

MINUTES of the REGION 26 COUNCIL

December 30, 2025

Region 26 Council:

Present:

Blaine Co: Matt Eggert
Garfield Co: Diana Hurlburt
Loup Co: Dave Larson
Ord, City of: Branden Stoural
Sherman Co: Tom Bandur, Vice-Chair
Valley Co: Theresa Petska
Wheeler Co: Doug Pokorny
Law Enforce: Joel Bergman
Tri-Co Municipalities:
Valley, Greeley, Sherman
Jay Meyer, Chairman

Absent:

Greeley Co: Jordan Foltz
Thomas Co: Joseph Smith
Range Co. Municipalities:
Thomas, Blaine, Loup, Garfield, Wheeler
Paige Ryschon

Staff Present: Alma Beland/Director, Virginia Michalski/Office Manager, Catie Larsen/Deputy EM, Miki Gerten/Dispatch CTO

Visitors Present: Caden Johnson/Dispatcher, Scott Philbrick/Valley County EM, Corey Troyer/Platte Valley Communications, Dale King/Wheeler County Sheriff, Bronson Meyer

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Chairman Meyer. Notice of the meeting and agenda were sent to County Clerks of each member county for posting and given in advance to all members of the Board.

Roll Call was taken with nine (9) members present.

The meeting being duly posted and a quorum present, the Chairman proclaimed this meeting to be a legal meeting and acknowledged that the Open Meeting Act was posted in the meeting room.

Motion by Diana Hurlburt and seconded by Dave Larson to approve the agenda.
Ayes (8) Nays (0) Abstain (0).

Motion by Diana Hurlburt and seconded by Doug Pokorny to approve the November 25, 2025 Minutes.
Ayes (7) Nays (0) Abstain (1).

Public Comment: None

In reviewing the Financial Statement for November, it was discussed and the board decided to go ahead and move the interest from our accounts into a new NPAIT account marked as interest and funds can be used as needed but kept separate to know what our interest is. Diana Hurlburt made mention that the budget is getting tight for our travel expense and we needed to be watching that. Motion by Tom Bandur and seconded by Branden Stoural to approve the November 2025 Financial Statement. Ayes (9) Nays (0) Abstain (0).

Tower & Equipment Report:

- The Garfield project has been completed that involved new repeaters and antennas for paging and radios at the existing tower north of Burwell for the Burwell frequency; a new repeater and antenna at the Ord tower site that is facing north to reach eastern Garfield County which will be

called the Garfield frequency and have better coverage for the east and be beneficial for Ericson and Bartlett when assisting with mutual aid in the area. This was paid for with Garfield ARPA funds and did provide programming of radios for Burwell, Ericson and Bartlett to have the Garfield frequency.

- On the Greeley tower Alma had not heard anything more from Stealth on what they were wanting to install on the tower. Jay would be monitoring the tower. The lighting has not been repaired yet and Corey/Platte Valley said they were having some problems with it and he would check with Grand Island to see if they are getting it resolved. Alma said she wanted to check on cost for replacing all tower lights with LED lighting that maybe would take care of the problems. Lumen Serve Lighting had contacted Alma on changing tower lights to LED and what they would do for maintenance. With problems we have been having with light outages it was worth checking into what the cost were to change to a longer lasting LED light. Their cost was approximately \$18,000 per tower and then a monthly monitoring fee. Platte Valley will also do LED lights and the board asked if Corey could look into their costs for us.
- Loup City had a power outage recently and the generator came on but it did not transfer power. Sheriff Bergman said that Tim with Power Tech talked him through manual transferring power, however Platte Valley still had to come out to put in new power supply for repeater.

Radio & Communications: Branden Stoural gave an update on the FirstNet radio communications project. He provided a project outline and reviewed the purpose of the effort, which is to create an alternate communication option using the Region 26 radio system. The intent of the project was for an improvement of reaching Region 26 with handheld or portable radios with consistent clear communications.

FirstNet was originally approached to develop a solution for the Ord Police Department, but discussions expanded to consider building the ROIP system at Region 26 so multiple departments could benefit. Branden explained that the concept uses a cellular device, such as the Sonim devise he had from First Net, to simulcast over the cellular network into the Region 26 high-band radio system. This would allow a user's voice to travel from the cellular network into the radio network and out through the repeater system for wider coverage to those currently on the radio network with existing radios.

Branden also reviewed additional capabilities of the system. Fire departments would be able to use a standard cell phone with the push-to-talk app, and departments without a radio license could still receive transmissions through their existing radios on the designated frequency. Using this system would not disrupt normal radio traffic; it simply provides improved coverage for users whose handheld or portable radios struggle to reach Region 26.

Branden noted that each radio channel would require its own FirstNet ROIP "cubic box," with each box supporting one frequency at a cost of \$6,275. If wired internet is not available, there would be a recurring cost of \$40 per month for connectivity. Departments also have the option to purchase their own licenses if they want private talk groups.

There would be no impact to dispatch operations. While the cubic box could be installed at Region 26, placing all channels at a single location could create a single point of failure. Installing a box at each county would avoid that risk. However, the risk would be low. If the system goes down, radio users would need to switch to a mobile radio since it would only affect the handheld devices.

Branden noted that a trial test of the system is available. There was a question about digital-to-analog voice quality, but Corey from Platte Valley said it should not be an issue when coming off the console.

There were questions about licensing, how many frequencies could be supported, and whether placing a box at a tower site could serve multiple departments. Savings may be possible by stacking units, and placing the box at Region 26 could reduce costs. Corey recommended testing a standalone setup before tying it into the console. Branden will continue working with FirstNet to gather build-out costs and we will begin discussions with departments about their interest in the project.

Communications Center Report:

Statistics breakdown for the previous month were passed out. They had 1379 Status, 314 Paging, 268 Wants/Warrants/Registrations, 153 Traffic Violations, 130 Messages, 106 Rescue Calls, 71 Livestock Complaint, 69 Standby for Events/Fire/Training, 68 Minor Detail, 66 Assist Other Agencies, 64 - 911 Accidental/Disconnect, 56 Gun Permits, 42 Assist Citizen, 31 Reckless Driver, 29 Animal Calls, 27 Accidents, 27 Burn Permits, 18 Paper Service, 13 Alarms, 13 Patient Transport, 12 Check Welfare, 11 Siren, 10 Disturbance/Harassment/Assault, 10 Fire Calls, 9 Follow Up, 9 Miscellaneous Tasks, 9 Motorist Assist, 9 Radio Test, 9 Suspicious Person/Transient, 9 Traffic Hazard, 8 Keys Locked in Vehicle, 8 Mutual Aid, 8 Suspicious Vehicle, 7 Direct Traffic/Funeral/Escort, 7 Suspicious Events, 7 Transfer 911 Call, 6 Arrest, 5 Suicidal Threats/Attempts, 4 Missing Person/Juvenile, 4 Uncontrollable Juvenile, 3 Civil Matters, 3 Death Investigation, 3 Prisoner Transport, 3 Special Assignment, 2 Utilities Complaint/Outage, 2 Weather and 15 various other incidents. Total number of contacts to the Communications Center for the month of October 2025 was 3136 which included 297 – 911 calls that had 18 abandoned calls and 1 text to 911 call. Also, there were 1,462 administrative calls into dispatch only.

The breakdown for November was 1264 Status, 295 Wants/Warrants/Registrations, 270 Paging, 163 Traffic Violations, 112 Messages, 90 Minor Detail, 76 Rescue Calls, 66 Assist Other Agencies, 56 Livestock Complaint, 55 Assist Citizen, 48 - 911 Accidental/Disconnect/Test, 38 Gun Permits, 37 Accidents, 25 Animal Calls, 25 Mutual Aid, 21 Reckless Driver, 20 Traffic Hazard, 19 Paper Service, 19 Patient Transport, 17 Fire Calls, 14 Burn Permits, 14 Standby for Events/Fire/Training, 12 Siren, 11 Direct Traffic/Funeral/Escort, 11 Disturbance/Harassment/Assault, 10 Arrests, 9 Follow-Up, 8 Alarms, 8 Check Welfare, 8 Motorist Assist, 7 Miscellaneous Tasks, 7 Uncontrollable Juvenile, 6 Radio Test, 5 Keys Locked in Vehicle, 5 Property Damage, 5 Suspicious Events, 5 Suspicious Vehicle, 4 Fraudulent Activity, 4 Suspicious Person, 4 Transfer 911 Call, 3 Gas Leak, 3 Prisoner Transport, 3 Special Assignment, 3 Terroristic Threats, 2 Burglary, 2 Child Abuse/Neglect, 2 Gas Drive-Off, 2 Suicidal threats/Attempts, 2 Theft and 13 various other incidents. Total number of contacts to the Communications Center for the month of November was 2908 which included 236 – 911 calls that had 12 abandoned calls and 1 text to 911 call. Also, there were 1,532 administrative calls into dispatch only.

Miki Gerten/Dispatch CTO reported on recent communications center activities. At the December staff meeting and Christmas gathering, Catie had presented certificates of recognition to Caden Johson for 5 years of service, Libby and Alma for over 20 years of service, Virginia for over 35 years and Donna for over 45 years. Following recent interviews, two candidates—Meggan Myers and Darien Blatchford—were selected and will begin dispatch training on January 6th.

Miki also reviewed 12 dispatch job functions that require additional training. Currently, only Donna and Miki are trained in all of these areas. Her goal is to expand training so more staff are able to provide coverage and backup across all functions. Miki requested that she and Catie be added to the fire department rosters to receive Page My Cell notifications so they can be aware when additional help is needed. Currently, only Donna and Alma receive these calls. Alma noted she could contact each department to request the additions, pending Board approval. The Board approved the request. Miki requested authorization to send possibly two dispatchers to a CTO training. A course is offered by NENA in January at Blair, and she hopes to send one dispatcher to that session. Miki stated it is going to be too much for her to be able to train two new employees all the time during dispatching shifts and doing the other required jobs as well and will need assistance. The budget came into question on what we had and the board agreed that it would be necessary to send someone of Miki's choosing to the next training.

Jay Meyer made a motion to go into executive session and seconded by Tom Bandur to discuss contract negotiations with Wheeler County. Ayes (9) Nays (0) Abstain (0). Executive session entered into at 8:09 pm. Dave Larson made the motion to come out of executive session at 9:52 pm with a second from Branden Stoural. No action taken.

Jay Meyer requested that the remaining CARES funding be placed on this agenda. The original plan was to use part of these funds to rebuild the old dispatch building for use as storage and a garage for the Region 26 pickup. Jay asked that the Board move forward with tearing down the old building and constructing a new structure for that purpose. Discussion followed regarding the demolition process, obtaining bids for new construction, and whether the existing concrete floor would need to be replaced. Dave Larson will gather construction bids for the next meeting, and it was noted that the Board may be able to handle the demolition of the old building. We can start clearing out the storage items and place in the existing rental location for purpose of tear down. Theresa Petska made a motion with a second from Diana Hurlburt to tear down the old dispatch building. Ayes (9) Nays (0) Abstain (0).

Catie Larsen brought up the employee handbook draft that had been sent out to the Board to review. She asked if they could approve the handbook tonight so that it could go into effect on January 1st. Tom Bandur made a motion to approve the handbook draft to go into effect on January 1st with a second from Dave Larson. Ayes (9) Nays (0) Abstain (0).

Catie also had new confidentiality forms for the board to sign and a separate one for employees to sign. These were updated and a little more detailed than what we had in the past and needed signed annually. Catie asked for the board to look them over and sign or bring back changes they would want.

Catie had Ian assist in the research for the laptops that are needed and she presented a laptop quote to the board from Dell to purchase two laptops for the office and one for training classes for dispatch which would be shipped to Applied Connective to get set-up and have the security installs done. Branden Stoural made a motion to purchase three laptops for \$749.99 each with a second from Diana Hurlburt. Ayes (9) Nays (0) Abstain (0).

Alma wanted the board to be aware that we requested Applied Connective to begin the process of transitioning the Region 26 domain to a .gov address, which will result in new email accounts ending in region26ne.gov. This change is being implemented for security purposes and was recommended by counties in the North Central Region since Region 26 serves as Fiscal Agent and submits financial information on their behalf.

Criminal Justice Board Report: Sheriff Joel Bergman had nothing to report.

Director's Report:

- Audit Books were presented from the auditor on the completed financial audit.
- Alma had a copy of the insurance appraisal report on equipment, towers and buildings
- CodeRED has been reinstalling info into our account and doing training modules with us for the new Crisis 24 platform.
- Alma joined a statewide conference call for the Task Force/Strike Teams. It was an end-of-year check-in to talk about this year's fire call-outs and how things went overall. The group also did an after-action review on the Custer County Complex fires and the Plum Creek fire, sharing what worked well and what could be improved for next time.
- Alma and Catie attended the NACO Conference in Kearney. NEMA shared FEMA grant updates, most of which we'd already heard. The 2025 grant, originally expected in September, may now be released in January. Alma noted we'll need to move quickly once it opens, especially if we receive additional ALPR cameras.
- Alma shared that she has turned the Flock camera project over to Catie, who is now working with the counties on credentialing and training. Catie reported that the remaining cameras should be installed soon, as Flock is in the process of scheduling the final installs. She also explained that the counties will need credentialing and training for when cameras go live.
- We joined the first weekly ice jam conference call for this winter with Hastings Weather service that was held yesterday with the emergency managers near rivers that can have issues.

- Alma stated that a draft of the Wheeler County LEOP had been turned in to NEMA and also a copy sent to the Wheeler County EM. Alma said she would be attending the next Wheeler County meeting for their approval and resolution.
- The EMS Squad Captains in Region 26 will have annual meeting here on January 7th.
- Catie reported on the trainings she has been lining up in the North Central Region working with her committee and the first will be a Salamander credentialing meeting here with the other North Central Region emergency managers to bring our credentialing equipment to train to help us utilize the equipment better that we have. Another training to involve the board members will be an Elected official and Emergency Manager training together on working a disaster. Three training classes will be held across the Region with one on March 23rd in Ord at the firehall.

Other Business: Branden Stoural said they would be having a training exercise in Ord on January 21st that will involve the Swat Team with an active shooter situation.

Next regular meeting date will be January 27, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.

Chairman Meyer adjourned the meeting at 9:39 p.m.

Alma Beland, Director/Coordinator

ACRONYMS

ALI – Automatic Location Identification (for 911)
ANI – Automatic Number Identification (for 911)
APCO – Assoc. of Public Communications Officials
ASR # – Antenna Structure Registration (Tower ID #)
CAD – Computer Aided Dispatch
CC – Communications Center
CERT – Community Emergency Response Team
CJIS – Criminal Justice Information System
COADs – Community Organizations Active in Disasters
COOP – Continuity of Operations Planning
COVID-19 – Coronavirus Disease 2019
C.R.I.M.E.S. – Calls & Records Information Management Software (part of Justice Data Solutions)
CTO – Chief Training Officer
DEE – was DEQ ... Changed to DWEE July 2025
DHHS – Department of Health & Human Services (State)
DHS – Department of Homeland Security
DR – Disaster Recovery
DOT – Department of Transportation - (NDOT) Nebraska
DWEE – Department of Water, Environmental & Energy (State)
E911 – Enhanced 911
EAS – Emergency Alert System (FEMA)
ECW – Emergency Call Works (Reg 26 911 Equip)
EM – Emergency Manager
EMD – Emergency Medical Dispatch
EMPG – Emergency Management Performance Grant
EMS – Emergency Medical Services
EMT – Emergency Medical Technician
EOC – Emergency Operations Center
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency (Federal)
ERG – Emergency Response Guide (Orange Book – Hazardous Materials)
FAA – Federal Aviation Admin. (Report tower light outages)
FADD – Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostician
FCC – Federal Communications Commission (for Radio Frequency Licenses)
FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency
FMD – Foot and Mouth Disease (Livestock)
FY – Fiscal Year
GAN – Grant Adjustment Notice (aka Grant Award)
GIS – Geographic Information System
GPS – Global Positioning System
gWORKS – Public information on Property by County
HAZMAT – Hazardous Materials
HHS – Health and Human Services (Federal)
HSGP – Homeland Security Grant Program
ICS – Incident Command System
IPAWS – Integrated Public Alert Warning System
IPPW – Integrated Preparedness Planning Workshop
J.A.M.I.N. – Jail Administration Management Information Network (Part of Justice Data Solutions)
JDS – Justice Data Solutions (Law Enforcement Records Management & CAD software system)
LASO – Local Agency Security Officer

LBF – Lee Bird Field – North Platte (Airport) Weather Service Location
LBPHE – Loup Basin Public Health Department (covers Blaine, Loup, Garfield, Wheeler, Greeley, Valley, Sherman)
LE – Law Enforcement
LEPC – Local Emergency Planning Committee
LEDRS – Livestock Emergency Disease Response System
LEOP – Local Emergency Operations Plan
MACH – Mobile Architecture for Communications Handling
MRC – Medical Reserve Corp
NACO – Nebraska Association of County Officials
NAEM – Nebr. Association of Emergency Managers
NEMA – Nebraska Emergency Management Agency
NENA – National Emergency Number Association
NESCA – NE Emergency Services Communicators Association
***NCR** – North Central Region* (see below)
NIMS – National Incident Management System
NIRMA – NE Intergovernmental Risk Management Association
NRIN – Nebraska Regional Interoperable Network
NX-Gen – Next Generation 911
PD – Police Department
***PET** – Planning Exercise Training* (see below)
POD – Points of Dispensing (Immunization)
PPE – Personal Protective Equipment
PMC – Page My Cell (secondary Paging to Depts.)
PSAP – Public Safety Answering Point (911 Centers)
PSC – Public Service Commission
PVC – Platte Valley Communications
RFP – Request for Proposal
RoIP – Radio over Internet Protocol
SEAT – Single Engine Air Tanker
SEOC – State Emergency Operation Center
SHSP – State Homeland Security Program
SME – Subject Matter Expert (Homeland Security Grants)
SO – Sheriff's Office
SRS – State Radio System
T-CPR – Telecommunicator CPR
THIRA – Threat & Hazard Identification & Risk Assessment
UPS – Universal Power Supply (workstation backup power supply until generator starts)
VFD – Volunteer Fire Department
VOAD – Volunteer Organization Aiding Disasters
VoIP – Voice over Internet Protocol
V-TAC – Mutual Aid VHF Frequency Channels
WEA – Wireless Emergency Alert
WCDHD – West Cent. District Hlth Dept. (Covers Thomas)
W.H.O. – World Health Organization
WPC – Weather Prediction Center – Norman, OK
WIRAT – Wildland Incident Response Assistance Team
WMD – Weapons of Mass Destruction

*** North Central PET Region Includes:**

Keith, Arthur, Grant, Hooker, McPherson, Logan, Custer, Cherry-
Keya Paha, Brown-Rock, Boyd-Holt and Region 26: (Thomas,
Blaine, Loup, Garfield, Wheeler, Greeley, Valley and Sherman)