

WATONWAN COUNTY BOARD

February 17, 2026

9:00 A.M.

The Watonwan County Board of Commissioners met in regular session February 17, 2026, at 9:00 AM in the Commissioners' Meeting Room of the Courthouse, City of St. James. The following Board Members were present: Scott Westman, Bill Miller, Dillon Melheim and Jim Pettersen. Not present: Jim Branstad. The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Miller moved, Pettersen seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, to approve the agenda as amended.

Melheim moved, Miller seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, to approve the minutes of the February 3rd regular meeting.

Commissioner Lance Mikkelson from Riverdale Township appeared before the Board to request information and clarification regarding communication and notification procedures related to J.D. 18 W&B Road Authority assessments, including the method and timing of notices to affected property owners and documentation of statutory compliance. The Board reviewed its procedures for mailed notices, publication requirements, and related communications, and all questions presented by Mikkelson were fully addressed and answered.

The Board reviewed a quote for the purchase of a new squad vehicle for the Sheriff's Department. A proposal was received from Dodge of Burnsville for a 2025 Dodge Durango Pursuit AWD in the amount of \$44,848. In addition, a quote was submitted by Mike's LLC Emergency Vehicle Installations for equipment and installation services totaling \$15,521.51.

Pettersen moved, Miller seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the purchase of a 2025 Dodge Durango Pursuit AWD and equipment and installation services.

County Engineer Michael McCarty presented to the Board adoption of operating policy for Long and Mary Lakes Water Control System operations procedures.

Melheim moved, Pettersen seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve Long and Mark Lakes Water Control System operations procedures.

McCarty presented the Public Works Departmental Policies and Guidelines to the Board for consideration and will be scheduled for a vote at a future meeting.

McCarty provided a potential quote from Falls Plows for a reversible snowplow. The reversible plow would cost \$3,863.00 more than a one-way plow, for a total price of \$346,262.28. No action was taken by the Board.

Miller moved, Pettersen seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, to approve the payment of bills as audited and filed in the County Auditor/Treasurer's Office as follows by fund: General Fund - \$77,366.92; Solid Waste Fund - \$1580.63; Road and Bridge Fund - \$77,041.89; Soil & Water Conservation - \$78,421.01; Ditch Fund - \$388,918.76; Agency Fund - \$4,718.70; and the Road and Bridge Fund - \$362,973.24; and to approve the January Disbursements Listing as presented.

Auditor/Treasurer Kelly Pauling presented the proposed 2026 ditch assessments to the Board. A one-year assessment was proposed for County Ditches (CD) #4, #64, and #102; and for Judicial Ditches (JD) #1 C & W, JD #2 M & W, JD #5 B & W, JD #6 W & B, JD #9 M & W, JD #12 W & C, JD #313, and JD #14 B & W. A three-year assessment at a rate of 4% was proposed for CD #1, JD #35 SW, and JD #35 SE. It was noted that Martin County submitted an invoice in the amount of \$125,000, which will be assessed at 4%.

Pettersen moved, Melheim seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the terms for the 2026 Ditch Assessments.

The Board was presented with the HRA Resolution authorizing the voluntary transfer of the South-Central MN Multi-County HRA's Housing Choice Voucher Program (Watonwan County) to the Blue Earth EDA for the purpose of administering and providing housing vouchers to eligible clients.

Pettersen moved, Westman seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, to approve the HRA Resolution.

Auditor/Treasurer Kelly Pauling requested permission to obtain quotes for a new van for Human Services to replace a vehicle scheduled for replacement due to age and maintenance concerns.

Melheim moved, Miller seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the purchase of a new van for Human Services based on the lowest responsible quote.

Auditor/Treasurer Kelly Pauling presented an amendment to the lease agreement for the Department of Corrections building located at 710 2nd Avenue South, St. James, MN 56081, which includes a proposed 3% increase to the rental rate. The Department of Corrections has responded with an addendum to the lease. While all addendums have not yet been fully reviewed, Pauling requested that the Board approve the 3% rental increase and authorize final approval of the lease amendment by County Attorney Julie Kelley upon completion of the review process, provided no discrepancies are identified.

Miller moved, Pettersen seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the 3% rental increase and to authorize final approval of the lease amendment by County Attorney Kelley, contingent upon satisfactory completion of the review.

Miller moved, Melheim seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the resignation in good standing of David Dahl.

Melheim moved, Pettersen seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the dismissal of Alica Zuhlsdorf.

Pettersen moved, Melheim seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the dismissal of Jenna Thom.

Pettersen moved, Melheim seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the resignation in good standing of Alysia Bolstad.

Miller moved, Melheim seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the appointment of Brenda McCabe to the position of Public Safety Telecommunicator.

Melheim moved, Westman seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the appointment of Ryan Mosser to the position of Building Maintenance Worker.

Miller moved, Westman seconded, and the motion passed unanimously for the transfer of Teri Hall to the position of Janitor.

Pettersen moved, Westman seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the appointment of Brian Swanson to the position of on-call TNT driver.

Melheim moved, Miller seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the transfer of Jacob Carr to the position of Full time Detention Officer.

Pettersen moved, Melheim seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the transfer of Jesse Gunderson to Deputy Sheriff.

Melheim moved, Westman seconded, and the motion passed unanimously to approve the appointment of Taylor Doering to position of Assistant County Engineer.

Commissioner Westman requested clarification in preparing a clear agenda and guidance for the Special Meeting on the DNR/rifle matter, including a defined purpose, a review of applicable regulations, presentation of relevant information, opportunity for public comment, and specification of any potential motions or actions for the Board's consideration.

Melheim brought to the Board's attention that old graffiti, previously covered on the roller rink door, is beginning to show through and may require repainting or replacement of the door.

Additionally, the Board was informed that signage will be installed at the roller rink to prohibit sunflower seeds in the area.

Melheim moved, Westman seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, to adjourn meeting at 10:35 AM.

Scott Westman, Chairman  
Watonwan County Board

Susan Montemayor, Deputy Clerk  
Watonwan County Board

ATTEST: Kelly Pauling  
Watonwan County Auditor/Treasurer