



Winnebago County

The Wave of the Future

**PERSONNEL & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2026**

A. Call to Order

Chairman Cox called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

Members Present: 5 - Chairman Morris Cox, Supervisor Steven Binder, Supervisor Stephanie Holt, Supervisor Don Nussbaum, Supervisor George Bureau

Also Present at the Meeting:

*Julie Barthels, County Clerk
Tori Kinderman, Deputy Clerk
Jamie Rouch, Director of Administration
Paul Kaiser, Director of Finance
Mark Habeck, Director of Human Resources
Mary Anne Mueller, Corporation Counsel
Stephanie Sauter, Paralegal for Corporation Counsel
Captain Lara Vendola, Sheriff's Office
Adam Breest, Director of Parks
Bob Doemel, Highway Commissioner
Adam Dorn, GIS Administrator
Michael Schuh, Finance
Diana Hellmann, Deputy Treasurer
Renee Soroko, Interim Director of Human Services
Jennifer Ruetten, Director of IT*

via TEAMS

*Amber Hoppa, Treasurer
Koby Schellinger, County Executive's Office
TE
Qiauna Ross*

B. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

C. Adopt Agenda

Motion by Supervisor Nussbaum, seconded by Supervisor Bureau, to adopt the agenda for today's meeting. CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE 5-0.

D. Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of February 5, 2026, Meeting Minutes
Motion by Supervisor Holt, seconded by Supervisor Binder, to approve the minutes of the February 5, 2026, meeting. CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE 3-0. (ABSTAIN: Supervisor Bureau, Supervisor Nussbaum)
2. Approval of February 16, 2026, Meeting Minutes
Motion by Supervisor Holt, seconded by Supervisor Cox, to approve the minutes of the February 16, 2026, meeting. CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE 5-0.

E. Updated Department Reports

1. *Jennifer Ruetten, Director of IT, updated the committee on the website project, and they are close to wrapping things up.
The County Board transition preparations are underway. Director Ruetten reminds*

supervisors they will need to turn in their devices as soon as possible if they are not running for the board.

Director Ruetten gave an update that IT is coordinating with the Department of Human Services and the District Attorney's Office for the transition of the CONNECT Program. The obstacle is that the District Attorney staff is on the state network and not the county network. IT started the process of upgrading county cell phones this week. All county employees with a county cell phone will get an upgraded phone.

IT is offering Artificial Intelligence classes. They have held 2 in-person training courses so far that were popular. IT also had a virtual training session that was recorded and will be available to staff.

Director Rutten reminded everyone not to put confidential information in public software and noted that Winnebago County does have an internal AI system.

Director Ruetten stated that some employees have shared AI success stories and how rapidly things are changing with AI.

2. *Mark Habeck, Director of Human Resources, gave a staffing update for his department. HR has 12 positions; 2 positions are vacant. Director Habeck stated electronic applications went live on February 12, 2026. To date, they have received 129 online applications. There has been a learning curve, but overall, it's going well. The goal is to have a more modern process and give hiring managers quicker access to the hiring pool. Director Habeck is hopeful this new system will speed up the hiring process and be more efficient. Director Habeck updated the committee on the Savi Student Loan Program. HR is getting ready to launch the program and is meeting with the vendor next week. Director Habeck noted that Corporation Counsel approved the contract and will continue to update everyone as progress is made. Director Habeck reported his new hire statistics were handed out to the committee members. Director Habeck noted his team has been busy, as there are typically a lot of new hires in January because of positions passed during the budget process.*

F. Business Items

1. Fund Balance Policy - Opportunity Fund

Paul Kaiser, Director of Finance, stated that the Executive team rewrote the fund policy in 2024 with several revisions and those revisions were passed in March 2025. Last year, they added the Opportunity Fund. This year, they were asked to redefine the Opportunity Fund and how it would be used.

Jamie Rouch, Director of Administration, said that at the last meeting they discussed the language for the policy. Director Rouch wanted to reiterate that the fund is called the Opportunity Fund because it is to be used for one-time expenditures that may not have been accommodated otherwise. Director Rouch stated she thinks they accomplished what they were tasked to do.

Supervisor Holt asked if it would help to clarify the general fund reserves in the policy language, and Director Rouch agreed.

Amendment: On the second page of the policy, the first bullet point to read, "Allow use of excess reserves immediately when the Unassigned General Fund Reserves Exceed 30%." Motion made by Supervisor Holt, seconded by Supervisor Bureau. CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE 5-0.

Motion by Supervisor Holt, seconded by Supervisor Bureau to Approve Fund Balance Policy — Opportunity Fund as Amended. Passed. Ayes 5, Nays 0, Abstain 0.

2. Approve Sale of Tax Foreclosure Parcel 902-0574 for \$137,700.00

Diana Hellmann, Deputy Treasurer, presented the last foreclosed property for 2025. The property was previously listed twice with no bids. The Treasurer's Office asked to accept the price from this bidder and noted the bidder had purchased from Winnebago County in the past and rehabilitated the properties and had them back on the market in a short period of time.

Motion by Supervisor Binder, seconded by Supervisor Holt to Approve Sale of Tax

Foreclosure Parcel 902-0574 for \$137,700.00. Passed. Ayes 5, Nays 0, Abstain 0.

3. Applying for and Accepting, if awarded, the SFY 2026 NG911 GIS Grant, Track 2, administered by the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs, Office of Emergency Communications

Adam Dorn, GIS Administrator, said that GIS works closely with the Sheriff's Office to give information to them and the state to have a more modern 911 communication system. Mr. Dorn stated this grant will help cover operational costs, and it requires no match from the county.

Motion by Supervisor Nussbaum, seconded by Supervisor Holt to Approve Applying for and Accepting, if awarded, the SFY 2026 NG911 GIS Grant, Track 2, administered by the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs, Office of Emergency Communications. Passed. Ayes 5, Nays 0, Abstain 0.

4. Authorization to Apply for and Accept the 2026 AARP Community Challenge Grant for GO Connect Microtransit Expansion Support

Michael Schuh, Finance, explained the expansion of Go Transit and said that this grant is a no-match grant. Mr. Schuh stated they hope to get \$15,000 to cover the expansion costs and reduce the levy impact. Mr. Schuh stated they should know in May if Winnebago County will get the grant.

Motion by Supervisor Holt, seconded by Supervisor Binder to Approve Apply for and Accept the 2026 AARP Community Challenge Grant for GO Connect Microtransit Expansion Support. Passed. Ayes 5, Nays 0, Abstain 0.

5. Approve Department of Human Services Budget Transfer from Consumer Program to Travel Expenses

Renee Soroko, Interim Director of Human Services (DHS), stated that DHS was over budget with mileage at year-end of 2025. Children's Long Term Support (CLTS) has grown exponentially in the last few years, and depending on how quickly they are able to fill open positions, the mileage costs will go up. CLTS currently serves 1,100 children. Director Soroko stated that some children are also placed out of town or out of state, and the workers need to travel to meet with those families. Director Soroko stated that consumer expenses were under budget, so they wanted to move money from one item to the other to balance the budget.

Motion by Chairman Cox, seconded by Supervisor Holt to Approve Budget Transfer for the Human Services Dept. Budget Transfer from Consumer Program to Travel Expenses. Passed. Ayes 5, Nays 0, Abstain 0.

6. Approve a Budget Amendment Request for #523S Side Mower Replacement Amounting to \$36,200.00

Bob Doemel, Highway Commissioner, said that the Highway Department has repaired this mower multiple times in the past. They looked to see if they could repair the damage again, but it is no longer repairable, so it needs to be replaced with a heavier duty mower. The proposed mower will be interchangeable with the other 6 mowers they use.

Chairman Cox and Director Rouch noted this is a budget amendment and not a budget transfer because the money is coming from the unappropriated Highway Fund balance, not already appropriated funds.

Motion by Supervisor Nussbaum, seconded by Supervisor Holt to Approve Budget Amendment for Highway Request for #523S Side Mower Replacement Amounting to \$36,200.00. Passed. Ayes 5, Nays 0, Abstain 0.

7. Approve \$129,391.00 Budget Amendment request for the Butte des Morts Boat Landing 2026 Capital Project

Adam Breest, Director of Parks, explained they received bids on February 18, 2026, for this project. They had 2 contractors bid within the approved budget. Director Breest explained that because bids can only be held for 60 days, he asked Chairman Cox to go out of committee order to allow him time to meet the deadline.

Motion by Supervisor Binder, seconded by Supervisor Nussbaum to Approve Budget Amendment for Butte Des Morts Landing - Parks 2026 Capital Project. Passed. Ayes 5, Nays 0, Abstain 0.

8. Type 2 Carryover Request — Sheriff's Department

Michael Schuh, Finance, explained the Sheriff's Office had a three-year SUD Grant. The money from the grant was originally allocated over three years, failing to show the true value of the grant. To remedy the situation, Finance has to complete 2 budget amendments, one for 2025 and one for 2026, to accurately reflect the amount of the grant remaining.

Motion by Supervisor Bureau, seconded by Supervisor Holt to Approve Type 2 Carryover Request for Sheriff's Dept. Passed. Ayes 5, Nays 0, Abstain 0.

9. Establish Salaries for the Upcoming Terms of Sheriff and Clerk of Courts

Director Habeck stated that the County Board must establish salaries for elected positions before candidates can take out papers for the election. The Clerk of Court's salary is in line with other Clerks of Court in the area and other department heads. During the past term, the Sheriff's salary was less than the Chief Deputy's position. Unless an adjustment is made, that will continue to happen. Director Habeck noted that other counties are also running into this issue and have passed increases.

Director Habeck noted that other positions are paid hourly and are compensated for their time, and historically, the Sheriff has always been an internal employee with the correct credentials and knowledge.

Captain Vendola notes that each level of promotion requires higher education and competency, so, the Sheriff position would require law enforcement knowledge. There is that expectation and they are accountable for their positions in their hierarchy.

Clerk of Court to receive 3% annual increase. Sheriff to receive \$6,154 adjustment with 3% annual increase.

Motion by Supervisor Holt, seconded by Supervisor Binder to Approve to Establish the Salaries for Terms of Sheriff & Clerk of Courts Passed. Ayes 5, Nays 0, Abstain 0.

10. Approve Changes to Policy 19 – Health Benefits of the Winnebago County Human Resources Manual

Director Habeck explained this policy change came from a situation where an employee suffered significant injuries during work. Once that employee exhausted their FMLA and PTO, they were moved onto COBRA insurance. The current policy is that the employee pays the full COBRA amount. Worker's comp pays their wage, but the employee has to pay more insurance fees under COBRA. The changes propose that employees will continue to pay the employee insurance rate if they are placed on COBRA after exhausting FMLA and PTO for a work-related injury. There were a few other changes that were never updated in the policy but are being proposed to reflect current practice.

Supervisor Holt questions the language for changing insurance within 30 days of marriage and how that should be reflected in the "life-event" changes that are already covered. Director Habeck explained that he thinks it's a clarification for if 2 employees get married, and they only need one family plan instead of 2 individual plans.

Motion made by Supervisor Holt to amend Policy 19 to strike "Employees who marry after their date of initial enrollment are eligible for family coverage provided that they apply within 30 days of the date of their marriage." in paragraphs 19.01(a) and 19.02(a), seconded by Supervisor Bureau. CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE 5-0.

Motion by Supervisor Binder, seconded by Supervisor Holt to Approve as Amended Changing Policy 19 - Health & Dental Benefits of the Winnebago County Human Resources Manual. Passed. Ayes 5, Nays 0, Abstain 0.

G. Honoring Retiring County Employees

1. Commendation for Diane Buchholz

Supervisor Bureau read commendation for Diane Buchholtz.

Motion made by Supervisor Bureau, seconded by Supervisor Holt. CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE 5-0.

2. Commendation for James Decker

Supervisor Bureau read commendation for James Decker.

Motion made by Supervisor Bureau, seconded by Supervisor Holt. CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE 5-0.

H. Notice of Claims

1. Disallow Notice of Claim from Dennis C. Strong II for a 1st Amendment Violation of the United States Constitution

Motion by Supervisor Bureau, seconded by Supervisor Holt to Approve to Disallow Claim for Dennis Strong II for a 1st Amendment Violation of the United States Constitution. Passed.. Ayes 5, Nays 0, Abstain 0.

2. Disallow Notice of Claim from Dennis C. Strong II for Slanderous Remarks Allegedly Made and Heard at the State Street Facility

Motion by Supervisor Bureau, seconded by Supervisor Holt to Approve to Disallow Claim for Dennis Strong II for Slanderous Remarks Allegedly Made and Heard at the State Street Facility. Passed. Ayes 5, Nays 0, Abstain 0.

3. Disallow Notice of Claim from RJ Gross for Damage to his Mailbox from a Winnebago County Snowplow

Motion by Supervisor Bureau, seconded by Supervisor Holt to Approve to Disallow Claim from RJ Gross for Damage to his Mailbox from a Winnebago County Snowplow. Passed. Ayes 5, Nays 0, Abstain 0.

4. Disallow Notice of Claim from Farmer's Insurance on Behalf of Wet Paint LLC, for Damage to Vehicle from a Winnebago County Snowplow

Motion by Supervisor Bureau, seconded by Supervisor Holt to Approve to Disallow Claim from Farmer's Insurance on Behalf of Wet Paint LLC, for Damage to Vehicle from a Winnebago County Snowplow. Passed. Ayes 5, Nays 0, Abstain 0.

I. Next Meeting Date: Thursday, April 2, 2026

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, April 2, 2026, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in the Susan T. Ertmer Conference Room (Room 120) at the David W. Albrecht Administration Building.

J. Adjourn

Motion by Supervisor Nussbaum, seconded by Supervisor Holt, to adjourn. MOTION CARRIED 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 11:27 a.m.

Submitted by:

Tori Kinderman

Winnebago County Deputy Clerk

The video portion of this meeting is available on the County website: <https://winnebagocowi.portal.civicclerk.com>