

WORK SESSION OF THE MOWER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

May 5, 2026

The Mower County Board of Commissioners in and for the County of Mower, Minnesota, met in Work Session May 5, 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 and County Attorney Kristen Nelsen.

The Board work session was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Board received an update on the PowerOn Midwest transmission project from Great River Energy representatives Mike Frank and Dan Leshner, who outlined project benefits such as improved electric reliability, economic gains, and preparation for future grid needs, along with an estimated tax revenue of roughly \$30,000 per mile per county. They explained that landowners retain property ownership within the 125-foot easement on each side of the line and that agricultural use can generally continue, with only tower bases affecting fields. Route permitting is underway with scoping meetings completed, public comments accepted until May 20, and formal hearings expected in late 2026. Multiple route corridors are being evaluated through open houses and public input, with a final route anticipated by early 2027; efforts prioritize minimizing impacts by following existing corridors, township or field lines, and maintaining straight routes to control costs. Questions from commissioners addressed right-of-way proximity, potential impacts near homes, stray voltage evaluation, local power distribution, and considerations related to data centers and utility interconnections, all of which will be further examined through environmental review and ongoing route development.

County Engineer Mitch Wenum reported that the County Road 7 bridge project is nearly complete with approaches underway and expected completion in late May or early June, and noted that replacing bridges is less expensive than lining them but causes greater traffic disruption. He outlined progress on roadway work south of Elkton, upcoming milling on County Road 15 and County Road 57, full-depth reclamation around May 20, and township bridge projects beginning after July 4, along with a May 21 bid opening for the Adams Shop remodel and work on a county road box culvert. County Road 4 improvements are planned for next year, and additional project details and bridge images were provided in handouts and are available online or by contacting the Engineer.

Sheriff Steve Sandvik reviewed organizational changes over the past year, noting solid performance across the department including Chief Deputy David Pike support, Captain Lynch's move to the County Attorney's Office supporting court investigations, James Brown's leadership as Jail Administrator. He reported on the department's successful response to the June 2025 cyber incident, during which the ARMER system remained fully

functional and continuity plans allowed operations to continue “old school,” leading to shared learning with other counties and a transition of RMS/CAD systems to cloud-based platforms to increase resilience. Staffing updates included two new deputies in onboarding and continued use of wellness resources, with 300 hours of resilience check-ins utilized by staff. Operational highlights included 11,468 calls for service, contracted patrol hours for Adams, Lyle, and LeRoy, ongoing investigative mutual-aid work, and approximately 150 court-security transports. Jail operations reported an average daily population of 42 inmates, a 10-day average stay, and \$198,000 in cost recovery, while navigating unfunded mandates such as pharmaceutical requirements and adjusting to the closure of one housing pod. PSAP staff handled an average of 107 daily calls—mostly non-emergency—while managing staffing challenges and maintaining certification and ongoing training. Additional updates included significant civil-process volume, emergency-management training exercises, community outreach efforts, and continued monthly training and responses from the joint SIRT team.

Proposed personnel policies changes that will be presented at the next meeting were shared with the Board for their information and input prior to approval.

Following a brief discussion the Board directed staff to reschedule the June 2, 2026 Work Session from 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 a.m. to accommodate times for outside agencies to present 2027 budget requests.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 2:54 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for at 9:00 a.m.

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THE MOWER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

BY: DAN SPARKS
Chairperson

Attest:
By: [Signature]
Clerk/Administrator