

Wells County Commissioner's Meeting Minutes

September 4, 2025

The September 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, Brian Argabright, Ivy Brye, Tim Buchwitz, Lucas Buerkley, Fay Fandrich, Lydia Gessele, Amy Lamm, Wells McGiffert, Alex Molander, Emanuel Pierce, Cheryl Ryan, Annette Sprague, Warren Strand, Munce Tronsgard, Lee Wentz, and Daniel Stutlien.

The meeting began with a public hearing regarding the transition of the WC Recorder to an appointed position at the conclusion of the term of current Recorder, Carrie Krause, when her term expires 12/31/26. Advantages discussed included the following: Seamless transition within the office, answering every day to the people of WC *via the Commission*, evaluated daily as opposed to once every four years, employee would follow policies & rules of WC, the working relationship with fellow employees, fiscal advantages and controls, apolitical position, lack of qualified people either reluctant to run or seeking elected office, and the details of the job are not well known. The only disadvantage discussed would be that this position would then not be directly elected by the people. Brian Argabright spoke in opposition as this would take away the independence of this position. Amy Lamm spoke regarding the qualifications of this and any other position in county government. Lydia Gessele spoke about the right of people to elect a person to do this job. The Commission has decided they would wait a month to receive further input from the public.

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

Employee timesheets were reviewed by the commissioners.

SB (M), BL (S) to approve the bills as presented. Unanimously carried.

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

BM (M), DM (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.

Correspondence from ND Game & Fish regarding the 2025-26 Fall Wild Turkey Proclamation was shared, as well as a letter from FEMA regarding the National Flood Insurance Program and WC's implementation of the new floodplain management measures. The Commission was also provided with the latest issue of "Pipeline Awareness." WC has the Alliance, Cenex, and Pembina Cochin Pipelines running underground.

Commission Portfolios were discussed.

Under the new Public Comments portion of the meeting, no individuals were signed up to address the Commission.

Tim Buchwitz wished to address the Commission regarding the Hamberg Slough project and the in-slope on one area of the road. Chairman Dockter was already apprised of the situation and it is being dealt with.

Joseph Carlblom of Vision Zero North Dakota met with the Commission to share information on this statewide initiative. Carlblom introduced himself and held a Q & A with the Commission as the Vision Zero initiative is designed to end deaths on the states' roads. Carlblom regards his role as proactive, as opposed to reactive, as Vision Zero is primarily for outreach and education to eliminate dangers and dangerous activities on ND's highways and roads.

Warren Strand of WC JDA sat down with the Commission to apprise them on matters related to the JDA. The organization is about attracting new business to the county by way of grants and no or low interest loans. Strand shared a few of the successes of the organization and stated that there have not been many recent requests. They're role is to assist new or existing business and to enhance the communities of WC, not to replace the local banks. JDA applications can be obtained from Sherrie Lien.

New WC Extension Agent, Ciera Kotaska, was introduced to the Commission. Kotaska spoke about her first two months on the job and getting to know both her role and the people in WC. Crop project monitoring, weather events, insects and diseases, as well as working with 4-H youth are just a few areas highlighted by Kotaska.

Wells McGiffert, on behalf of PRC Wind, shared updates regarding the status of the Flickertail Wind Project in Eddy and Wells Counties. McGiffert spoke of outreach and open houses recently held in both New Rockford and Fessenden at which they shared maps and received feedback from local patrons. A finalized layout is nearing completion after which PRC will be going to townships and the counties in preparation for permitting. McGiffert projected permitting is still likely a few months away.

WC Road Foreman, Brent Keller, met with the Commission to discuss matters of his Dept. Keller discussed the completion of the Hamberg Slough Project and some in-slope work that will still need to be completed for safety reasons. Chip sealing work is slated for the next month, followed by some fall ditch mowing. The state shed has been prepped for return to the State of ND if an agreement cannot be reached to continue the lease with WC. Keller discussed a mower replacement need for the fairground area. Keller discussed personnel and the lack of applicants for open positions. A couple of retired former employees who came back part-time for summer work have stated an interest in continuing this arrangement into the winter as-needed by WC. The Commission asked Keller about the results of truck regulatory enforcement in WC in the past several months.

WC patron Lydia Gessele addressed the Commission on subject of Public Trust. Gessele addressed specifically Commissioner Oaths of Office from the 2020 election and, in absence of those, theft of office and the illegitimacy of everything that was has been done in the interim. Gessele claims this to be a violation of the law.

WC Auditor Daniel Stutlien provided fresh copies of the budget to the Commission stating there was a slight alteration in total valuation of WC. All told, the valuation of the county sits at \$48,514,173, down \$24 from August. Stutlien entertained questions from the Commission. WC will hold their public hearing on the budget Tuesday, October 7th, at 8:00 AM in the KTL Building in conjunction with the October meeting of the WC Commission.

Stutlien presented and discussed the NDPHIT health insurance rates for '26. Rates for the WC employee group increased by 9.1% for '26.

The Commission then discussed the merits of meeting with various political sub-divisions similar to their effort to sit down with townships in the Summer of '24. The Commission would like to continue and/or grow this opportunity to meet with all political subs in the future.

The Commission was introduced to a new Property Fraud Alert system now available to all property owners free-of-charge in Wells County. This initiative, born out of the ND Recorders Information Network, allows all parcel owners to sign up electronically to be notified if any document is recorded effecting their property. Every property owner in WC should want to get registered for this before fraud strikes. Questions should be referred to the WC Recorder's Office.

The Commission considered contracted winter snow removal on county properties including the Courthouse, KTL, and Festival Hall as needed. Kelby Houchin has indicated interest to continue in this capacity in this early AM only. DM (M), BL (S) to hire Houchin for winter AM snow removal as needed at \$100/hr. for WC properties. Unanimously carried.

The next Six-County Meeting will be held Tuesday, September 9th, in Foster Co (*note location flip with Emmons Co.*). Commissioners were surveyed for topics. Public hearings was one subject mentioned.

The next WC Departments meeting will be held Thursday, September 18th, at 12:30 PM in the KTL.

NDACo's Tour of Counties will be coming to WC Thursday, September 25th, at 2:00 PM. Finally, NDACo's State Convention will be held October 26th-28th in Bismarck.

The next regular meeting of the WC Commission will be held Tuesday, October 7th, at 8:00 AM in the KTL Building. The meeting will begin with the '26 WC Budget Hearing.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:56 AM.

The following Fees and Receipts were approved and ordered filed:

Clerk of Court	\$	390.00
Recorder	\$	0.00
Sheriff	\$	902.50
Misc.	\$	12,603.84

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

#Direct Deposit	Payroll, General (1000)	\$	103,774.86
#Direct Deposit	Payroll, Road (2001)	\$	44,924.14
#Direct Deposit	Payroll, 911 (2003)	\$	1,308.55
#Direct Deposit	Payroll, County Agent (2005)	\$	3,194.47
#Direct Deposit	Payroll, Social Welfare (2007)	\$	68,144.96
#ACH BC/BS	Insurance	\$	57,196.05
#ACH NDPERS	Retirement	\$	32,227.72

25-Sep General

Wells County Treasurer	\$391.01 Central Supplies
Pitney Bowes	\$39.00 Postage meter supplies
Wells County Treasurer	\$358.64 Telephone
NDTC	\$640.26 Telephone
Fessenden City	\$383.59 Countywide Utilities

Otter Tail	\$1,183.03 Countywide Utilities
Central City H2O+	\$46.50 Countywide Utilities
Wells County Treasurer	\$92.20 Bank Charges
Wells County Treasurer	\$44.99 Courthouse & KTL Maintenance
Dakota Dust-Tex	\$214.76 Courthouse & KTL Maintenance
Tracys Market	\$40.99 Courthouse & KTL Maintenance
BW Electric	\$308.29 Courthouse & KTL Maintenance
MARC	\$391.99 Courthouse & KTL Maintenance
Foster County Independent	\$11.84 Legals
Benson County Farmers Press	\$56.00 Legal Publications
Herald Press	\$131.96 Legal Publications
Software Innovations	\$2,500.00 Technology
Wells County Treasurer	\$218.96 Technology
HP INC.	\$1,616.52 Technology
ITD	\$1,469.95 Technology
NDACo Resources Group	\$57.00 Technology
NDTC	\$100.78 Technology
Advanced Business Methods	\$49.33 Technology
Tom's Home Furnishings	\$509.15 Chair
Wells County Treasurer	\$32.89 Ink supplies/Maint. Contracts
ND State Treasurer	\$70.00 Marriage Licenses
Carla Johnson	\$116.90 Travel/Mileage
Wells County Treasurer	\$45.00 Dues/Registration Fees
Jamestown Communications	\$100.00 Dues/Registration Fees
Wells County Treasurer	-(\$580.00) Training
Wells County Treasurer	\$827.22 Travel/Mileage/Veh.Maint.
Ward Hilger	\$144.84 Travel/Mileage/Veh.Maint.
Kotaco Fuel & Propane	\$103.09 Travel/Mileage/Veh.Maint.
Wells County Treasurer	\$467.34 Uniforms
Wells County Treasurer	\$159.52 Misc.
Wells County Treasurer	\$154.48 Physicals
Central Dakota Family Physicians	\$141.00 Physicals
Wells County Treasurer	\$113.83 Telephone
NDTC	\$58.02 Telephone
Otter Tail	\$47.35 Utilities
Fessenden City	\$313.82 Festival Hall/Fair Utilities
Otter Tail	\$707.32 Festival Hall/Fair Utilities
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	\$13,879.36

HB 1066

Knife River Materials	\$79,112.95 HB 1066
Wold Engineering	\$4,746.78 HB 1066
KLI Engineering, LLC	\$14,453.78 HB 1066
Susag Sand & Gravel	\$5,465.31 HB 1066
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	\$103,778.82

Jail & Transp.

HACTC	\$2,091.16 Jail & Transport Medication
HACTC	\$8,835.00 Jail & Transport Prison Board
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	\$10,926.16

Co. Agent

Leaf	\$235.91 Copier Lease & Maint.
NDTC	\$123.36 Telephone
Ciera Kotaska	\$618.80 Travel/Mileage
Otter Tail	\$45.10 Utilities
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	\$1,023.17

Social Services

Wells County Treasurer	\$116.95 Client Support
Wells County Treasurer	\$141.00 Fuel/Foster Care
Farmers Union Oil-Fessenden	\$44.00 Fuel/Foster Care
Wells County Treasurer	\$46.31 Meals/Foster Care
Wells County Treasurer	\$72.30 Fuel/Child Protect. Serv.
Farmers Union Oil-Fessenden	\$105.88 Fuel/Child Protect. Serv.
Lango LLC	\$2.74 Contracted Services
Farmers Union Oil-Fessenden	\$143.41 Family Social Worker/Fuel
CenDak Cooperative-New Rockford	\$32.26 Family Social Worker/Fuel
Kreiter Autoworks, Inc.	\$120.75 Vehicles
Wells County Treasurer	\$24.83 Meals/Foster Care
Little Mart	\$93.00 In Home Care/Fuel
Farmers Union Oil-Fessenden	\$297.61 In Home Care/Fuel
Patriot Fuels	\$191.54 In Home Care/Fuel
Farmers Union Oil-Fessenden	\$93.00 Vehicles
Opdahl Body Shop	\$75.00 Vehicles
Dales Radiator & Repair	\$73.00 Vehicles
Patriot Fuels	\$10.00 Vehicles
Wells County Treasurer	\$100.00 Contracted Services
4th Corporation	\$140.00 Contracted Services
Advanced Business Methods	\$350.52 Contracted Services
Leaf	\$0.00 Contracted Services
Wells County Treasurer	\$579.37 Telephone
Dakota Central	\$170.69 Telephone
NDTC	\$562.48 Telephone
Wells County Treasurer	\$105.00 Vehicles
CenDak Cooperative-New Rockford	\$76.43 Vehicles
Central City H2O+	\$187.50 Zone Admin Support/Misc
ITD	\$112.22 Zone Admin Support/IT Other
NDACo Resources Group	\$1,020.00 Zone Admin Support/IT Other
Wells County Treasurer	\$127.80 Zone Admin Supp./Office Materials
Foster County Independent	\$78.00 Subscriptions & Memberships
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	\$5,293.59

Weed Control

Donna Rau	\$220.87 Salary - Employee
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Fram Township

\$500.00 Noxious Weed/Leafy Spurge/Cost Sharing

\$720.87

Hwy Tax

Harvey Oil Co.

\$7,904.39 Fuel

Power Plan

\$4,122.38 Machinery Repairs & Supplies

Gooseneck Implement

\$385.27 Machinery Repairs & Supplies

Wells County Treasurer

\$118.27 Supplies

Tracys Market

\$38.39 Supplies

Lemer's ACE & Rental

\$359.99 Supplies

Kimball Midwest

\$1,177.44 Supplies

Linde Gas & Equipment

\$145.90 Supplies

NDTC

\$145.18 Telephone

Wells County Treasurer

\$99.76 Utilities

Fessenden City

\$152.41 Utilities

Sykeston City

\$49.00 Utilities

Northern Plains Electric

\$599.62 Utilities

Otter Tail

\$290.00 Utilities

Harvey City

\$133.40 Utilities

Cathay City

\$95.00 Utilities

Central Plains Water

\$175.83 Utilities

\$15,992.23

Capital Projects

NDDOT

\$689.19 Capital Projects

24-7

Wells County Treasurer

\$81.90 Pharm Chem.

Office Of Attorney General

\$35.00 Scram Fees

Redwood Toxicology Laboratory

\$80.14 Screenings

\$197.04


\$152,500.43

Approved:



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

Attest:



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