

# MERCER COUNTY COMMISSION MINUTES

August 6, 2025  
The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chairman Gene Wolf. Present were Commissioners Jamee Folk, Mark Pierce, Rick Bauman, Casey Voigt, Auditor Carmen Reed and Dan Arens of the Hazen Star. Othrs present during the meeting were Treasurer Dawn Grannis, States Attorney Todd Schwarz, HR/EM Director Alice Grinsteinner, Deputy Auditor Mark Erhardt, Sheriff Terry Ternes, Beulah Park District Director Sonja Dutchuk, Hazen Parks & Recreation Commissioner Matt LeMasters, Coyote Creek Mining Representative Jeremy Eckroth, David Straley, and Brad Erickson, NDSU Extension Agent Metta Pfliger, ND Geological Survey Geologist Levi Moxness, Tax Director Jennifer Neumiller, J2 Studios President James Devine, and Assistant Highway Supervisor Dennis Olheiser.  
Pledge of allegiance was said.  
Pierce moved to approve the amended agenda. Bauman seconded. All voted aye. Motion carried.  
Bauman moved to approve the July 17, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. Folk seconded. All voted aye. Motion carried.  
Pierce moved to approve the July 25, 2025 special meeting minutes with the correction of “not” to “no” in line 32. Folk seconded. All voted aye. Motion carried.  
Tax Director Jennifer Neumiller presented the application for temporary use permit #656, from ND Dept of Mineral Resources-Geological Survey, for drilling and coring 50 – 200-foot-deep test holes to determine the concentrations of critical minerals in lignite and claystone in and beneath the Bear Den Member of the Golden Valley Formation. The disturbance area is less than 2,500 ft2 (0.06 acres), maximum sites per tract = 5, maximum project disturbance = 3.6 acres. All holes will be plugged and the drill sites reclaimed as per NDAC 43-02-01-14. ND Geological Survey Geologist Levi Moxness was present for questions. Bauman moved to approve Temporary Use Permit #656 as presented. Pierce seconded. All voted aye. Motion carried.

Voigt moved to approve the Utility Occu-pancy Application and Permit 1772(25) for Roughrider Electric Cooperative. Folk seconded. All voted aye. Motion carried.  
HR/EM Director Alice Grinsteinner, Beulah Park District Director Sonja Dutchuk, and Hazen Parks & Recreation Commissioner Matt LeMasters discussed the Perry Weather system implementation, recurring costs, and added safety benefits that this system would provide for campers and residents in and around the Beulah and Hazen Bay areas. It was agreed that a payment plan would be developed regarding the Perry Weather System and brought back before the board for consideration.  
Grinsteinner formally requested \$500 in funding for the Walking Challenge as part of the Mercer County Wellness Program, which gives us a 1% reduction of our insurance premiums, which equates to an estimated \$16,000 in projected savings for 2026. Grinsteinner also presented the new state lodging rate of \$110/night, effective August 1, 2025. Folk moved to approve the new state lodging rate of \$110/night, effective August 1, 2025. Voigt seconded. All voted aye. Motion carried.  
NDSU Extension Agent Metta Pfliger requested permission for the following out-of-state trips: (1) The National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (NEAFCS) Annual Convention in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Focus is on nutri-tion, healthy aging, chronic disease, healthy families, child development, mental health, community development, food scarcity and finance. Total cost is \$2,030 with NDSU paying \$1,250 and County pays \$780. And (2) 79th Annual Leadership Conference (The Black Hills Recreation Leaders Laboratory) in Custer, South Dakota. Focus is on leadership and teambuilding. Cost to the County is \$465.00. Voigt moved to approve both the Grand Rapids, Michigan and Custer, South Dakota trips as presented. Folk seconded. All voted aye. Motion carried.  
Recessed at 9:43 a.m.  
Reconvened at 9:53 a.m.

J2 Studios President James Devine re-viewed a remodeling plan for the A1 Auto Repair building at 712 Co Rd 21 in Beulah. The next step will be to gather actual cost estimates and a detailed floor plan. Item was placed on the next meeting agenda.  
Assistant Highway Supervisor Dennis Ol-heiser presented information regarding the Highway Department request to purchase a new set of cutting edges with a quote of approximately \$11,000. Folk moved to approve the Highway Department’s pur-chase of cutting edges for approximately \$11,000. Pierce seconded. All voted aye. Motion carried.  
Folk moved to approve the June Recorder’s Revenues of \$5,288.60. Bauman second-ed. All voted aye. Motion carried.  
Folk moved to appoint Deanne Gierke and Kodelle Dunkley to the McLean – Mercer Regional Library Board. Pierce seconded. All voted aye. Motion carried.  
Treasurer Dawn Grannis informed the Board that the Tresurer’s Official Payments Contract has been terminated and replaced by the Certified Payments option that is also connected to our website.  
The 2026 Budget was discussed. The fol-lowing changes were made: (1) Update EM Estimated 2026 Revenues from \$7,789.77 to \$37,000. (2) Put 911 salary of \$68,640 back into the Sheriff’s budget, instead of the 911 fund. (3) Change General Fund cash reserve from \$1,500,000 to \$2,000,000, and (4) Increased General Fund retirement by \$9,000. Item was tabled.  
Voigt recused himself. States Attorney Todd Schwarz stated that he had received information from Voigt regarding the Coyote Creek Road Resolution and gave Voigt the floor. Voigt stated he would provide the needed easement to the county for \$28,000 and no further easement is needed because it was deemed a “road by prescrip-tion.” Information was discussed.  
Recessed at 11:25 a.m.  
Reconvened at 11:34 a.m.  
Pierce moved to reject the offer of \$28,000 for easement as it is unreasonable. Folk seconded. All voted aye. Motion carried.

NACCO Representative David Straley stat-ed that a resolution between the mine and the county still needs to be agreed upon and noted that the lease agreement between the mine and landowner is a separate and private issue. The “Final Resolution of the 18 ST SW Road Easement” was placed on the August 20, 2025 agenda at 11:00 a.m.  
2026 Budget was discussed and it was agreed that Reed will update new changes into the 2026 budget while vouchers are being reviewed.  
Portfolio updates were given.  
Board reviewed vouchers. Folk moved to approve the bills as presented with the exception of the Hazen Hardware Hank bill for \$17.94. Pierce seconded. All voted aye. Motion carried. The following bills were approved for payment: ADVANCED BUSI-NESS METHODS \$12,470.02; ARMOR INTERACTIVE \$270.58; ASKIM, CRAIG \$319.90; BABCOCK, AUSTIN \$252.90; BERG, MICHAEL \$32.20; BRONSON’S MARKETPLACE \$7,058.86; BYRNA TECHNOLOGIES, INC \$35.99; CENTER MACHINE INC \$467.80; CHARM-TEX, INC. \$244.70; CITY OF BEULAH \$411.90; D & E SUPPLY CO INC \$655.86; DALE SCHWALBE TRUCKING \$1,000.00; DANA SAFETY SUPPLY, INC. \$13,883.00; DIRT PRO SERVICES \$165.00; EIDE CHRYSLER \$1,073.70; ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS INC \$1,396.04; EN-TZE, CINDY \$21.70; FIRESIDE OFFICE SOLUTIONS \$93.66; FITTERER OIL HAZEN LLC \$132.50; FLEMMER, RYAN \$14.00; FOLKERTS, JESSE \$255.08; HAZEN HARDWARE HANK \$148.78; HAZEN STAR \$1,800.00; ISTATE TRUCK CENTER \$259.02; KRAUSE SUPER VALU \$52.53; LIGNITE TIRE SERVICE \$704.84; LINDE GAS & EQUIPMENT, INC. \$277.44; M & B RENTALS LLP \$675.00; MATTHEIS, BAR-BARA \$23.20; MERCER CO AMBULANCE \$300.00; MERCER COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT \$1,260.18; MIDWEST DOORS INC \$438.00; MONTANA DAKO-TA UTILITIES \$58.34; NAPA \$1,008.49; ND APCO ASSOCIATION \$180.00; ND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

\$672.22; ND DEPT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY \$50.00; NDSU EXTENSION SERVICE \$18,017.50; NEUBERGER OIL COMPANY \$34,322.04; North Central International, LLC \$1,200.48; NORTH DAKOTA ENVELOPE COMPANY \$268.25; NORTHERN PUMP & COMPRESSION INC \$10,400.00; NORTHWEST TIRE AUTO SERVICE INC. \$2,142.59; PALO-MINO PRESS \$40.00; PEHL, PAM \$44.00; PETERSON, COLIN \$44.00; PHARM-CHEM, INC. \$447.30; QUADIENT LEAS-ING USA, INC. \$175.75; ROUGH RIDER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC \$175.00; SAILER, SHANNON \$28.00; SCHEID, RICHARD \$12.60; SCHLENDER, SCOTT \$25.20; STROUP INSURANCE & REAL-TY \$50.00; THE HUB CONVENIENCE STORES, INC. \$114.39; T-MOBILE USA, INC \$100.00; TROTTER CON-STRUCTION INC. \$446.00; TRUENORTH STEEL \$423.36; TYLER TECHNOLOGIES \$6,077.50; UNIFORM CENTER \$1,585.85; VERIZON WIRELESS \$168.46; VOLK, GINGER R. \$93.93; WALK-N-ROLL INC \$2,143.00; WESTERN DAKOTA ENER-GY ASSOCIATION \$500.00; WESTERN PLAINS PUBLIC HEALTH \$4,491.60; WEX BANK \$6,831.87; GRINSTEINER, ALICE \$717.00; HAUGEN, COURTNY \$252.90. (TOTAL: \$139,502.00)  
The updated 2026 Preliminary Budget was presented and discussed. Pierce moved to approve the 2026 Preliminary Budget as presented. Folk seconded. All voted aye. Motion carried.  
There being no further business the meet-ing was adjourned at 12:18 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednes-day, August 20, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. in the boardroom of the Mercer County Govern-ment Center in Stanton, North Dakota. The meetings can be viewed online at www.mercercountynynd.com.  
Approved: Gene Wolf, Chairman  
Attest: Carmen Reed, Auditor  
8501-5095, Ph: (701) 328-6300, or online at www.gf.nd.gov.  
  
(08-28-2025)

## NDHHS: Rise reported in West Nile virus cases *43 cases reported since Aug. 14, 3 in Mercer County*

COMPILED BY RYAN SCHLEHUBER  
CENTER REPUBLICAN EDITOR

As of Tuesday, Aug. 26, as many as 43 cases of humans infected with West Nile virus have been reported since Aug.14, according to a recent state report, with three cases reported in Mercer County.  
The North Dakota Health and Human Ser-vices has reported it has seen a rise in West Nile virus cases in recent weeks. Sixteen counties in North Dakota have reported at least one case of a resident testing positive for West Nile virus. Of the 43 cases reported – 13 from Cass County alone – 11 of those people were hospitalized and nine had nervous sys-tem complications.  
As of Aug. 25, the NDHHS also reported 42 mosquito pools, three birds and two mammals have also tested positive for West Nile virus. Williams County reportedly had 20 mosqui-to pools positive for West Nile virus while Grand Forks and Burleigh each had six.  
West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne illness that spreads primarily through the bite of an infected mosquito. Birds are the primary hosts, but humans are also susceptible. Most infected individuals are asymptomatic; how-ever, one in 150 may develop a neurological disease that can be fatal.  
Symptoms include fever, headache, body aches and rash. Severe cases can lead to neu-rological issues such as encephalitis or men-ingitis, which can be deadly.  
“It’s this time of the year when we do see increased cases,” said Michelle Dethloff, an infectious disease and epidemiology surveil-lance unit director for NDHHS. “Any time mosquitoes are out, there is a risk of West Nile virus being transferrable. It’s peak sea-son this time of year until that hard frost.”  
The rise in cases at this time of the year is not alarming, however, Dethloff said when-ever cases jump up as quickly as it has since Aug. 14, she said communities need to be more aware.  
“Everyone has to be aware with spending

time outside, between dusk and dawn, when primary mosquitoes come out bite, and that’s anytime in the summer,” she said. “There are certain times when these things pick up, when activity picks up, and that’s a sign too that it’s out there and people are getting in-fected and the risks increase. People just need to be aware of that.  
In 2024, NDHHS reported a total of 38 cases of West Nile virus infections. In 2023, there were 58, and at its recent peak in 2018, there were 204.  
“How it shakes out in the end this year, I think we will be on par compared to the last five or six years,” Dethloff said. “We always see West Nile virus every year, but now is the time we see increases. We don’t want people to be complacent about it. We want to encour-age people, when they’re outside this time of year, to still be aware that West Nile virus is still out there.”  
NDHHS recommends North Dakotans take these precautions to avoid mosquito bites:  
• Use insect repellent registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that contain ingredients such as DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, PMD, 2-undecanone, and permethrin (cloth-ing only). Always follow the directions on the manufacturer’s label for safe and effective use.  
• Wear protective clothing outdoors such as long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks.  
• Limit outdoor activities between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes that can carry West Nile virus are most likely to bite.  
• Eliminate stagnant water in containers around homes where mosquitoes can lay their eggs (e.g. gutters, buckets, flowerpots, old tires, wading pools and birdbaths).  
• Install or repair screens on windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out of residences.  
• Maintain a well-trimmed yard and land-scape around homes.  
West Nile virus was first identified in Uganda in 1937. A strain began spreading in 1999, circulating in Israel and Tunisia before

reaching New York City, where it sparked a major outbreak that spread across North America.  
Who gets affected the worst when infected by West Nile virus, it is still hard to tell, Deth-loff said.  
“Many people have immunity and wouldn’t even know they have West Nile virus unless they get checked,” she said. “But it can cause severe diseases for some people. We just don’t know how someone will be affected. You can be a healthy adult and get really sick.”  
The Beulah Beacon reached out to the Sakakawea Medical Center and Coal Country Community Health Center, but both health facilities declined to comment.  
For more information on West Nile virus, visit www.hhs.nd.gov/wnv.

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