

# North Dakota agencies, local government websites face federal accessibility deadline as transparency concerns emerge

By Ceilidh Kern

**North Dakota Monitor**  
BISMARCK, N.D. — Deadlines are nearing for North Dakota government agencies to bring their websites and mobile apps into compliance with new federal accessibility standards. But some officials say content may need to be removed rather than updated.

In April 2024, the U.S. Department of Justice announced a new rule requiring state and local governments' websites and apps to comply with accessibility standards under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Updates could include making content compatible with a screen reader for people with a visual impairment or adding subtitles to videos for people who are hard of hearing.

Governments with a population over 50,000 face an April 24 deadline while smaller governments have until April 2027 to finish necessary updates. If governments don't meet these deadlines, they could be taken to court.

That could reduce transparency, according to Matt Gardner, the executive director of the North Dakota League of Cities.

"To comply with a federal law, the best way to do it is probably to delete portions of your website and remove documents," Gardner said during a Jan. 21 legislative hearing.

"At a time when we want to be more transparent, I could see political subdivisions across the state being less transparent," he added.

The discussion came during a three-day special legislative session. Although the session focused on federal rural health dollars, one bill included a request for \$1.5 million from North Dakota Information Technology to help state agencies update their websites and apps.

The request included money for an "industry standard" tool for scanning websites for accessibility issues, according to Corey Mock, NDIIT's chief information officer.

During his testimony, Gardner asked lawmakers for \$500,000 for a cost-sharing program to help smaller governments buy into the state's contract for the tool.

Lawmakers approved the state agency's funding request and the League of Cities' request to allow local governments to buy into the contract, but the bill didn't include money to help cities and counties cover the cost.

Gardner said in an interview after the special session that cities may have to look for free resources to comply with the federal requirement.

"When you think of a very small community, I mean, their entire property tax collection may be \$14,000. They have very limited resources to buy into a state contract," Gardner told the Monitor.

That could impact government transparency, particularly for complex, externally produced content, such as financial audit reports or engineering firms' project designs, which officials could opt to remove rather than update, Gardner said.

At the hearing, Sen. Brad Bekkedahl, a Republican from Williston and the chairman of the Joint Appropriations Committee, told Gardner that if cities are concerned about liability, he would encourage them to pull down content.

"If it's that big of a liability issue, that's what I'd recommend my city to do," said Bekkedahl, who is also a Williston city commissioner. "Is it detrimental to citizens? Absolutely. But this is a federal mandate. We didn't bring this on ourselves."

Mock told the committee that for state agencies, online content is being triaged, with the most critical content — such as applications or information about services — being updated first. As the deadline approaches, less critical information could be temporarily removed and republished later.

According to the DOJ website, older content that was posted to a government's website or app before the compliance deadline is most likely exempt if it's in a "word processing, presentation, PDF or spreadsheet file" format.

Additionally, content stored in an explicitly labeled "archive" section of a website will be considered exempt if it was created before the compliance deadline and is kept only for reference or recordkeeping.

Asked whether content had been removed permanently from agencies' sites because it would have taken too many resources or too much time to update, Mock replied, "Not that anyone on our team is aware of."

Older content, meanwhile, will be archived on state agencies' websites, where it will still be accessible to the public.

In Fargo, nothing has been removed from the city's website because of accessibility compliance efforts, according to Ron Gron-

neberg, the city's chief information officer.

"There was a clause in (the rule) that grandfathered-in stuff, so I don't anticipate us removing anything that's old," he said. "I think we're in compliance on the old stuff."

But in Bismarck, the city's efforts to update its website have involved taking down outdated content, according to Kalen Ost, a communication strategist who has been involved with the city's digital accessibility efforts. He said it's also part of the city's normal site management.

If information on a page is outdated or conflicts with newer content, it may be deleted or combined with other pages, he said.

But the city retains files such as PDFs and Word documents offline, where they can be accessed through a records request, and meeting minutes and agendas are in another module and don't "ever really get messed with," he said.

While small towns don't have to worry about updating some of their older content, they may be hesitant to upload things to their websites in the future, according to Gardner.

"Websites will keep their base: hours of operation, 'here is where you can pay your water bill,' and some of those basics," he told the Monitor. "(That's) maybe what these websites turn into."

Media attorney Jack McDonald said the situation demonstrates the downside of governments pushing to publish public notices on their websites instead of in newspapers.

"The answer is always, 'Well, we can put it on our website. That's a lot cheaper and easier.' And the answer (to that) is, 'Yeah, but how long is that going to be on the website?'" McDonald said.

The website NDPublicNotices.com, run by the North Dakota Newspaper Association, provides a backstop thanks to its "huge repository" of public notices and meeting minutes from the past 15 years, said Executive Director Cecile Wehrman.

"Those minutes will not disappear from the public record," she said.

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# Northern Plains Rail Services commits \$250,000 to help bring train exhibit to Grand Forks Children's Museum

GRAND FORKS, N.D. — Northern Plains Rail Services has announced a \$250,000 commitment to the Grand Forks Children's Museum, a gift that helps unlock a key anonymous donor match and supports the design and development of a train experience within the Museum's future Land Exhibit.

The commitment comes as the Museum prepares to break ground on its new facility and expand hands-on learning opportunities that explore transportation, infrastructure and how communities are connected.

"We are thrilled for Northern Plains Rail Services to join our list of donors," said Katie Mayer, executive director of the Grand Forks Children's Museum. "With this gift, we will be able to add a train experience to the Land Exhibit. Through our research, we've seen how strongly kids engage with trains at other children's museums, and this experience will spark curiosity and imagination for children and families across the region."

The Land Exhibit will highlight not only how agricultural products are grown, but also how they move from farm to market, giving children a hands-on way to explore the systems and infrastructure that support production, storage and transportation.

"Northern Plains Rail Services is proud to support the Grand Forks Children's Museum and be part of an exhibit that reflects how our region works," said Jesse Chalich, CEO of Northern Plains Rail Services. "Rail helps connect farmers and producers to markets, and our work focuses on keeping rail systems safe and operating so products can continue to move. We hope this train experience helps kids understand that connection and inspires future railroaders."

The Grand Forks Children's Museum will feature immersive exhibits focused on land, air and water, designed to encourage curiosity, creativity and problem-solving while celebrating the region and the industries that help it thrive.

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beneficiaries may be allowed to stretch withdrawals over a longer period.

### Minimize Your Taxes

As tempting as it may be to cash out an inherited IRA in a lump sum, or take large withdrawals over just a few years, proceed carefully. Doing so could trigger a hefty tax bill. Withdrawals from a traditional IRA are generally taxed as income at your regular tax rate.

For many heirs, spreading distributions over the 10-year period can help manage taxes and reduce the risk of being pushed into a higher tax bracket. Other strategies may make sense if your income fluctuates or you're nearing retirement.

To help navigate these decisions, consider working with a financial advisor. If you don't have one, you can find a fee-only, fiduciary financial planner through the National Association of Personal Financial Advisors at napfa.org.

Send your questions or comments to questions@savvysenior.org, or to Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.

## LEGAL NOTICES

### PARK RIVER AREA SCHOOL BOARD REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - JANUARY

#### PARK RIVER AREA SCHOOL BOARD REGULAR MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 14, 2026

A Regular Board Meeting was held January 14, 2026. Members present: Sydney Bata, Brad Brummond, Michael Helt, Kelly Houser, Erika Miller, Jacqi Zikmund joined later. Absent: Jenna Midgarden.

President Bata called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M. and offered members the opportunity to recite the pledge of allegiance.

M: Brummond S: Miller to finalize the agenda, All in favor, M.C.

No public in attendance for public comment.

M: Helt S: Houser to approve the December 16, 2025 Regular Meeting minutes, All in favor, M.C.

Member Zikmund joined the meeting.

M: Houser S: Zikmund to approve the expenditures as follows: General Fund #7622-7661, \$624,079.76; Payroll and Benefits #7614-7621 and #15202-15295, \$358,363.38; Special Activities #5956-6008, \$16,707.24, All in favor, M.C.

NDPHIT 50,414.98; Time Management Sys 3.00; JP Morgan 14,157.31; Tuition Express 100.97; Lively 123.90; Time Mgmt Sys 283.67; Tuition Express 91.07; Unum Life Ins 1,547.15; Electro Watchman 208.20; Indigo Signworks 1,747.50; My Fruit Sales 2,106.52; The Village 1,250.00; Bank Of ND 259,435.54; Cenex Fleetcard 264.87; Dept Of Public Inst 2,296.98; East Side Jersey Dairy 2,391.25; Zachary Fischer 137.24; Molly Flaten 1,950.00; Fordville Lankin School 2,290.00; Freshlee Printed 15.00; Global Safety Ntwk 277.47; Grafton School 27.55; Hahn's Bakery

536.25; I-State Truck Ctr 10,901.51; Jaymar Business Forms 209.92; Leon's Bldg Ctr 14.97; Light & Water Dept 12,229.64; Richard Wedel 210.00; Marco Tech 1,235.00; MDU 8,652.61; Jana Fjeld 70.00; North Star Coop 21.94; NVCTC 47,675.25; Northdale Oil 2,746.76; Park River Area School 60.00; Peterson Sheet Metal 4,510.50; Polar Comm 100,627.44; St Mary's Catholic Church 104.65; Sysco 3,350.53; UVSE 61,113.03; US Bank 25,550.00; Valuations Northwest 125.00; The Village 1,250.00; Walsh County Press 115.70; Walsh County Record 150.50; Walsh County Treasurer 1,473.39; WEX Health 25.00; Steve Daley 24.00; Tami Daley 145.00; Karyn Dobeimer 40.00; Angela Dubois 30.00; Deb Karas 24.00; Jennifer Kubat 80.00; NDHSAA 25.00; Joann Okeson 40.00; Regents Of The Univ 80.00; Nicholas Lundquist 244.00; Grant Skibicki 160.00; Ryan Solseng 60.00; Brian Fike 100.00; Mark Huso 237.00; Robert Goll 160.00; Jeffrey Manley 160.00; Brian Fike 183.20; Grant Skibicki 160.00; Isaiah Hylden 160.00; Shawn Hanson 183.20; Robert Goll 160.00; Ryan Solseng 160.00; Matthew Odermann 218.00; Grant Skibicki 160.00; Jeffrey Manley 212.20; Ryan Solseng 160.00; Isaiah Hylden 160.00; Kevin Sundre 160.00; Nicholas Lundquist 247.00; Grant Skibicki 160.00; Mark Huso 160.00; Jeffrey Manley

212.20; Robert Goll 160.00; Ryan Solseng 160.00; Lane Bell 102.54; Bowl Mor Lanes 256.00; CF-Advertising 810.60; Coca-Cola 2,476.00; Nevin Daley 300.00; East Side Jersey Dairy 311.40; Game One 105.93; Linn's Tex Mex 1,164.00; Richard Wedel 17.50; NDCEL 975.00; Northland Community & Tech 350.00; Tucker Omdahl 80.00; Park River Area School 4,026.57; Polar Comm 86.90; Emma Porter 300.00; Alexis Restemayer 300.00; Tanner Schramm 95.00; Loren Zavalney 165.00.

Financial Report: Reviewed revenues, bus repairs, and new bus purchase.

Administration Reports: Elementary Principal, Mrs. Martin - Battle of the Books Regional is in Cavalier in February; Secondary Principal, Mr. Justin - UND Math Meet success, student assembly, NHS food drive-Pie a Teacher, and training for transition from PowerSchool to Infinite Campus program; Supt. Schramm - Homeland Security Grant, Edmore dissolution-tax assessment error, and partnering with First Care Health Center for a youth mental health speaker. Library Report: Miller - Two new computers in the library.

Vocational Center Report: Brummond - Meeting on Friday.

Early Learning Center Report: Supt. Schramm - Gross motor skills room: sound panels installed, lighting issues.

Long-Range Technology Plan Committee: Supt. Schramm - Prioritizing items for updating or replacement.

Policies & Procedures, Personnel Committee: President Bata - Reviewed NDSBA updated policies regarding Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Education of Special Education Students, discussed the Superintendent Evaluation- 360 Review Process.

Supt. Schramm gave a presentation on the School Accountability Report.

Discussed superintendent evaluation process during the PPP Committee report.

Board members can forward any retreat topics to Supt. Schramm.

M: Brummond S: Zikmund to approve option B-1 of the 2026-27 School Calendar, All in favor, M.C.

M: Zikmund S: Helt to approve the Pledged Securities as of December 31, 2025, All in favor, M.C.

M: Miller S: Brummond to approve the Resolution for Destruction of Records, All in favor, M.C.

M: Zikmund S: Houser to pay \$3,000 to Park River Arena Commission for 2025-

26 rental, Roll call vote, Helt-nay, Houser-aye, Zikmund-aye, Miller-aye, Brummond-aye, Bata-aye, M.C.

M: Miller S: Brummond to approve the application for a State and Local Cybersecurity Grant, All in favor, M.C.

M: Miller S: Houser to rescind Policies AACA- Section 504 Dispute Resolution Policy and FDE- Education of Special Education Students/Students with Disabilities, Roll call vote, Helt-aye, Houser-aye, Zikmund-aye, Miller-aye, Brummond-aye, Bata-aye, M.C.

M: Helt S: Zikmund to approve the first reading, waive the second reading, and adopt Policies AACA- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Policy and FDE- Education of Special Education Students/Students with Disabilities under the IDEA, Roll call vote, Brummond-aye, Miller-aye, Zikmund-aye, Houser-aye, Helt-aye, Bata-aye, M.C.

M: Zikmund S: Miller to approve the Open Enrollment Applications received from two families of Fordville-Lankin School, Grade K, All in favor, M.C.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 19, 2026 at 5:30 P.M.

Adjourned at 7:28 P.M.

/s/Sydney Bata, President  
/s/Roberta Hinkel, Business Manager

(2/25/2026)

### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CITY OF PARK RIVER VARIANCE

#### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

BE ON NOTICE, that the city of Park River has received a request to grant a variance to allow for non-conforming use in R-1 zoned property to allow a commercial daycare in rental property to operate on the following property:

That part of the North 10 feet of Lot 19 and that part of Lots 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 lying west of the East 141 feet of said Lots, Block 19, Original Townsite of the City of Park River, North Dakota.

By \_\_\_\_\_  
Kyle Halvorson, Mayor

BE ON FURTHER NOTICE, that the public is hereby notified that a hearing on this request will be held on March 9th, 2026, at 5:15 p.m. at the city council

(2/25/2026)

**North Dakota newspapers also post public notices on www.ndpublicnotices.com at no additional charge to units of government.**

### PARK RIVER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT 8 NOTICE OF CANDIDATE FILING FOR ELECTION DEADLINE

Notice is hereby given that the deadline for filing to have a candidate's name printed on the ballot for the Park River Area School District 8 is April 6, 2026 by 4:00 p.m. The following office is up for election:  
School Board Member (3 year term)  
Park River Rural

A candidate for a school district office must prepare and sign a document stating the candidate's name and the position for which the individual is a candidate, and a SFN 10172 Statement of Interests form. Both of these documents must be filed with the school district business manager for Park River Area School District 8 by the above deadline date and time. Forms are available at www.parkriverk12.com under School Board or may be obtained from the Business Manager's office.

Roberta Hinkel  
Business Manager

### CITY OF EDINBURG COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS - FEBRUARY

City of Edinburg Council Proceedings February 9th, 2026 @ 7:00pm

Call to Order: Mayor TJ Hall  
Present: Michael Evenson, Michael Paulson, Taylor Hall, Dylan DuBois  
Also present:  
Absent: Dennis Hammer

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Evenson. The motion was seconded by Taylor. MC.

The monthly financial statements and the upcoming bills were reviewed. A motion was made by Paulson to accept the financial statements and pay all bills with general account checks 9039 through 9054 (16 checks), sewer and garbage. The general balance after bills is \$6,130.64. The motion was seconded by Evenson. MC

GENERAL		
EFT	CNH Industrial	373.60
9039	WC Treas	298.50
	D. DuBois	\$646.50
	L. Foseide	\$230.88
	D. Pewe	\$510.74
	Northeast Rural Water	\$83.25
	Polar	\$128.35
	CHS	\$550.43
	Farmers Union Oil	\$428.82
	WC Treas	\$234.79
	Olson Oil	\$245.10
	R&R Ent.	\$235.00
	Ottertail	\$827.79
	WC Press	\$73.87
	K. Hall	\$94.86
	T. Hall	\$55.41
	Edinburg Park Board	197.87

	TOTAL	\$5,215.76
Sewer 2115	Otter Tail	\$67.28
	D. Pewe	\$350.93
	TOTAL	\$418.21
Garbage 1267	Cons Waste Ltd	\$3050.75
	TOTAL	\$3050.75

Old Business:  
Second Reading of Ottertail contract, Paulson made a motion to approve the contract and sign. Taylor seconded, MC. Dylan and TJ signed the contract. Taylor made a motion to transfer \$5,000 from Highway fund to General. Evenson seconded. MC Paulson made a motion to apply for 2026 WC self help grant. Evenson seconded MC

New Business:  
Taylor made a motion to approve the City of Edinburg ordinance for floodplain management that was made up by TJ. Paulson seconded, MC

Approval of New USPS lease beginning 2/1/2028 end 1/31/2023. Motion made by Taylor, Evenson 2nd MC

Other discussions with no decisions.  
Adjourn: Taylor motioned at 7:25 pm

Next meeting: Monday, March 9th, 2026 at 7:00 pm

Minutes are being published subject to the governing body's review and revision. Respectfully submitted  
Dylan DuBois, Auditor

(2/25/2026)