

WATONWAN COUNTY BOARD

January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026

9:00 A.M.

The Watonwan County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on January 6, 2026, at 9:00 A.M. in the Commissioners' Meeting Room of the Courthouse, City of St. James. The following Board Members were present: Jim Branstad, Dillon Melheim, Bill Miller and Scott Westman. The meeting was called to order by County Auditor/Treasurer/Coordinator Kelly Pauling and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Pettersen moved, Melheim seconded to nominate Commissioner Scott Westman for Chairman for 2026.

Branstad moved, Pettersen seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, to cast a unanimous ballot for Commissioner Scott Westman as Chairman for 2026.

Pettersen moved and Melheim seconded, to nominate Commissioner Bill Miller as Vice-Chairman for 2026.

Branstad moved, Melheim seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, to cast a unanimous ballot for Commissioner Bill Miller as Vice-Chairman for 2026.

Chairman Westman declared his intention to make and vote on motions.

County Sheriff Jared Bergeman requested approval to hire Christopher Burban as an on-call deputy to assist with staffing needs and ensure adequate coverage.

Pettersen moved, Miller seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to hire Christopher Burban as an on-call deputy.

Branstad moved, Miller seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, to approve the minutes of the December 16 regular meeting.

Melheim moved, Branstad seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, to approve the agenda as amended.

Miller moved, Branstad seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, to approve payment of the End-of- Year Vouchers as audited and filed in the County Auditor/Treasurer's Office as follows by fund: Road & Bridge Commissioner Bills: Road and Bridge Fund - \$100,431.54; Commissioner Bills: General Fund - \$ 60,326.45.

Branstad moved, Pettersen seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, to approve payment of bills as audited and filed in the County Auditor/Treasurer's Office as follows by fund: Commissioner Bills: General Fund - \$74,622.68; Road & Bridge Commissioner Bills: Road and Bridge Fund - \$15,994.78 and approved the December Per Diems as presented.

Commissioners Miller and Pettersen discussed and agreed to switch AMC Policy committees. No other committee changes occurred.

Pettersen moved, Branstad seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, to approve committee appointments.

County Engineer Michael McCarty presented an update regarding the reconstruction of County Road 13 and ongoing road maintenance efforts are focused on improving safety and driving conditions.

Miller moved, Melheim seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, to approve the Van Hee Media as the legal newspaper for 2026.

Branstad moved, Miller seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, to approve Elected Officials minimum salaries.

Melheim moved, Westman seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, to approve the tobacco license for Village Inn.

The Board was presented with a withdrawal notice from the Rural Minnesota Energy Board from Nicollet County.

Pettersen moved, Melheim seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the promotion of Deputy Sherriff Brandon Sprenger.

Melheim moved, Branstad seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the retirement in good standing of Dave Flemming.

Pettersen moved, Branstad seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the retirement in good standing of Earl Kunz.

The Board presented a Memorandum of Agreement for the Law Enforcement contract, which includes newly added language addressing Minnesota Paid Leave requirements and provisions related to sick and personal leave.

Branstad moved, Miller seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the MOA with Law Enforcement.

The Board reviewed the contract for non-licensed jailers and dispatchers, including proposed compensation adjustments.

Branstad moved, Westman seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the contract for non-licensed jailers and dispatchers.

Commissioner Melheim asked questions regarding the recycling sheds and potential plans for

their disposition. Discussion included options such as auctioning or reselling the sheds. No final decision was made; the matter will be brought back for a future vote in July.

Commissioners discussed attending the Drainage Conference in Alexandria, MN, including per diem for attendance.

Branstad moved, Miller seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve per diem to attend the Drainage Conference.

Branstad moved, Melheim seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, to adjourn at 10:10 A.M.

Scott Westman, Chairman  
Watsonwan County Board

Susan Montemayor, Deputy Clerk  
Watsonwan County Board

ATTEST: Kelly Pauling  
Watsonwan County Auditor/Treasurer