

CLAY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
8:30 AM, TUESDAY, MAY 5, 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 Ebinger, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the agenda.

Employee Recognitions

The following employees were recognized: Elizabeth Bjur for 20 years with Public Health, Corrie Runger for 15 years with Social Services, and Brenda Paper for 15 years with Social Services.

Citizens to be Heard

There were no citizens to be heard.

Approval of Payment of Bills and Vouchers

On motion by Commissioner Ebinger, seconded by Commissioner Baer, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the bills and vouchers totaling \$493,280 from 113 vendors. There were 80 warrants issued under \$2,000 (\$33,474) and the following 33 were over \$2,000.

Lake Agassiz Regional Library	\$ 90,672	BDT Mechanical, LLC	\$ 4,831
West Central Regional Juvenile Center	\$ 72,733	City of Ulen	\$ 4,782
Code 4 Services, Inc	\$ 27,848	WEX Bank	\$ 4,673
Lakes & Prairies CAP, Inc.	\$ 26,854	Johnson's Auto Repair LLC	\$ 4,538
City Of Barnesville	\$ 25,525	Bytespeed, LLC	\$ 4,250
ALPHA Training & Tactics, LLC	\$ 25,134	Winthrop & Weinstine, P.A.	\$ 4,000
Sanford Health	\$ 22,104	Widseth Smith Nolting & Associates Inc	\$ 3,382
WEX Bank - Sheriff	\$ 18,213	Verizon 386550144-00004	\$ 3,219
Veolia North America	\$ 17,638	Thomson Reuters - West 590031	\$ 2,790
Historical & Cultural Society Of Clay Co	\$ 17,284	Green View Inc.	\$ 2,700
Stantec Consulting Services, Inc.	\$ 16,954	McKesson Medical Surgical	\$ 2,375
Town & Country Oil Inc.	\$ 11,549	Fitzgerald Construction Inc.	\$ 2,364
Greater F M Economic Development Corp	\$ 10,000	Wallwork Truck Center	\$ 2,152
Visto's Trailer Sales	\$ 7,197	Braun Intertec Corp	\$ 2,137
Moorhead Public Service	\$ 6,668	MidStates Wireless, Inc.	\$ 2,107
Oasis Mental Health & Wellness	\$ 5,850	MN Counties Intergovernmental Trust	\$ 2,048
Verizon-386550144	\$ 5,226		

Approval of Minutes from April 21, 2026

On motion by Commissioner Krabbenhoft, seconded by Commissioner Baer, and unanimously

carried, the Board approved the minutes from April 21, 2026.

Wildlife Habitat Protection Presentation by The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy Associate Director of Grasslands, Liz Beery, and Habitat Protection Program Manager Jane Cowan provided the Board with a presentation regarding a Wildlife Habitat Protection project in Clay County.

Ms. Beery stated The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Pheasants Forever have been working on a wildlife habitat protection project in Keene and Hagen Townships. A landowner approached TNC last year wishing to sell wet meadow prairie and marginal cropland that can be protected and restored for wildlife habitat. The landowner is keeping the most profitable crop land for continued agricultural use. Through this protection project TNC is pleased to protect more land for wildlife habitat and for controlled public recreational access. Hunting will be allowed on all of the 1,900 acres and long-term ownership of this land will be split between three entities. TNC will own 480 acres, the MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will own 320 acres as a new Wildlife Management Area (WMA), and the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) will own 1,100 acres. 160 acres will be designated Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge (NTP NWR) as an addition to the adjacent Erickson NTP NWR tract. And 940 acres will be designated Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) as an addition to Flickertail Prairie WPA.

Ms. Beery stated a good portion of this land has historically been used as hay fields because it contains wet soils that are not productive for crops. Current land use on nearby conservation lands owned by TNC, DNR, and USFWS include rotational haying, as well as conservation grazing, controlled burning, and weed control. A portion of this land will also be farmed within the next two years to prepare for prairie restoration seeding, and future haying and grazing efforts will be completed in collaboration with local landowners.

Ms. Beery stated the source of funds come from the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) portion of the Clean Water Land & Legacy Amendment.

Commissioner Baer asked when the transition of ownership of the land will occur. Ms. Beery stated the transition of acres to the USFWS and DNR will take place within the next 1 to 2 years. Generally, it's preferred to do some restoration on the acres before they're transferred.

Commissioner Mongeau and the Board extended their appreciation for all the individuals who came to support this project.

Clay County Local Advisory Council (LAC) for Children's Mental Health Annual Report & Mental Health Month Proclamation

Clay County Social Services Supervisor/Children's Mental Health LAC Secretary Treasurer, Michelle Thordal, and Lakeland Mental Health Center Rule 79 Case Manager/Children's Mental Health LAC Chair, Michelle Mullikin presented the Clay County Children's Mental Health Local Advisory Council (LAC) annual report

Ms. Thordal and Ms. Mullikin discussed an overview of current activities, community engagement efforts, and survey findings, a multi-year perspective on trends impacting children's mental health in the County, continued system strengths in collaboration and school-based services, identifying ongoing challenges related to workforce shortages, service capacity,

and access to higher levels of care.

Commissioner Campbell asked for further explanation regarding how workforce shortages impact the LAC. Ms. Thordal stated in regard to access to family therapy or the community health partnerships such as Lakeland or Solutions, they have a hard time keeping people in those roles. They see a lot of their therapists going into private practice because reimbursement rates are low, and wages can't compare. If clients have MN Medical Assistance, there are only certain providers that will accept that insurance, and those are the agencies like Lakeland and Solutions.

Commissioner Ebinger asked for more information regarding the Police program. Ms. Thordal stated she wasn't aware of the specifics but that the program will be paired down to a more targeted approach.

Commissioner Campbell asked what happens to the children who are not offered the appropriate services that are needed. Ms. Thordal stated those youth would end up in the Child Protection system, and in Juvenile centers. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Baer asked how Clay County compares to other counties regarding these issues. Ms. Thordal stated most other counties report having the same issues, such as long wait times and service capacity. There are some counties that have access to different things, but the general theme is the same. Commissioner Mongeau asked if having mental health supports within every school is a consistent trend with other counties in the state. Ms. Thordal confirmed that was correct.

Discussion ensued regarding transportation barriers.

Commissioner Ebinger followed up on the Police Program and stated he just heard from the Chief Deputy who informed him that Moorhead PD is no longer hosting the summer youth program because they didn't receive the Youth Intervention Program (YIPA) grant, so they're trying to reform the program into something smaller but it hasn't been fully figured out yet. Discussion ensued regarding grants.

On motion by Commissioner Campbell, seconded by Commissioner Ebinger, and unanimously carried, the Board read and approved to proclaim May 2026 as Mental Health Month in Clay County.

On motion by Commissioner Ebinger, seconded by Commissioner Krabbenhoft, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the Children's Mental Health LAC Membership.

CLOSED SESSION: Permitted by Section 13D.05, Sub. 3(d), to Discuss Issues Related to Security Systems and Receive Security Briefings

On motion by Commissioner Campbell, seconded by Commissioner Baer, and unanimously carried, the Board approved to go into closed session at 9:09 a.m. permitted by section 13D.05, Sub. 3(d), to discuss issues related to security systems and receive security briefings.

On motion by Commissioner Campbell, seconded by Commissioner Krabbenhoft, and unanimously carried, the Board approved to come out of closed session at 9:47 a.m.

Request Approval to Purchase Replacement Firewalls

Technology Services Director Rory Schmitz requested approval to purchase replacement firewalls in order to meet the growing demand for high Internet usage by benefiting from increased speed the State of Minnesota IT Department (MNIT) has granted the County, and to reconfigure how all network traffic is routed throughout our organization and to improve security between departments. The existing firewalls will be re-used by our criminal justice departments to separate Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) traffic to a separate connection. This will further ensure compliance with the Minnesota BCA and FBI's security policies.

\$83,037 will come from the 2026 Technology Services budget and then \$10,000 will come from the Technology Services Internal Services fund on the firewall line item. These new firewalls would then also be added as a new Internal Services line for replacement in 5 years.

Commissioner Campbell asked what the lifespan of firewalls was. Mr. Schmitz stated the lifespan is typically 5 years. Discussion ensued regarding the funding, the reason for the purchase, and slow connections.

On motion by Commissioner Campbell, seconded by Commissioner Krabbenhoft, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the purchase of new Firewalls through High Point Networks in the amount of \$93,037.00.

BREAK

The Board took a break from 9:57 a.m. to 10:02 a.m.

Request Approval of the Final Contract Voucher for SAP 014-634-032

County Engineer Justin Sorum requested approval of the Final Contract Voucher for SAP 014-634-032 which was the Mill and Overlay project on CSAH 34 from TH 9 to CSAH 11. The initial bid from Central Specialties was \$1,846,160.10 and the final amount to be approved is \$1,846,671.44.

On motion by Commissioner Baer, seconded by Commissioner Ebinger, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the Final Contract Voucher for SAP 014-634-032 in the amount of \$1,846,671.44.

Request Approval of the Clay County Law Enforcement Center Feasibility Study Professional Services Proposal

County Administrator Stephen Larson requested approval of the Clay County Law Enforcement Center Feasibility Study Professional Services Proposal and stated the Clay County Law Enforcement Center was constructed in 2016 and the Moorhead Police Department (MPD) rents a minimum of 30,000 square feet of the facility for their needs and is under contract through 2038. Recently, Clay County was notified that MPD had filled all of their available office spaces within the facility and has begun to explore facility options that would meet their strategic plan. Therefore, it's requested to proceed with a feasibility study evaluating the potential reuse of the Law Enforcement Center if the City Police vacate their current space.

The proposal, submitted by Klein McCarthy Architects, outlines an initial study focused on determining whether several county departments currently housed in the Government Services Building could be relocated into the Law Enforcement Center (LEC). This phase is limited in scope and designed to provide a high-level assessment of spatial needs, building constraints, and general layout options before any detailed design or cost estimating occurs. The total cost

for this study is \$10,000 which would come from reserves.

Commissioner Mongeau stated when the LEC was built, there was thought that went into how the garage was built, specifically so that there could be an expansion on the second level. Mr. Larson stated there is a little bit of an elevation change, but yes, it was set up for expansion, roughly 15,000 square feet.

Commissioner Campbell stated this was discussed at the Building Committee and it's worthwhile for the County to go through this phase. There are a lot of questions and logistics regarding this topic, where the Sheriff's Office will need to be involved. In addition, the current bond that's on that facility will need to be reviewed, because part of the bond included the contract with the City of Moorhead.

Commissioner Ebinger discussed his disappointment with this and how it's probably a disappointment for everyone who worked on the project. Efforts were made and the County extended a real opportunity for the MPD at a low cost, because at the time, the City of Moorhead didn't have the funding. Commissioner Ebinger hopes that the County can be made whole, if the city decides to terminate the partnership. Commissioner Campbell also expressed his disappointment and discussed how the MPD had been partners with Clay County going back to the 1960's. When the new LEC was planned, the idea of the MPD moving out was never a thought. However, if they need more space, it's their decision to make.

On motion by Commissioner Baer, seconded by Commissioner Ebinger, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the Clay County Law Enforcement Center Feasibility Study.

Committee Reports/County Administrator Update/Discussions

- Commissioner Ebinger had no meetings to report on.
- Commissioner Krabbenhoft reported on meetings for Legislative Planning; met with National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI); met with Senators Housley, Utke, Rasmusson, Kupec, and Representative Joy; and Moorhead City Planning.
- Commissioner Campbell had no meetings to report on.
- Commissioner Baer reported on meetings for AMC Nuts, Bolts, and Boardrooms Conference; met with Representatives Joy, Gander, Skraba, and Baker; and MRC.
- Commissioner Mongeau reported on meetings for AMC Nuts, Bolts, and Boardrooms Conference; meetings at the Capital; met with Representative Joy; met with Senate Majority Leader Senator Murphy, Senator Kupec, and our Legislative team regarding the final 2 weeks of session; NAMI presentation; PRTF/NSJ; MRC; Metro COG Executive Committee meeting; and discussed the NACo applications for 2026-2027 committee appointments.
- County Administrator Stephen Larson reported on meetings for MACA Leadership; Legislative Planning; MPCA Settlement Update; PRTF/NSJ; Department Head Evaluation; Letters to Legislators; met with Sheriff Empting on a series of issues; met with Derrick LaPoint and Lori Johnson regarding Bell Bank services; Met with Brian Melton and Troy Amundsen; on Friday, May 8, 2026, we have a hearing with MCIT regarding coverage; and next week after Board we have our quarterly EDC/EDA meeting at 1:00 p.m.
- Assistant County Administrator Darren Brooke reported on meetings for met with Sheriff Empting regarding the Cadet Program; met with an employee regarding an issue ;

payroll estimate for MCIT; PRTF/NSD; and data practices response with social services.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Jenny Mongeau, Chair
County Board of Commissioners

Stephen Larson, County Administrator