Minutes of the Region 26 Council Board Meeting

May 26, 2026

Present:

Blaine County: Matt Eggert (Late arrival)
City of Ord: Branden Stoural (Late arrival)
Garfield County: Diana Hurlburt
Greeley County: Jordan Foltz
Loup County: Dave Larson
Range Municipalities: Paige Ryschon
Sherman County: Tom Bandur
Thomas County: Joseph Smith
Valley County: Theresa Petska
Wheeler County: Doug Pokorny
Law Enforcement: Joel Bergman
Tri-County Municipalities: Jay Meyer, Chairman

Absent:

Staff Present: Catie Larsen, Executive Director; Alma Beland; Emergency Manager, Virginia Michalski, Office Manager Miki Gerten, Head Dispatcher, Donna Steckel, Dispatcher, Meggan Meyer; Dispatcher

The meeting was called to order at 6:59 p.m. by Chairman Jay Meyer.

Notice of the meeting and agenda were sent to all county clerks of each member county/municipality for posting and given in advance to all members of the Board. A quorum was present, and the Chairman declared the meeting to be a legal meeting of the Region 26 Council in accordance with the Open Meeting Act, which was posted and available for public review.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was amended for Items 12, 14, and 19. Motion to approve the amended agenda by Joseph Smith, seconded by Theresa Petska. Vote carried by roll call vote. Ayes (10), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Diana Hurlburt, seconded by Doug Pokorny, to approve the April 28, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried by roll call vote. Ayes (8), Nays (0), Abstain (2).

Public Comment

No public comments were received.

Approval of April 2026 Financial Statement

Staff reported that ACH payments have been established with both power companies. Loup Valleys Power ACH payments are effective immediately. Custer Public Power will transition to ACH beginning next month following one final check payment.

Motion by Dave Larson, seconded by Jordan Foltz, to approve the April 2026 Financial Statement. Motion carried by roll call vote. Ayes (10), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Approval of May 2026 Claims

Additional claims received after publication of the agenda were reviewed.

Motion by Joseph Smith, seconded by Jordan Foltz, to approve and pay the May 2026 claims. Motion carried by roll call vote. Ayes (12), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Towers and Equipment

The Greeley Tower beacon light was reported out of service. Platte Valley Communications has been contacted and is expected to inspect the tower and provide a report.

The purchase agreement and bill of sale for the Custer County Tower have been sent for signatures and staff anticipates completion by June 30, 2026.

An aging repeater located at the Ord Tower was replaced. The removed repeater remains functional and will be retained on-site as a backup unit.

Garage Update

Electrical service has been disconnected; the building permit has been approved. Dave Larson said he would be shutting the water off this week.

The air conditioning unit will be removed and stored at the Loup County shop for possible future sale. Demolition logistics continue to be coordinated board members.

Following demolition, measurements will be taken of the existing concrete pad to determine compatibility with the proposed replacement structure.

Wheeler County – Rescinded Termination

The Council acknowledged Wheeler County's rescission of its prior termination notice regarding participation in the Region 26 Interlocal Agreement.

July 2026 Interlocal Renewal

Staff reported that all renewal agreements have been received except for two remaining jurisdictions. One signed agreement has not yet been returned, Blaine County is expected to act following its May 27, 2026 meeting, and outreach to Valley County continues.

2026-2027 Budget Review

The Council reviewed the proposed budget and discussed utilizing prior-year budget figures for the upcoming fiscal year. This approach is expected to result in savings of approximately $40,000 to $46,000.

Members supported directing any savings into a reserve fund for business continuity and future operational needs.

The Council discussed insurance valuations, including replacement cost coverage versus appraised values for tower assets.

Contents coverage was reviewed, and the Council supported increasing coverage to $900,000 to ensure dispatch consoles, CAD systems, and communications equipment are adequately protected.

Alternative funding methodologies were reviewed, including population-based assessments, fixed-cost sharing, and valuation-based assessments. Concerns were expressed regarding the fairness of the current usage-based formula and potential officer safety implications. No action was taken.

Motion by Dave Larson, seconded by Tom Bandur, to approve the 2026-2027 budget as the same amount as last year's budget and assessment rates. Motion carried by roll call vote. Ayes (12), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Monthly vs. Quarterly Assessment Billing

The Council discussed transitioning from quarterly assessments to monthly billing. Following discussion, the Council elected to continue quarterly assessments. Staff was directed to develop a staggered payment schedule among member counties to improve cash flow management.

Criminal Justice Board Report

No report was presented.

Dispatch Schedule

Staff presented a revised fixed dispatch schedule to begin in July 2026. The schedule will be evaluated after three months.

Discussion included training opportunities, activity levels on the night shift, and the need to ensure all employees receive equal exposure to training and operational experiences.

Communications Center Report

Miki Gerten reported they started off the month with a Law Enforcement meeting. Some discussion held about a new CAD system, other than that we agreed to meet in the morning instead of afternoon.

We had the Active Shooter Training on the 15th with the Parkland shooter. Very interesting and educational, would like to work with school communities to get floor plans for each school in the Region, so we can be somewhat prepared in the event something as unfortunate occurs in our area.

We have had four ride a-longs completed, five more to do. Scheduling them is somewhat of an issue but we are getting it figured out.

Catie, Virginia and Miki have a couple trips planned to check the physical, day to day operations of either CentralSquare, ProSuite or MindShare/Avtec Radio Consoles. We have scheduled stops in Kearney, Hastings, Clay Center, Columbus and Howard/Nance County Dispatch Centers. We hope to get first-hand knowledge of what they like and dislike about the systems.

Miki and Catie are working on setting up and completing evaluations that are scheduled for mid-June.

Miki will be attending a Supervisor Training course in Lincoln for three days mid-June. She is very much looking forward to it and hope to gain some knowledge that helps with team building and growth.

Also attending training will be Tamika and Jaimie – another 3-day event to 'qualify' them on the NCIC teletype system. They will attend these classes at the Law Enforcement Center in Grand Island.

Because of the NCIC training we are not going to implement the introductory 'set' schedule until the second week of July, we do however want to give it a couple months to see how people like it. Miki does feel like they are going to have to do some rotations monthly or quarterly, so everyone has the opportunity to work with others.

Along with the set schedule we do have one individual who will go down to two shifts Miki has had two different dispatchers ask about the insurance stipend being split differently, to reflect two out of three days worked receiving 2/3rds of the stipend. Miki's understanding is that it is up to the board's discretion. Unsure why the stipend is cut in half when the dispatcher is still working 2/3rds of their weekly shifts.

Director's Report

Catie Larsen provided updates on regional planning, grants, training, and administrative activities.

Catie reported that the 2025 Department of Homeland Security Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) is anticipated to operate on a three-year performance period rather than the previous one-year cycle. At this time, no information has been provided regarding when funding will become available.

Efforts continue to fully expend all remaining 2023 and 2024 PET funding. During the May 28, 2026 PET Region meeting, members will review available funding balances and determine what funds may need to be returned to the State of Nebraska based on current guidance.

Catie is also working with the PET Region to complete required grant inventory documentation and reporting requirements.

The Active Shooter Training conducted by Florida-based instructors was held on May 15, 2026, at the Taylor Event Center. A total of 56 participants attended the training.

The Mobile Precision Engagement Platforms Course was also completed with 12 participants in attendance.

The 203 Fire After Action Report has been completed.

Staff met with Corey and other stakeholders to discuss proposed projects and equipment purchases utilizing the grant funding. During the meeting, an AVTEC dispatch console was demonstrated and reviewed.

Corey also confirmed that representatives will be evaluating the Mindshare dispatch console platform to provide an additional comparison option before a final recommendation is made. Additional information regarding the grant and proposed purchases has since been received and distributed through email correspondence.

The Region 26 SAM.gov account has been updated and is prepared for use once the grant application process becomes available.

Employee evaluations have been scheduled and are expected to be completed prior to July 1, 2026.

Catie was invited to participate as a panel speaker for the University of Nebraska Medical Center Preparedness Team Symposium. The presentations are scheduled for May 28, 2026, in La Vista and June 3, 2026, in Kearney.

Executive Session - Personnel

Miki Gerten asked to go into executive session for personnel matters.

A motion regarding personnel matters was made by Dave Larson and seconded by Doug Pokorny. Vote carried by roll call vote. Ayes (12), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Motion by Dave Larson, seconded by Joel Bergman, to exit executive session and return to open session at 10:19 with no action made. Vote: Ayes (12), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Next Meeting Date

The next regular meeting of the Region 26 Council will be held June 30, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Meyer.

Respectfully submitted,

Catie Larsen, Executive Director

Approved by the Region 26 Council:

Chairman _____ Date _____