

## **Wells County Commissioner's Meeting Minutes**

### **October 7, 2025**

The October meeting began with the WC public budget hearing 8:00 AM. Present at the meeting were Stan Buxa, Dennis Dockter, Bryan Lautt, Danny Maxwell, Brian Miller, Ivy Brye, Lydia Gessele, Richard Lies, Pam Norstedt, Lorita Shumway, Larry Skiftun, Annette Sprague, Daniel Stutlien, and Neil Nelson of the Herald-Press.

As per NDCC 57-15-02.2. WC Auditor, Daniel Stutlien, reviewed the same budget presented to the Commission back in August highlighting anticipated local expenditures of \$6.09 million, including \$48,514 for Garrison Diversion, \$48,514 for the State Medical Center, as well as \$250,000 for a Capital Projects account designed to match state and federal grants for infrastructure. Of the \$6.09 million budget, \$4,520,466 will come from local property taxes, with the remainder coming from mostly state sources. The taxes paid to WC fund not only the aforementioned interests, but also all county operations including jail and transportation costs, the Extension Agent's office, Emergency Fund, Historical Society, JDA, the County Library, the VSO, the County Health District, Senior Citizen services, the Water Board, the Weed Board, and the Soil Conservation District. Stutlien presented forecasted additional revenues of app. \$2.2 million which also includes dollars earmarked for specific spending purposes including, but not limited to, anticipated prairie dog funds, projected flexible transportation infrastructure grant funds, state matching dollars for seniors, HSZ indirect cost payments, etc. All told, WC's budget will balance for '26, notwithstanding a decline in various forms of state aid.

Public comment and questions were entertained on the 2026 WC Budget.

Richard Lies questioned where the money comes from for the township lawsuit that has been appealed to the ND Supreme Court. As this is not specifically a WC matter, a response came from WC Water Board Chair, Larry Skiftun, who stated, "Oak Creek Drain taxpayers."

Ivy Brye asked why WC miscellaneous expenses are not a line item for each particular department or office within the budget. WC Auditor, Daniel Stutlien, responded that the county follows a model from the State of ND. Stutlien has long wondered the same thing and will ask the question of the state organization while at state convention in late October.

With no further questions, the budget hearing closed at 8:36 AM.

Following the budget hearing, Chairman Dockter called the regular meeting to order at 8:36 AM. Present at the meeting were Stan Buxa, Dennis Dockter, Bryan Lautt, Danny Maxwell, Brian Miller, Ivy Brye, Lydia Gessele, Richard Lies, Wells McGiffert, Alex Molander, Pam Norstedt, Lorita Shumway, Larry Skiftun, Annette Sprague, Daniel Stutlien, and Neil Nelson of the Herald-Press.

Additions to the agenda included Wells County Health District, Garrison Diversion, and enhanced revenue sources.

SB (M), DM (S) to approve the minutes from the September Meeting. Unanimously carried.

BL (M), DM (S) to approve the minutes from the September Special Meeting held 9/25/25. Unanimously carried.

Employee timesheets were reviewed by the commissioners.

BM (M), DM (S) to approve the bills as presented. Unanimously carried.

The current WC Balance Sheet was reviewed and discussed. Also, the Auditor shared current county investments as well as Commission controlled WC funds. DM (M), BM (S) to approve the Balance Sheet. Unanimously carried.

SB (M), BM (S) to approve Laura Muscha, Treasurer, and Daniel Stutlien, Auditor, to purchase or cash out CD's and investments on behalf of WC. Unanimously carried.

Pledged Securities for all WC bank accounts were reviewed by the Commission. It was the consensus of the Commission the securities were adequate to cover the county's current deposits.

Correspondence regarding the annual Court Facilities Improvement Grant was shared, as well as the approved Garrison Diversion budget for 2026. In addition, a letter of congratulations was received from ND HHS for WC's creation of an "Infant Friendly" workplace. Also, a letter from the US Dept. of the Interior was received requesting the Commission's respond favorably to becoming a cooperating agency with BLM in preparation of an environmental impact statement for revision to the current ND Resource Management Plan. SB (M), BM (S) to approve WC being a cooperating agency for this purpose. Unanimously carried. Lastly, a letter from the ND Water Users Assn. was received informing of the upcoming 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Joint ND Water Convention to be held Dec. 9-11 in Bismarck.

Commission Portfolios were discussed.

Under the new Public Comments portion of the meeting, Lorita Shumway wished to address the Commission on the Recorder's position. Shumway spoke to the Commission regarding an e-mailed letter recently sent to each member. Shumway expressed her desire to keep the Recorders position elected. Shumway also questioned dual committee position of various individuals, specifically planning and zoning. Shumway was thanked for addressing the Commission.

WC Sheriff, Chris Kluth, addressed the Commission. Kluth shared the hiring of a new full-time deputy transitioning the department to fully staffed. Kluth also shared his Calls for Service Report. The new dept. vehicle purchased a year ago has been outfitted and is now in use, and the graphics on all of the dept. vehicles are being updated. The motorcycle (*evidence*) in impoundment since 2020 will be moved to another secure location.

WC States Attorney, Oliver Bromke, spoke to the Commission regarding matters of his office. Bromke spoke broadly about case work and suggested his log for this year is ahead of last year's pace. Bromke took questions from the Commission including his balancing of his work with McHenry Co.

Jason Mayfield of Wold Engineering sat with the Commission to share insight on bridge removal north and east of Fessenden. The road realignment project and bridge project have been submitted for Flex Funding. The county's responsibility is for PE costs if approved. Mayfield also shared an anticipated cost of \$3.726 million for the mill and overlay Old 52 which has been submitted for consideration of Flex Funding. Another WC project for a mill and overlay on WC #1 has also been submitted for consideration of Flex Funding.

WC Road Foreman, Brent Keller, met with the Commission to discuss matters of his Dept. Keller discussed the completion of in-slope work on the Hamberg Slough project area and the near completion of the chip sealing project in the Bremen area. Keller also discussed some dept. equipment and personnel, including part-time employees for upcoming winter work. Keller also

mentioned bridge inspectors have been in the area and WC will be awaiting reports. Lastly, Keller mentioned the old horse barn at the Fairgrounds is having the stalls removed by the Historical Society. Next step is to create a plan to raze the building.

WC patron Lydia Gessele addressed the Commission on the subject of property taxes. Prior to Gessele addressing the Commission, Chairman Dockter suggested while welcoming Gessele to share comments, mutual respect should be exhibited by Gessele. Gessele went on to speak at length of the obfuscation of property taxes over the past century.

BM (*M*), DM (*S*) to establish the minimum sales prices for properties scheduled to be sold at auction in November at the level of taxes due. Unanimously carried. There are currently 13 parcels that have delinquent taxes for 2022, 2023, and 2024 requiring WC foreclosure. Of the 13 parcels, 10 are vacant lots. The Foreclosure tax sale is scheduled for Tuesday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00 AM in the WC Auditor's Office.

WC received an estimate bid to replace the roof on the KTL Building in the summer of '26 from Teves Construction in the amount of \$97,500. It was the consensus of the Commission to seek more details from the contractor.

A Telecommuting request from Daniel Stutlien, WC Auditor, for portions of November and December was presented for consideration by the Commission. SB (*M*), DM (*S*) to approve the agreement. Unanimously carried.

WC District Health has apprised WC of their funding crisis due to the end of their federal grants. The concern, without being directly addressed, is one that will threaten not only the long-term viability of the agency, but also the short-term viability as the agency's resources may be exhausted by the end of the calendar year. District Health will be in attendance at the November meeting to address the Commission on this matter.

The Commission resumed discussions on the 2026 WC budget. SB (*M*), DM (*S*) to approve the budget as presented. On a roll call vote: SB-yea, DD-yea, BL-yea, DM-yea, BM-yea. Unanimously approved.

WC Auditor Daniel Stutlien discussed intentions to lead the Commission through a long-term planning process to clarify the fiscal direction of WC. With declining population, aging infrastructure, and levy caps now in place, it is going to become imperative for WC to have a plan to deal with the fiscal challenges that undoubtedly will arise going forward. The plan is to get this underway this fall and completed by spring.

WC Policy 307 ~ Sick Leave Benefits was shared with the Commission with a request to alter the policy clarifying direct family members and removing a section within the policy that has no useful purpose. DM (*M*), BM (*S*) to approve the policy with the language changes as presented. Unanimously carried.

Last month, the Commission held a public hearing on making the WC Recorder an appointed position. After being in the discussion phase for years, and direct scrutiny for the last month following the hearing, BL (*M*), SB (*S*) to approve the WC Recorder as an appointed position following the conclusion of the current Recorder's term which expires 12/31/26. Following discussion, on a roll call vote: SB-yea, DD-yea, BL-yea, DM-yea, BM-yea. Unanimously approved.

The Commission was asked to consider a MOU between WC and the ND SOS's office regarding Election equipment and best practices for the storage, administration, and use of that equipment. DM (M), BM (S) to approve the MOU as drafted. Unanimously carried.

The WC Commission was asked to nominate a member as a delegate to the ND State Fair. SB (M), DM (S) to appoint Bryan Lutt to serve as the delegate. Unanimously carried.

The Commission has come to understand the potential value of Garrison Diversion (NR Canal) being accepted by WC. There was discussion and the Commission requested an invite be sent to authorities to establish the details of any potential transaction.

WC Auditor, Daniel Stutlien, informed the Commission the FH window project is completed, but we are still awaiting the replacement of the front doors. Also, Stutlien apprised the Commission of Open Enrollment for benefits which will be held in November. There is a strong possibility of changing employee vision insurance, which is not currently a county subsidized benefit.

The next WC Departments meeting will be held Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, at 2:30 PM in the KTL.

The NDACo State Convention will be held Oct. 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> in Bismarck. Wells County is scheduled to meet with NDDOT Monday, October 27<sup>th</sup>, at 2:30 PM.

The next regular meeting of the WC Commission will be held Tuesday, November 4<sup>th</sup>, at 8:00 AM in the KTL Building.

The next Six-County Meeting will be held in December in Emmons Co.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:07 AM.

The following Fees and Receipts were approved and ordered filed:

Clerk of Court	\$	260.00
Recorder	\$	8,992.70
Sheriff	\$	1,047.50
Misc.	\$	24,642.00

On motion, the following bills were ordered paid: (*Gross wages, when listed*)

#Direct Deposit	Payroll, General (1000)	\$	99,604.68
#Direct Deposit	Payroll, Road (2001)	\$	49,913.04
#Direct Deposit	Payroll, 911 (2003)	\$	1,308.55
#Direct Deposit	Payroll, County Agent (2005)	\$	3,194.47
#Direct Deposit	Payroll, Social Welfare (2007)	\$	68,645.15
#ACH BC/BS	Insurance	\$	60,126.77
#ACH NDPERS	Retirement	\$	33,851.00

## Oct.

### 2025

#### General

Wells County Treasurer	\$147.66	Central Supplies
ODP Business Solutions, LLC	\$1,696.60	Central Supplies
Wells County Treasurer	\$433.09	Telephone
NDTC	\$659.84	Telephone
Otter Tail	\$1,172.44	Countywide Utilities
Fessenden City	\$418.50	Countywide Utilities

Wells County Treasurer	\$25.00	Bank Charges
Tracys Market	\$39.27	Janitor Supplies
Farmers Union Oil-Fessenden	\$85.87	Courthouse & KTL Maintenance
Elite Spraying	\$190.00	Courthouse & KTL Maintenance
Dakota Dust-Tex	\$461.76	Courthouse & KTL Maintenance
Transcript Publishing	\$63.00	Legal Publications
Herald Press	\$308.04	Legal Publications
Foster County Independent	\$63.00	Legal Publications
ND State Radio	\$120.00	Sheriff Teletype
NACO	\$450.00	Co. Dues
Tao Interactive, Inc.	\$599.95	Technology-Website
NDACo Resources Group	\$5,735.70	Technology
NDTC	\$100.76	Technology
Tyler Technologies	\$13,697.58	Tech. Support
Software Innovations	\$750.00	Technology-Core Logic
Advanced Business Methods	\$2,905.37	Technology
ITD	\$1,496.60	Technology
Dell Marketing LP	\$638.84	Technology
Wells County Treasurer	\$20.00	Countywide Misc.-Title Changes
Wells County Health District	\$2,504.80	Opioid money-3rd Qtr.
Carrie Krause	\$109.43	Countywide Misc.
Western Products Inc.	\$50,547.50	FH & Fairground Maint.
Danny Maxwell	\$42.00	Travel/Mileage
Brian Miller	\$146.30	Travel/Mileage
Stan Buxa	\$206.50	Travel/Mileage
Dennis Dockter	\$196.00	Travel/Mileage
Bryan Lautt	\$275.80	Travel/Mileage
NDSAA	\$400.00	Dues/Registration Fees
ND State Treasurer	\$35.00	Marriage Licenses
Carrie Krause	\$212.80	Travel/Mileage
Wells County Treasurer	\$530.65	Ink supplies/Maint. Contract
Wells County Treasurer	\$958.60	Travel/Mileage/Veh.Maint.
Kotaco Fuel & Propane	\$49.02	Travel/Mileage/Veh.Maint.
Faye Schimelfenig	\$50.00	Travel/Mileage/Veh.Maint.
Opdahl Body Shop	\$522.50	Travel/Mileage/Veh.Maint.
Farmers Union Oil-Fessenden	\$1,510.04	Travel/Mileage/Veh.Maint.
Axon Enterprise Inc.	\$5,003.70	Cameras
Lautt's Auto Body & Towing	\$6,310.00	Storage
Wells County Treasurer	\$142.43	Sheriff Candy
Central Dakota Family Physicians	\$141.00	Physicals
Wells County Treasurer	\$1,068.81	Grant Match
Wells County Treasurer	\$114.17	Telephone
NDTC	\$58.88	Telephone
Tammy Roehrich	\$98.00	Travel/Mileage
Otter Tail	\$50.26	Utilities

Wells County Treasurer	\$136.00	Travel/Mileage
Otter Tail	\$649.84	Festival Hall/Fair Utilities
Fessenden City	\$319.59	Festival Hall/Fair Utilities
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	\$104,668.49	

### **HB 1066**

Knife River Materials	\$663,538.64	HB 1066-Road Repair
Wold Engineering	\$151,592.32	HB 1066
Susag Sand & Gravel	\$2,202.55	HB 1066
KLJ Engineering, LLC	\$19,871.17	HB 1066
Gowan Construction	\$7,634.55	HB 1066
Flint Hills Resources	\$107,123.79	HB 1066
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	\$951,963.02	

### **911**

ND State Radio	\$21,584.75	
OnSolve, LLC	\$5,113.44	Code Red System-Reverse 911
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	\$26,698.19	

### **Jail & Tansp**

HACTC	\$269.13	Jail & Transport Medication
Rolette County Sheriff's Dept.	\$170.00	Jail & Transport Prison Board
HACTC	\$9,975.00	Jail & Transport Prison Board
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	\$10,414.13	

### **Co. Agent**

Leaf	\$281.50	Copier Lease & Maint.
Herald Press	\$49.00	Office Supplies
NDTC	\$121.74	Telephone
Ciera Kotaska	\$561.70	Travel/Mileage
Otter Tail	\$47.87	Utilities
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	\$1,061.81	

### **Social Services**

Wells County Treasurer	\$8.00	Client Support
Wells County Treasurer	\$105.92	Fuel/Foster Care
Farmers Union Oil-Fessenden	\$35.54	Fuel/Foster Care
Farmers Union Oil-Fessenden	\$103.31	Vehicles
Wells County Treasurer	\$274.99	Office Materials
Wells County Treasurer	\$132.75	Fuel/Child Protect. Serv.
Farmers Union Oil-Fessenden	\$29.70	Fuel/Child Protect. Serv.
CenDak Cooperative-New Rockford	\$23.01	Fuel/Child Protect. Serv.
Farmers Union Oil-Fessenden	\$74.49	Vehicles
Wells County Treasurer	\$37.43	Meals/Child Protect. Serv.
Lango LLC	\$4.04	Contracted Services
Wells County Treasurer	\$37.05	Family Social Worker/Fuel
Farmers Union Oil-Fessenden	\$81.81	Family Social Worker/Fuel
Opdahl Body Shop	\$90.00	Vehicles
Wells County Treasurer	\$11.70	Meals/Foster Care

Patriot Fuels	\$195.56	In Home Care/Fuel
Little Mart	\$78.35	In Home Care/Fuel
Farmers Union Oil-Fessenden	\$232.22	In Home Care/Fuel
Patriot Fuels	\$26.27	Vehicles
Bessette Motors, Inc.	\$78.43	Vehicles
Wells County Treasurer	\$100.00	Contracted Services
Pitney Bowes Global Financial Services L	\$81.90	Contracted Services
Leaf	\$122.00	Contracted Services
4th Corporation	\$140.00	Contracted Services
Advanced Business Methods	\$447.39	Contracted Services
Patriot Fuels	\$116.33	Fuel
Farmers Union Oil-Fessenden	\$27.00	Fuel
Wells County Treasurer	\$434.61	Telephone
NDTC	\$569.71	Telephone
Dakota Central	\$170.69	Telephone
NDACo Resources Group	\$2,385.72	Technology
Central City H20+	\$180.00	Zone Admin Support/Misc
Nelson Funeral Home	\$3,500.00	BA Burial Account
NDACo Resources Group	\$1,140.00	Zone Admin Support/IT Other
ITD	\$112.28	Zone Admin Support/IT Other
Wells County Treasurer	\$817.70	Zone Admin Supp./Office Materials
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	\$12,005.90	

### **Weed Control**

Kyle Alfstad	\$243.25	Salary - Board Meeting
Danny Maxwell	\$161.90	Salary - Board Meeting
Kelly Muscha	\$216.11	Salary - Board Meeting
Dale Schmitz	\$415.18	Salary - Board Meeting
Donna Rau	\$220.87	Salary - Employee
		Noxious Weed/Leafy Spurge/Cost
Valhalla Township	\$500.00	Shar
		Noxious Weed/Leafy Spurge/Cost
West Ontario Township	\$500.00	Shar
US Treasury	\$275.20	WC/Withholding
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	\$2,532.51	

### **Hwy Tax**

Harvey Oil Co.	\$5,067.87	Fuel
Farmers Union Oil-Fessenden	\$15,493.38	Fuel
Lautt's Auto Body & Towing	\$8,000.00	Highway Machinery
Wells County Treasurer	\$320.53	Machinery Repairs & Supplies
Swanston Equipment	\$3,138.96	Machinery Repairs & Supplies
Patzer Truck Repair	\$266.35	Machinery Repairs & Supplies
County Line Truck Repair, LLC	\$2,905.78	Machinery Repairs & Supplies
High Plains Equipment	\$46.35	Machinery Repairs & Supplies
Butler Machinery	\$5,980.29	Machinery Repairs & Supplies

Gooseneck Implement	\$54.59	Machinery Repairs & Supplies
Mid-Dakota Lumber	\$22.99	Supplies
Auto Value Carrington	\$265.67	Supplies
NAPA-Harvey	\$56.76	Supplies
Linde Gas & Equipment	\$149.74	Supplies
NDTC	\$145.18	Telephone
Doug Mertz	\$84.00	Travel/Mileage
Double M Sanitation	\$175.00	Utilities
Verendrye Electric	\$111.47	Utilities
Harvey City	\$64.20	Utilities
Wells County Treasurer	\$96.47	Utilities
Northern Plains Electric	\$208.25	Utilities
Otter Tail	\$321.93	Utilities
Fessenden City	\$155.96	Utilities
Sykeston City	\$98.00	Utilities
Cathay City	\$95.00	Utilities
Central Plains Water	\$285.51	Utilities
Foster County Medical Center	\$125.00	Physicals
Central Dakota Family Physicians	\$140.00	Physicals
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	\$43,875.23	

**24-7**

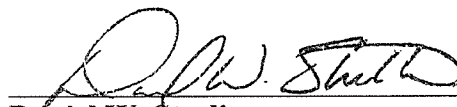
Wells County Treasurer	\$127.80	Sweat Patch Analysis
Redwood Toxicology Laboratory	\$46.04	Screenings
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	\$173.84	

\$1,153,393.12

**Attest:**



**Dennis T. Dockter,**  
Wells County Commission Vice Chairman



**Daniel W. Stutlien,**  
Wells County Auditor