

WORK SESSION OF THE MOWER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

June 2, 2026

The Mower County Board of Commissioners in and for the County of Mower, Minnesota, met in Work Session June 2, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. at the Government Center in Austin, Minnesota.

All members present, viz: Chair Dan Sparks, Vice-Chair Mike Ankeny, Jerry Reinartz (*arrived 9:10*), John Mueller and Polly Glynn. Also in attendance were County Administrator/Clerk Matthew Verdick and County Attorney Kristen Nelsen.

The Board heard 2027 budget presentations from several outside agencies, beginning with the Whitewater Project, which highlighted design progress, community support, and an estimated \$10.7 million project cost, requesting County financial participation alongside anticipated City, Hormel, and foundation contributions. The Historical Society requested maintaining prior funding levels (\$68,000 *(plus \$10,500 for maintenance)*) to support exhibits, tours, and upcoming America 250 activities. The Soil & Water Conservation District requested \$175,000, consistent with previous years, to continue water quality, agricultural conservation, and watershed initiatives. The SE MN Initiative Fund requested \$1,500, again matching prior support, to continue economic development, early childhood, and community vitality grants. SEMCAC requested \$6,000 for the senior nutrition program and provided updates on Head Start facility construction challenges. SE MN Emergency Medical Services requested \$5,000, the same as last year, to support regional EMS training and coordination. The Mower County Senior Center requested the same funding level as the previous year (\$56,000 + \$36,000 for CHORE) to continue serving a growing membership, meal programs, and senior services while noting facility needs such as restroom upgrades. The Ag Society reported ongoing fairgrounds maintenance and upgrades and presented a 2027 funding request of \$79,000 (which includes \$45,000 allocated for operations) plus \$15,000 for maintenance. The funding is to support maintenance, operations and planned improvements, including the replacement of the deteriorating barnyard structure with a new open-air facility.

Correctional Services Director Steve King noted for the board that Sentence to Serve (STS) Crew Leader Matt Ziebell joined the Correctional Services Department about a year ago as STS was brought in-house after a 25% Department of Corrections funding reduction. Ziebell reported that 82% of STS work hours support county property and maintenance needs, with additional work for local governments and nonprofits, including tax-forfeited property cleanouts and recycling. STS continues a strong working relationship with the Jail, offering pro-social activities and skill development. A \$100,000 Legacy Grant was recently awarded, with STS hours eligible as matching funds.

Veteran Services Officer Rodney Streich reported continued strong activity with approximately 20 daily interactions and steady community support driven largely by word of mouth and outreach at legions and memorial events. The veteran transport van averages about 25 users per month. The Veterans Memorial is approximately 90% complete, though paver orders were delayed due to a supplier issue; the goal is to reopen by Flag Day. The office will

be seeking grant funding for memorial lighting, is addressing a statewide shortage of cemetery flag holders, and continues assisting veterans with Honor Flight applications, with the September flight already full.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for June 9, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

THE MOWER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

BY: DAN SPARKS
Chairperson

Attest:

By: Maria W. Verheid
Clerk/Administrator