

Minutes of the Region 26 Council Board Meeting

August 25th, 2026

Present:

Blaine County: Matt Eggert (late arrival)
City of Ord: Cheyenne Doyle, Alternate
Garfield County: Diana Hurlburt
Greeley County: Jordan Foltz
Loup County: Dave Larson
Range Municipalities: Paige Ryschon
Thomas County: Joseph Smith
Valley County: Theresa Petska
Wheeler County: Doug Pokorny
Tri-County Municipalities: Jay Meyer, Chairman

Absent:

Sherman County: Tom Bandur
Law Enforcement: Joel Bergman
Catie Larsen, Executive Director

Staff Present: Virginia Michalski, Office Manager; Miki Gerten, Dispatcher Supervisor

Chairman Jay Meyer called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm as a legal meeting of the Region 26 Council. Notice of the meeting and agenda were sent to all clerks of each member county/municipality for posting and given in advance to all members of the Board. A quorum was present. The Open Meetings Act was available for public inspection.

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Joseph Smith, seconded by Dave Larson to approve the agenda. Motion carried by roll call vote. Ayes (8), Nays (0), Abstain (1) Diana Hurlburt remarked that the prior minutes were precise and detailed.

Approval of July 28, 2026 Minutes

Motion by Diana Hurlburt, seconded by Theresa Petska, to approve the July 28, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried by roll call vote. Ayes (7), Nays (0), Abstain (3).

Approval of July 2026 Financial Statement

The Board reviewed revenues including municipal assessments and tower leases. Ansley Tower equipment sale proceeds were transferred into the CARES equipment fund. Theresa Petska asked where the municipal assessments were in the revenue part of the budget. Virginia Michalski will confirm with Catie but did not see it on the revenue sheet. Clarification was provided regarding consultant payments for North Central THIRA work

for the North Central PET Region, for which Region 26 serves as fiscal agent. An omitted 911 phone expense of approximately \$10,000 was adjusted within the budget. A Loup City generator invoice from Power Tech was reduced by \$120 after follow-up by Catie Larsen. Motion by Joseph Smith, seconded by Dave Larson to approve the July financial statement. The financial statement was approved by roll call vote. Ayes (10), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Approval of August 2026 Claims

Claims were reviewed in detail. New grant expenses were noted and no changes were reported within 911 accounts. Frontier invoices were expected by the end of the week. Members discussed a dispatch cell phone case purchase; Virginia Michalski clarified this was for the new dispatch cell phone. Mention was made about the economical active shooter training costs. Claims were approved by roll call vote. Ayes (10), Nays (0), Abstain (0).

Ord Frontier Phone Line

The Board discussed the remaining Frontier telephone line located at the Valley County Sheriff's Office in Ord, which has historically been maintained as a backup communication resource in the event staff had to leave the Region 26 building. Virginia noted that the line currently costs approximately \$200 per month. Members questioned whether the expense continues to be justified given the availability of alternative backup communication methods. Discussion also included concerns regarding the status and location of the associated equipment, which could not be identified following remodeling projects at the Sheriff's Office. Additionally, Frontier has not provided any formal updates concerning ongoing reports that copper landline services may eventually be discontinued, creating uncertainty regarding the long-term reliability and value of maintaining the line.

After reviewing the operational need for the service and considering existing backup capabilities, the Board agreed that the telephone line was no longer necessary. Matt Eggert made a motion to discontinue the Frontier telephone line, seconded by Doug Pokorny. The motion carried by roll call vote. Ayes (10), Nays (0), Abstain (0). It was noted that in the event of a communications disruption, 911 operations will continue to utilize established contingency procedures, with 911 calls rolling over to Custer County. Administrative telephone lines and a dispatch cell phone will serve as additional backup communication resources to ensure continuity of service.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Towers and Equipment

A backup computer from Cheyenne County was installed at Station Two after the original computer failed. Approximately \$700 in air conditioner repairs were incurred at the Ord

tower. It remains unclear if both east and west units are fully fixed. Jay Meyer will check on this. The North Loup/Scotia pagers were not working August 16 & 17. (Page My Cell worked.) It was found that the antenna in Scotia was damaged during storms and remains out of service. Virginia checked with the Taylor village clerk about the yard light in the alley. Village officials plan to contact Custer Public Power about assuming responsibility for the alley light. Jay Meyer noted the front yard light does not appear to be connected. The Sherman North Tower generator is operating correctly. Thedford experienced paging and radio failures, possibly caused by a cut copper line; Hamilton and Consolidated have been contacted. There appeared to also be a problem with Custer County's frequency during night shift status checks. Communications with Custer County were restored after technicians corrected switched antennas. Matt Eggert mentioned the need for consistent protocols when pager systems are out of service.

Garage Updates

Garage demolition has been delayed until September due to recent storms in our counties.

Criminal Justice Board Report

A well-attended Criminal Justice Board meeting was held in mid-August.

Communications Center Report

Monthly statistics were handed out. Stats included 126 disconnected 911 calls, most resolved through callback procedures. Dispatch traffic activity increased significantly during the rodeo.

Director Report

Virginia read Catie's director report: The North Central PET Region acquired FirstNet backup service for 911 communications. Catie & other emergency managers have completed ICS 400 training and Catie is finishing prerequisites for the NEMA Capstone course. EMPG reimbursement request exceeding \$34,000 was submitted and approved. Ansley Tower sale is complete. The financial audit was completed. Power Tech worked with Catie to reduce the bill mentioned previously. Catie was contacted by the media regarding FLOCK cameras that Ord City Council voted to remove. She submitted the same information to all about how the PET Region works and how requests from our partners are handled. Disaster declarations were submitted for Greeley, Valley, and Thomas Counties for recent windstorms. Catie will continue to gather damage information and work with NEMA. Catie filled out a grant application for two skids for Dunning Fire Department. She is still working through some steps but it sounds like she received the grant and the funding will come to Region 26 who will then distribute to Dunning to purchase the skids. Matt asked why Region 26 applied for the grant for the Dunning Fire Dept. Virginia thought it had something to do with Region 26 having a Sam.gov account and the fire department did not, but would have to confirm that with Catie.

Communications Center

Miki Gerten reported that the Region 26 Law Enforcement group welcomed Wheeler County Sheriff Tim Larby at the August meeting. She also acknowledged the resignation of Deputy Jay Welch from Greeley County. Training updates were provided for Taylor (CTO training), Jamie, and Tamika (NCIC training).

Other Business

The Sandhills Area Sheriffs Association mutual aid agreement was reviewed, establishing assistance protocols among eleven counties and eliminating inter-county billing. Joseph Smith provided a copy should our law enforcement group be interested. Board members discussed grant administration costs such as audits and check printing and supported developing an administrative fee structure for the North Central PET Region. Annual dues and penalties for late payment were discussed, including a potential \$150 annual fee and grant eligibility consequences for nonpayment. Members celebrated receipt of a \$450,000 Deb Fischer CAD grant and reviewed anticipated future state and federal 911 funding opportunities. Diana was excited to see small counties applying for and receiving grant awards.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be September 29, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:59 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia Michalski, Office Manager