

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS  
PENNINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING  
JANUARY 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025 – 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 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 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 2024 Board Chairman Nelson 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 Sourdif, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, 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 December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024, as written. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to approve following Commissioner warrants. Motion carried.

County Revenue	\$361,538.59
Road & Bridge	\$ 88,027.36
Solid Waste Facility	\$ 9,602.69
Justice Ctr Jail Bond Fund	\$619,603.13
Justice Ctr Cap. Imp.	\$308,650.00
Ditch Funds	\$ 65,495.00

Meal reimbursements and per diems in the amount of \$525.00 were also approved.

The County Board proceeded to organize for the year 2025 with the County Coordinator assisting by calling for nominations for Chairman. Commissioner Lawrence nominated Commissioner Sourdif as Chairman for 2025. Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, that nominations cease and that a unanimous ballot be cast for Commissioner Sourdif as Chairman. Motion unanimously carried.

The County Coordinator then called for nominations for Vice-Chairman. Commissioner Peterson nominated Commissioner Sorenson as Vice-Chairman for 2025. Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, that nominations cease and that a unanimous ballot be cast for Commissioner Sorenson as Vice-Chairman for 2025. Motion unanimously carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, that the County Board express their appreciation to Commissioner Nelson for serving as Chairman in 2024. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, 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. Discussion was held on the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting in November as it lands on Veteran's Day. The Board will change the date of that meeting later in the year. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was carried.

Moved by Commissioner Sorenson, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, that 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 unanimously carried.

Moved by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, 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 unanimously carried.

Commissioner Sorenson 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 2025, published weekly, each Wednesday, in Thief River Falls.

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

Commissioner Nelson introduced the following resolution and moved 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 seconded by Commissioner Peterson and upon vote was unanimously carried.

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. Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to approve the insurance

premium rates for 2025 and authorize the County Auditor-Treasurer to pay as presented. Motion unanimously carried.

The County Board reviewed a list of Committee, Boards, and meetings that would allow for a per diem to be paid. Motioned by Commissioner Sorenson, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, 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 unanimously 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
- 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 by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, 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 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025, and shall be reviewed at the County Board's discretion.

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

Moved by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to reappoint Larissa Fitzgerald and Linda Helgeland to a three-year term on the Pennington County Extension Committee effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025, to December 31, 2027. Motion unanimously carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Sorenson, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, to appoint Scott Petrescue as the County Coroner for a one-year term ending December 31, 2025, as per MN Statutes 3901.005. Following discussion, the motion was carried. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, to approve the following appointments. Motion unanimously 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  
Coordinator Kevin Erickson  
Auditor-Treasurer Jennifer Herzberg

**Human Services Building:**

Commissioner Sorenson  
Commissioner Lawrence  
Coordinator Kevin Erickson

Human Services Director Julie Sjostrand

**LEC/ Justice Center:**

Commissioner Sorenson  
Commissioner Lawrence  
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  
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

- Emergency Management Committee  
Commissioner Nelson  
Commissioner Sourdif
  
- 2025 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

Seth Vettleson = County Sheriff

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, to approve the hire of Dean Klaven as Sentence-to-Serve Crew Leader at wage step 4 of the union contract, with final approval contingent on successful BCA fingerprinting. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to approve the hire of Joseph Bauer as Full-Time Corrections Officer, with final approval contingent on successful BCA fingerprinting. Motion carried.

Tony Mapes – Director of Veteran’s Services

Mr. Mapes introduced himself as the new Director of Veteran's Services. He noted there are three training courses to take as a new VSO and he expects to have them all complete by the end of the month. He has been meeting with veterans since his first day and seeks assistance from the Fargo office and area Veteran Service Officers as needed. He invited the Board members to stop into his office anytime and asked that they direct veterans his way. He noted there is a lot to learn but he like his job and is enjoying meeting and assisting our veterans.

Carl Bruzek – County Assessor

Mr. Bruzek discussed the draft Tax Abatement Policy that was presented to the Board at a prior meeting. He noted some changes have been made by the County Coordinator and that the policy will also need legal review by the County Attorney prior to any Board action. Mr. Haase said he will review the proposed policy and hopes to have it ready for the next County Board meeting.

County Auditor-Treasurer Items:

Motioned by Commissioner Sorenson, seconded by Peterson, to approve and accept the following donations received in 2024. Motion carried.

Sentence-to-Serve (misc. services, wood sales)	\$ 50,766.80
D.A.R.E.	\$ 800.72

The County Board reviewed the individual ditch levies as recommended by the committee. Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, that a levy be made for ditch maintenance purposes and property assessed to various ditches in 2024, payable in 2025, 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	25.0%	JD #11	20.0%
CD #21	60.0%	CD #43	25.0%	CD #62	40.0%	JD #13	10.0%
CD #32	15.0%	CD #44	50.0%	CD #70	2.0%	JD#13 Penn/Red Lake	2.0%
CD #33	25.0%	CD #45	50.0%	CD #71	60.0%	JD #15	20.0%
CD #35	50.0%	CD #46	40.0%	CD #73	50.0%	JD #18	20.0%
CD #36	20.0%	CD #47	25.0%	CD #74	15.0%	JD #25-3	1.0%
CD #37	60.0%	CD #53	25.0%	CD #75	30.0%	JD #30	20.0%
CD #38	30.0%	CD #55	80.0%	CD #77	5.0%	JD #31	3.0%
CD #39	25.0%	CD #57	30.0%	CD #96	8.0%	JD #60	10.0%
CD #41	1.5%	CD #58	20.0%	JD #1	25.0%	JD #30 Br. A	2.0%

Ms. Herzberg noted that the 2024 audit engagement letter has been received. Motioned by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, to acknowledge receipt

of the 2024 county audit engagement letter from Hoffman, Philipp, and Martell PLLC. Motion carried.

Ms. Herzberg reminded the elected officials that campaign finance reports related to the 2024 elections are due by January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025.

County Coordinator Items:

Motioned by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, to approve the reappointment of Commissioner Peterson to the Northwest Minnesota Juvenile Center Board for a four-year term effective January 1, 2025. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to approve issuance of a duplicate warrant to Amber Keefe in the amount of \$38.76 to replace lost warrant 115508 dated August 22, 2024, without issuance of an indemnifying bond. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, to approve a non-union wage increase for Building & Grounds Supervisor Morgan Bernier from Step 4 - \$36.26/hour, to Step 5 - \$37.96/hour, effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025, with it noted that no step increase will occur on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025. Motion carried.

County Attorney Items: None.

Committee Reports / Commissioner Updates:

Commissioner Peterson requested discussion on the former Human Services building, stating that since the department has moved to the Government Center the County needs to make a decision on the future of the building. Commissioner Lawrence noted that the Building Committee has held discussion on the issue and the building is in need of some work, including a new furnace. Following discussion on the county's options to keep, sell, or lease the building, there was a motion by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, that the County Auditor-Treasurer, County Assessor, and the County Attorney research MN Statutes and the procedures to sell the former Human Services building located at 318 Knight Ave. N. Motion carried.

Mike Flaagan – County Engineer

Motioned by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, to accept the resignation of Full-Time Highway Equipment Operator Jonathan Grove effective December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, to authorize the County Engineer to advertise for the position of Full-Time Highway Equipment Operator. Motion carried.

Motioned by Commissioner Lawrence, seconded by Commissioner Sorenson, to approve an increase to Highway Department blading rates from \$120.00/hour with a \$75.00 minimum charge to \$130.00/hour with a \$80.00 minimum charge, effective January 1, 2025. Motion carried. The Engineer stated that the county still blades private driveways at such rates, but county road obligations take priority.

Engineer Flaagan discussed the CSAH #3 rehab project and stated he is submitting the project for a grant. The project will mainly consist of milling and overlay and will cover the portion from running from the intersection of Highway #59 east to the county line. Information on the project is available on the county website. If the grant is approved it would cover a large percentage of project costs and would fund safety enhancements such as lighting at multiple intersections. Project information letters have been sent to affected landowners and to seek their support.

Mr. Flaagan provided an update on the truck orders, noting they are expected to ship on January 9<sup>th</sup> and will move on to Bert's Truck Equipment for installation of required equipment. He doesn't expect the trucks to be ready in time for use this current winter season. Once received the county will have to decide on the future of the current trucks.

Committee Reports/Updates: None.

Motioned by Commissioner Sorenson, seconded by Commissioner Lawrence, to adjourn the Board meeting to January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. Motion carried.

ATTEST:

Kevin Erickson, County Coordinator  
Pennington County

Roy Sourdif, Chairman  
Board of Commissioners