

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
PENNINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JUSTICE CENTER BOARD ROOM
MAY 12, 2026 – 10:00 A.M.**

Pursuant to adjournment, the Pennington County Board of Commissioners met in the Pennington County Justice Center Board Room in Thief River Falls, MN, on Tuesday, May 12, 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 Chairman Sorenson, 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 Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Recognition of Citizens: None.

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, to approve the County Board minutes of April 28, 2026, as written. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, to approve the Auditor & Manual warrants for April totaling \$1,563,669.82 and the following Commissioner warrants. Motion carried.

County Revenue	\$37,234.75
Road & Bridge	\$26,102.55
Solid Waste Facility	\$ 8,358.80
Ditch Funds	\$ 975.00

Meal reimbursements and per diems in the amount of \$1,314.97 were also approved.

Mike Flaagan – County Engineer

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, to approve a LRIP Grant Agreement between MnDOT and the Pennington County Highway Department for the CSAH #11 project (SAP 057-611-002; CP 57-26-04). Motion carried.

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

**RESOLUTION
Local Road Improvement Plan Grant Agreement
Grant Terms and Conditions**

WHEREAS, Pennington County has applied to the Commissioner of Transportation for a grant from the Local Road Improvement Fund; and

WHEREAS, the Commissioner of Transportation has given notice that funding for this project is available; and

WHEREAS, the amount of the grant has been determined to be \$721,398.10 by reason of the lowest responsible bid; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Pennington County does hereby agree to the terms and conditions of the grant consistent with Minnesota Statutes, section 174.52, and will pay any additional amount by which the cost exceeds the estimate and will return to the Local Road Improvement Fund any amount appropriated for the project but not required. The proper Township officers are authorized to execute a grant agreement and any amendments thereto with the Commissioner of Transportation concerning the above-referenced grant.

Engineer Flaagan noted that bids for the CSAH #11 project were opened on April 27, 2026, and following approval of the LRIP Grant Agreement and related resolution, the bid for the project can now be awarded by the Board. The project estimate was \$3,842,191.93 and the three bids received were as follows: Davidson Construction - \$3,619,100.35, Spruce Valley Construction - \$3,914,163.98, R.J. Zavoral & Sons, Inc. - \$3,971,417.66. Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, to award the bid for the CSAH #11 project (SAP #057-611-002/CP 57-26-04) to Davidson Construction in the amount of \$3,619,100.35. Motion carried. Mr. Flaagan noted the project is expected to begin June 1, 2026, and the expected completion date is October 15, 2026.

Mr. Flaagan reviewed the following two quotes received for 2026 spraying services:

Carr's Tree Service Inc.	\$141.25/mi (roadside spraying)
Larson Helicopters, LLC	\$275.00/mi. (aerial spraying)

Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, to approve the quotes received and authorize the County Engineer to use either vendor as appropriate. Motion carried. Mr. Flaagan noted a third quote for aerial drone spraying was received and will be discussed at a future meeting if warranted.

Seth Vettleison – County Sheriff

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, to approve the hire of Addison Nichole Severts as Part-Time Corrections Officer, contingent upon successful BCA fingerprint records check. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, to approve the hire of Seth James Garthus as Part-Time Corrections Officer, contingent upon successful BCA fingerprint record check and background check. Motion carried.

County Auditor-Treasurer Items:

Motioned by Commissioner Sourdif, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, to approve a revised, five-year contract with the State of MN – DNR for licensing services provided by the Motor Vehicle Department. Motion carried.

County Coordinator Items:

Mr. Erickson informed the Board that Fynboh Construction plans to begin concrete work on the north and west sides of the Government Center on or around June 15, 2026, weather and schedule permitting. Thief River Glass will also soon begin warranty work on three windows on the 3rd floor of the Government Center that have water leaks.

County Attorney Items: None.

Committee Reports/Commissioner Updates:

Commissioner Lawrence stated that he recently attended the AMC ‘Nuts, Bolts, and Board Rooms’ training in St. Paul. Of note was a session hosted by Ehler’s, Inc. where county five-year capital improvement plans were discussed. The training group also visited the State Capitol.

Commissioner Sorenson discussed a recent meeting with Representative Michelle Fischbach and Senator Amy Klobuchar to discuss the new water inlet pipe proposed for Thief River Falls municipal water. The group also met with MN DNR and Fish & Wildlife Services and traveled to Agassiz Refuge to view local water and discuss future improvements. The group also visited homes near Hartz Park that are threatened by the eroding shoreline.

Carl Bruzek – County Assessor

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, to approve an Application for Abatement for Jeremy & Laura Williams, parcel I.D. R16.03636001 in Rocksbury Township, for taxes payable 2026 to reflect the corrected market value of 8.12 acres of waste/non-productive land. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, to approve an Application for Abatement for Larry & Ruth Coltom, parcel I.D. R16.01315300 in Rocksbury Township, for taxes payable 2026 to reflect the property receiving residential homestead classification. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Sourdif, to approve 2026 maintenance agreements with the townships of Black River, Bray, Deer Park, Kratka, Norden, Numedal, Polk Centre, River Falls, Sanders, and Wyandotte. Motion carried.

10:30 am – Public Hearing

At 10:30 a.m. the Chairman recessed the Board meeting and called the Public Hearing on County Ditch #96 to order.

Present for the Hearing: Commissioners Sourdif, Lawrence, Sorenson, Peterson, and Nelson; Lucas Fornshell, Nathan Haase, Jennifer Herzberg, April Scheinoha – TRF Times, Mike Flaagan, Kevin Erickson, John Kolb (via Zoom), Constituents Gary & Dawn Berard.

John Kolb of Rinke Noonan stated the purpose of the Hearing is to receive comments and concerns regarding the petition of Mr. and Mrs. Berard for their property, parcel I.D. R11.03018200 (40 acres), to be removed from the CD #96 system. He reviewed the agenda and MN Statutes Chapter 103E that governs such process. The County Board does not need to make a decision today and may continue the Hearing to another date.

Mr. Kolb listed the property location, the basis of the petition, and noted that CD #70 is also being assessed for this property. A recent redetermination stated the property does benefit from CD #70 but does not benefit from CD #96.

Ms. Herzberg provided information regarding notice to landowners in the system, and publication of the Hearing date, time, and location both online and in print. Mr. Kolb stated such notices satisfy the Statute requirements.

County Engineer Mike Flaagan presented the petition by the Berard's and also a map from the CD #70 redetermination showing which parcels pay into both CD #96 and CD #70. Mr. Kolb noted that the property's assessment for CD #96 amounts to less than two-tenths of 1% of that system, and the determination of CD #70 showed that the property receives greater benefits from that system. Mr. Kolb noted that in the past ditch viewers determined the property was benefiting from both systems, but the recent redetermination showed they are only benefitting from CD #70. CD #96 was last redetermined back in 1996, but technology is much more advanced and accurate today. Commissioner Nelson questioned benefits in the case of flooding or high water, with Mr. Kolb replying that water can go in many directions in such instances, and that likely wasn't considered in this redetermination.

Hearing no more comments from the Board, the Chair then called for public comments. Mr. Berard stated that for the last four springs there's been concerns about his water going west into CD #96. He has taken pictures at different times and stated that water from this property does not go west to CD #96. Hearing no other public comments, the Chair closed the public comment period.

Mr. Kolb noted the following questions for the Board: 1) does evidence support that water from the petitioner's property has been diverted from the drainage system? 2) can the property significantly or regularly use the drainage system? 3) does evidence support that the property does not benefit from CD #96 and that removal will not prejudice the other landowners paying into the system? Following discussion, Commissioner Nelson motioned, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, to approve the petition by Gary and

Dawn Berard for their property (Parcel ID R11.03018200) to be removed from the County Ditch #96 system and approve the Findings and Order Removing Property from Pennington CD 96 Benefitted Area. Motion carried. Mr. Kolk stated he will process the required paperwork and forward it on to the County for signatures.

At 10:54 a.m. the Chairman closed the Public Hearing on CD #96 and called the Board meeting back to order.

Dawn Berard expressed her gratitude to the County Board for hearing their concerns on the issue and for approving the petition.

Commissioner Nelson commented on the MMUA emergency tabletop exercise held on April 28, 2026, at the Ralph Engelstad Arena. The exercise was regarding a weather emergency that took down the area's electrical power grid and how area cities, counties, power agencies, National Guard, etc. would respond, act, and communicate with the public during such emergency. Emergency Manager Erik Beitel, County Coordinator Kevin Erickson, and Commissioners Nelson and Sourdif were in attendance.

Motioned by Commissioner Sourdif, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, to adjourn the Board meeting to May 26, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. Motion carried.

ATTEST:

Kevin Erickson, County Coordinator
Pennington County

David Sorenson, Chairman
Board of Commissioners