when necessary and that appropriate alternatives, such as Attendant Care, remain available.

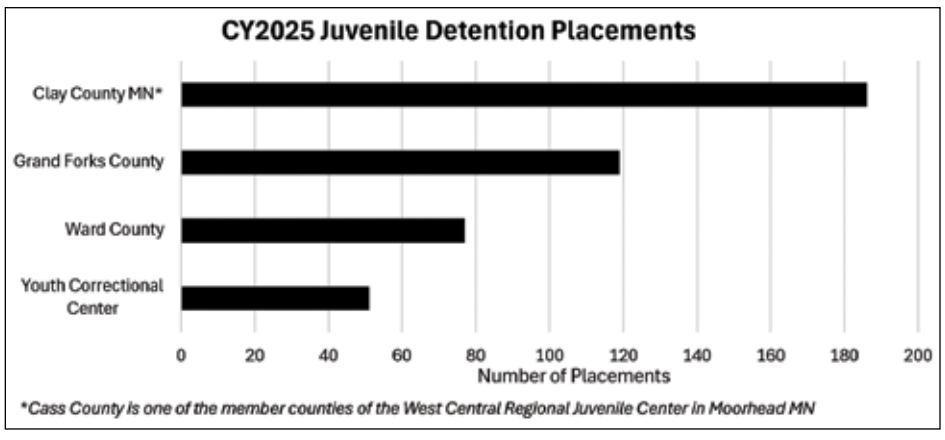
JUVENILE DETENTION CAPACITY ACROSS NORTH DAKOTA

Juvenile detention is for youth who require secure placement while awaiting court proceedings. In North Dakota, access to juvenile detention is provided through a combination of state-operated, county-operated, and regional facilities. The State makes a limited number of beds at YCC in Mandan available for county detention needs. County-operated juvenile detention facilities in Grand Forks and Ward Counties serve not only their own jurisdictions but also other counties throughout the state that need secure placement. In the east, a juvenile center in neighboring Clay County, Minnesota, provides a regional resource through an arrangement that includes Cass County.

YCC's detention capacity has become increasingly limited as the state balances county detention needs with its own need for bed space. When a bed is not available at YCC, local law enforcement is responsible for finding an alternative secure placement, which may require transporting the youth to Minot or Grand Forks.

Capacity also cannot be measured simply by comparing the number of youth detained with the number of licensed beds. Facilities must account for length of stay, gender and age separation requirements, behavioral issues and other factors that can make individual beds unavailable.

In calendar year 2025, there were 433 juvenile detention placements reported across four facilities, illustrating the extent to which multiple facilities play in meeting North Dakota's secure detention needs.



Population trends also suggest that detention capacity could remain a prominent issue in the years ahead. North Dakota's youth population is projected to grow over the next decade. While population growth alone does not determine future detention needs, these projections reinforce the importance of planning for appropriate detention capacity as well as appropriate alternatives.

WHO PAYS TO KEEP CAPACITY AVAILABLE?

Perhaps the more difficult question is not how many beds are needed, but how to ensure those beds remain available and who pays to maintain them.

Juvenile detention is expensive to operate because many costs are fixed. A facility needs trained staff, security, education, food, medical services, and other required services whether every bed is occupied or not. A smaller facility can therefore have a high daily cost even when it is efficiently operated.

That creates a particular challenge for the counties that operate juvenile detention facilities. Grand Forks and Ward Counties bear the responsibility and financial risk of maintaining facilities that function, in practice, as regional and statewide resources. Other counties can pay for a bed when they need one, but the host county must maintain the facility, staff, and infrastructure every day so that a bed is available when the need arises.

Officials from Grand Forks and Ward Counties have been discussing the sustainability of their existing facilities and the possibility of seeking state assistance with operating costs. The continued operation of existing facilities is itself part of the statewide capacity issue, as the loss of existing beds would place additional pressure on the remaining detention facilities.

For counties that use detention infrequently, committing ongoing local dollars to a regional facility can also be difficult. A small county may go years without needing a juvenile detention bed. Yet when a serious case does arise, that county has the same need for immediate access to an appropriate secure placement as a larger jurisdiction. Some county officials have compared the concept to insurance—the value is not necessarily measured by how frequently an individual county uses the service, but by knowing the capacity exists when it is needed.

The issue is further complicated by the cost of transporting youth. When the nearest available bed is several hours away, the cost to a county or city is not limited to the detention rate. Law enforcement officers or deputies may spend hours transporting a youth to a facility and then returning to their jurisdiction. Those extended transports also take officers and deputies away from their regular duties, potentially straining already-limited law enforcement resources in their home jurisdictions.

In the south-central region, stakeholder discussions have begun exploring potential options for addressing detention needs over the longer term. Options discussed have included a regional detention facility as well as broader, multi-purpose models that could incorporate other youth services. The discussion has also recognized that detention capacity is not solely an issue for Burleigh and Morton Counties, and that any regional approach would need to consider the needs and participation of surrounding jurisdictions.

USING SECURE DETENTION APPROPRIATELY

One thing is clear: secure detention is only one piece of the system. North Dakota's detention screening tool provides law enforcement with an objective framework to help determine whether secure detention is necessary or whether a less restrictive option may be appropriate. North Dakota's Attendant Care Program provides a nonsecure alternative for youth who require temporary supervision but do not need to be held in a locked facility.

Maintaining and appropriately using alternatives such as Attendant Care is important both for youth and for the detention system. Research has shown that unnecessary or inappropriate use of secure detention can negatively affect youth outcomes, including disrupting education and family connections, affecting mental health, and increasing the likelihood of continued justice system involvement. Youth who can safely be managed in a less restrictive setting should therefore not occupy limited secure beds, allowing detention capacity to remain available for cases in which public safety requires secure placement.

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES

The discussions to date have focused not on identifying a single solution, but on developing a clearer understanding of the challenges and exploring options for ensuring sufficient detention capacity. As those conversations continue, the funding question will be particularly important for counties.

Per-diem payments compensate a facility when a bed is used, but the distinction between paying for use and paying to maintain capacity may be central to the next phase of the conversation. Any future funding approach will need to recognize the respective responsibilities of the state, counties, and cities, as well as the varying levels of utilization across jurisdictions.

The goal is to ensure that when a local jurisdiction needs an appropriate placement for a youth, the right option is available, accessible, and sustainable.

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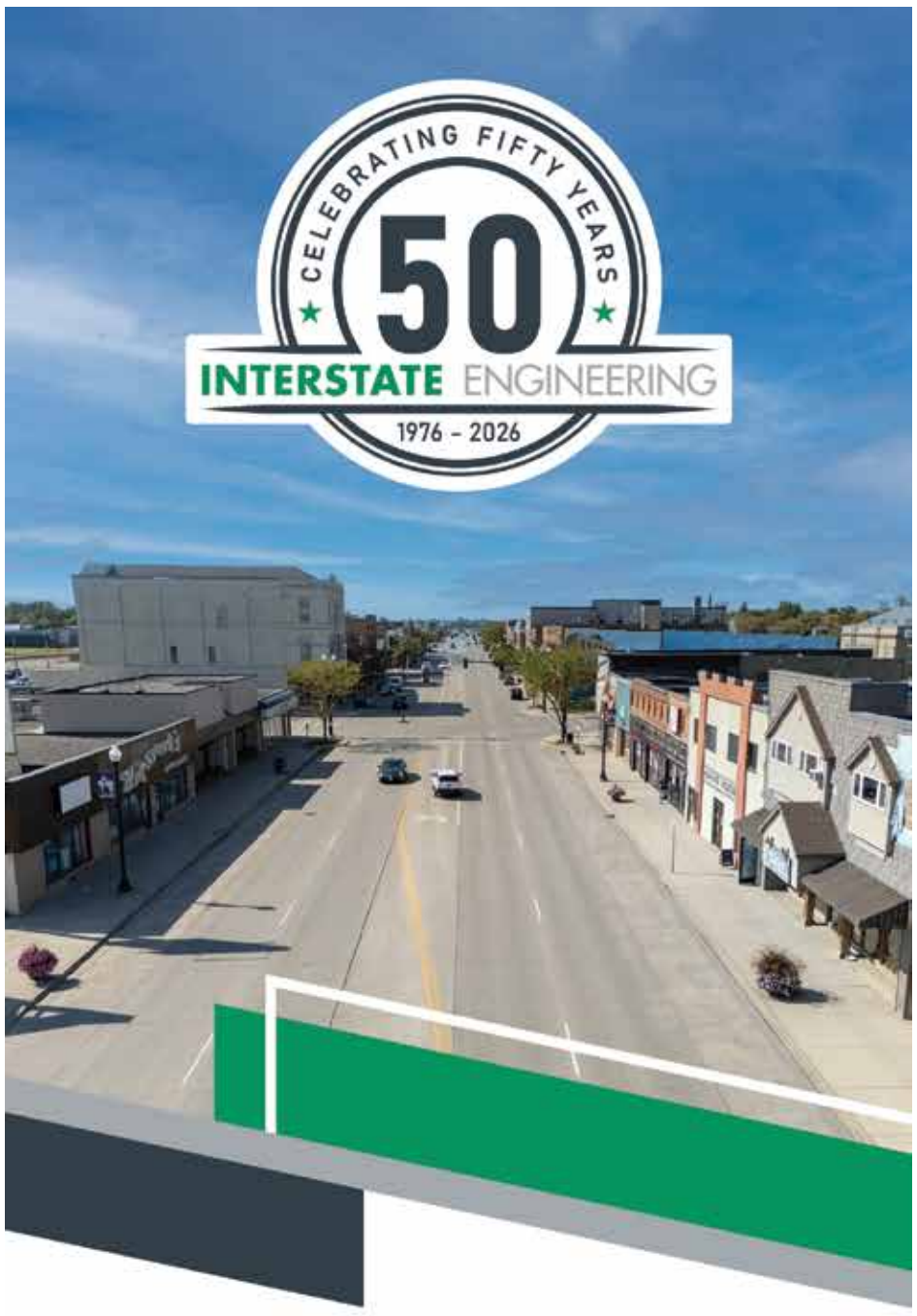

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Cavalier County Students Spearhead Farm-to-Table Gardening

Stephanie Welsh | Cavalier County Health District

With the intent to improve overall health through better nutrition, a farm-to-table program in Cavalier County has continued to expand due to its popularity and support from its community.

To increase local youths' connection with where their food comes from, Cavalier County Health District (CCHD) launched a farm-to-table gardening project in 2022 and today, the program providing access to locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables continues to expand.

Initially, CCHD partnered with Langdon Area Schools (LAS) Technology and Engineering Education students to build raised community garden boxes. The boxes were designed to allow access throughout the growing season for community members of all ages and abilities, and locations were chosen primarily in areas where food insecure populations may visit. The host sites included businesses, government organizations, long-term care facilities, schools, and community groups. After LAS' Family and Consumer Science students planted the seeds, these sites agreed to provide care and watering for the boxes and oversee harvest and final clean up. Each year, 35 raised garden boxes are placed at 12 Cavalier County host sites.

The county overcame weather challenges during planting season by placing two hydroponic tower gardens inside all county schools and one in a preschool. These gardens were used in classroom and after-school club settings to continue farm-to-table education during winter months, with an added benefit of providing fresh produce within lunchroom salad bars.



This year, the project included an in-ground community garden located at the Cavalier County Courthouse as the county offered space and staff to care for the garden. Project funds supported the cost of tilling and plants. Plans are in place to add more perennial plants to increase sustainability and cost efficiency of the garden for future years.

"It's been a privilege for NDSU Extension in Cavalier County to be a part of this effort that helps our community members be part of a field-to-fork initiative," said NDSU Extension Agent Katie Henry. "It fits well within our mission of empowering North Dakotans through science-based education, and we plan to continue this partnership for the benefit of our citizens."

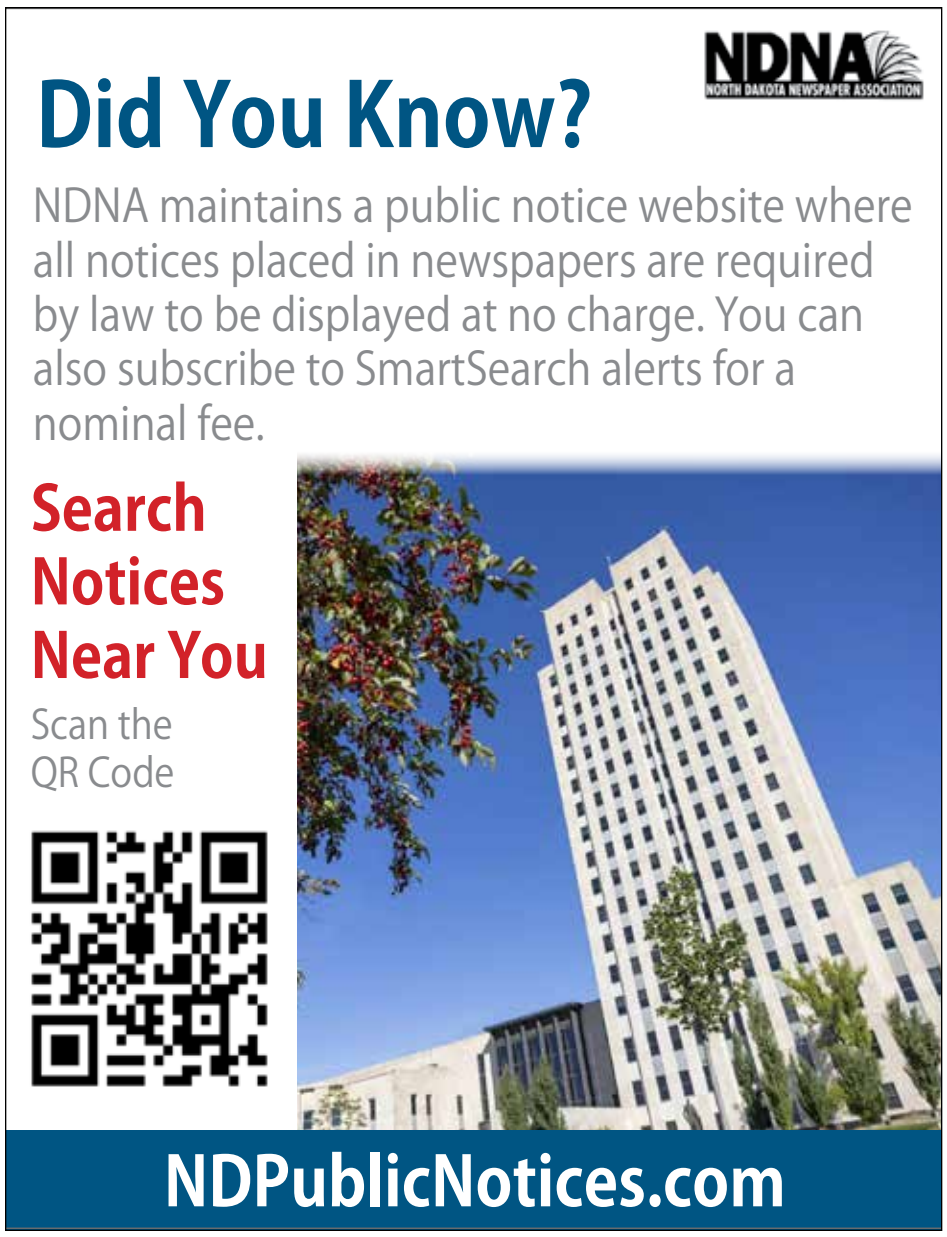
While the focus of the garden boxes and in-ground garden are to teach youth, community members are also encouraged to watch the progress of the gardens, provide care, and participate in the produce harvest.

"The gardens have really made an impact on our community," Henry said. "From older adults grateful to gather only the amount of fresh produce they need and not have to care for a whole garden to a student who began gardening with her family and tells us she loves vegetables now, the project allows all ages to take an active role in not only tending to the plants but learning how they grow and when to harvest."

CCDH, NDSU Extension and Cavalier County Library teamed up to offer a seed library where patrons can check out seeds at no cost at the library in the spring and prepare and return seeds harvested from their gardens in the fall for next season's check-out. The program offered twelve varieties of seeds, selected with novice gardeners in mind, and participants checked out over 130 seed packets.

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services grant, Maternal and Child Health Services.





ILG Hours Awarded

LEVEL I - 30 Hours

Jason Arth, Sargent — Commissioner
Rick Bauman, Mercer — Commissioner
Vonda Bechtel, Western Plains Public Health — Office Manager
Sheri Bertsch, Lake Region District Health Unit — Finance Manager/Wellness Coordinator
Rebecca Bethke, Oliver — Clerk of District Court/Deputy Recorder
Kevin Bishop, Ransom — Commissioner
Pam Blinsky, Stutsman/Foster — Emergency Manager/911 Coordinator
Loretta Blotske, McLean — Deputy Recorder
Holly Brekhus, First District Health Unit — Executive Director
Shari Bublitz, Divide — Emergency Manager/Planning Director/911 Coordinator
Roberta Bursheim, Grand Forks — HR Manager
Tonya Drenth, Stutsman — Deputy Treasurer
Rory Farstveet, Golden Valley — Commissioner
Jared Fischer, Grant — Emergency Manager/911 Coordinator
Jamee Folk, Mercer — Commissioner
Joshua Frey, Nelson/Towner — State's Attorney
Corey Genter, Stutsman — Deputy Sheriff
Debra Guest, Traill — Recorder
Jamee Hansen, Renville — Commissioner
Bryan Haugenoe, Divide — Highway Superintendent
Kimberlee Hegvik, Cass — State's Attorney
Blair Hodge, Cass — HR Generalist
Steve Hunt, Traill — Sheriff/Emergency Manager
Matthew Johansen, McKenzie — Sheriff
Ron Jurgens, Walsh — Sheriff
Sandee Kimpel, McKenzie — Planning Adminstrator/Director
Starr Klemetsrud, Lake Region Law Enforcement Center — Director
Victoria Klingbeil-Trout, Renville — Deputy Auditor/Risk Manager
Gary Kuhn, Dunn — Sheriff
Corey Lee, Stark — Sheriff
Lou Lombardi, Grand Forks — Veterans Service Officer
Melissa Morden, Pembina — Recorder/Clerk of District Court
Colleen Morstad, Grand Forks — Finance Director
Robin Mosset, Emmons — Recorder/Clerk of District Court
Dey Muckle, Golden Valley — Sheriff
Casey Olson, Steele — Tax Director
Duane Peterson, Sargent — Human Resources Director/Risk Manager
Christina Potts, Walsh — Auditor/Treasurer
Breanna Raines, Ward — Administrative Assistant
Caitlyn Roemmich, Wells County District Health Unit — Adminstrator
LoAnn Roshau, Dunn — Communications & Marketing Director
Gary Ruhl, Richland — Sheriff/Coroner
Barbara Selchert, Barnes — Risk Manager/Payroll/HR
Ken Snider, Sioux — Commissioner
Mike Sonsalla, Slope — Commissioner
Sheri Uecker, Adams — Recorder/Clerk of District Court
Stephanie Welsh, Cavalier County Health District — Adminstrator
Connie Werth, Sheridan — Treasurer
Gene Wolf, Mercer — Commissioner
Chad Wolsky, Stutsman — Commissioner
Dean Wyckoff, Billings — Sheriff

LEVEL II - 100 Hours

Pam Binder, Burleigh — Human Resources Director/Risk Manager
Gwyn Bosch, McLean — Clerk of District Court
Kendall Brehm, Towner — Recorder/Clerk of District Court
Dean Franchuk, Stark — Commissioner
Barb Frydenlund, Rolette — Public Health Nurse Administrator
Melissa Gapp, Pembina — Auditor/Treasurer/Supt. of Schools/Risk Manager
Michelle Garrett, Mercer — Deputy Treasurer
Colleen Germann, Slope — Treasurer
Alice Grinsteinner, Mercer/Oliver — Human Resources Director/Emergency Manager
LaJuana Hayen, Sargent — Tax Director
Renae Johnson, Renville — 911 Coordinator
Kyle Kirchmeier, Morton — Sheriff
Sue Koropatnicki, Stutsman — Treasurer/Recorder
Tracy Peters, Cass — Human Resources Director
Beth Pietsch, Ward — Planning & Zoning Administrator
Karen Richard, Stark — Auditor/Treasurer/Superintendent of Schools
Lisa Scanson, Foster — Deputy Recorder
Shelly Schwab, Ransom — Recorder
Andrea South, Richland — Deputy Auditor
Julie Straabe, Ward — Assessor
Lisa Weigel, Logan — Risk Manager/Deputy Auditor
Sally Whittingham, Dunn — Auditor/Treasurer/Superintendent of Schools
Brenda Wyckoff, Sargent — Public Health Administrator
Cindy Yagow, Sargent — Treasurer/Recorder/Clerk of District Court

LEVEL III - 150 Hours

Heidi Anderson, McLean — Recorder
Dessie Calihou, Dunn — Human Resources Director/Risk Manager
Nichole Degenstein, Ward — Human Resources Director/Risk Manager
Emily Deschamp, Bottineau — Auditor/Superintendent of Schools
Carol Grenz, Barnes — Deputy Auditor
Becky Hagel, Foster — Commissioner
Marisa Haman, Ward — Auditor/Treasurer
Vernetta Iron Eyes, Sioux — Treasurer/Recorder
Dana Larsen, Ward — Highway Engineer
Nick Moser, Cavalier — Commissioner
Jodie Nelson, Barnes — Deputy Recorder
Joetta Pearcy, Stark — Human Resources Director/Risk Manager
Ellen Roundy, Foster — Auditor/Treasurer/Supt. of Schools/Risk Manager
Jaden Schmidt, Oliver — Auditor/Planning Admistrator & Director
Natalie Wandler, Stark — Tax Director/GIS Coordinator

LEVEL IV - 200 Hours

Shannon Davis, Stutsman — Human Resources Director/Risk Manager
Nicole Gentzkow, Ransom — Auditor
Dawn Grannis, Mercer — Treasurer
Marcia Kessel, Billings — Auditor/Treasurer
Mickie McNulty-Eide, Oliver — Recorder
Mindy Schumacher, Bowman — Auditor/Risk Manager
Mary Senger, Burleigh — County Administrator
Wanda Sheppard, Dickey — Auditor
Adam Smith, Golden Valley — Commissioner
Stacey Swanson, Billings — Tax Director/Planning Director/911 Coord./GIS Coord.
Cindy Worrel, LaMoure — Treasurer

LEVEL V

Lori Foss, McLean — Chief Deputy Auditor/Supt. of Schools/Computer Operations Dir.
Gina Ketterling, McIntosh — Auditor/Risk Manager
Julie Mindt, Barnes — Auditor/Superintendent of Schools
Danielle Petersen, Renville — Recorder/Clerk of District Court
Dawn Rhone, Morton — Auditor
Tracy Stein, Sheridan — Deputy Auditor/Risk Manager

LEVEL VI

Melissa Vachal, Mountrail — Recorder/Planning Adminstrator & Director

EXHIBITORS AND SPONSORS

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- Ackerman-Estvold Engineering Management and Consulting, Inc.
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- G&R Controls
- Great Plains Food Bank
- Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University
- Homestyle Direct
- Katalog
- LeafFilter Gutter Protection
- Mail Services
- Mohawk Group
- NACo
- ND Public Information Officer Association
- NDSACCHO
- NDSU Extension
- North Dakota Association of Regional Councils
- North Dakota Community Foundation
- North Dakota Concrete Council
- North Dakota Department of Water Resources
- North Dakota Township Officers Association
- North Dakota Weed Control Association
- OMB State Procurement Office & State Surplus Property
- PFM Financial Advisors LLC
- Rinker Materials
- Ritchie Bros.
- Rough Rider Industries
- SEH
- State Bar Association of North Dakota
- Steffes Group, Inc.
- Swanston Equipment
- The Village Family Service Center - Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- University of Mary
- University of North Dakota - MPA Program and ND - ASPA
- Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute
- US Geological Survey
- Vanguard Appraisals, Inc.
- Vision West ND
- Vision Zero
- WSB

2026 LARGE EQUIPMENT EXHIBITORS

- Butler Machinery Company
- General Equipment & Supplies, Inc.
- Normont Equipment Company
- Northwest Tire
- RDO Equipment Co.
- Road Groom Manufacturing
- Sanitation Products, Inc.

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- ONEOK, Inc
- RDO Equipment Co
- Road Groom Mfg., LLC
- SRF Consulting Group
- Team Laboratory Chemical, LLC
- TechND
- Tractor & Equipment Co
- Wold Engineering, PC

County Employees Recognized at the ND Emergency Management Association Conference in September



Regional Spotlight Award: Noelle Kroll, McLean County Emergency Manager



Achievement Award: Sarah Duttenhefner, Dunn County Emergency Manager



Achievement Award: Loren Lang, Kidder\ McIntosh County Emergency Manager



Achievement Award: Ben Gates, Steele\Traill County Emergency Manager

Hettinger County Auditor Jeri Schmidt Retires

Luann Dart | Hettinger County Herald

After more than two decades of public service, retired from her role at the Hettinger County courthouse on Aug. 31 when she was celebrated with an open house.

"It's just been a wonderful, wonderful experience, getting to know a lot more people in the county and everybody's been so good to work with," she says.

"I get up and I enjoy going to work and I like the people that I work with," she says of her approximately 22 fellow county employees. Schmidt started with the county in November 2012 after serving as the Mott city auditor for 12 years prior.

She worked under the tutelage of retiring Auditor Roy Steiner for about five months before being appointed as county auditor in early 2013.

Schmidt always had an affiliation with numbers, working for companies with accounts payable and accounts receivable to develop an accounting background.

As county auditor, her duties ranged from A to Z. She oversaw the primary and general elections every two years and meticulously balanced the budget to present to the county commissioners.

After the treasurer and auditor offices were combined in 2015, the office became the overseer of funds coming in and going out, she describes.

"Budget time is my favorite time," she says. "And I like seeing people, so the residents, taxpayers, working with everybody."



Jeri Schmidt

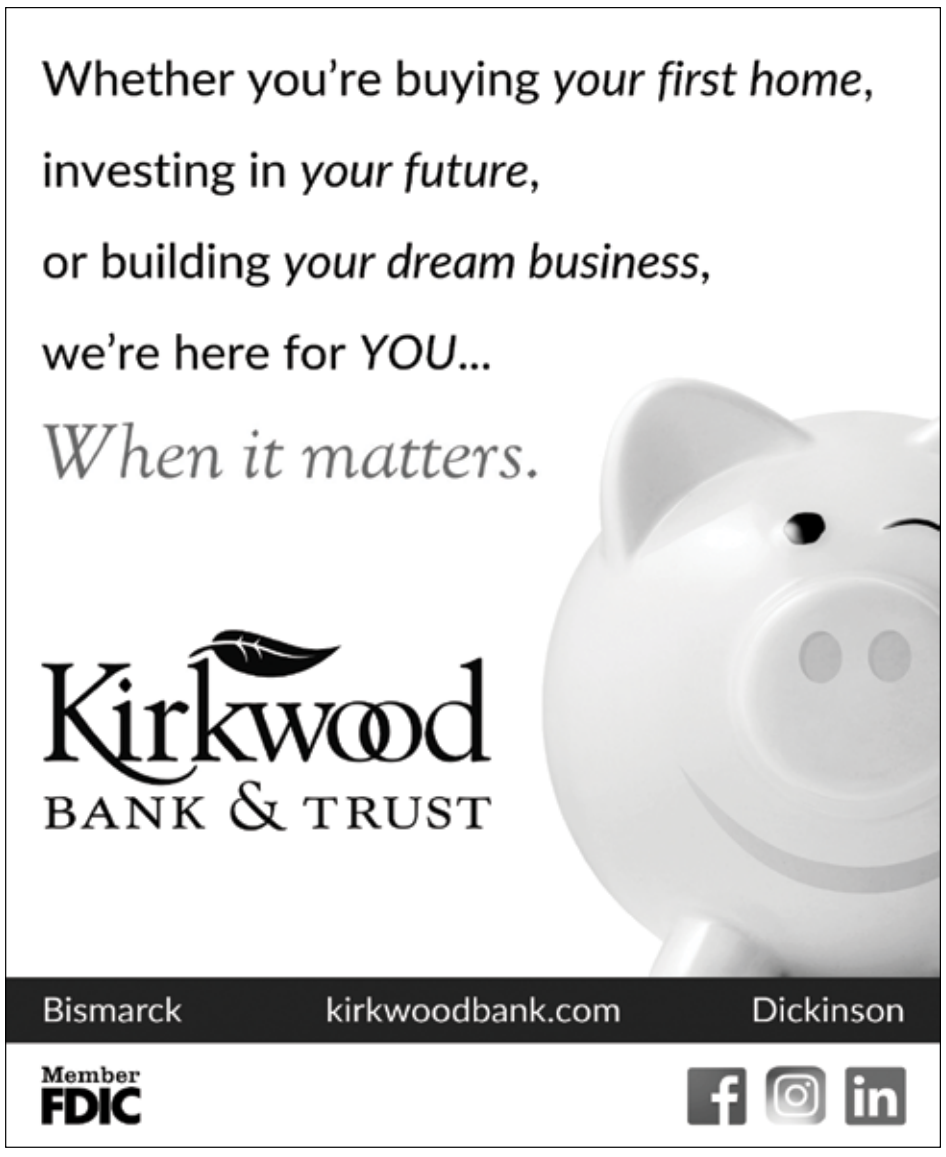
The main changes to the office have been applying new legislation. "Every time the Legislature comes up with new laws, it's implementing them in the correct way," she says. "That made it interesting as we go along."

"All the election laws were trying to make it better for both the voter and the poll workers," she says.

Leading up to her retirement, she assisted Cameo Frieze, who was appointed auditor/treasurer as of May 1. "I've been in the background," Schmidt says. "She's going to do great."

Frieze now serves as the Hettinger County auditor/treasurer, with Tommie Reich and Mikaela Klein as deputy auditor/treasurers. I only live four minutes, maybe three minutes away, so if I get lonely, I'll come up and bug them," Schmidt says with a laugh.

In retirement, she has a list of "'honey do" projects and she wants to hit the golf course more. "I'm going to play it by ear and see what comes," she says.



Your Employee Just Got Military Orders. Now What?

Practical USERRA Questions for County Employers and Service Members

Jerald Engelman | ND ESGR Ombudsman

An employee walks into your office and says, "I just received military orders." What happens next?

For many county HR professionals and supervisors, this may not be an everyday situation. For a member of the National Guard or Reserve, however, military service and civilian employment are often two important parts of life. The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) provides important protections for service members while also establishing responsibilities for both employees and employers.

So, what should you know?

First, military service should not put an employee at a disadvantage in the workplace. USERRA protects employees from discrimination because of their past, present or future military service and provides rights related to returning to civilian employment.

Second, communication matters. When an employee receives military orders, the employee and employer should communicate as early as practical about the upcoming absence, work responsibilities and the anticipated return. Good communication can prevent misunderstandings before they become problems.

Third, military service is protected leave. Military service is a legal obligation, and USERRA provides specific protections for qualifying service. Employers should understand their responsibilities rather than treating military duty as an ordinary personal leave request.

What happens when the employee returns? USERRA generally provides reemployment rights following qualifying military service. In appropriate circumstances, the returning employee may be entitled to return to the position they would have attained had they remained continuously employed, including applicable seniority, status and pay. Employers also have responsibilities when a returning employee needs reasonable efforts to refresh or upgrade skills required for the position.

And what if you aren't sure? That's where North Dakota Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ND ESGR) can help.

The ND ESGR provides information and assistance to employers and service members regarding USERRA. An ESGR Ombudsman can help both sides understand their rights and



responsibilities and work toward resolving questions before they become larger workplace issues.

Military service and civilian employment don't have to be competing interests. With communication, understanding and a little preparation, employers can support their employees who serve—and service members can continue serving their communities at work and in uniform.

Questions about USERRA? Learn more through the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve USERRA resource page, https://www.esgr.mil/USERRA/What-is-USERRA, or call 701-471-0419.

Bringing Local Knowledge and Technical Assistance to the Work of Caring for the Land

Sarah Tunge | ND Association of Soil Conservation Districts

When people think of county government, they may think first of roads, public safety, property taxes, human services or elections. But across North Dakota, county boundaries also provide a familiar framework for another kind of public service: conservation.

North Dakota's 54 soil conservation districts work with farmers, ranchers, landowners, communities and conservation partners to protect the state's soil and water resources. Organized along county boundaries, the districts provide a local connection to state and federal conservation resources.

Although soil conservation districts are not county departments, their work is closely connected to the people and landscapes counties serve. Their local knowledge and relationships make them valuable partners in addressing soil erosion, water quality, grazing, wildlife habitat and soil health.

Because conservation needs vary across the state, locally led conservation allows districts to work directly with the people who manage the land. A producer in the Red River Valley may face very different challenges than a rancher in western North Dakota. Local district supervisors and staff understand those differences because they live and work in the communities they serve.

Districts collaborate with county officials, producers, landowners, NDSU Extension, USDA-NRCS, state agencies and other organizations on conservation projects and education. Their local perspective also provides an important voice in broader conservation efforts.

At its core, the work is about helping people conserve natural resources while keeping working lands productive. Conservation practices can provide benefits beyond individual properties, including healthier watersheds, improved water quality, wildlife habitat and more resilient agricultural land.

Education is another important part of the mission. Districts host workshops, demonstrations and other activities for producers and communities, while youth programs help students understand the connection between healthy natural resources, agriculture and their communities. That investment can build a greater understanding of conservation among the next generation of producers, landowners and community leaders.

Conservation also requires a long-term perspective. A tree planted today can provide benefits for decades, while improvements in soil health and watershed management build over time.

For county government, that makes soil conservation districts more than organizations that share a geographic footprint. They are local partners with knowledge, relationships and a long-term commitment to the communities they serve.

To learn more about North Dakota's soil conservation districts, conservation and regenerative agriculture, join the North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts for its annual convention December 1-2, 2026, at the Bismarck Event Center. Visit ndascd.com for more information.

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RETIREMENT NEWS

NDIRF Announces Property Insurance Appraisal Partnership with Centurisk

Carrie Wingenbach | NDIRF Member Services Representative

The North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund (NDIRF) has partnered with Centurisk to provide property insurance appraisals for NDIRF and North Dakota Fire & Tornado Fund (NDFT) members. These appraisals are crucial to ensure accurately valued insurance coverage and insurance reflecting current replacement costs.

Over the next four years, Centurisk will conduct property insurance appraisals on all insured buildings currently valued at over $90,000. This effort began in August in the northeastern quadrant of the state and will be completed in June 2027, weather permitting.

Appraisals will then begin in the southeast quadrant. Scan the QR code to view the property insurance appraisal map.

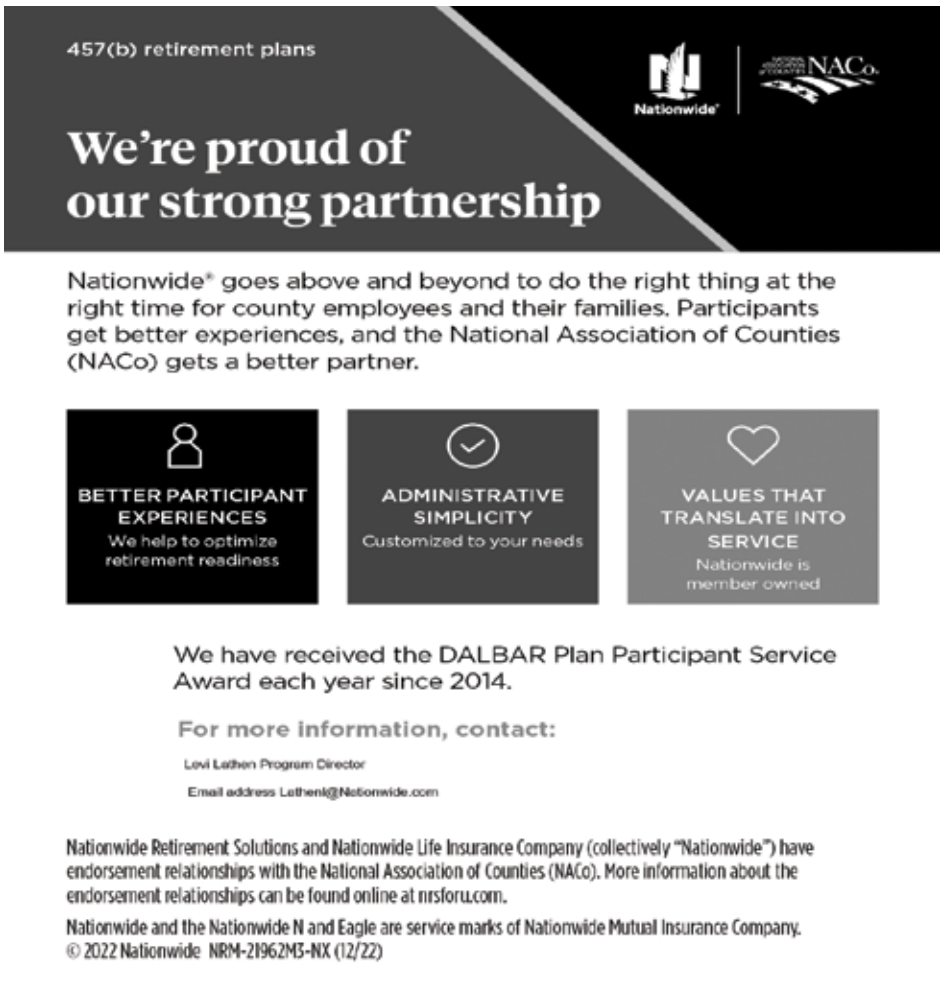
Centurisk will only be conducting onsite appraisals of building property. Personal, outdoor and trailer property information will not be collected and will not appear on the statement of values (SOV) that is provided to Centurisk.

Approximately two weeks before the onsite visit, your county's assigned Centurisk appraiser will reach out to schedule an introductory call. During that conversation, the appraiser will:

1. Confirm a tentative inspection date
2. Review the current SOV
3. Ask for identification of any owned buildings that are not listed on the SOV
4. Confirm whether any buildings listed on the SOV are no longer owned

On the day of the appraisal, the appraiser will need access to all insured buildings and may require an escort to each location. County assistance in providing access and responding promptly to phone calls and emails from Centurisk will help ensure the appraisal process is completed as efficiently as possible.

For more information, email carrie.wingenbach@ndirf.com.



Empower Your Employees Financial Wellness with Nationwide Retirement Solutions

Paul Fuller | Sr. Retirement Specialist

As a Plan Sponsor, you understand the critical role financial wellness plays in your employees' overall well-being and productivity. At Nationwide Retirement Solutions, we're committed to helping you deliver a retirement plan that goes beyond savings — one that empowers your workforce with the tools, education, and support they need to thrive financially.

A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO FINANCIAL WELLNESS

Nationwide offers a holistic financial wellness experience that aligns with your organization's goals. Our comprehensive Financial Education Library provides your employees with access to a wide range of resources — from foundational financial literacy to advanced retirement planning strategies. These materials are designed to meet participants where they are in their financial journey, helping them build confidence and make informed decisions.

TOOLS THAT DRIVE ENGAGEMENT AND OUTCOMES

Our suite of digital tools and calculators is designed to engage participants and encourage proactive planning. These self-service resources include:

- Retirement income estimators
- Budgeting and savings calculators
- Investment risk tolerance assessments
- Contribution planning tools

These tools are intuitive, accessible, and tailored to help participants take meaningful steps toward their financial goals.

GROWFORTH – PERSONALIZED FINANCIAL WELLNESS

GrowForth is our innovative financial wellness platform that delivers a personalized experience for each participant. With GrowForth, your employees can:

- Set and track financial goals
- Access curated educational content
- Receive personalized tips and reminders
- Monitor progress and adjust plans as needed

GrowForth helps foster long-term financial health by making financial wellness approachable and actionable.

MY INCOME & RETIREMENT PLANNER

Our **My Income & Retirement Planner** is a powerful self-service tool that helps participants visualize their retirement readiness. It enables them to:

- Estimate future retirement income
- Identify potential income gaps
- Explore different savings and investment scenarios
- Create a personalized action plan

This tool empowers participants to take control of their retirement planning with clarity and confidence.

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North Dakota Youth Finding Their 'Next Chapter' at NDSU

Dominic Erickson | NDSU Extension Communication Specialist

Today's youth are learning to forge their own paths, and North Dakota 4-H is guiding them.

The Next Chapter at NDSU initiative is a response to a national survey of high schoolers indicating that they do not feel prepared for a job after graduation and want an educational pathway that is shorter, more affordable and connected to a career. The program also helps connect youth and professionals to foster networking and mentorship.

In January 2025, NDSU Extension 4-H Youth Development announced that the Next Chapter at NDSU initiative was selected to receive a $250,000 grant from the CHS Foundation and the program is seeing some of the first responses to this college- and career-readiness curriculum.

The curriculum features 17 adaptable lesson plans on topics such as time management, resume writing and financial management. Delivered in the classroom, after school and in 4-H club settings, the program aims to prepare youth to succeed in their future careers — to be "Beyond ready," an initiative by the National 4-H Council to prepare youth to be healthy, productive and engaged.

Margo Bowerman, NDSU Extension 4-H Youth Development STEM specialist, says feedback from instructors has been very positive.

"Family and consumer science teachers, particularly, are finding a lot of value in the skill-building lessons," says Bowerman. "Independent living skills are what seem to be desired most."

A feature of Next Chapter at NDSU is the *Careers in a Box* resource. Designed to expand program reach and enhance youth development, *Careers in a Box* introduces participants to career-focused activities that provide real-world experiences. Agricultural career pathways represented in the CHS-funded kits include food safety officer, sensory meat scientist, livestock nutritionist, agricultural broadcaster, livestock breeder, soil conservationist and hydroponics technician.

"Of course, we've heard these *Careers in a Box* are especially appreciated by ag teachers," says Bowerman. "We'll continue to work with NDSU faculty to educate high-schoolers on how these careers are attached to an education, including what NDSU can offer."

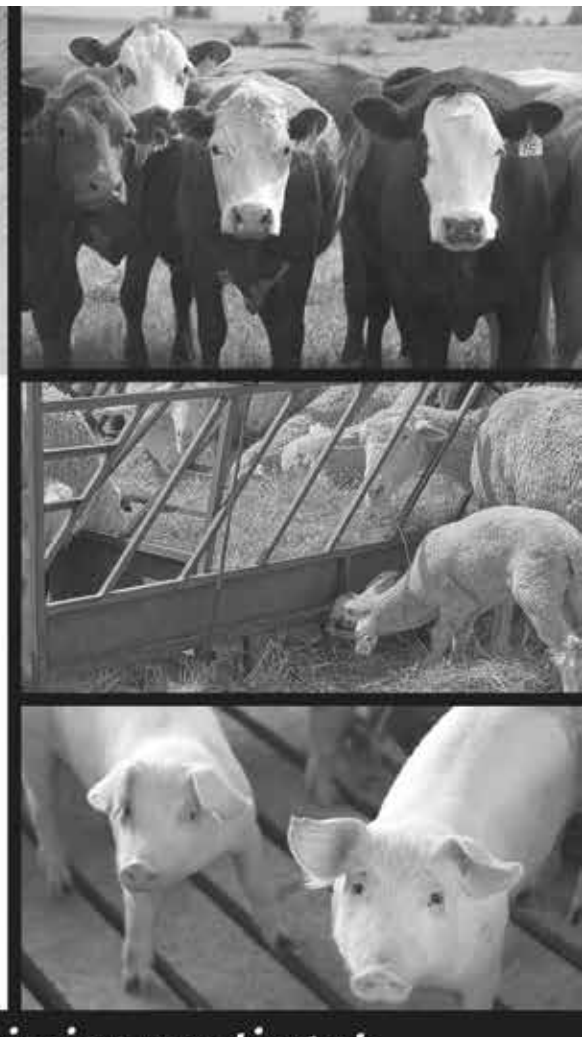


Leigh Ann Skurupey, assistant director of 4-H Youth Development, says she was excited to hear just how effective Next Chapter is proving to be.

"It has been incredible working with NDSU Admissions," says Skurupey. "They have provided a lot of support for this project, and we are already seeing the impact: 59% of our participating 2026 graduates applied to NDSU. This is a true recruitment opportunity."

North Dakota 4-H is continuing to explore developing additional *Career in a Box* opportunities, such as soil science, to expand opportunities for youth to connect with additional agricultural career pathways and NDSU expertise. More information is available on the NDSU Admissions website.

North Dakota
Livestock Alliance
ndlivestock.org



The North Dakota Livestock Alliance is a non-profit organization led by farmers and ranchers focused on transparency with North Dakota's Counties about:

- *The economic and community benefits to welcoming livestock operations to your county*
- *What to expect when a livestock operation is proposed in your community*
- *State and local livestock zoning procedures*
- *Modern livestock management, barn design and environmental stewardship*

Contact us or invite NDLA to your next County Commission meeting at ndlivestock.org or 701-712-1488 Follow us on Facebook @LivestockND

North Dakota Attorney General's Opinions

These and all other Opinions issued by the ND Attorney General's Office can be seen at:
www.attorneygeneral.nd.gov/opinions-search/.

RED RIVER REGIONAL DISPATCH CENTER

Opinion #: 2026-SO-27

Date Issued: November 2, 2026

Issued To: Red River Regional Dispatch Center (RRRDC)

Request: Whether the RRRDC violated N.D.C.C. § 44-04-20 by failing to properly notice the regular meeting of its operations committee about a change of location following a sewer backup at the planned meeting location.

Conclusion: RRRDC did not substantially comply with the statutory notice requirements after it changed the meeting location and violated the public meeting notice requirement.

DIVIDE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION

Opinion #: 2026-SO-25

Date Issued: November 2, 2026

Issued To: Divide County School District Board of Education

Request: Whether the Divide County School District Board of Education (Board) violated N.D.C.C. §§ 44-04-19 and 44-04-20 by failing to properly notice and permit public access to a meeting of an alleged committee of the Board, consisting of three of the seven Board members and two school principals.

Conclusion: The Board states that less than a quorum of Board members met with the two school administrators and that this group was not a committee of the Board. Based on the facts provided by the Board, a quorum of the Board did not meet and no violation of the open meetings law occurred.

STUTSMAN COUNTY LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE

Opinion # 2026-O-22

Date Issued: September 25, 2026

Issued To: Stutsman County Local Emergency Planning Committee

Request: Whether the Stutsman County Local Emergency Planning Committee violated N.D.C.C. § 44-04-21.1 when it conducted a vote by email to pay two bills.

Conclusion: The Stutsman County Local Emergency Planning Committee violated the open meetings law when it conducted Committee business by email.

WHITE SHIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

Opinion #: 2026-SO-20

Date Issued: September 25, 2026

Issued To: White Shield Public School District

Request: Whether the District violated N.D.C.C. §§ 44-04-18 and 44-04-20 by failing to respond to an open records request and failing to provide a notice of school board meetings.

Conclusion: The District violated open records request law by not responding to the request within a reasonable time and by failing to provide the requested records. The District also failed to provide notice of school board meetings after it was requested.

NORTH PRAIRIE REGIONAL WATER DISTRICT

Opinion #: 2026-O-15

Date Issued: August 28, 2026

Issued To: North Prairie Regional Water District

Request: 1. Whether the North Prairie Regional Water District violated N.D.C.C. § 44-04-19 by holding its January 18, 2024, meeting in a room with a capacity of fourteen attendees with an expected attendance of fourteen attendees.

2. Whether the North Prairie Regional Water District posted notice in substantial compliance with N.D.C.C. § 44-04-20 when it failed to post the notice of its January 18, 2024, regular meeting at its meeting location.

Conclusion: 1. The North Prairie Regional Water District did not violate N.D.C.C. § 44-04-19 as it held its January 18, 2024, meeting at a location which could accommodate the number of persons reasonably expected to attend the meeting.

2. The North Prairie Regional Water District failed to post its meeting notice in substantial compliance with N.D.C.C. § 44-04-20 when it failed to post notice of the meeting at the location of the meeting on the day of the meeting.

MORTON COUNTY

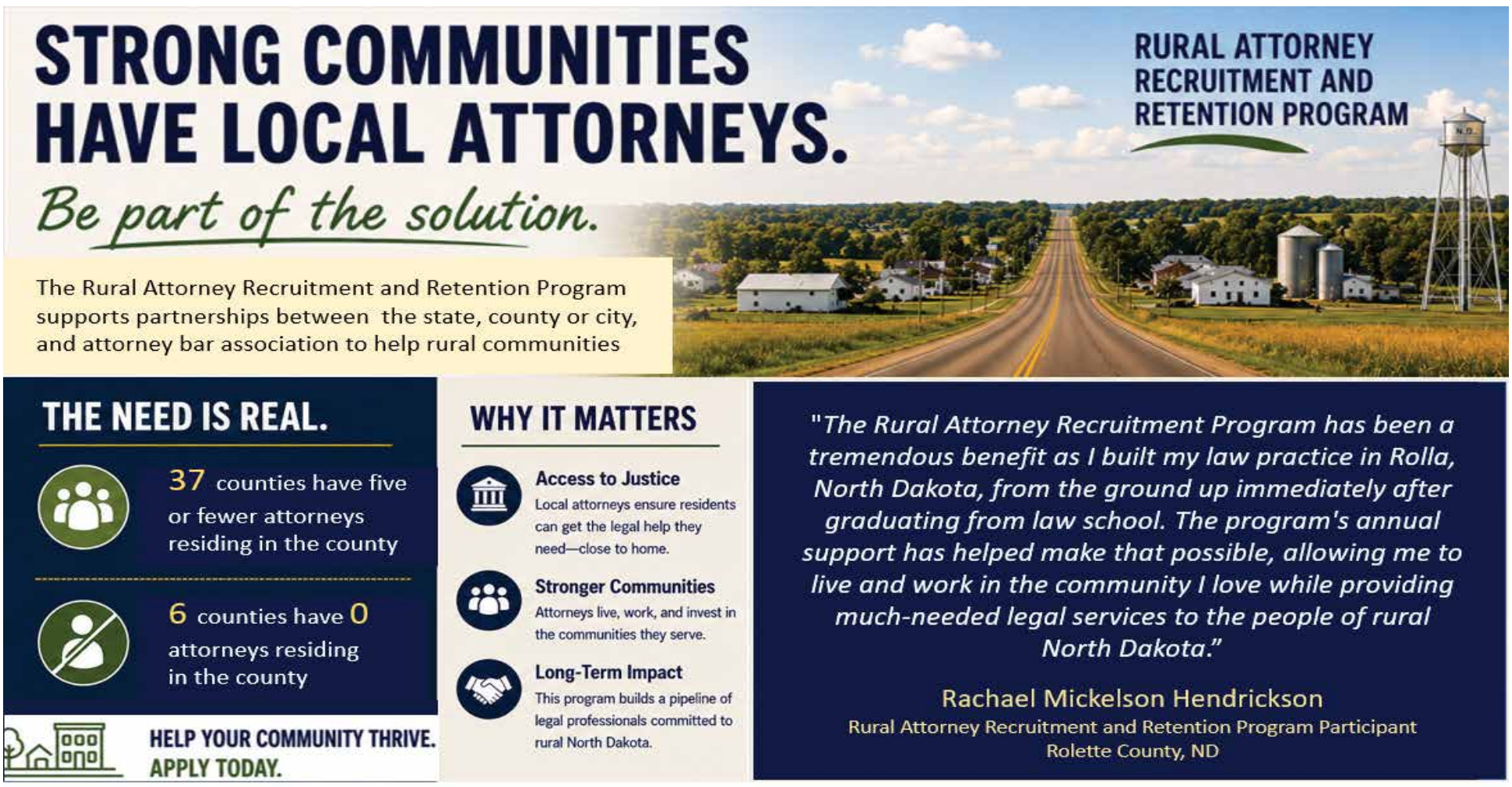
Opinion #: 2026-O-16

Date Issued: August 31, 2026

Issued To: Morton County

Request: Whether Morton County failed to respond to an open records request in violation of N.D.C.C. § 44-04-18 when requesting copies of property tax notices.

Conclusion: Morton County did not violate the open records laws when an initial request for records had been caught in a spam filter and the County responded promptly once a follow-up email was received



2026 COUNTY CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

1 _____ Daylight Savings Time Ends
3 _____ General Election
11 _____ Veteran's Day
20-21 _____ North Dakota Farm Bureau Annual Meeting, Bismarck Hotel & Conference Center
26 _____ Thanksgiving Day
30-Dec 1 _____ ND Township Officers Association Annual Convention, Bismarck Hotel & Conference Center

DECEMBER

1-3 _____ 70th Legislative Assembly Organizational Session, Capitol
3 _____ NDIRF Board Meeting, NDIRF Office Building
8-10 _____ Joint ND Water Convention & Irrigation Workshop, Bismarck Hotel & Conference Center
9 _____ NDCCA Board Meeting, NDACo County Office Building
10 _____ ILG/NDACo Board Meeting, NDACo County Office Building
11-12 _____ ND Farmers Union State Convention, Bismarck Event Center
16-17 _____ ND Sheriffs & Deputies Association Meeting, Bismarck Hotel & Conference Center
21 _____ First Day of Winter
25 _____ Christmas

JANUARY

1 _____ New Year's Day
5 _____ 70th Legislative Assembly Begins
18 _____ Martin Luther King Jr. Day



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