

CLAY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
8:30 AM, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2025
Meeting Room A / B – 3rd Floor – Courthouse
MINUTES

The Clay County Board of Commissioners met in regular session with the following Commissioners present: Paul Krabbenhoft, Ezra Baer, Jenny Mongeau, Kevin Campbell, and David Ebinger. Others present: County Administrator Stephen Larson, County Attorney Brian Melton, Assistant County Administrator Darren Brooke, and Senior Administrative Assistant Sarah Hellem.

Call to Order

Commissioner Campbell called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Approval of Agenda

On motion by Commissioner Baer, seconded by Commissioner Mongeau, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the agenda.

Approval of the Temporary Permit for 1 to 4 Day On-Sale Liquor License for Barnesville Knights of Columbus

By consent, the Board approved the temporary permit for 1 to 4 day On-Sale Liquor License for Barnesville Knights of Columbus.

Approval of the State of Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources Natural Resources Block Grant Program Grant Agreement for FY 2026 and 2027

By consent, the Board approved the State of Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources Natural Resources Block Grant Program Grant Agreement for fiscal year 2026 and 2027.

Citizens to be Heard

There were no citizens to be heard.

Approval of Payment of Bills and Vouchers

On motion by Commissioner Mongeau, seconded by Commissioner Baer, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the bills and vouchers totaling \$666,649 from 112 vendors. There were 83 warrants issued under \$2,000 (\$35,215) and the following 29 were over \$2,000.

Internal Revenue Serv	\$ 266,360	Moorhead Public Service	\$ 4,670
CRAFCO, Inc.	\$ 82,524	Elan Financial Services	\$ 4,663
Trinity Services Group, Inc.	\$ 58,507	Dakota Plains Mechanical, Inc.	\$ 4,495
Mn Dept Of Revenue	\$ 35,536	Ehlers	\$ 4,250
VEBA Select Account	\$ 30,752	Xcel Energy	\$ 3,969
JT Lawn Service	\$ 28,504	Valley Mortuary Transportation Services	\$ 3,323
Turnkey Corrections	\$ 14,979	Nitzkowski, Inc.	\$ 3,168
Houston Engineering Inc	\$ 14,098	Summit Fire Protection	\$ 2,903
NACO	\$ 13,396	Petro Serve USA-SW	\$ 2,804
City of Glyndon	\$ 10,497	City of Felton	\$ 2,620
Code 4 Services, Inc	\$ 7,322	Alvero LLC	\$ 2,580
Stantec Consulting Services, Inc.	\$ 6,762	Little Falls Machine, Inc.	\$ 2,513
LELS	\$ 5,658	Minnkota EnviroServices, Inc.	\$ 2,364

Sabin C Store	\$ 5,048	State of MN Health Care Savings Plan	\$ 2,337
North American Benefits Company	\$ 4,823		

Red River Communications Grant Update

Red River Communications General Manager/CEO Tom Steinolfson, Sales and Marketing Manager Kari Kleingartner, provided the Board with an update on the grants that are currently in process, including the Federal Reconnect Grant, the Border-to-Border (B2B) Grant, and the Minnesota DEED BEAD Grant.

Discussion ensued regarding where cable lines will run, if the reconnect round 5 project extends past the county line, and funding.

Presentation Regarding Food Waste Composting Program for Clay County

Clay County Climate Action Group member Fred Sternhagen presented the Board with a recommendation to invest in a food waste composting program for Clay County. Mr. Sternhagen discussed the benefits to this program including the longevity of the landfill with financial benefits, climate benefits, and this program being a proven tested method.

Commissioner Mongeau extended her appreciation to this approach and the ability to holistically look at waste in a different way. Nevertheless, things like this do cost money, so there needs to be a discussion to figure out how to finance something like this.

Commissioner Campbell discussed other components such as the collection of this type of waste, SCORE funding, Solid Waste Municipal tax, and where equipment will go.

Commissioner Campbell stated that this will be a topic of discussion at the Solid Waste Advisory Committee to see what can be done with commercial entities, as a starting point.

Request Authorization to Issue Request for Proposals for 2026 Local Homeless Prevention Aid Funds

Social Services Director Quinn Jaeger requested approval to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for 2026 Local Homeless Prevention Aid Funds, and stated the Local Homeless Prevention Aid (LHPA) was established by the 2021 Minnesota Legislature to help local governments ensure that children and families do not experience homelessness. The program focuses on preventing housing instability and assisting families and unaccompanied youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Clay County has received a preliminary allocation of \$303,877 in LHPA funding for SFY2026. These funds must be used to support new or existing homeless prevention and assistance projects within Clay County that meet statutory requirements. The RFP will prioritize proposals that align with statutory intent, demonstrate strong collaboration, and provide direct housing stability services to families with children and unaccompanied youth. Projects must target families with children in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 academic programs and/or unaccompanied youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Following the release of the RFP, proposals will be reviewed and scored by a selection committee. A recommendation for funding allocation and contract approval will be brought back to the Board for consideration at a later date.

Discussion ensued regarding implementation timeline, and the process in catching fraud.

On motion by Commissioner Krabbenhoft, seconded by Commissioner Ebinger, and

unanimously carried, the Board approved to authorize Clay County Social Services to issue a Request for Proposals for 2026 Local Homeless Prevention Aid funds in the amount of \$303,877.

Request Authorization to Issue Request for Proposals for 2026 Statewide Affordable Housing Aid Funds

Mr. Jaeger requested approval to issue a Request for Proposals for the 2026 Statewide Affordable Housing Aid Funds, and stated Statewide Affordable Housing Aid (SAHA) was established by the 2023 Minnesota Legislature to support affordable housing development and preservation, reduce housing instability, and prevent homelessness. Eligible uses include emergency rental assistance, gap financing, support for nonprofit housing providers, and housing related operational or supportive costs. Clay County's preliminary 2026 allocation is \$81,550, an increase from \$68,698 in 2025. These funds must be used in accordance with state statute and program requirements administered by Minnesota Housing and the Minnesota Department of Revenue. Proposals will be reviewed and scored by a selection committee, with a recommended funding allocation and contract approval brought back to the Board at a later date.

Commissioner Campbell thanked Mr. Jaeger for providing the previous year's allocation numbers.

On motion by Commissioner Ebinger, seconded by Commissioner Baer, and unanimously carried, the Board approved to authorize Clay County Social Services to issue a Request for Proposals for 2026 Statewide Affordable Housing Aid funds in the amount of \$81,550.

Request Approval of the Final Contract Voucher for SAP 014-645-002

County Engineer Justin Sorum requested approval of the final contract voucher for SAP 014-645-002. This was the mill and overlay project in the City of Dilworth on CSAH 45. Northern Improvement was the contractor, with the initial bid of \$237,707.25. The final amount to be approved is \$251,668.07.

Discussion ensued regarding municipal state aid, and the 5-year plan.

On motion by Commissioner Baer, seconded by Commissioner Mongeau, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the final contract voucher for SAP 014-645-002 in the amount of \$251,668.07.

Request Approval of the Final Contract Voucher for CP 014-300-002

Mr. Sorum requested approval of the final contract voucher for CP 014-300-002. This was the County wide striping project. Sir Lines-A-Lot was the contractor with the initial bid of \$109,606.19. The final amount to be approved is \$121,569.26.

On motion by Commissioner Mongeau, seconded by Commissioner Baer, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the final contract voucher for CP 014-300-002 in the amount of \$121,569.26.

Request Approval of the 2026 Voluntary Furlough Program

Human Resources Director Anna Moore requested approval of the 2026 Voluntary Furlough Program and stated this program helps Clay County reduce payroll expenses without layoffs,

maintain employee benefits, and provide staff flexibility for unpaid time off. This policy has saved the County approximately \$56,000 in 2025. This was presented at the Personnel Issues Committee (PIC) and was recommended for Board approval. If approved for 2026, all furlough requests will still be subject to Department Head approval.

On motion by Commissioner Ebinger, seconded by Commissioner Baer, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the 2026 Voluntary Furlough Program.

Request Approval of the 2026 Meal Reimbursement Rates

Ms. Moore requested approval of the 2026 Meal Reimbursement Rates of \$15.00 for breakfast, \$20.00 for lunch, and \$30.00 for dinner. To receive reimbursement for breakfast and/or dinner expenses, the employee's travel must include an overnight stay and/or the employee's departure/return time must be more than 2 hours outside the employee's regular workday schedule. When meals are part of a tuition or registration fee, no additional reimbursement request for such meals can be claimed. This was discussed at PIC and recommended for approval.

On motion by Commissioner Baer, seconded by Commissioner Ebinger, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the meal reimbursement rates of breakfast at \$15, lunch at \$20, and dinner at \$30 for 2026.

Request Approval of the 2026 Mileage Rates

Ms. Moore stated the 2026 IRS mileage rates have not been released yet, however, with the suggestion from PIC, the request would be if a fleet vehicle is available and an employee chooses to use their personal vehicle, the reimbursement rate shall be \$0.50 cents per mile. If no fleet vehicle is available or if specific circumstances warrant the use of a personal vehicle, which is at the discretion of the Department Head, the reimbursement rate shall be equal to the 2025 IRS rate (\$0.70/Mile). This rate is subject to change in 2026, but is not yet published.

On motion by Commissioner Mongeau, seconded by Commissioner Ebinger, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the 2026 Mileage Reimbursement Rates.

Request Approval of Resolution 2025-38 for Setting the Minimum Salary of the Clay County Sheriff and Setting the Clay County Sheriff's Salary for 2026

County Administrator Stephen Larson requested approval of Resolution 2025-38 for setting the minimum salary of the Clay County Sheriff and setting the Clay County Sheriff's salary for 2026.

Discussion ensued regarding the grades and steps of the Clay County grid.

On motion by Commissioner Ebinger, seconded by Commissioner Baer, and unanimously carried, the Board approved Resolution 2025-38 setting the minimum Clay County Sheriff Salary at \$137,364 and setting the Clay County Sheriff Mark Empting's Salary at \$184,678.21 for 2026.

RESOLUTION 2025-38 ESTABLISHING 2026 COUNTY SHERIFF SALARY

WHEREAS, the County Board of Commissioners has the duty and responsibility, by law, to establish by resolution the minimum and annual salaries to be paid to its elected officials; and

WHEREAS, the County Board of Commissioners has considered the position responsibilities and duties, the tenure and performance of the incumbents, and the market salaries for similar positions in similar counties; and

WHEREAS, under Minn. Stat. § 387.20 Subd. 2., at the January meeting prior to the first date on which applicants may file for the office of County Sheriff, the Clay County Board of Commissioners shall set by resolution the minimum salary to be paid to the County Sheriff for the term next following; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the minimum salary as set by the Clay County Board of Commissioners for the elected position of County Sheriff shall for the next term set at \$137,364; and

BE IT RESOLVED that the 2026 salary as set by the Clay County Board of Commissioners for the elected position of County Sheriff shall be set at \$184,678.21.

Request Approval of Resolution 2025-39 for Setting the Minimum Salary for the Clay County Attorney and Establishing the Clay County Attorney Salary for 2026

Mr. Larson requested approval of Resolution 2025-39 for setting the minimum salary for the Clay County Attorney and establishing the Clay County Attorney's Salary for 2026.

Discussion ensued regarding the increase to the MN Public Defenders, and the grades and steps of the Clay County grid.

On motion by Commissioner Ebinger, seconded by Commissioner Baer, and unanimously carried, the Board approved Resolution 2025-39, setting the minimum County Attorney's Salary at \$155,640 and setting Clay County Attorney Brian Melton's Salary at \$203,542.25 for 2026.

**RESOLUTION 2025-39
ESTABLISHING 2026 COUNTY ATTORNEY SALARY**

WHEREAS, the County Board of Commissioners has the duty and responsibility, by law, to establish by resolution the minimum and annual salaries to be paid to its elected officials; and

WHEREAS, the County Board of Commissioners has considered the position responsibilities and duties, the tenure and performance of the incumbents, and the market salaries for similar positions in similar counties; and

WHEREAS, under Minn. Stat. § 388.18 Subd. 2., at the January meeting prior to the first date on which applicants may file for the office of county attorney, the Clay County Board of Commissioners shall set by resolution the minimum salary to be paid the county attorney for the term next following; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the minimum salary as set by the Clay County Board of Commissioners for the elected position of County Attorney shall for the next term set at \$155,640; and

BE IT RESOLVED that the 2026 salary as set by the Clay County Board of Commissioners for the elected position of County Attorney shall be set at \$203,542.25.

Request Approval of Resolution 2025-40 for Establishing the Clay County Commissioners Salaries and Per Diem for 2026

Mr. Larson requested approval of Resolution 2025-40 for establishing the Clay County Commissioners salaries and per diem for 2026. This would include the 4% Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) and the maximum per diem of \$100 per day.

Discussion ensued regarding the per diem, and the COLA.

Commissioner Baer moved for a 0% increase to the Commissioners salaries for 2026. Motion died due to the lack of a second.

On motion by Commissioner Krabbenhoft, seconded by Commissioner Ebinger, and carried, with one descending vote (Commissioner Baer), the Board approved Resolution 2025-40 for establishing the 2026 Clay County Commissioners Salaries at \$40,822.51 and a maximum Per Diem of \$100 per day for appointed committee assignments and other Board approved meetings.

**RESOLUTION 2025-40
ESTABLISHING 2026 ANNUAL SALARY AND PER DIEMS FOR COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

WHEREAS, Minnesota Statute 375.055, Subdivision 1, requires the County Board of Commissioners to set salaries and per diem payments for its members prior to January 1 of the effective year; and

WHEREAS, the County Board of Commissioners desires to set salaries and per diem payments for its members prior to January 1 of the effective year.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Clay County Board of Commissioners approve setting the County Commissioners salary at \$40,822.51: and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clay County Commissioner's 2026 per diem is set as follows: A county commissioner may collect one per diem of \$100.00 for each day spent performing the official duties pertaining to appointed committees. Regularly scheduled county board meetings are exempt from per diems.

Review Lakes & Prairies Community Action (CAPLP) - Rural Routes - Senior Transportation 2026 Funding Request

Mr. Larson stated the Clay County Board of Commissioners previously provided funding for the Lakes & Prairies Community Action (CAPLP) Rural Routes Senior Transportation Program in prior budget cycles. During the 2026 budget planning process, the Board faced numerous competing priorities and difficult funding decisions. After careful consideration, funding for the CAPLP Rural Routes program was removed from the proposed 2026 budget. At the Truth in Taxation meeting held on December 16, 2025, several residents expressed concerns regarding the proposed discontinuation of funding for this program. CAPLP has amended their 2026 request to \$42,583.50 in hopes of reconsideration.

Commissioner Campbell discussed the importance of these services and stated that he would like to see the Board reinstate the funding for the CAPLP Rural Routes program for 2026, by

using reserves to fund the request, so there is no impact to the levy.

Discussion ensued regarding cost per ride, and the need for these services.

CAPLP Executive Director Lori Schwartz expressed her appreciation to the Board for their reconsideration.

On motion by Commissioner Mongeau, seconded by Commissioner Baer, and unanimously carried, the Board approved to reinstate the 2026 funding request for the CAPLP Rural Routes Senior Transportation Program, in the amount of \$42,583.50, to the 2026 budget and for funds to come from Clay County reserves.

BREAK

The Board took a break from 9:58 a.m. to 10:07 a.m.

Request Approval of Resolution 2025-41 Adopting the Clay County Final Levy and Budget 2026

Mr. Larson requested approval of Resolution 2025-41 adopting the Clay County Final Levy and Budget for 2026, and provided the history and background to this year’s budget cycle.

On motion by Commissioner Ebinger, seconded by Commissioner Krabbenhoft, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the 2026 Clay County budget of \$128,981,062.00.

On motion by Commissioner Ebinger, seconded by Commissioner Krabbenhoft, and unanimously carried, the Board approved Resolution 2025-41 Adopting the 2026 Clay County Final Levy.

RESOLUTION 2025-41

WHEREAS, The Clay County Board of Commissioners did hold a public meeting on December 16, 2025, and

WHEREAS, The Clay County Board of Commissioners has addressed the concerns of its citizens to the best of their ability, and

BE IT RESOLVED, That the Clay County Board of Commissioners hereby certifies the following levy for taxes to be collected in 2026:

Revenue Fund	\$	26,512,277
Road and Bridge Fund		5,129,877
Building Improvements		44,660
Library		323,955
Social Services		14,194,101
Debt Retirement-Courthouse		553,901
Debt Retirement-County Projects		<u>525,788</u>
Total	\$	<u>47,284,559</u>

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Clay County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts the 2026 budget as presented.

Committee Reports/County Administrator Update/Discussions

- Commissioner Baer reported on meetings for WCRWD; and White Earth Nation Committee.
- Commissioner Ebinger reported on meetings for Greater FM EDC; Cass-Clay Homeless Coalition; FM Diversion Authority; and LARL.
- Commissioner Krabbenhoft reported on meetings for Cass-Clay Homeless Coalition; and Clay County HRA Liaison.
- Commissioner Mongeau reported on meetings for AMC Annual Conference; met with Judge Rosenfeldt regarding specialty courts; FMWF Chamber Public Policy; Extension Committee; Clay County Leaders Roundtable; PLMSW; FM Diversion Land Management; MCCJPA; Metro COG; NSJD/PRTF Legislative Planning; Flood Mitigation Legislative Planning; and Lakeland Mental Health Center.
- Commissioner Campbell reported on meetings for PLMSW; White Earth Nation Committee; FM Diversion Land Management; MCCJPA; FM Diversion Authority; and FMWF Chamber Public Policy.
- County Administrator Stephen Larson reported on meetings for Union Negotiations conversations; White Earth Nation Committee; met with Dan Mahli and Brandon Lunak; MCCJPA; Strive Committee; Regional MACA meeting; and the Board will meet next Tuesday, December 30, 2025.
- Assistant County Administrator Darren Brooke reported on meetings for TNT; Union Negotiations; met with HR and Auditors Office regarding PFMLA; MnCCC; Strive Committee; NSJD/PRTF Legislative Planning; and end of year tasks.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:46 a.m.

Jenny Mongeau, Chair
County Board of Commissioners

Stephen Larson, County Administrator