Minutes of the Region 26 Council Board Meeting

June 30, 2026

Present:

City of Ord: Branden Stoural (Late arrival)
Garfield County: Diana Hurlburt
Greeley County: Jordan Foltz
Loup County: Dave Larson
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:

Blaine County: Matt Eggert
Range Municipalities: Paige Ryschon

Staff Present: Catie Larsen, Executive Director, Virginia Michalski, Office Manager Miki Gerten, Head Dispatcher, Donna Steckel, Dispatcher

Other Present: Corey Troyer with Platte Valley Communications

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 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 Chair noted the agenda had been amended. Amendments included the Ansley Tower item and Budget Population Correction item. Motion and second were made to approve the amended agenda. Motion by Tom Bandur, seconded by Joseph Smith, to approve the May 26, 2026 agenda as presented. Motion carried by roll call vote. Ayes (10), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Approval of May 26, 2026 Minutes

Diana identified a correction under the Garage Update section clarifying that the matter was being continued by the board. Motion and second were made to approve the corrected minutes. Motion by Joel Bergman, seconded by Dave Larson, to approve the May 26, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried by roll call vote. Ayes (10), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Public Comment
No public comment was received.

Approval of May 2026 Financial Statement
The board reviewed the May 2026 financial statement. Discussion included preparation of a final fiscal year-end report as of June 30, 2026. Virginia was directed to prepare a final financial statement and budget summary after all figures are finalized to identify any remaining funds available for transfer. Motion by Branden Stoural, seconded by Jordan Foltz, to approve the May 2026 Financial Statement. Motion carried by roll call vote. Ayes (10), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Approval of June 2026 Claims
A revised claims listing was distributed with updates. Changes involved the Nebraska State Patrol, mock license expense, and tower mileage entries. Motion by Dave Larson, seconded by Doug Pokorny, to approve and pay the June 2026 claims. Motion carried by roll call vote. Ayes (10), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Deb Fischer Grant / Mindshare vs. AVTEC
Corey Troyer of Platte Valley Communications attended the meeting and Catie and Corey reviewed the Deb Fischer Grant process. The SAM.gov and Grants.gov portions were complete and the remaining requirement was an itemized grant budget.

The board compared MindShare and Avtec dispatch console systems. MindShare was presented as a Nebraska-based system manufactured in Lincoln, Nebraska, with fewer licensing requirements, simplified architecture, built-in recording capabilities, and positive references from other Nebraska agencies.

MindShare Proposal:
- Seven console positions with associated accessories.
- Approximate project cost: $244,398.
- Five years of support included.

Avtec Proposal:
- Approximate cost: $247,000.
- Discussion occurred regarding proprietary licensing and future costs.

The board reviewed a proposed repeater replacement project estimated at approximately $137,000, including antennas and selected infrastructure upgrades. The grant budget would include both the console project and repeater project if eligible.

Motion by Joseph Smith, seconded by Dave Larson, to proceed with MindShare. Motion carried by roll call vote. Ayes (10), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Towers and Equipment
Catie reported the Greeley tower light issue had been corrected. Investigation determined a relay box was overheating and causing repeated failures. Modifications were completed and

the repair continues to be monitored. Catie also reported that revisions requested on the purchase agreement for the Ansley Tower had been completed and returned. The agreement has been forwarded to Broken Bow Emergency Manger and Clerk for legal review and remains pending signature by the clerk. The board discussed equipment located at Sargent Tower that remains owned and insured by Region 26 although responsibility belongs to Custer County. Consensus was reached to remove the equipment from Region 26 insurance coverage and notify Custer County to assume responsibility.

Garage Update
The board discussed demolition of the old Region 26 structure. Dave Larson agreed to determine whether insurance coverage may apply. If coverage is unavailable, demolition will be completed locally. Custer Public Power will need to disconnect lines serving the adjacent streetlight before demolition begins.

NRIN/Fiber Redundant Communication Bill
Extensive discussion occurred regarding the declining reliability and future of NRIN connectivity. The board reviewed alternatives including ALLO Fiber, FirstNet, Hamilton Fiber opportunities, and backup connections through Broken Bow.

ALLO proposals included:
- Three-year agreement at approximately $800 annually per center.
- Five-year agreement at approximately $550 annually per center.

The board expressed support for pursuing the regional fiber solution and favored the five-year option due to long-term savings but was fine with what the East Central group voted on moving forward with.

Budget – Population Correction
Catie Larsen informed the board that the population figured used in the budget were incorrect. Corrected allocations were reviewed. Blaine County had already remitted payment and discussion centered on issuing a credit rather than voiding and reissuing payments. The board approved use of the revised population figures and directed corrected invoices be issued. Motion by Tom Bandur, seconded by Jordan Foltz, to use the new population calculation and reissue invoices to clerks. Motion carried by roll call vote. Ayes (10), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

LB596 Open Meetings Act
The board reviewed requirements contained in LB596, including quarterly posting requirements, website notice provisions, and other Open Meetings Act updates. Virginia and Catie will work on posting the Agenda on the Region 26 website moving forward.

Employee Raises
The board reviewed budget and cost-of-living considerations. Following discussion, the board approved a 3% wage increase effective July 1, 2026. Motion by Jay Meyer, seconded by Doug Pokorny, to approve 3% raise for staff starting July 1, 2026. Motion carried by roll call vote. Ayes (10), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Executive Director Salary /Evaluation
The board discussed transitioning Catie from hourly to salaried status consistent with the Executive Director position previously held by Alma. The Personnel Committee will conduct

the Executive Director evaluation process and provide recommendations to the full board. Salary adjustments stemming from the evaluation will be retroactive to July 1, 2026.

Stipend Discussion
The board reviewed a request regarding prorating stipends for part-time employees. Consensus was reached to leave the handbook unchanged.

Night Shift Differential
The board discussed recruitment and retention considerations, workload differences, and practices used by neighboring communication centers. Rather than implement a permanent differential, the board discussed a six-month merit-based incentive trial to be reviewed at the end of 2026.

NRIN Board Nomination
Catie was nominated to complete Alma's unexpired NRIN Board term. Motion by Joseph Smith seconded by Dave Larson, to have Catie finish Alama's term on the NRIN Board. Motion carried by roll call vote. Ayes (10), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Criminal Justice Report
No report was presented because the board had not met.

Communications Center Report
Miki presented the Communications Center Report. Early in the month, she joined Virginia and Catie on site visits to agencies currently utilizing the CentralSquare CAD system and the MindShare Radio Console. The visit to CentralSquare in Columbus provided valuable information, with several questions answered and additional questions identified. Based on those discussions, it was determined that visiting another agency would be beneficial to gain further insight into their experience with the system.

The visit to Howard County to review the AVTEC Radio Console was well received. Later in the month, staff participated in a video conference with the owner of MindShare to discuss the system's capabilities and potential applications for the Communications Center. The group was very impressed with the system and its possibilities.

Miki was unable to attend the Supervisor Training in Lincoln; however, due to the circumstances, the registration fee was refunded.

During the month, the Communications Center experienced the loss of two dispatchers, Darien and Jake. Two promising applications were received, and interviews were scheduled with those candidates.

NCIC training was postponed for Tamika and Jaimie. Caden is scheduled to complete virtual CTO training in July, and efforts are underway to enroll Taylor in a virtual CTO training class in August. Caden has been moved to a Superior position.

Director Report
Catie presented the Director's Report.

North Central PET Region

- The 2025 Department of Homeland Security/EMPG Grant work plan was received.
- PET funding continues to be utilized, and efforts are underway to fully expend available funds.
- An NRIN Change Request was submitted to provide funding for Starlink, First NET or fiber connectivity to support redundant communications.
- The required inventory was submitted to NEMA.
- All required progress reports were submitted.
- Training requests for ICS 300, ICS 400, G191: ICS/EOC Interface, and the IAEM-USA Region 7 Symposium were approved for Emergency Managers using grant funds to attend.

CodeRED

- The CodeRED system has been reformatted and is expected to function more effectively. Please let Catie know if you are receiving counties, you should not be. Virgina and Catie continue to monitor CodeRED to make sure things are working properly.

Senator Deb Fischer Grant

- The SAM.gov account has been updated.
- The first step of the grant process has been completed, with the second step due July 23, 2026.

JDS System

- The JDS requires our server to be updated before moving forward with the project.
- Discussion was held regarding pursuing funding through the Deb Fischer Grant to assist with the necessary upgrades or completing the updates sooner to allow progress on the JDS project.

Interlocal Agreement

- All Interlocal Agreements have been signed and received.

LEOP Updates

- Garfield and Loup Counties' LEOPs are due to NEMA by the July 1 deadline.
- Work is continuing on the Valley County LEOP. Catie is waiting for a response from some of the villages with their updates.

Personnel and Operations

- Employee evaluations were completed.
- Two applicants were identified for interviews.
- Alma assisted local fire departments with truck reimbursement applications totaling more than $80,000 in reimbursement funding. Catie will continue to monitor this and check with Fire Department to ensure they received the reimbursement.
- Jake's employment was terminated, and unemployment documentation was submitted.
- Caden was promoted to the Supervisor position. Miki, Caden, and Catie will be meeting to review supervisory responsibilities, followed by a staff meeting to discuss operational and personnel changes with all staff.

Other Items

- Alma's retirement party was well attended and considered a success.
- Discussion was held regarding scheduling considerations for the July Board meeting due to Catie attending a training in Omaha following the meeting, as well as a potential date change for the August Board meeting.

Executive Session -Intel

Joseph Smith asked to go into executive session. A motion was requested to enter executive session regarding an intel matter at 8:35 p.m. A motion to enter executive session was made by Tom Bandur and seconded by Dave Larson. Vote carried by roll call vote. Ayes (10), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Motion by Dave Larson, seconded by Joseph Smith, to exit executive session and return to open session at 8:45 p.m. with no action made. Vote: Ayes (10), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting is scheduled for July 28, 2026 at 5:00 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 ___________