OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF
NIOBRARA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Tuesday, October 6, 2026
Commissioners' Office - Niobrara County Courthouse
424 S. Elm Street, Lusk, WY

The Niobrara County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, October 6, 2026, at 8:58 a.m. Present were Chairman Patrick Wade, Vice-Chair Elaine Griffith, Commissioner Jeb Hanson, and County Clerk Becky L. Freeman.

Also in attendance were Sheriff Randy Starkey, Heather Goddard of *The Lusk Herald*, Melvin ZumBrunnen, landowners Dawn Godfrey, Marlin Godfrey, and Kevin Gaukel, and county commissioner candidates Tiffany Thurston and Kevin Baars.

Chairman Wade led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Road & Bridge - Foreman Fred Thomas met with the Commissioners and updated them on road and bridge business.

Kevin Gaukel met with the Commissioners and Foreman Thomas regarding truck traffic on Divide Road.

He asked whether the speed limit for trucks could be reduced and dust control measures implemented.

Chairman Wade explained that a traffic study would be required before changing the speed limit. Foreman Thomas stated that T2 from Laramie would install traffic counters and that it could be eight to ten months before a study could be conducted. Thomas also reported that he had discussed speed limits and dust control with the oil company, including the possible use of magnesium chloride. Chairman Wade suggested that the company water the road near residences to reduce dust.

Foreman Thomas reported that crews were continuing to repair washouts. Chairman Wade asked whether any winter projects were planned, and Thomas stated that none had been identified yet. Thomas noted that work was needed on Cow Creek near Shannon Bruegger's property. He also reported that wood lodged in the culvert on Indian Creek was beyond the reach of the county's current equipment.

Commissioner Hanson suggested installing a low-water crossing on Indian Creek. Chairman Wade stated that the existing low-water crossing on the west side should be widened.

Ladwig Road and Easement – Dawn and Marlin Godfrey met with the Commissioners to discuss adding Ladwig Road to the county's road index and preserving the existing easement as recorded in the county records. They presented historical information regarding the easement/road. The easement extends from the Lamb property to the Godfrey property, serves three users, and was described as a Class III Road in prior minutes.

The Godfreys also requested auto gates for two locations along the right-of-way and noted that an existing cattle guard was in poor condition. They offered to purchase replacement auto gates from the County. Foreman Thomas stated that he had two new 12-foot auto gates available and would check prices.

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County Attorney- Attorney Anne Wasserburger met with the Commissioners and discussed county business.

Executive Session- Vice-Chair Griffith moved to enter into executive session at 9:34 a.m. to discuss potential litigation, W.S. § 16-4-405 (a)(iii) and to consider or receive any information classified as confidential by law, W.S. § S. 16-4-405 (a)(ix). Commissioner Hanson seconded, and the motion carried.

Commissioner Hanson moved to leave executive session at 10:01 a.m. and clarified that the purpose of entering into executive session was to discuss potential litigation pursuant to W.S. § 16-4-405(a)(iii). Vice-Chair Griffith seconded, and the motion carried.

Sheila Boldon and Greg Starck joined the meeting.

Elected Officials and Department Heads- Sheriff Starkey reported that a new heater is being installed at the jail.

Clerk of Court Lund noted that there is an issue with the faucet in the men's restroom. It was suggested she contact Mark Groh, Jr., or Jerry Miller.

Assessor Teri Stephens said that her office has been working on all transfers from last year. The 2027 Exemptions opened on October 1st, and both the 25% Homeowner Residential Property Tax Exemption and 50% Long-Term Residential Homeowner Exemption are open until March 1, 2027. More information is available on the Assessor's webpage: https://www.niobraracounty.org/_departments/_assessor.

Emergency Management Coordinator James Santistevan reported that he has an upcoming fall conference in Riverton, and updates to the County's THIRA plan were submitted last month.

Public Health Nurse Supervisor Melanie Pearce reported a busy October schedule. On October 22, staff would collaborate with Weston and Crook Counties on an emergency exercise involving a point of distribution (POD). A flu vaccination clinic was scheduled for October 27 at the Senior Center from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., and COVID-19 vaccinations were available at the office.

County Clerk Becky Freeman noted her office had been busy recording documents relating to oil and gas activities as well as preparing for the upcoming General Election.

Vice-Chair Griffith updated everyone on the painting of the curbs and steps at various county buildings.

Commissioner Hanson said he plans to attend the Regional Energy Summit in Idaho Falls, ID on October 28th-29th.

Richard Ladwig and Sheila Boldon met with the Commissioners and presented information regarding the process of Assessment to Action (A2A). He explained that it is a process aimed at

identifying challenges and removing obstacles to build a resilient local economy. It involves collaboration to explore, refine, and develop solutions to local problems.

Old Jail- Melvin ZumBrunnen and Greg Starck met with the Commissioners and asked if a decision had been made after the walk through with the asbestos abatement contractor and WWC Engineering. The Commissioners said no decision had been made because they had not received a report from the contractor.

They discussed funding available for the abatement through the DEQ Brownsfield Program, which is up to $250,000.00, but if the removal of the lead paint were included, it could exceed the allowable amount available.

Lisa Shaw, with the Niobrara Conservation District, called in to the meeting and the group discussed the request for information from Basin Electric Power Cooperative to support route development for the proposed Laramie River-to-Belfield 345-kV Transmission Line Project extending through portions of Wyoming, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota.

The group discussed the draft comments developed by the Conservation District and Chairman Wade suggested minor changes.

Vice-Chair Griffith moved to sign on to the draft comments in conjunction with conservation district regarding the Laramie River-to-Belfield 345-kV Transmission Line Project. Commissioner Hanson seconded, and the motion carried.

Teri Stephens and Lori Himes met with the Commissioners to discuss hiring a new employee prior to the retirement of current assessor. Commissioner Hanson moved to authorize the assessor's office to hire an additional employee. Vice-Chair Griffith seconded, and the motion carried.

Sheriff Starkey notified the Commissioners that pursuant to W.S. § 31-5-303(f), they had the ability to decrease a maximum speed limit to not less than thirty-five (35) miles per hour for unpaved roadways under W.S. § 31-5-301(b)(iv) without first conducting a speed study.

Based on this information, Vice-Chair Griffith moved pursuant to W.S. § 31-5-303(f) to decrease the speed limit to 35 mph on Divide Road beginning at the intersection of Hwy 18/20 and Divide Road until Divide Road intersects with N. Mahnke Road, then one mile north from the junction of Divide Road and N. Mahnke Road, for a period not to exceed one year. Commissioner Hanson seconded, and the motion carried.

Sheriff- Sheriff Starkey reported that one of the jail's heat pumps had seized. He presented a proposal from Johnson Controls to repair the failed unit for approximately $6,400.00 or replace both units, which are original to the building and nearing the end of their useful life. Johnson Controls recommended replacing both heat pumps and installing isolation valves at an estimated cost of $16,800.00, with a one-year warranty. Commissioner Hanson initially moved to replace one

heat pump, then withdrew that motion and moved to replace both units based on Johnson Controls' recommendation. Vice-Chair Griffith seconded, and the motion carried.

24-Hour Catering Permit- Commissioner Hanson moved to approve the 24-hour catering permit for 3 Sister's to sell alcoholic beverages at the Son of a Gun Banquet being held October 24, 2026. Vice-Chair Griffith seconded, and the motion carried.

Consent Agenda- Commissioner Hanson moved to approve the consent agenda. Vice-Chair Griffith seconded, and the motion carried. The consent agenda consisted of the minutes of the September 15, 2026, meeting, Petitions of Affidavits for Reduction in Taxes for JP Oil Company, Inc. for ($42.84), and for Einsel Douglas C et al for ($1,433.79), and receipts for September from the County Clerk for $7,402.25, from the Sheriff for August for $431.25, and September for $221.25, and from the Clerk of Court for $820.26.

Old Jail continued- The Commissioners had a brief phone call with Loren Ruttinger with WWC Engineering to discuss different options of asbestos remediation for the old jail. He forwarded a revised proposal from Safetech, Inc., the asbestos abatement company.

The Commissioners reviewed remediation options for the old jail, including **Option One:** Taking no action; **Option Two:** Removing asbestos to prepare the structure for demolition at an estimated cost of $46,500.00, plus WWC professional fees and asbestos clearance costs; **Option Three:** removing asbestos and all interior lead-based paint to prepare for renovations at an estimated cost of $116,000.00, plus WWC professional fees and asbestos clearance costs; **Option Four:** Removing asbestos and interior lead-based paint while encapsulating the paint on the jail cells at an estimated cost of $98,700.00, plus WWC professional fees and asbestos clearance costs. **Option Five:** Another option to include removing lead-based paint from the exterior soffit and fascia for an additional $80,400.00,plus WWC professional fees and asbestos clearance costs.

Chairman Wade asked whether the remediation options involved additional fees. Mr. Ruttinger explained that each option included professional fees and that DEQ would cover both remediation costs through the Brownfields Program and professional fees because the county was enrolled in the Voluntary Remediation Program.

Vice-Chair Griffith moved to choose option three, asbestos removal and all interior lead-based paint removal through the Brownsfield remediation program. Commissioner Hanson seconded, and the motion carried.

Commissioner Hanson moved to set a hard stop date of March 2, 2027, for interested individuals to produce a use for the old jail. Vice-Chair Griffith seconded, and the motion carried.

Payroll and the following vouchers were approved for payment: Bills are listed in the following format: Vendor- Department- Description- Amount- September Payroll- $164,685.35, Aflac- Various- Supplemental insurance- $4,177.18, Allbright's True Value- Various- Parts, supplies-

$168.18, Alsco- Various- Shop towels, coveralls, door mats- $462.60, Anne Wasserburger- Various- Supplies- $1,638.98, Becky L. Freeman- Elections- Travel expense- $235.60, Black Hills Chemical & Janitorial- Facilities- Supplies- $845.58, Black Hills Energy- Various- Utilities- $328.38, Bob Ruwart Motors, Inc.- Sheriff- Vehicle repairs- $93.36, Boldon Diesel Service, LLC.- Road & Bridge- Equipment repairs- $2,410.67, Boomtown Parking Lot Maintenance- Facilities- Maintenance- $2,534.25, Canon Financial Services, Inc.- General County- Copier lease payments- $710.00, CenturyLink- Various- Telephones- $1,227.05, CenturyLink Business Services- Various- Telephones- $70.56, Cindi Wood, CWLS- Clerk of Court- Court appointed attorney fees- $468.00, Clay Ritter- Sheriff- Supplies- $51.34, CNA Surety- General County- Treasurer's Bond- $200.00, Connecting Point Computer Centers- Various- Copier service agreements- $253.36, Converse County- General County- IT expense- $200.00, Cory Wilcox- Coroner- Deputy Coroner stipend & case assist- $450.00, Decker's Market- Various- Supplies- $15.18, Delta Dental of WY- Various- Dental insurance- $930.30, Dennis C. Meier- Circuit Court Magistrate- Office rent- $1,000.00, Double A Properties, LLC.- Various- Office rent- $1,500.00, Elections Systems & Software- Elections- Ballot prep, supplies, $9,060.76, Empower Trust Company, LLC.- General Co.- Deferred Compensation- $23,590.00, Fire Nebula Web Design- 250 Grant- IT expense- $412.00, Frank Parts Co.-Various- Parts, vehicle repairs- $623.15, Fusion Cloud Services, LLC.- Various- Telephones- $4,437.13, Geographic Innovations- Various- Professional mapping services- $1,500.00, GreatAmerica Financial Services- Sheriff - Copier service agreement- $103.00, Hometown Country- Detention- Uniforms- $168.00, Honey Badger Towing & Recovery, LLC.- Sheriff- Towing abandoned vehicles- $903.00, Jameson Cleaning & Maintenance- Facilities- Fairgrounds & public health building cleaning contracts, fairgrounds event booking contract- $10,050.00, Kassidy Miller- Prevention grant- Operational supports- $40.00, Lexie Painter- Extension- Contract labor- Fair board bookkeeping- $600.00, Lori Himes- Various- Mileage lister, supplies- $226.58, Lusk Herald- Various- Subscriptions & publications- $3,908.80, Lusk State Bank- General County- Payroll taxes- $47,538.61, Mark C. Hardee Law Office, P.C.- Clerk of Court- Court appointed attorney fees- $763.40, Medico-Mart, Inc.- PHN- Vaccines- $2,628.06, Merri Keller- PHN- Supplies- $40.00, NCIC Inmate Communications- Detention- NCIC Tablets- $746.93, Niobrara County Fair Board- Quarterly tax allocation- $26,167.32, Niobrara County Hospital District- 1% Tax Option- $23,860.29, Niobrara County Library- Reimbursement for def. comp.- $3,625.00, Niobrara County Public Health- Prevention Grant- Indirect costs- $288.02, Niobrara Election Association- Various- Radio tower electricity- $59.81, ODP Business Solutions, LLC.- Elections- Supplies- $665.40, Palen Law Offices, LLP.- Clerk of Court- Court appointed attorney fees - $1,404.00, Platt Custom Harvesting & Repair- Sheriff- Vehicle repairs- $200.00, Playbl- Prevention Grant- Education- $3,600.00, Porter, Muirhead, Cornia, & Howard- General County- Audit- $13,500.00, Richard A. Ladwig- 250 Grant- Supplies- $450.00, S|A|S Legal Group, LLC.- Clerk of Court- Court appointed attorney fees- $467.00, Smith Psychological Services- Dispatch- Employee medical- $800.00, Swanson Services Corp.- Detention- Inmate commissary- $234.32, The Master's Touch- Treasurer- Mailing service- $256.58, Thompson Safety, LLC.- Sheriff- Schools- $240.00, Thomson Reuters- West- County Attorney- Law library- $171.29, Total Response- Dispatch- Computer expense- $2,945.80, Town of Lusk- Various- Utilities- $3,381.01, Traci Bruegger- Facilities- CH, Library, Justice Center cleaning contract- $4,300.00, Tyler Technologies- Treasurer- Computer expenses-

$82.69, UW College of Ag, Live Sciences- Extension- Co share 4-H educator quarterly salary- $6,000.00, Verizon Wireless- Various- Phones, computer expense- $439.86, Visa- Various- Supplies, postage, dues, travel expense, maintenance, medical supplies, vehicle repairs, IT & computer expenses- $2,820.88, Vision Service Plan- Various- Vision Insurance- $398.86, Visionary Broadband- Various- IT expense- $551.60, Westco- Road & Bridge- Fuel- $3,677.89, WYDOT Financial Services- Various- Fuel- $3,202.56, Wyoming Dept. of Workforce Services- General County- Quarterly Worker's Comp. premium- $8,587.57, Wyoming Educators' Benefit Trust- General County- Health & life insurance- $39,950.95, Wyo Lawn & Tree- Facilities- Maintenance- $214.00, Wyoming Machinery Company- Road & Bridge- Parts, equipment repairs- $2,361.21, Wyoming Network- General Co.,- IT expense- $200.00, Wyoming Retirement System- General County- Law enforcement retirement- $17,896.09, Wyoming Women's Center- Detention- Inmate meals- $1,964.70, Zetron Inc.- Dispatch- Computer expense- $6,800.00, September Total- $473,760.04.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

NIOBRARA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Patrick Wade, Chairman

STATE OF WYOMING COUNTY CLERK COUNTY OF NIOBRARA

Becky L. Freeman, County Clerk