

The Barnes County Commission met in regular session on Tuesday, March 17, 2026 with Bill Carblom, Mike Schwehr, Vicky Lovell, Pete Paulson, and Shawn Olauson. Chairman Bill Carblom called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m., roll call was taken, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and the agenda was reviewed.

Vicky Lovell made a motion to amend the agenda to add the release of covid dollars funding for the Barnes County Water Resource District. Pete Paulson seconded the motion. The motion carried with all members voting yes upon roll call vote..

The Barnes County Water Resource District is requesting release of the balance of their covid dollars funding for the Little Dam project. The balance is \$265,694.61. Shawn Olauson made a motion to release the covid dollar request; Vicky Lovell seconded the motion. Motion carried upon roll call vote with all members voting yes.

Public Comments

Several concerned individuals spoke regarding the proposed Conditional Use Permit a proposed hog farm located in the NE¼ of Section 13-142-57 in Grand Prairie Township. Marilyn Henderson, Madeline Luke, Aaron Henderson, Vicki Voldal Rosenau, Scott Ulmer, Gayle Burchill, and Jack Ertelt expressed concerns, some of which are regarding the company's presence in China, compacity of the Spiritwood Aquafer, locally owned grain purchases, results of fertilizer on soil, water quality downstream from facility, air pollution, diseases, cancer, forcing small family farms out, what happens when a breach takes place, maintenance of roads, property tax, set back area, asking to delay decision one month, antibody resistance, worn out welcome in other states, source and amount of water used. David Bullerman of Son-D-Farms and the Karges family would like to diversify their farm in order to keep this generation and generations to come on the family farm. To accomplish this, they have decided Pipestone Systems aligned best with their passion and goal of pig farming. Son-D-Farms value stewardship, animal care, and responsible farming and are asking for the approval of a Condition Use Permit for the hog farm being proposed. Nick Fitzgerald explained Pipestone would be the management company. The Bullerman family would still be the owner. Pipestone does interact internationally, with clients that raise pigs, including in China and Mexico in management of facilities. The farm would use approximately 40,000 gallons of water per day. They will consult with Barnes Rural Water and supplement with wells. They will be entering into road use agreements with the townships and county. Blackhawk Farms needs good roads for staff and freight so they will be responsible for the cost of maintaining and operating the roads. Cleaning takes place each day. Nathan Pesta explained that the structures are designed with Midwestern Client Service 36 and ACI 318 Structural Code. Concrete pits are designed to hold manure for up to 16 months storage. Proactive drain tile leak detection monitoring system around foundation of the pit providing real time integrity insurance. The structure is designed where runoff is captured and filtered and controlled on-site through divergent and storm water basin to control any storm water coming off. There are high standards of environmental stewardship and regulatory compliance and technological innovation. Tom Bodine with the ND Agriculture Department, Marty Haroldson with the ND Environmental Control, Tamra Heinz with the ND Pork Council, Amber Wood with the ND Livestock Alliance explained the strict standards that are applied including odor standards, annual manure nutrient compliance inspections, Nutrient Management Plans, Pollution Management, and how local and state standards are followed. Jennifer Feist, VC-BC Development Corporation supports Blackhawk Farms contingent that all state and local requirements are met. Terry Entzinger, dairy farm operator, explained the operations are very well policed and trucks do not enter the barns to get manure on the tires to pass on down the roads. Mike Clemens stated the value added to farms brings people back to farms and keeps them viable. Farmers benefit from having the manure applied to their fields. They have not had any problems with roads, and the aquafer will have no issues supplying the water needed. Casey Drege represents clients in like matters and stated the commission must render decision based on state law and facts or support evidence. Denial or delay needs to be articulated. Litigation can take years. Barnes County States Attorney, Tonya Duffy, agreed with Casey Drege's statements. Dwight Kiefert, District 24, serves on the ND Ag Committee. The main concerns that people have has been addressed at the state level and sessions are open to the public. He also stated to be aware of special interest groups from out of state. Many letters of support were also submitted to the commission regarding the pros and cons of approving the hog farm facility. Tonya Duffy re-iterated that decision needs to be made based on meeting the standards and on factual findings.

Planning & Zoning

Discussion took place on a Conditional Use permit which was presented for Blackhawk Farms RE, LLP located in the NE ¼ 13-142-57 in Grand Prairie Township for establishing a hog farm of 8,511 pigs. Planning and Zoning Board approved the permit.

Nick Fitzgerald stated 16 full-time employees will be on-site staff. Payroll for the on-site staff will be 1.221 million dollars with fully sponsored employer health care. The average payroll with the benefits and retirement plan is \$76,000.00 per team member. Entry level is \$50,000.00. Recruitment will be locally first. There will be no housing on site. Vicky Lovell is expressed concern if there will be an adequate water supply. Tonya Duffy explained that under state statue, there is a certain list of things that the county commissioners may not do. Commissions cannot make findings that are not based on fact. There was no testimony received that there would be a water issue. Testimony and comments received were that if there is not enough water, the facility would not be built. The farm could not be sustained if water were not available. Testimony is that Barnes Rural Water will be used with a well as backup. Pete Paulson made a motion to go ahead with the CUP; Mike Schwehr seconded the motion. During

discussion, read by Commissioner Carlblom, the six points made by statute for the CUP are as follows: 1) That the establishment, maintenance, or operation of the conditional use will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, morals, comfort, or general welfare. 2) That the uses, values, and enjoyment of other property in the area for purposes already permitted shall be in no foreseeable manner substantially impaired or diminished by the establishment, maintenance, or operation of conditional use. 3) That the establishment of the conditional use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding properties for uses permitted in the district. 4) That adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, and other necessary site improvements have been or are being provided. 5) That adequate measures have been or will be taken to provide ingress and egress so designed as to minimize traffic impact on the area. 6) That the conditional use shall substantially conform to all applicable regulations of the district in which it is located. The motion carried upon roll call vote with Commissioners Olauson, Paulson, Carlblom, and Schwehr voting yes. Commissioner Lovell voted no due her belief that the utility aspect of point 4 was not provided at the time of this meeting..

A setback variance located in the NE ¼ 26-140-59 of Hobart Township was presented for Shawn and Karla Ranisate for an addition onto the south side of their house. Bill Carlblom made a motion to approve the variance; Shawn Olauson seconded the motion. The motion carried with all members voting yes upon roll-call vote. A setback variance located in Ashtabula Township, Lots 5 and 6 Jewett Beach Section 210 and 22-148-58 for a cabin located 5' from the south property line on Lot 5 and a shed 7' from the north property line on Lot 6. Shawn Olauson made a motion to approve the variance; Vicky Lovell seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously upon roll call vote with all members voting yes. Building permits were reviewed.

MIS Department

Information was presented for changing the system the county uses to backup various Windows servers with a package called Datto which includes local hardware backups in the cost. This system will enable bringing a server online on its own in the event of a hardware failure and has automated checks of the backups. Restores are faster and this system provides added protection against malware using immutability. The cost is \$5,490.45 per month for a total of \$65,885.40 annually. There is a one-time setup fee of \$810.00 which would be split 50/50 with the City of Valley City. The City of Valley City will be billed monthly for their portion of the cost. Vicky Lovell moved to approve the Datto system; Mike Schwehr seconded the motion. The motion carried with all members voting yes upon roll call vote.

Corrections

Jeremy Wolff is requesting to attend the Law Enforcement Training Academy. This is a twelve-week training course which he would be attending if the commissioners approved. By passing this course, he would be able to be a backup for a sheriff's deputy in the Sheriff's Office if needed. Corrections is short one correctional officer. The commissioners felt at this time that Jeremy's time is too valuable to be gone for a 12-week period of time. They may reconsider the decision at a later time.

Auditor's Office

Mike Schwehr moved to approve the March 3, 2026 minutes as presented. Shawn Olauson seconded the motion. Motion carried upon roll call vote with all members voting yes. The Barnes County Water Resource District is short on funds to make their bond payment and are requesting release of the balance of their covid dollars funding for the Little Dam project. The balance is \$265,694.61. Shawn Olauson made a motion to release the covid dollar request; Vicky Lovell seconded the motion. Motion carried upon roll call vote with all members voting yes. The publishing Barnes County Water Resource agenda was discussed. Barnes County Water Resource is not required by law to publish their meeting agendas. Shawn Olauson made a motion to rescind the motion made years ago stating that the Barnes County Water Resource publish their meeting agenda; Vicky Lovell seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously upon roll call vote with all members voting yes.

Commission Discussion

Pete attended the Hazard Mitigation Meeting. Eldred Knutson informed Pete that the State VA has three vans up for sale. Two are old and have high mileage and one is a 2017 Ford transit van with 40,000 miles and they are asking \$30,000.00. These options do not fit our needs. Shawn Olauson gave an update on Clausen Springs Dam and Browns Dam. Upper Sheyenne River Joint Water Resource is holding their meeting at the Eagles. Snagging and Clearing is finished for this year. The museum is getting showcases from Sargeant County Museum. The board raised the wage for Wes. Mike Schwehr gave an update on City County Health District. They are remodeling the check-in area to make it more private. A Versa grant was received for the project. Vicky informed us applications for CVDG grants open on May 28th and Energy Conservation Grant applications are open until May 14th through the Department of Commerce called Innovate ND. Bill Carlblom gave an update on pipe and Asbestos removal from the pipe running from the tunnel in the courthouse basement to the jail. Funding for the HVAC system was discussed.

With no further business, Vicky Lovell made a motion, seconded by Shawn Olauson, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously, with all members voting "aye" and the meeting was adjourned at 10:06 a.m.

Bill Carlblom, Chairman
Barnes County Commission
Julie Mindt
Barnes County Auditor