

CLAY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

8:30 AM, TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2026

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

Approval of Agenda

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

Minnesota Lawful Gambling LG220 Application for Exempt Permit - Pheasants Forever

By consent, the Board approved Minnesota Lawful Gambling LG220 Application for Exempt Permit for Pheasants Forever.

Tax Abatement for G.Wambach Due to a Clerical Error

By consent, the Board approved Tax Abatement for G.Wambach due to a clerical error.

Approval of Ordinance 2026 - 01 Retaining Firearm Limitations For Deer Hunting In Clay County

By consent, the Board approved Ordinance 2026 - 01 Retaining Firearm Limitations for Deer Hunting in Clay County.

Citizens to be Heard

There were no citizens to be heard.

Approval of Payment of Bills and Vouchers

On motion by Commissioner Krabbenhoft, seconded by Commissioner Ebinger, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the bills and vouchers totaling \$234,843 from 86 vendors. There were 65 warrants issued under \$2,000 (\$34,724) and the following 21 were over \$2,000.

Lakeland Mental Health Center, Inc.	\$ 81,137	The Retrofit Companies Inc.	\$ 3,756
Clay County Auditor-Treasurer	\$ 18,226	Xcel Energy	\$ 3,602
MN Counties Computer Coop	\$ 14,409	Sanford Health	\$ 3,000
Butler Machinery Co	\$ 11,248	Wallwork Truck Center	\$ 2,917
City of Glyndon	\$ 10,944	Disposal Services Inc	\$ 2,550
Agee/Antonio	\$ 8,909	Grainger Inc.-856722335	\$ 2,452
Bolton & Menk, Inc.	\$ 7,483	Lakes Area Jetting, LLC	\$ 2,437
Dakota Plains Mechanical, Inc.	\$ 6,291	JT Lawn Service	\$ 2,096
Office of MNIT Services	\$ 4,991	Reliance Telephone	\$ 2,070

Amazon Capital Services	\$ 4,987	Bob Barker (Sheriff)	\$ 2,023
Galls, LLC - 5287110	\$ 4,586		

Approval of Minutes from April 14, 2026

On motion by Commissioner Campbell, seconded by Commissioner Baer, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the minutes from April 14, 2026.

Request Approval of the Recommended Appointment – Clay County Emergency Manager

Sheriff Mark Empting requested approval of the recommended appointment of the Clay County Emergency Manager and stated in preparation of the departure of the current Emergency Manager, a promotional process was conducted to identify the replacement. It's recommended that Sgt. Nicole Reno be appointed to the rank of Lieutenant and designated as the Clay County Emergency Manager. Sgt. Reno has nearly 10 years of experience with Clay County, along with prior service with the Moorhead Police Department. She has demonstrated strong leadership, is well organized, and is a driven professional with a clear commitment to public safety and effective emergency management.

On motion by Commissioner Ebinger, seconded by Commissioner Campbell, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the appointment of Lieutenant Nicole Reno as the Clay County Emergency Manager.

Request Approval to Authorize the Sheriff's Office to Purchase an Enclosed Trailer for Range Equipment and Supplies

Sheriff Empting requested approval to purchase an enclosed trailer for range equipment and supplies due to the loss of access of the Moorhead Police Department range.

Training activities will now be conducted at the Glyndon Rod and Gun Club, which requires transporting a significant amount of equipment for each session. The enclosed trailer would be used to safely and efficiently haul essential range supplies, including targets, target stands, barricades, barricade stands, ammunition, cleaning supplies, and other necessary training materials. In addition, the trailer would serve as a centralized, secure storage solution for all range-related equipment. This will improve organization, extend the lifespan of equipment by protecting it from the elements, and ensure readiness for training operations.

This request does not require any additional county funding. If approved, the cost of the trailer could be covered using existing salary savings within the Sheriff's Office budget. Utilizing these one-time savings allows us to meet an immediate operational need without impacting the overall county budget or requesting additional funds. This approach ensures fiscal responsibility while maintaining the quality and safety of our training program.

Discussion ensued regarding when the Sheriff's Office was notified of not being able to use the Moorhead PD gun range, and long-term plans.

On motion by Commissioner Ebinger, seconded by Commissioner Baer, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the purchase of an enclosed trailer for the Sheriff's Office for the purpose of transporting and storing range equipment and supplies in the amount of \$7,192.00.

Annual Department Update - Public Health

Public Health Director Jessica Mickelson, Supervisors Liz Bjur and Suzie Ouradnik, Emergency Preparedness Manager Sylvanus Domah, Finance Manager Brandon Nelson, Environmental Health Director Kent Severson, Health Promotion Director Rory Biel, and Nutrition Specialist Tara Audette presented the department update for Public Health.

Ms. Mickelson discussed the mission of the Public Health department, and the organization structure including Adult Health, Family Health, Environmental Health, Health Promotion, Finance, Women Infant and Children (WIC), Emergency Preparedness, and the Partnership4Health Community Health Board.

Ms. Ouradnik discussed the Adult Health division including the 1,650 clients that are served, services provided such as Medica, Blues, UCare, UCare SNBC, and State Waivers.

Ms. Bjur discussed the Family Health division including the public health clinic and disease prevention and control, school nursing, and program funding.

Mr. Severson discussed the Environmental Health division including licensing inspections of restaurants & bars, hotels & pools, food trucks & special events, and campgrounds & mobile home parks, phone inquiries, septic compliance inspections, new-system contractor applications, demolition permits, public health nuisance, and septic inspection statistics. Discussion ensued regarding food inspections.

Mr. Biel discussed Health Promotion including the growth of Food Council, the Positive Community Norms grant, the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP), Opioid Response Team, child & teen checkups, and Youth as Life Leaders (YALL).

Mr. Nelson discussed the financial statistics for Public Health and Partnership4Health CHB. Discussion ensued regarding the CHB.

Ms. Audette discussed the Women Infant and Children (WIC) program including the number of individuals served, nutrition assessments, lactation education and resources, the farmers market coupon program, food packages, technology improvement including the WIC card, mobile app, phone visits, the language line. Discussion ensued regarding the designated farmers markets, and community gardens.

Mr. Domah discussed Emergency Preparedness including tracking inventory through Salamander Live, emergency go-bag distribution, all-hazard regional planning, trainings, setting up a Plan of Dispensing (POD), and grant funded projects.

Commissioner Mongeau thanked the Public Health department for their great work.

Request for Approval of Step Placement for a Healthcare Unit Eligibility Worker

Financial Assistance Supervisor Mikala Wodarek requested approval of the step placement for a Healthcare Unit Eligibility Worker and stated the Board previously approved refilling a vacated Eligibility Worker position within the Healthcare Unit. This request is part of executing that approved staffing plan. Social Services is recommending appointment of a highly experienced internal candidate to the position at Grade 14, Step 9. The candidate brings nearly a decade of prior experience in healthcare eligibility programs, including Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare, and previously performed at a high level within the unit.

The Healthcare Unit continues to experience high caseloads per worker and increasing workload demands. Filling this role with an experienced internal candidate significantly reduces onboarding time and allows for rapid assumption of a full caseload. This approach improves service delivery timelines and reduces workload strain on the remaining team. In contrast to hiring externally, this strategy minimizes training burden, stabilizes operations much faster, and supports continuity of service to residents. Although the requested step placement is above entry level, it reflects prior directly relevant experience in this same position, and prior step attainment in the same job classification.

This is a budgeted position in the 2026 budget and this staffing transition is projected to result in a net savings of approximately \$15,365 for 2026, but the savings would be realized in backfilling the internal candidate's current position.

Commissioner Mongeau stated this was discussed at the Personnel Issues Committee and there was great discussion and this was supported as it's a great opportunity to have a highly qualified individual take on this role.

On motion by Commissioner Krabbenhoft, seconded by Commissioner Ebinger, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the step placement of Grade 14, Step 9 for the Healthcare Unit Eligibility Worker.

Annual Department Update - Social Services: Child Support Fraud & Collections and Fiscal Services.

Social Services Collections Supervisor Sandy Thorne, and Social Services Fiscal Supervisor Susan Roll provided the Board with an update on the Child Support Fraud & Collections and Fiscal Services Divisions within Social Services.

Ms. Thorne discussed staffing, welfare fraud, fraud referrals, fraud prevention, criminal cases, overpayment totals, funding & statutory requirements, collections, collection duties & statistics, child support services, Federal Financial Participation (FFP), FFY 2025 Statistics, Program Revenue for FFY 2025, Collection Sources FFY 2025, and the upcoming changes and challenges within the division. Discussion ensued regarding referrals

Ms. Roll discussed the Social Service Accounting team, Child Care Assistance support & statistics, revenue generation, State Fiscal Reporting, budget prep & YTD reporting, County financial statement support, State Audit participation, current challenges, and what's on the horizon for the division along with preparing for those changes.

The Board thanked Ms. Thorne and Ms. Roll for their presentation and their hard work.

BREAK

The Board took a break from 9:59 a.m. to 10:06 a.m.

Committee Reports/County Administrator Update/Discussions

- Commissioner Ebinger reported on meetings for County Commissioner/HRA Commission Work Group Session; FM Diversion Finance Committee; Criminal Justice Advisory Board; FM Diversion Authority Board; and County Management Retreat.

- Commissioner Krabbenhoft reported on meetings for County Commissioner/HRA Commission Work Group Session; Adult Mental Health LAC; West Central Initiative Economic Development; Legislative Planning; Historical & Cultural Society; CAPLP; Cass/Clay Food Commission; and County Management Retreat.
- Commissioner Campbell reported on meetings for County Commissioner/HRA Commission Work Group Session; PLMSW; Building Committee; SWAC; PIC; MCCJPA; FM Diversion Authority Board; County Management Retreat; WCRWD; and CSAH 12/52 Roundabout - Preconstruction Open House.
- Commissioner Baer reported on meetings for County Commissioner/HRA Commission Work Group Session; Building Committee; Criminal Justice Advisory Board; County Management Retreat; and WCRWD.
- Commissioner Mongeau reported on meetings for County Commissioner/HRA Commission Work Group Session; Planning Commission; Earth Day Press Conference; Dilworth RESCO Facility Ground Breaking; Compliance Committee; Legislative Planning; Buffalo Ridge Solar Project Developer meeting; SWAC; PIC; Flood Mitigation Working Group; MCCJPA; SWCD Pollinator Party; CAPLP; County Management Retreat; Lakeland Mental Health Center; and CSAH 12/52 Roundabout - Preconstruction Open House.
- County Administrator Stephen Larson reported on meetings for County Commissioner/HRA Commission Work Group Session; met with Matt Leiseth with Downtown Moorhead Inc.; Legislative Planning; Buffalo Ridge Solar Project Developer meeting; Building Committee; PIC; Flood Mitigation Working Group; MCCJPA; County Management Retreat; WCRWD; Chat GPT User Group; and discussed a Road Restrictions update.
- County Attorney Brian Melton reported on meetings for YMCA Woman of the Year Program; Attorney's Office Facility dog has been named; and County Management Retreat.
- Assistant County Administrator Darren Brooke reported on meetings for PIC; Step 3 grievance; HR staff meeting; data requests; MNCCC HR Payroll meeting; 2027 Budget; Spring Rural Cities & County meeting; 2027 Risk Assessment; Earth Day Press Conference; Compliance Committee; Legislative Planning; Engineering Tech Interviews; Building Committee; SWAC; PIC; County Management Retreat; MNCCC Regional Meeting; and Chat GPT User Group meeting.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

Jenny Mongeau, Chair
County Board of Commissioners

Stephen Larson, County Administrator