

## Wells County Commissioner's Meeting Minutes January 6, 2026

The January meeting was called to order by Chairman Dockter at 8:00 AM. Present at the meeting were Stan Buxa, Dennis Dockter, Bryan Lutt, Danny Maxwell, Brian Miller, Bryon Brynjulson, Tom Deede, Kyle Erdmann, Lydia Gessele, Michaela Gessele, Richard Lies, Devon Long, Chad Reimche, Larry Skiftun, Annette Sprague, Daniel Stutlien, and Neil Nelson of the Herald-Press.

Discussion of Commission appointments, specifically the Water Board, was added to the agenda.

SB (*M*), DM (*S*) to approve the minutes from the December Meeting. Unanimously carried.

Employee timesheets were reviewed by the commissioners.

The current WC Balance Sheet was reviewed and discussed. Also, the Auditor shared current county investments as well as Commission controlled WC funds. BM (*M*), DM (*S*) to approve the Balance Sheet. Unanimously carried.

DM (*M*), SB (*S*) to approve Laura Muscha, Treasurer, and Daniel Stutlien, Auditor, to purchase or cash out CD's and investments on behalf of WC. Unanimously carried.

Pledged Securities for all WC bank accounts were reviewed by the Commission. It was the consensus of the Commission the securities were adequate to cover the county's current deposits.

The only correspondence received this month was a thank-you note from Anne Ehni and the WC Soil Conservation District for office space provided at the KTL during the federal government shutdown.

Commission Portfolios were discussed.

The Commission discussed portfolio assignment for 2026. Portfolios were assigned as follows: Clerk of Court & Sheriff's Dept.: Brian Miller; Treasurer's Office & States Attorney: Bryan Lutt; Custodial, Road & DES: Dennis Dockter; Extension, Recorder & HR: Danny Maxwell; Auditor & Tax Director: Stan Buxa. Also assigned were as follows: South Central Dakota Regional Council: Dennis Dockter; WC Fair Board & WC Housing Authority: Bryan Lutt.

Under the new Public Comments portion of the meeting, Richard Lies and Annette Sprague signed up to address the Commission. Lies wished to speak as a WC resident on matters related to the Water Board. Lies specifically addressed matters related to potential drain assessments being utilized to cover legal fees. Lies feels this would be a violation of taxpayer money as there would seemingly be no benefit to the landowner. Sprague desired to address matters of Planning & Zoning. Sprague first wished to praise the WC Treasurer's office for their work getting tax statements out this year. On P&Z, Sprague praised the committee for their work on data centers, and was seeking the ordinance once approved.

Regarding Water Board appointments, or any WC board for that matter, the Commission questioned why do we not advertise the board vacancies? If so, should the appointments be delayed until this is done? The discussion of the Commission was that while there are pros & cons to an application and interview process, the number of boards and appointees would make this a cumbersome process. SB (*M*), DM (*S*) to suggest interested parties in vacant or vacating WC board position submit a written letter to WC indicating said interest. Unanimously carried.

Regarding Commission appointments, for the Planning & Zoning Committee, SB (*M*), DM (*S*) to re-appoint Bob Martin and Warren Strand, and appoint Joey Allmaras for a vacant seat. Unanimously carried. For the School District Reorganization Committee, BM (*M*), DM (*S*) to re-appoint Stan Buxa & Bob Nelson. Unanimously carried. On the Water Board, SB (*M*), BM (*S*) re-appointing Tom Deede, Devon Long, and Larry Skiftun. Motion carried 4-0 w/ BL abstaining. On the Weed Board, BM (*M*), BL (*S*) to re-appoint Kelly Muscha and Dale Schmitz. Unanimously carried. Appointment recommendations are still needed for WC District Health, WC JDA, and Central Prairie HSZ.

WC Sheriff's Office Deputy, Janelle Pepple, met with the Commission to discuss matters of the department in the absence of Sheriff Kluth. Pepple discussed the Calls For Service Report for 2025. Pepple shared info on current staffing of the dept., which is currently an open position (*FTE*).

WC States Attorney, Oliver Bromke, shared information regarding his office. Workload is on par with last year and Bromke shared a message of excellent cooperation amongst all parties involved in the enforcement and legal processes of local law. Bromke also shared his transition of residency in WC so he may stand for election in WC in '26.

WC Tax Director Jana Mogren visited with the Commission regarding assessor's responsibilities, '26 equalization regarding land values, and WC Planning & Zoning. Regarding P&Z, data centers have been recently addressed by the committee and an ordinance has been established. DM (*M*), BM (*S*) to adopt the data center ordinance as presented from the P&Z Committee. Unanimously carried. According to Mogren, as per the State of ND, ag land values are set to decline in '26. SB (*M*), BL (*S*) to reduce ag land values by 4% overall to remain within tolerance. Unanimously carried. Lastly, considering assessor's responsibilities, seven townships and two cities have a non-WC employee responsible for their assessing. The Tax Director is trying to determine if WC should be responsible, or should those respective political subdivisions be responsible, for sending out legally required valuations to all property owners within those jurisdictions. It was recommended Mogren reach out to the assessors and determine how they wish to proceed, and the Commission will take this up at an upcoming special meeting.

Larry Skiftun, Bryon Brynjulson, Tom Deede, Devon Long, and Chad Reimche of the WC Water Board sat with the Commission to discuss their recent lawsuit in front of the ND Supreme Court regarding the removal of drainage culverts in the Oak Creek Drain. Skiftun reviewed a number of prepared points regarding this matter. Through much discussion, what's done is done, and all parties professed a desire to work better together in future endeavors.

WC Road Foreman, Brent Keller, sat with the Commission to discuss matters of his Dept. Keller briefly discussed current tasks being attended to with the mild winter so far, as well as upcoming planned dept. projects for '26.

Bryan Tykwinski of KLJ Engineering sat with the Commission to discuss the bridge scheduled for replacement on WC #1 North of Fessenden this Summer. Plans have been submitted to DOT for review. Bid opening is scheduled for April with completion date tentatively scheduled for October. Box culvert replacements for two sites North & East of Fessenden have been submitted for Flex Funds and are waiting on a response.

A Flood Plain Model D Amendment was presented to the Commission to update the NDCC reference. SB (*M*), BL (*S*) approving the Amendment as presented. Unanimously carried.

A raffle permit from Flatland Trailblazers, Inc. was considered by the Commission. DM (M), BM (S) to approve the raffle permit request. Unanimously carried. #WC2026001

The Commission continued discussions regarding long-term planning in an ongoing effort to develop clarity regarding the financial challenges and fiscal direction of WC in the coming years. WC Road Foreman, Brent Keller, shared some insight regarding dept. personnel and responsibilities. Primary, secondary, and winter routes were discussed as possibilities. Further discussion ensued on the topic. The Commission decided to hold a special meeting Wednesday, January 2st, to continue the discussion.

The next WC Departments meeting will be held Thursday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00 PM.

The Annual Township Officers Assn. Meeting will be held Friday, February 27<sup>th</sup>, at 9:30 AM at the Festival Hall.

The next Six-County Meeting will be held in Kidder Co. Tuesday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00 AM.

There will be two upcoming Special Meetings of the WC Commission Friday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, at 8:00 AM to approve the bills and deal with assessor responsibilities, and Tuesday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, at 8:00 AM to discuss long-term planning.

The next regular meeting of the WC Commission will be held Thursday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, at 8:00 AM in the KTL Building.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:49 AM.

The following Fees and Receipts were approved and ordered filed:

Clerk of Court	\$	345.00
Recorder	\$	4,626.80
Sheriff	\$	1,401.25
Misc.	\$	25,265.45

On motion, the following bills were ordered paid: (*Gross wages, when listed*)

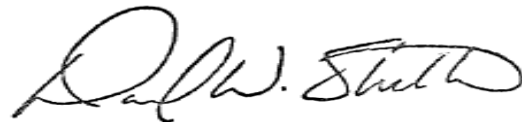
#Direct Deposit	Payroll, General (1000)	\$	95,156.58
#Direct Deposit	Payroll, Road (2001)	\$	45,803.96
#Direct Deposit	Payroll, 911 (2003)	\$	1,308.55
#Direct Deposit	Payroll, County Agent (2005)	\$	3,194.45
#Direct Deposit	Payroll, Social Welfare (2007)	\$	74,815.65
#ACH BC/BS	Insurance	\$	65,769.89
#ACH NDPERS	Retirement	\$	33,477.73

**Approved:**



**Dennis T. Dockter,**  
**Wells County Commission Chairman**

**Attest:**



**Daniel W. Stutlien,**  
**Wells County Auditor**