

AITKIN COUNTY BOARD**January 6, 2026****Call to Order**

The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners met the 6th day of January, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. at the Aitkin Government Center with the following members present: Commissioners J. Mark Wedel, Laurie Westerlund, Travis Leiviska, and Bret Sample. Also present were County Administrator David Minke and via interactive technology Administrative Assistant April Kellerman.

Commissioner Michael Kearney was absent.

County Administrator David Minke called the meeting to order.

Commissioner Bret Sample nominated Commissioner J. Mark Wedel for Board Chair. No other nominations. All commissioners voted in favor of Commissioner Wedel for Chair 4-0.

Commissioner Bret Sample nominated Commissioner Travis Leiviska for Board Vice Chair. No other nominations. Motion made by Commissioner Sample, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried 4-0 to approve Commissioner Travis Leiviska as Board Vice Chair.

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Commissioner Leiviska, seconded by Commissioner Sample and carried 4-0 to approve the January 6, 2026 agenda.

There was no Citizens' Public Comment.

Consent Agenda

Motion by Commissioner Westerlund, seconded by Commissioner Leiviska and carried 4-0 to approve the Consent Agenda as follows.

- A) Correspondence File December 23, 2025 to January 5, 2026;
- B) Approve December 23, 2025 County Board Minutes;
- C) Approve Equipment Purchase – 2015 Mack GU713 from Boyer Trucks, St. Michael in the amount of \$42,000;
- D) Approve Auditor Vouchers – Auditor Warrants paid 12.19.25: Health & Human Services \$42,994.86, Opioid Remediation Settlement \$116.20 for a total of \$43,111.06;
- E) Adopt Resolution #20260101-001: Appointment of Mail, Absentee and UOCAVA Ballot Board;
- F) Approve Annual Employee Dishonesty and Faithful Performance Bond;
- G) Information Only – Annual Report Lake Minnewawa Lake Improvement District;
- H) Approve Manual Warrants/Voids/Corrections – Elan paid 12.04.25: General Fund \$1,399.00, Long Lake Conservation Center \$60.50, Health & Human Services \$789.91 for a total of \$2,249.41
- I) Approve Auditor Vouchers – Auditor Warrants paid 12.26.25: Road & Bridge \$60,358.03;
- J) Approve Commissioner Vouchers – Commissioner Warrants paid 12.31.25: General Fund \$106,592.10, Reserves \$4,343.57, Road & Bridge \$18,100.83, Unorganized Townships \$9,938.90, Health & Human Services -\$71.96, Trust \$4,899.64, Forest Development \$259,960.19, Long Lake Conservation Center \$2,599.89, Parks \$44,971.00, Coronavirus Relief Fund \$2,766.67 for a total of

\$454,100.83;

K) Approve Auditor's Vouchers – Auditor Warrants paid 12.31.25: General Fund \$18.47, Health & Human Services \$59,728.24 for a total of \$59,746.71;

L) Adopt Resolution #20260101-002: Thomas Melton application to repurchase tax-forfeited property;

M) Approve Manual Warrants/Voids/Corrections – Manual Warrants paid 12.30.25: General Fund \$5,732.24, Taxes & Penalties \$76.16 for a total of \$5,808.40;

N) Approve Auditor Vouchers – Auditor Warrants paid 12.31.25: General Fund \$149,989.94;

O) Approve Pay Equity Report

Regular Agenda

Jessica Johnson – VP, External Affairs – Talon Metals presented an update on Talon Metals activity in Tamarack and the status of the proposed acquisition of Ludin Mining's Eagle Mine and Humboldt Mill Operations.

Commissioner Michael Kearney joined meeting remotely through Microsoft Teams at 9:21 a.m.

Motion by Commissioner Westerlund, seconded by Commissioner Sample and carried 4-0 to Approve Purchase of a 2014 John Deere 772G Motor Grader from Larson Brothers implement in Harris, Minnesota in the amount of \$90,000.

Dennis Thompson – Land Commissioner provided a summary of county tax forfeit Land Sales conducted under the Tyler v Hennepin County settlement requirements.

Andrew Carlstrom – Environmental Services Director reviewed the proposed Amendments to Shoreland Ordinance. The Public hearing was opened at 10:03 a.m.

Public Comments made by: Bob Karls, Aitkin County Resident; Pat Murphy, Aitkin County Resident Chair Wedel noted the public hearing will be continued to the January 27th Regular County Board Meeting.

Carlstrom then presented the First Reading on Amendments to Shoreland Ordinance.

Motion by Commissioner Leiviska, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried 4-0 to Adopt the 2026 Board of Commissioners Meeting Procedures and Rules of Business.

Motion by Commissioner Sample, seconded by Commissioner Leiviska and carried 4-0 to Approve the 2026 Board of Commissioners regular meeting schedule.

Motion by Commissioner Westerlund, seconded by Commissioner Sample and carried 4-0 to Adopt Resolution #20260101-003 Designating the Official County Newspaper:

BE IT RESOLVED, That the Aitkin Independent Age is hereby designated by the Aitkin County Board of Commissioners as the official county newspaper in which all official business shall be published. Voyageur Press is named second publication of Financial Statement.

Motion by Commissioner Sample, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried 4-0 to Approve

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2026 AMC Policy Committee Members and Voting Delegates as follows:

Environment & Natural Resources Policy Committee	Andrew Carlstrom
General Government Policy Committee	Travis Leiviska
Health & Human Services Policy Committee	Sarah Pratt
Public Safety Policy Committee	Laurie Westerlund
Transportation & Infrastructure Policy Committee	Michael Kearney

Voting Delegates

1. Mark Wedel, Commissioner Dist. 1
2. Laurie Westerlund, Commissioner Dist. 2
3. Travis Leiviska, Commissioner Dist. 3
4. Bret Sample, Commissioner Dist. 4
5. Michael Kearney, Commissioner Dist. 5
6. David Minke, County Administrator
7. Sarah Pratt, HHS Director
8. Andrew Carlstrom, Env. serv. Director

Motion by Commissioner Westerlund, seconded by Commissioner Leiviska and carried 4-0 to Adopt Resolution #20260101-004 2026 Committee Appointments as follows:

Aitkin Airport Commission (2)	J. Mark Wedel John Welle
Aitkin County Care Board	Laurie Westerlund
Aitkin County Community Corrections Advisory Board (2)	J. Mark Wedel Laurie Westerlund
Aitkin County HRA (Liaison)	Bret Sample
Anoka County JPA Advisory Board	Laurie Westerlund
Aitkin County Opioid Settlement Subcommittee	Bret Sample
Aitkin County Water Planning Task Force	J. Mark Wedel
Aitkin County HRA (Liaison)	Bret Sample
Aitkin Economic Development Administration (AEDA)	J. Mark Wedel
AMC Delegates (7)	Commissioner District 2 Commissioner District 3 Commissioner District 5 County Administrator County Engineer Environmental Services Director HHS Director
Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)	J. Mark Wedel Bret Sample
Arrowhead Counties Association (1)	Michael Kearney Laurie Westerlund, Alt.

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Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency	Michael Kearney Travis Leiviska, Alt.	
Arrowhead Regional Development Center (ARDC)	Michael Kearney Travis Leiviska, Alt.	
Assessor for Unorganized Townships	Mike Dangers	
ATV Committee (2)	Travis Leiviska Laurie Westerlund	
Big Sandy Lake Management Plan (1+Alternate)	Bret Sample Michael Kearney, Alt.	
Brainerd 1 Watershed 1 Plan	J. Mark Wedel	
Budget Committee 2020 (2)	Travis Leiviska J. Mark Wedel	
East Central Regional Library Board	Travis Leiviska Bret Sample, Alt.	
Economic Development (2)	J. Mark Wedel Bret Sample	
Emergency Management	J. Mark Wedel	
Environmental Assessment Worksheet (2)	Michael Kearney Bret Sample	
Extension Committee (2)	Michael Kearney Laurie Westerlund	
Facilities/Technology Committee (2)	J. Mark Wedel Bret Sample	
Fairgrounds Liaison	Jim Bright	
H&HS Advisory Committee (Liaison) (2)	J. Mark Wedel Michael Kearney	
Historical Society (Liaison)	Travis Leiviska	
Joint County Natural Resources Board (2)	Bret Sample Dennis Thompson Michael Kearney, Alt.	
Lakes & Pines (1+Alternate)	Travis Leiviska Michael Kearney, Alt.	
Law Library	Travis Leiviska Michael Kearney, Alt.	
McGregor Airport Commission	Bret Sample	
MCIT Representative (1 + Alternate)	Laurie Westerlund David Minke, Alt.	
Mille Lacs Fisheries Input Group	Laurie Westerlund	
Mille Lacs Watershed (1 + Alternate)	Travis Leiviska Laurie Westerlund, Alt.	
Mississippi Headwaters Board (1+Alternate)	Michael Kearney Bret Sample, Alt.	

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MN Rural Counties (1+Alternate)	Laurie Westerlund Travis Leiviska, Alt.	
Natural Resources Advisory Committee (2)	Michael Kearney Bret Sample	
NE MN Office Job Training	Travis Leiviska	
Northeast MN ATP (2)	Michael Kearney John Welle Travis Leiviska, Alt.	
Northeast MN Emergency Communications Board (ECB)	Travis Leiviska Dan Guida, Alt.	
Northeast MN Regional Advisory Committee (RAC)	Patrice Erickson Dan Guida, Alt.	
Northeast Waste Advisory Committee (NEWAC) (1+Alternate)	Bret Sample Laurie Westerlund, Alt.	
Northern Counties Land Use Coordinating Board (NCLUCB) (1+Alternate)	Laurie Westerlund Michael Kearney, Alt.	
Northwoods Regional Trail Alliance	Land Dept Staff, Alt.	
Ordinance Committee (2)	Travis Leiviska Bret Sample	
Personnel/Insurance Committee (2)	Michael Kearney J. Mark Wedel	
Planning Commission	Michael Kearney Laurie Westerlund, Alt.	
Rum 1W1P Policy Committee	Laurie Westerlund Travis Leiviska, Alt.	
Snake River Watershed Management Board/1W1P Policy Committee	Travis Leiviska Bret Sample, Alt.	
Sobriety Court	J. Mark Wedel	
Solid Waste Task Force (2)	J. Mark Wedel Bret Sample	
Toward Zero Deaths	J. Mark Wedel	
Tri-County Community Health Services Board	Laurie Westerlund	
<p>Motion by Commissioner Westerlund, seconded by Commissioner Sample and carried 4-0 to Approve Letter of Support – Aitkin Airport Terminal Grant.</p> <p>Commissioner Sample updated the board on a recent meeting with Congressman Stuabuer and the Army Corps of Engineers regarding Big Sandy Lake.</p>		

Adjourn

Motion by Commissioner Westerlund, seconded by Commissioner Leiviska and carried 4-0 to adjourn the meeting at 11:37 a.m. with the next regular meeting on Tuesday, January 27, 2026 at the Aitkin County Government Center.

J. Mark Wedel, Board Chair
Aitkin County Board of Commissioners

David J. Minke, County Administrator
Clerk to the County Board