

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
PENNINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING
JANUARY 6th, 2026 – 10:00 A.M.**

Pursuant to M.S. 375.07, the Pennington County Board of Commissioners met in the Pennington County Justice Center Board Room in Thief River Falls, MN, on Tuesday, January 6th, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. Members Present: Seth Nelson, Bruce Lawrence, Roy Sourdif, Dave Sorenson, and Neil Peterson. Members absent: None.

The meeting was called to order by 2025 Board Chairman Sourdif and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The Chairman asked if there were any amendments to the agenda. Hearing none, there was a motion by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to approve the agenda as written. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, to approve the County Board minutes of December 30th, 2025, as written. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to approve following Commissioner warrants, to include payment to four law enforcement employees for uniform reimbursements totaling \$816.91, the MN Sheriff's Association for 2026 annual dues totaling \$5,102.66, and to Sheila Wiskow for County Coroner secretarial services totaling \$350.00. Motion carried.

County Revenue	\$311,049.22
Road & Bridge	\$ 88,875.11
Solid Waste	\$ 9,029.00
Ditch Funds	\$ 61,838.75

Meal reimbursements and per diems in the amount of \$857.32 were also approved.

The County Board proceeded to organize for the year 2026 with the County Coordinator assisting by calling for nominations for Chairman. Commissioner Peterson nominated Commissioner Sorenson as Chairman for 2026. Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, that nominations cease and a unanimous ballot be cast for Commissioner Sorenson as Chairman. Motion carried.

The County Coordinator then called for nominations for Vice-Chairman. Commissioner Lawrence nominated Commissioner Peterson as Vice-Chairman for 2026. Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, that nominations cease and a unanimous ballot be cast for Commissioner Peterson as Vice-Chairman for 2026. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, that the County Board express their appreciation to Commissioner Sourdif for serving as Chairman in 2025. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Sourdif, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, that the dates for the regular meetings of the Board will be the second Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. and the fourth Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. of each month unless otherwise called, with the exception of the Statutory meeting in January that is set by law. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, and pursuant to MS471.96, elected and appointed officials of the County be designated as representatives of the County in their respective State Association and are eligible for reimbursement of expenses by-law with presentation of verified claims. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, to appropriate and set aside in the Revenue Fund and authorize the Auditor-Treasurer to pay necessary expenses for postage, freight, telephone, water, lights, and other utilities as provided by MS375.16 as amended. Motion carried.

Commissioner Peterson introduced the following resolution and moved for its adoption:

RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED that the official newspaper of Pennington County shall be The Times for the year 2026, published weekly, each Wednesday, in Thief River Falls.

The foregoing resolution was duly seconded by Commissioner Lawrence and upon vote was unanimously adopted.

Commissioner Sourdif introduced the following resolution and moved for its adoption:

RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED, that pursuant to the by-laws of the Association of Minnesota Counties; the following officers are named delegates of the County of Pennington, to-wit: Commissioners, Engineer, Auditor-Treasurer and County Attorney. Other officers may be authorized by the Board to attend as non-voting members.

The foregoing resolution was duly seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, and upon vote was unanimously adopted.

The County Board reviewed the insurance premiums for the County's Workmen's Compensation, Property, Liability and error and omission policies. The insurance policies are all through the Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust. Commissioner Peterson moved, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, to approve the insurance premium rates for 2026 and authorize the County Auditor-Treasurer to pay as presented. Motion carried.

The County Board reviewed a list of Committee, Boards, and meetings that would allow for a per diem to be paid. Moved by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner

Nelson, to approve the following list of committees, boards, and meetings as meetings authorized to charge a per diem of attending on behalf of Pennington County. Motion carried.

Advance Thief River Committee
Airport Zoning Advisory Committee
AMC Legislative Review Committee
Annual Township Meetings
Area Transportation Plan
Association of Minnesota Counties Meetings
Building and Maintenance Committee
BWSR Wetland Meetings
Chamber of Commerce
Clearwater River 1 Watershed 1 Plan Policy Committee
Community Strong
Emergency Management Committee
Extension Committee
Family Service Collaborative
Feedlot Meetings
Gravel Tax Committee
Highway Committee
Household Hazardous Waste Meetings
Human Service Committee
Insurance Committee
Inter-County Community Council
Joint City/County Meetings
Juvenile Training Center Board
Law Enforcement Committee
Law Library Committee
Government Relations Committee
Minnesota Rural Counties
MnDOT County – Joint Facilities Committee
Northern Counties Land Use Coordinating Board
Northland Community and Technical College Advisory Committee
Northwest Minnesota Joint Powers Board
Northwest Regional Library Board
Northwest Minnesota Regional Emergency Communication Board
Land of the Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging
Northwest Regional Development Commission Board
Northwest Regional Development Commission Transportation Committee
Pennington County Housing Loan Fund
Pennington County Water Resource Advisory Committee
Personnel Committee
Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force
Pennington County Historical Society Board
Red Lake River Corridor

Red Lake Watershed Meetings
Red Lake River 1 Watershed 1 Plan Policy Committee
Red River Basin Joint Powers Board
Red River Valley Development
Regional Insurance Board
Road, Bridge, and Culvert Committee
Safety Committee
Solid Waste Committee
Special County Board Meetings
Technology Committee
Thief River Falls Regional Airport Authority
Thief River Falls Library Board
Thief River 1 Watershed 1 Plan Policy Committee

Also, any other Committees that are established by the County Board or appointments made or meetings attended while representing Pennington County.

The following resolution was motioned for approval by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, and upon vote was unanimously carried.

RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED, that an employee that has been given a County vehicle for their use and the employee chooses to use their own vehicle anyway, the employee will not be reimbursed the County mileage rate unless the vehicle assigned to them is inoperable.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the meal reimbursement for travel outside the County shall not exceed \$15 for breakfast, \$25 for a noon meal, and \$35 for an evening meal; that meal reimbursement shall be made for the exact expenditure, plus up to a 15% gratuity, and not the maximum amount allowed; itemized receipts, not totals receipts, must be attached to the claim form or no reimbursement will be made; no alcoholic beverages will be reimbursed,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that there shall be no reimbursement for meals within the County of Pennington,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the meal reimbursement without lodging shall be submitted on a claim form, with receipt (s) attached, to be processed through payroll whereby withholding tax and FICA will be deducted and that meal reimbursements with overnight lodging will not enter into the payroll system,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the County Auditor and Human Service Director are hereby given the authority to adjust the amounts of reimbursement if the above policy is not followed,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this meal and mileage policy shall be effective January 1st, 2026, and shall be reviewed at the County Board's discretion.

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, to appoint Jennifer Herzberg as MnCCC delegate with Lucas Fornshell as alternate. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, to appoint Scott Petrescue as the County Coroner for a one-year term ending December 31, 2026, as per MN Statutes 3901.005. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, to approve the following appointments. Motion carried.

- Road, Bridge, and Culvert Committee
Commissioner Lawrence
Commissioner Sorenson
Commissioner Nelson
Commissioner Peterson
Commissioner Sourdif
- Human Service Committee
Commissioner Lawrence
Commissioner Sorenson
Commissioner Nelson
Commissioner Peterson
Commissioner Sourdif
- Law Library Committee
Commissioner Sourdif
- Building & Maintenance Committee

Government Center:
Commissioner Lawrence
Commissioner Sorenson
County Coordinator Kevin Erickson
Auditor-Treasurer Jennifer Herzberg

LEC / Justice Center:
Commissioner Sorenson
Commissioner Lawrence
County Coordinator Kevin Erickson
Sheriff Seth Vettleson
- Thief River Falls Airport Zoning Commission
Commissioner Nelson
- Thief River Falls Chamber of Commerce Representative
Commissioner Sourdif
- Inter-County Community Council Board

Commissioner Nelson
Commissioner Sourdif, Alternate

- NW Regional Development Transportation Committee
Commissioner Sourdif
- County Extension Committee
Commissioner Lawrence
Commissioner Sourdif
- Pennington County Historical Society
Commissioner Nelson
- Pennington County Water Resource Advisory Committee
Commissioner Peterson
- Solid Waste Committee
Commissioner Nelson
Commissioner Lawrence
- Highway Committee
Commissioner Lawrence
Commissioner Peterson
- Household Hazardous Waste Joint Powers Board
Commissioner Nelson
Commissioner Lawrence, Alternate
- Land of the Dancing Sky Area Agency Aging Board / Region 1 Aging
Advisory
Commissioner Sorenson
Commissioner Sourdif, Alternate
- Regional Insurance Advisory Board of the Northwest Service
Cooperative
Commissioner Sorenson
County Coordinator Kevin Erickson
- NW Regional Library Board and Thief River Falls Library Board
Commissioner Sourdif
- Minnesota Rural Counties Board
Commissioner Peterson
Commissioner Lawrence, Alternate
- Northern Counties Land Use Coordinating Board

Commissioner Nelson
Commissioner Peterson

- NW Regional Emergency Communications Board
Commissioner Lawrence
Commissioner Nelson, Alternate
- Pennington County Affordable Housing Fund Advisory Board
Commissioner Sorenson
- Pennington/Red Lake County Public Health & Home Care Board
Commissioner Sourdif
- Labor/Personnel Committee
Commissioner Lawrence
Commissioner Peterson
- Pennington County Safety Committee
Commissioner Nelson
- Technology Committee
Commissioner Nelson
Commissioner Lawrence
- Gravel Tax Committee
Commissioner Lawrence
Commissioner Peterson
- Law Enforcement Committee
Commissioner Lawrence
Commissioner Peterson
- 2026 AMC Policy Committee Appointments
Environment & Natural Resources - Commissioner Peterson
General Government - Commissioner Sourdif
Health & Human Services - Commissioner Nelson
Public Safety - Commissioner Lawrence
Transportation & Infrastructure - Commissioner Sorenson
- Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force Joint Powers Governing Board
Commissioner Lawrence
- Northwest Regional Development Commission Board
Commissioner Lawrence
- Government Relations Committee

Commissioner Sorenson
Commissioner Sourdif, Alternate

- TVF Regional Airport Authority
Commissioner Lawrence
Commissioner Peterson
- Association of MN Counties Delegate
Commissioner Lawrence
Commissioner Sorenson
Commissioner Nelson
Commissioner Peterson
Commissioner Sourdif
- NW Regional Affordable Housing Fund Advisory Board
Commissioner Sorenson
- Quinn County Advisory Board
Commissioner Peterson
Commissioner Sorenson, Alternate
- Thief River One Watershed One Plan Policy Committee
Commissioner Peterson
Commissioner Sorenson, Alternate
- 911 Advisory Committee
Commissioner Sorenson
- Red Lake River Corridor
Commissioner Nelson
- Red Lake River Basin Board
Commissioner Sourdif
- Clearwater River One Watershed, One Plan Policy Committee
Commissioner Peterson
Commissioner Sourdif, Alternate
- Comprehensive Local Water Plan, Joint Powers Board
Commissioner Peterson
- NW Juvenile Training Center Board
Commissioner Peterson
- Red Lake River One Watershed, One Plan Policy Committee
Commissioner Sorenson

Commissioner Peterson, Alternate

- Advance Thief River Committee
Commissioner Sourdif
Commissioner Sorenson, Alternate
- Cannabis Committee
Commissioner Sorenson
Commissioner Nelson
- Community Strong
Commissioner Nelson
- NW Minnesota Multi County HRA
Commissioner Nelson

Motioned by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence to appoint Commissioners Sorenson and Peterson to the Emergency Management Committee. Motion carried.

Seth Vettleon – County Sheriff

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, to authorize the County Sheriff to advertise for the position of Full-Time STS Crew Leader. Discussion followed with Sheriff Vettleon stating that the position was included in the 2026 budget. The Board also discussed the local value of the STS program and noted that Marshall County continues to support the program and budget at the rate of 25%. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, to authorize the County Sheriff to advertise for one Full-Time Deputy Sheriff position, noting this is a vacancy and included in the 2026 budget. Motion carried.

Sheriff Vettleon informed the Board that the 2023 Chevrolet Tahoe patrol vehicle involved in an accident has been MCIT has declared the vehicle a total loss and approximately \$42,000 will be received from the claim. The Sheriff noted that a patrol vehicle previously available in Warroad, MN has been sold. He is researching available patrol vehicles and pricing to include equipment and installation as needed. He hopes to provide the County Board an update at their January 27, 2026, meeting.

County Auditor-Treasurer Items:

Motioned by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Sourdif, to approve and accept the following donations received in 2025. Motion carried.

Sentence-to-Serve (misc. services, wood)	\$ 54,960.61
D.A.R.E	\$ 400.00

The County Board then reviewed the individual ditch levies as recommended by the committee. Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, that a levy be made for ditch maintenance purposes and property assessed to various ditches in 2025, payable in 2026, in the following amounts. Motion carried.

Ditch Levies							
Ditch	Levy %	Ditch	Levy %	Ditch	Levy %	Ditch	Levy %
CD #16	100.0%	CD #42	40.0%	CD #59	30.0%	JD #11	20.0%
CD #21	60.0%	CD #43	25.0%	CD #62	40.0%	JD #13	10.0%
CD #32	40.0%	CD #44	75.0%	CD #70	1.0%	JD#13 Penn/Red Lake	2.0%
CD #33	25.0%	CD #45	60.0%	CD #71	60.0%	JD #15	20.0%
CD #35	50.0%	CD #46	50.0%	CD #73	50.0%	JD #18	30.0%
CD #36	20.0%	CD #47	25.0%	CD #74	40.0%	JD #25-3	1.0%
CD #37	75.0%	CD #53	20.0%	CD #75	20.0%	JD #30	30.0%
CD #38	50.0%	CD #55	80.0%	CD #77	10.0%	JD #31	4.0%
CD #39	25.0%	CD #57	30.0%	CD #96	10.0%	JD #60	10.0%
CD #41	2.0%	CD #58	40.0%	JD #1	25.0%	JD #30 Br. A	2.0%

Ms. Herzberg noted that the 2025 audit engagement letter has been received. Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, to acknowledge receipt of the 2025 county audit engagement letter from Hoffman, Philipp, and Martell PLLC. Motion carried.

The following resolution was introduced by Commissioner Sourdif, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, and upon vote was unanimously carried.

**PENNINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING ABSENTEE, MAIL, AND UOCAVA BALLOT
BOARDS AND DELEGATING AUTHORITY TO APPOINT BALLOT BOARD
JUDGES FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2026**

WHEREAS, Minnesota Statutes § 203B.121, subdivision 1, requires the county board to establish an Absentee Ballot Board; and

WHEREAS, the Pennington County Board of Commissioners desires to establish an Absentee Ballot Board effective January 6, 2026, to provide uniformity and consistency in the processing, acceptance, and rejection of returned absentee ballots in Pennington County; and

WHEREAS, Minnesota Statutes § 203B.121 authorizes the county board to appoint election judges to serve on ballot boards and further permits the county board to delegate that appointment authority to the county auditor-treasurer; and

WHEREAS, the Absentee Ballot Board may consist of a sufficient number of election judges appointed under Minnesota Statutes § 204B.19 through 204B.22, or deputy county auditor-treasurers trained in the processing and counting of absentee ballots; and

WHEREAS, efficient administration of elections requires flexibility in appointing, removing, and replacing ballot board judges throughout the election year as workload and election activity require;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Pennington County Board of Commissioners hereby establishes an Absentee Ballot Board, Mail Ballot Board, and UOCAVA (Uniformed and Overseas Citizens' Absentee Voting Act) Ballot Board pursuant to Minnesota Statutes §§ 203B.121, subdivision 1, and 203B.23; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Pennington County Board of Commissioners hereby delegates authority to the Pennington County Auditor-Treasurer to appoint, remove, and replace ballot board judges as necessary for all elections conducted during calendar year 2026, including but not limited to:

- Statewide elections
- County elections
- Municipal elections administered by the county
- School district elections
- Special elections and special primaries

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all ballot board judges appointed by the County Auditor-Treasurer must meet the qualifications of election judges under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 204B and must complete all required training; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this delegation of authority shall be effective from January 6, 2026, through December 31, 2026, unless earlier rescinded by action of the Pennington County Board of Commissioners.

The Auditor-Treasurer reminded the elected officials present that campaign finance reports are due by January 31st, 2026.

County Coordinator Items:

Mr. Erickson reminded the Board that annual employee safety training will be held at the Joint Use Facility today, January 6, 2026, from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. and on Wednesday, January 7, 2026, from 9:00 – 12:00 p.m.

The following resolution was introduced by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, and upon vote was unanimously carried.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Minnesota Statutes providing for the compensation of the various elected County Officials required that the minimum amount to be paid to any person elected to the following positions shall be established by the County Board for the year prior to the time that the filings open for the elected position.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the minimum to be paid to Officials for the terms beginning January 2027 and the Statutes applying thereto is as follows: County Sheriff – MSA387.20 - \$75,000; County Attorney – MSA388.18 - \$75,000.

Mr. Erickson provided an update to the Board regarding replacement of a water heater at the Justice Center. Building & Grounds Supervisor Morgan Bernier continues to research the options and is awaiting a follow-up quote from Bernier Plumbing for an indirect tank option.

Mr. Erickson discussed the overtime request approved at the last Board meeting for Lead Custodian Tony Marsh. The request was precautionary due to predicted weather and staff absences, but the overtime was not realized.

County Attorney Items:

Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, to authorize the purchase of a new computer from Garden Valley Technologies for the County Attorney's office at a cost not to exceed \$1,000. Discussion followed with Mr. Haase stating that forfeiture funds can be used for the purchase. With no further discussion, the motion was carried.

Mr. Haase informed the Board that Ms. Abigail Flaagan began her internship in the County Attorney office on January 5, 2026.

Committee Reports / Commissioner Updates: None.

Motioned by Commissioner Sourdif, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, to adjourn the Board meeting to January 27, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. Motion carried.

ATTEST:

Kevin Erickson, County Coordinator
Pennington County

David Sorenson, Chairman
Board of Commissioners