



AGENDA

SPECIAL MEETING/ COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Date: April 21, 2026

District 1 J. Mark Wedel, Chair

Time: 1:00 PM

District 2 Laurie Westerlund

Where: Government Center Training Room

District 3 Travis Leiviska, Vice Chair

307 2nd Street NW

District 4 Bret Sample

Aitkin, MN 56431

District 5 Michael Kearney

In accordance with Minnesota Statutes §13D.02, one or more commissioners may participate in the meeting via interactive technology. Commissioners joining via interactive technology will be seen and heard in the meeting room and votes will be taken by roll call.

- 1) J. Mark Wedel, County Board Chair
 - A) Call to Order
 - B) Pledge of Allegiance

- 2) Long Lake Conservation Center
 - A) History / Purpose
 - B) Economic Impact
 - C) Operating Budget Review
 - D) Current Programming
 - E) Current Needs and CIP
 - F) Opportunities
 - G) Discussion / Next Steps

- 3) Adjourn



Aitkin County Administration

Aitkin County Government Center
307 2nd St. NW; Room 310
Aitkin MN 56431
218-927-7276
David.Minke@AitkinCountyMN.gov

To: Aitkin County Board of Commissioners
From: David Minke, County Administrator
Date: April 21, 2026
Subject: Long Lake Conservation Center

The Long Lake Conservation Center has been a part of Aitkin County since 1963 when the St. Louis Park Kiwanis Club donated 200 acres on Long Lake “for the purposes of creating a residential environmental learning center for area students”. This early founding as an Environmental Learning Center makes LLCC the first and the oldest Environmental Learning Center (ELC) in Minnesota. The LLCC is also the only ELC that is owned by a local unit of government. County ownership creates opportunities and imposes liabilities.

In 2012 Maven Perspectives was hired to complete a marketing analysis of the LLCC. The one conclusion of the report that will resonate with all of us is:

***The relationship between the LLCC and the County is unclear and indecisive.
There exists confusion around the LLCC being a sub-department of the Aitkin
County Land Department and making a profit.***

Today our task is to begin to bring clarity to the mission and activities of the LLCC. As noted in the conclusion above, money was and has continued to be the lightning rod around all LLCC conversations. I would challenge you to focus on establishing a vision for the LLCC that aligns with your vision for Aitkin County and then we can work on how to fund it.

Today’s meeting is going to focus on building a common base of understanding and provide opportunities for you to discuss and give direction on what is important to you regarding the LLCC.



Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

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Agenda Item #

Requested Meeting Date: April 21, 2026

Title of Item: Long Lake Conservation Center

<input type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA	Action Requested: <input type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft) <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing <i>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input type="checkbox"/> Information Only
Submitted by:		Department:
Presenter (Name and Title):		Estimated Time Needed:
Summary of Issue: Long Lake Conservation Center A) History/ Purpose B) Economic Impact C) Operating Budget Review D) Current Programming E) Current Needs and CIP F) Opportunities G) Discussion / Next Steps		
Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:		
Recommended Action/Motion:		
Financial Impact: <i>Is there a cost associated with this request?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$</i> <i>Is this budgeted?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>Please Explain:</i>		