Traverse County Commission
Regular Board Meeting
July 21, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Commission Chair Jerrel Olson. Other Commissioners present were Dwight Nelson, Chad Metz, Kayla Schmidt, and Mark Gail. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The agenda was unanimously approved upon a motion from Gail, seconded by Metz. No conflicts of interest were declared. The July 7, 2026, Board minutes were unanimously approved upon a motion from Nelson, seconded by Metz.

Highway

County Engineer Chad Gillespie and Highway Supervisor Brian Koch appeared before the Board to provide a department update. Gillespie provided the Board with information from a presentation he attended showing the increase in high level rain events in recent years, the last 10 years shows an upward trend and the percentage increase of annual precipitation across the state. He also gave them information on the CSAH 3 Tile Fix. Gillespie informed the Board that Highway is the sponsor for the Wheaton Active Transportation Grant for Sidewalks, which means they will be doing the bidding, and they will be approving the plans before sending them to State Aid. Gillespie said that Traverse County is administering the 2027 District Wide Edge Line Striping. Federal HSIP dollars are used for this and counties in our district have decided that the best use of these funds based on the safety improvements that can be used for is the stripe a 6' edge line. Our portion is approximately $144,132 based on the estimate. Lastly Gillespie gave an update on the CSAH 6 and Croke TWP Box Culverts Project.

Traverse Care Center/PrairieView Place

Regional Director of SNF Operation from Minnewaska Michelle Ehrenberg and Nate Christensen, Administrator, appeared before the Board with a quarterly update. The census at both Traverse Care Center and Prairieview Place have been holding steady at around 35 for TCC and PVP only has 2 open apartments. The turnover rate has remained low in the past year. Metz inquired if there were any upcoming projects that we should be aware of. Ehrenberg mentioned that there are no scheduled projects.

Midwest Geological

BJ Bonin from Midwest Geological appeared before the Board. Bonin updated the Board on the status of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources groundwater Atlas for Traverse County. In 2023, DNR staff expected the Atlas to be completed around 2028. Bonin explained that there are two parts to the Atlas once the first part starts it will take around two years to complete then the DNR can start on the second part. Bonin explained that there is a possible expansion to the dairy in Stevens County, which he doesn't see there being an issue with water because of the expansion. Schmidt asked if he had any insight on the Wilkin County dairy project, Bonin was not aware of any.

Extension

Regional Director, University of Minnesota Extension, Cecilia Amadou appeared before the Board with an Extension update. Amadou informed the Board that our 4-H Program Assistant has vacated the position and they will be posting the position at the end of August. Beginning in March, our overall programming was reduced and they are offering a reduction to the second quarter billing of 40%. The Board asked for more information on the reduction before they will approve it. Amadou will reach out to get additional information on the number of hours and amount of help we received during the reduced programming. The 2027 budget was presented to the Board, the County Extension Committee went over the budget at their last meeting, they are requesting a 1.95% decrease. Schmidt asked Amadou if population is part of the formula for the contracted amount with the University, Amadou said

that population is not a part of the formula. Olson asked for a list of what is included in the other services and charges in the budget. Auditor/Treasurer Kit Johnson will work on getting this sent out.

Auditor/Treasurer

Auditor/Treasurer Kit Johnson appeared before the Board with a department update. He gave an update on elections, early voting, and local candidate filings. Johnson asked for approval of the following resolution which was approved unanimously upon a motion by Schmidt and seconded by Metz:

RESOLUTION SEEKING STATE OF MINNESOTA
REVENUE SHARING FUND TO SUSTAIN DEPUTY REGISTRAR OFFICES

WHEREAS, the State of Minnesota has a responsive and well-established network of locally operated deputy registrars acting as independent agents for the benefit of our citizens and the State, who are appointed and regulated by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety; and,

WHEREAS, the State of Minnesota in 1949 established a filing fee on motor vehicle-related transactions to be retained by the deputy registrar office as their only income to pay for all their associated costs in providing this vital local service on the State's behalf; and,

WHEREAS, increasing costs borne by any office include but are not limited to basic inflation, salaries, training, insurance, rent, security, bank fees, utilities, furnishings, phones, computers, IT infrastructure, scanners, copiers, paper and toner cartridges, postage; and,

WHEREAS, the Department of Public Safety has transferred 40% of their data entry work onto deputy registrars without due compensation for these additional time-consuming tasks; and,

WHEREAS, the Department of Public Safety has aggressively marketed their exclusive online and mail-in service options to the public which also captures any filing fee in direct competition with deputy registrar offices who depend upon that revenue for their own local sustainability; and,

WHEREAS, increased costs to provide local services, exacerbated by competition and expanded new duties both caused by the State, now routinely outpace the filing fee income realized by any deputy registrar office and causing 6 permanent local office closures statewide since 2021; and,

WHEREAS, annual shortages incurred by public deputy offices are now consistently being subsidized by their local governments to remain open, while private deputy offices without this ability are forced to seek alternative lines of credit elsewhere to remain operational; and,

WHEREAS, a 2022 State commissioned independent expert review (*King report*) specifically calls on the State to share 25-50% of all filing fee revenue derived from the Department's online and mail-in transactions with all local deputy registrar offices, and a subsequent State commissioned study from 2024 (*Barry-Dunn report*) also reinforced the overall need to develop a more sustainable revenue model for deputy registrars to remain operational.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the *County* of Traverse requests that the 2027 State Legislature recognize the critical need to sustain deputy registrar offices and to enact a permanent state revenue sharing fund for deputy registrars, sourced with 50% of the existing filing fee revenue captured by the

Department of Public Safety from their online and mail-in transactions to be disbursed quarterly among all deputy offices in Minnesota.

Passed and adopted this 21st day of July, 2026

Johnson also asked for approval on the following resolution, which was approved unanimously upon a motion by Metz, second by Nelson:

RESOLUTION NO. 26-05

A RESOLUTION APPOINTING LAURA CRONEN AS THE DRIVER'S LICENSE AGENT FOR TRAVERSE COUNTY

WHEREAS, Traverse County operates its own local license bureau, providing critical Driver and Vehicle Services (DVS) to county residents; and

WHEREAS, under the provisions of Minnesota Statutes, section 171.061, the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) authorizes counties to act as Driver's License Agents to accept applications for driver's licenses, instruction permits, and Minnesota identification cards; and

WHEREAS, Traverse County requires a formally designated individual to serve as the official Driver's License Agent to maintain legal compliance, oversee operations, and execute state reporting requirements; and

WHEREAS, the Traverse County Board of Commissioners wishes to officially appoint Laura Cronen to serve in this capacity.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of Traverse County, Minnesota, as follows:

1. Official Appointment: Laura Cronen is hereby officially appointed as the Driver's License Agent for Traverse County.

2. Authority and Duties: In this capacity, Laura Cronen is granted the authority to manage all county-run Driver and Vehicle Services operations and is directed to faithfully execute all duties mandated by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Traverse County Board of Commissioners this 21st day of July, 2026.

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Jerrel Olson, Chairman

ATTEST:

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Lisa Zahl, County Coordinator

MCIT is offering extra cyber coverage, Johnson has submitted the application to receive a quote.

County Coordinator

Upon a motion by Gail and seconded by Nelson, the following bills were approved unanimously.

ACCESS	$4,261.38
BRANDON COMMUNICATIONS	$3,624.00
COUNTIES PROVIDING TECHNOLOGY	$5,778.15
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES ECPN	$9,013.76
ELAN FINANCIAL SERVICES	$7,660.34
ESRI	$7,201.00
GUNNER GENERAL CONTRACTING & INSULATION	$7,500.00
HEARTLAND RANCH INC	$12,597.00
HORIZON PUBLIC HEALTH	$8,491.13
HORMANN/MARK	$2,200.00
ISSENDORF CONSTRUCTION	$9,110.37
MORRIS ELECTRONICS	$18,848.95
PRAIRIE LAKES YOUTH PROGRAMS	$2,200.00
PRIME BUILDERS LLP	$3,000.00
WEST CENTRAL REGIONAL JUVENILE CE	$4,880.00
WESTERN PRAIRIE HUAN SERVICES	$593,133.46
WEX BANK	$3,194.72
WHEATON EDA	$2,000.00
WILKIN COUNTY	$5,724.60
DIAMOND MOWERS, INC.	$47,518.20
LARSON OIL, INC	$42,514.50
M-R SIGN CO., INC.	$3,606.76
TRI COUNTY COOP OIL ASSOC	$2,320.88

Per M.S. 375.12, the number of claims totaling $2,000.00 or less were 56 in the amount of $19,895.92.

The Board discussed the Stevens County response to Traverse County letter regarding Watershed Projects. The Commissioners requested that a letter be written to clarify that it was regarding the Eldorado Project and their concerns with that specific project. Zahl presented the Water Recreation Equipment Policy for the equipment that was bought through the No Child Left Outside Grant. Extension would like to run the program. The Board tabled the policy until County Attorney Matt Franzese has a chance to look over the liability section.

Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

Committee Reports

Metz attended the Western Prairie Finance Committee and gave an update. Schmidt attended the Western Prairie Preplacement, Western Prairie Joint Powers Board, Extension, Planning and Zoning, and the Bois de Sioux Watershed meetings. Nelson attended Horizon Public Health, Soil and Water, Extension, TCC/PVP, and Planning and Zoning.

Olson adjourned the meeting at 10:29 a.m.

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Lisa Zahl, County Coordinator Jerrel Olson, Chair