

WORK SESSION OF THE MOWER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

March 3, 2026

The Mower County Board of Commissioners in and for the County of Mower, Minnesota, met in Work Session March 3, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. at the Government Center in Austin, Minnesota.

All members present, viz: Chair Dan Sparks, Vice-Chair Mike Ankeny, Jerry Reinartz, John Mueller and Polly Glynn. Also in attendance were County Administrator/Clerk Matthew Verdick.

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Board received a Bond 101 overview from Ehlers advisors Dan Tienter and Nick Anhut, who reviewed key principles of municipal bonding, capital financing options, and current market considerations for the Public Works Campus project. They explained pay-as-you-go versus pay-as-you-use financing, general obligation debt, interest rate structures, credit ratings, and the advantages of tax-exempt borrowing.

Ehlers outlined the bond issuance process, including planning and authorization, competitive bidding, Board actions at pre-sale and award, call features, refinancing options, arbitrage rules, and ongoing disclosure requirements. They discussed financing scenarios for the three project options—remodel, addition, or new facility—and potential revenue sources such as sales tax, wheelage tax, and other funds.

Next steps include holding a public hearing to set the maximum borrowing amount, followed by a 30-day reverse referendum period. If no petition is filed, the County may proceed toward bond issuance. Ehlers emphasized conservative planning, coordination with staff, and aligning financing with final project costs, and they offered continued support as the County moves forward.

The County Engineer presented an overview of the department's funding structure and ongoing budgeting considerations. He outlined the five primary highway funding sources, including State Aid, Local Option Sales Tax, wheelage tax, wind tax, and the general tax levy, noting current revenues and upcoming discussions such as renewing the Local Option Sales Tax and potentially increasing the wheelage tax from \$10 to \$20. He also explained the complexities of State Aid distribution, township bridge funding, and the rationale behind dedicating specific tax revenues to highway purposes. Discussion included concerns about state actions affecting local revenues and the longstanding statutory responsibilities the County holds for bridges over 48 inches.

He further reviewed project costs, system needs, and long-term maintenance expectations, including typical road lifespans, annual mileage targets, bridge and culvert responsibilities, and strategies for maximizing State Aid through route designation changes.

Board members discussed township cost participation levels for bridge projects, the feasibility of increasing contributions to \$20,000, and historical statutes guiding bridge ownership. The Engineer also addressed urban versus rural project funding considerations, culvert sizing issues, and coordination with cities.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 2:52 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for March 10, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

THE MOWER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

BY: DAN SPARKS
Chairperson

Attest:
By: M u V
Clerk/Administrator