

Mixing fact with fiction

Sportswriters are told to tell all they know of the famous sports figures they’ve encountered.

Editorial page contributors are encouraged to publish their best columns in a book.

Back in the day of letterpress newspapers, editors, who often ventured in the back shop and worked alongside their shop foremen and printers, once retired, sadly, never lived long. Breathing in the industry’s ever-present gases and fumes in aging structures ungodly hot in the dead of summer and uncomfortably cold at the height of winter; hands and fingers crippled by age-old printing presses, permanently stained by black ink, burned, bruised and cut working over casters,

routers, saws, banks and Linotypes -- all of that with failing eyesight and bad backs -- wasn’t exactly conducive to a long life once retired.

Asked why they haven’t shared their life’s work, retired newspaper editors will tell you: “I’m too damn old and tired. Outside, family and friends and a handful of loyal readers, who’s crazy enough to buy anything I write at the end of my career? Besides, who cares?”

“We care,” my two sisters tell me.

“Put your best columns in a book,” they tell me.

“Better yet, write a fictional novel. Or write a book mixing fact and fiction, that’s more up your alley. Certainly, you can build a storyline from many

hundreds of characters you’ve met and interviewed.

“Plus, sisters Sue and Jenney continued, you’ve written literally thousands of columns and stories.

Thousands is a stretch, I countered.

“Do the math. You’ve been writing for more than 60 years.”

I’m not good at math, never was. I finished near the bottom of my senior class. In my case, GPA meant: grades profoundly atrocious. I’m not kidding.

“But you could write.”

That’s what Mrs. Anderson, my English teacher, told me. It’s the only reason I got a C+.

Would you settle for a documentary, I asked.

Out of the question, they replied.

First of all, I would need a clear storyline. “Good luck with that,” they said.

Secondly, an emotional connection would help. “Your outward emotions extend as far as the price of beer, the fate of floozies and the Minnesota Twins.”

My content would need to be thoroughly researched, sources authenticated, all that jazz.

“Fat chance you’ll do any of that.”

Finished yet? I asked.

“Nope. Release forms need to be signed by the family of the deceased; we say this we’re guessing many of the people you introduced us to are no longer with us. Technically, you’ll need cameras, audio equipment, a director,

cinematographer, producer, and lastly, you will need financing.”

You’re right, it’s out of the question, I conceded. I’ll write a book.

“Good plan. Save us each a signed copy.”

Anything else?

“Yes. How’s your health?”

Good, thank you for asking.

“Considering you’re in the twilight of your career, you should probably start writing that book.”

Waiting for that lightning bolt of inspiration to strike, I said.

“Come in out of the rain, you’re all wet.”

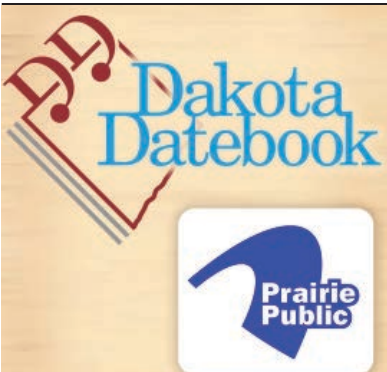
That’s what I’ve been told. Finished now?

“Promise you’ll do this, okay. Write the book.”

Promise.



NEIL O. NELSON



“Dakota Datebook” is a radio series from Prairie Public in partnership with the State Historical Society of North Dakota and with funding from the North Dakota Humanities Council. See all the Dakota Datebooks at prairiepublic.org, subscribe to the “Dakota Datebook” podcast, or buy the Dakota Datebook book at shopprairiepublic.org.

James B. Power
by Carole Butcher

December 16, 2025 – James B. Power was born in New York State in 1833. After studying civil engineering. He spent a few years as the deputy state treasurer for Minnesota. But most of his working career was spent with railroads. The Northern Pacific Railway employed him as a clerk and later as a civil engineer. For the Great Northern Railway, he worked as a land commissioner, responsible for selling thousands of acres to bonanza farmers.

And Power himself was one of the first bonanza farmers in the Red River Valley. When the Northern Pacific Railroad went bankrupt in 1875, he used the opportunity to encourage eastern investors to acquire enormous tracts of land. Power purchased 6,000 acres. He then retired to his farm where he raised purebred cattle.

Power was appointed to the Board of Trustees of North Dakota Agricultural College. He was serving on the Board in 1893 when the college became entangled in politics. There were differences between the faculty and the politicians. One earlier accomplishment of Power’s was the acquisition of the land for Island Park. This came during his time as land commissioner for the Northern Pacific Railroad.

James B. Power passed away on this date in 1913 at the age of 80.

Christmas Gifts
by Sarah Walker

December 18, 2025 – The nature of the Christmas gift has changed over time. In the 19th Century novel "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens, Ebenezer Scrooge's clerk Bob Cratchit only wanted some extra coal and food for his family.

Another famous story of Christmas gifts first appeared in December 1905, written by William Sidney Porter, better known as O. Henry. In "The Gift of the Magi" a young woman, Della, cuts and sells her long hair to purchase a Christmas gift for her husband, Jim – a chain for his pocket watch. Jim, on the other hand, had sold his watch to buy Della combs for her hair.

Today, trees are displayed replete with piles of presents. Black Friday, the “first day of Christmas shopping,” is often celebrated as much as Thanksgiving, the holiday it follows. And in 2005, Cyber Monday emerged – the big online shopping day after the Thanksgiving weekend. So, Christmas shopping has long been a part of the season, whether by computer, in stores, or by catalog.

On this date in 1919, the Hope Pioneer newspaper in Steele County urged its readers and last-minute shoppers to take advantage of newspaper ads, stating: "Holiday buying is greatly facilitated where people study newspaper advertising in advance. If they go to the stores without much idea what they are going to buy, it takes a lot of looking and questioning before they make up their minds. If they have read the advertising carefully, they have a clear idea of what they want. They should be able to say, ‘Let me see that article you advertised in The Pioneer, I think it is about what I want.’"

Of course, the Pioneer also encouraged its readers to use proper manners:

"People should do their Christmas shopping in a patient and good tempered spirit. They must remember that clerks at that time are tired and flustered, and can't be expected to always manifest a perfect disposition. Some people get all out of temper if they are delayed in being waited upon. If they find themselves tempted to say a sharp word, they should reflect that if they had made their purchases a month ago, they would have secured better attention. Defects in store service are due to the failure of the public to anticipate its wants."

Always good advice.



Public Notices

NOTICE OF HEARING

Please take notice that a Public Hearing will be held by the Wells County Planning Commission on the 5th day of January, 2026 at 7:00 pm in the meeting room of the KTL Building in Fessenden ND, for the purpose of discussing implementing a Data Center ordinance. The Wells County Planning Commission consists of Stan Buxa, Danny Maxwell, Daniel Stutlien, Chad Ziegler, Faye Schimelfenig, Robert Martin, Warren Strand, and Jon Polries.

All parties and concerned citizens are invited to said hearing at which time they shall have the opportunity to be heard. Please take further notice that the proposed Data Center Ordinance of Wells County, ND shall be available for inspection and copying at the Wells County Tax Director's Office, 700 Railway ST N Fessenden, ND, on Monday through Friday of each week between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:00 pm. Township officials also have copies of said changes, and all proposed documents can be viewed on the home page of www.wellscountynd.com. A link to the Proposed documents can also be found on the Wells County Government Facebook page.

Dated this 9th day of June, 2025.
Jana Mogren, Secretary
(December 13, 20 & 27, 2025)

Fessenden-Bowdon School Board Regular Meeting

Wednesday, November 12, 2025 - 7:00 AM Board Room

MEMBERS PRESENT: Monica Larson, Erin Hagemeister, Miranda Kittelson, Mychal Neumiller, Hans Widicker

OTHERS PRESENT: Supt. Darren Sheggerud, Principal Lindsay Widicker, Business Manager Michelle Johnson, Teacher - Mackenzie Dietz

President Monica Larson called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The agenda was approved. Motion by Hagemeister, second by Neumiller, to approve the minutes for the October 14th regular meeting as presented. Roll call vote. All voting yes. Motion carried.

Motion by Kittelson, second by H Widicker, to approve monthly financial reports as presented. Roll call vote. All voting yes. Motion carried. Motion by Hagemeister, second by Kittelson, to approve the district bills as presented. Roll call vote. All voting yes. Motion carried.

The building committee report was given. An update was given on the bus garage building test.

The transportation committee report was given. Supt will start the process for bidding on a large bus for the district. The superintendent report was given. The principal's report was given. The activities director's report was given.

Policy BDA authorizes the board to adopt policies with one reading and waive second reading when the board deems this action necessary. Motion by Neumiller, second by H Widicker, to adopt the following policies with one reading: DFAA - Teacher Evaluation; FGDB - Student Handbooks; BA - School Board Ethics; FCAC - Head Lice. Roll call vote. All voting yes. Motion carried.

Motion by Hagemeister, second by Kittelson, to approve the tuition waiver for students attending the Yellowstone School District. Roll call vote. All voting yes. Motion carried Motion by Neumiller, second by H Widicker, to approve Miranda Kittelson to be varsity assistant coach for HWC girls wrestling for the 2025-26 season. Roll call vote. All voting yes. Motion carried.

Principal Widicker presented school performance data from the 2024-25 school year.

Discussed the replacement of buses. Supt Sheggerud will start the process of bus bids for a 39 passenger bus under 26,000 lbs for late summer or early fall delivery.

The Superintendent Evaluation was reviewed and shared. All six areas are satisfactory. Motion by Kittelson, second by H Widicker, to approve the evaluation as presented. Roll call vote. All voting yes. Motion carried.

The next regular meeting was set for Tuesday, December 9, 2025 at 7:00 AM in the Board Room. The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 AM.

Monica Larson, President
Michelle Johnson, Business Manager
(December 13, 2025)

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING WELLS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

November 6, 2025

The Wells County Planning Commission met in a regular meeting on Thursday, November 6, 2025, in the KTL Meeting Room 7:00 pm, with the following members present: Vice Chair-

man Danny Maxwell, Robert Martin, Warren Strand, Faye Schimelfenig, Chad Ziegler, and Daniel Stutlien. Members Absent were Stan Buxa and Jon Polries. Others present included Jana Mogren, Lydia Gessele, & David Fite.

Vice-Chairman Danny Maxwell called the meeting to order.

Vice-Chairman Maxwell asked if there were any changes to the agenda, hearing none, the board proceeded with the meeting.

Vice-Chairman Maxwell asked if anybody from the public wanted to speak during the Public Comment section. None spoke.

Discussion was held pertaining to letters of credit. Through discussion, it was determined that these letters of credit basically performed the same function as a bond. Therefore, no verbiage was added in the financial portion of the rough draft of the data center ordinance.

Discussion was held pertaining to emergency personnel and training pertaining to emergencies at a data center.

Daniel Stutlien motioned to add Emergency Management and Response needs based on Mountrail County rough draft ordinance, as well as contact Emergency personnel for input.

Warren Strand seconded the motion. On a vote being called, all voted aye. Motion carried.

With no other business, Warren Strand motioned to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned.

(December 13, 2025)

VALHALLA TOWNSHIP PUBLIC HEARING

Please take notice that a Public Hearing will be held by the Valhalla Township Zoning Board on the 29th day of December, 2025 at 7:00 pm at the bremen bar, Bremen ND to consider an adoption of wind energy facilities ordinance to the existing Valhalla Township zoning ordinance, and to consider the Wind Energy Facility Siting Permit application submitted by Flickertail Wind LLC, on November 12th 2025, public testimony welcome. The Valhalla Township Zoning Board consists of Kyle Alfstad, Nathan Lund, and Dan Alfstad. The zoning ordinance and permit application are available for public inspection during regular business hours by calling 701-302-8317.

Kyle Alfstad
Valhalla Township Chairman
(December 13 & 20, 2025)

Wells County Commissioner’s Meeting Minutes

December 4, 2025

The December meeting was called to order by Chairman Dockter at 8:01 AM. Present at the meeting were Stan Buxa, Dennis Dockter, Danny Maxwell, Brian Miller, Tim Buchwitz, Lydia Gessele, Brittany Long, Caitlyn Roermich, Randy Suckut, Daniel Stutlien, and Neil Nelson of the Herald-Press. Commissioner Bryan Lautt was not present.

BM (M), DM (S) to approve the minutes from the November Meeting. Unanimously carried.

Employee timesheets were reviewed by the commissioners.

SB (M), BM (S) to approve the bills as presented. Unanimously carried.

The current WC Balance Sheet was reviewed and discussed. Also, the Auditor shared current county investments as well as Commission controlled WC funds, also noting \$400,000 was transferred out of the MM November 28 th to cover payroll, bills, and payments to political subs.

DM (M), SB (S) to approve the Balance Sheet. Unanimously carried.

SB (M), DM (S) to approve Laura Muscha, Treasurer, and Daniel Stutlien, Auditor, to purchase or cash out CD's and investments on behalf of WC. Unanimously carried.

The only correspondence received this month involved the Bank of ND's Revolving Loan Fund for infrastructure, and notification of the 62 nd Annual Joint ND Water Convention scheduled for December 9-11 in Bismarck.

Commission Portfolios were discussed.

The Commission discussed officers and portfolio assignment for 2026. BM (M), SB (S) to nominate Dennis Dockter as Chairman and to cast a unanimous ballot for Dockter. Unanimously carried. SB (M), BM (S) to appoint Danny Maxwell Vice-Chairman. Unanimously carried. WC needs a representative for both the South Central Dakota Regional Council and the WC Housing Authority, as well portfolio holders for Clerk of Court & Sheriff's Dept., Treasurer's Office & States Attorney, Custodial, Road & DES, Extension, Recorder & HR, and Auditor & Tax Director. Chairman Dockter will review portfolio assignments at the January meeting.

Wells County received beer and liquor licenses applications from all existing licensees, including Fessenden Country Club, Fessenden Country Club (Festival Hall), Flatland Trail Blazers, Inc. (Wells County Fairgrounds), KALR Inc. (Bremen Bar), Kotoco Fuels Inc., and Peaceful Valley Golf Course. BM (M), DM (S) to approve each of the license requests for 2026. Unani-

mously carried.

SB (M), DM (S) to approve DHB, FIBT, and FSB as designated depositories for Wells County Funds for 2026. Unanimously carried.

Commission meeting dates for 2026 were provided the Commission.

Yearend authorizations were discussed. DM (M), BM (S) to authorize the Auditor to approve all payments for postage, and to election workers, schools, townships, cities, fire districts, ambulance districts, and any other agencies including County Agency, Preservation, ND 2477, Sheriff, and 911 Wireless funds, as the Auditor may deem appropriate without first presenting the payments to the Commissioners for approval throughout 2026. Unanimously carried.

Under the new Public Comments portion of the meeting, Randy Suckut requested to address the Commission regarding county roads and highways. Suckut begin by thanking the Commission for their service. He then went on to thank the Road Dept. for filling the holes in County #71.

Suckut's question to the Commission was regarding how WC prioritized the roads for which flex fund applications were submitted. The Commission shared some of the criteria utilized and will share traffic counts with Suckut when available.

Caitlyn Roermich, Director of WC District Health, and Brittany Long, member of the WC District Health Board, revisited the Commission regarding the District's impending financial hardships. SB (M), BM (S) to authorize up to \$150,000 to be provided, along with documentation, as necessary during 2026 from General Fund resources to keep District Health operational. Unanimously carried.

WC Road Foreman, Brent Keller, met with the Commission to discuss matters of his Dept. Keller discussed the completion of the horse barn removal at the Fairgrounds, as well as razing a property in Fessenden which came back to WC due to unpaid taxes. Keller has met with the Fair Board to discuss placement of more asphalt millings at the Fairgrounds late next summer or early fall. WC has had gravel crushed to prepare for the '26 season. Shop inspections have been completed for the quarter, and various compliances issues will need to be addressed. Keller discussed personnel and equipment needs, specifically a trailer for the Dept.

Jason Mayfield of Wold Engineering sat with the Commission to discuss the status of flex fund applications, completed projects, and potential upcoming projects in WC.

An abatement request was considered from Gibby Carlascio for parcel #80389000. SB (M), DM (S) to deny the request. Unanimously carried.