

Morton County Commission prepares for new year

By Brendan DeLuca-Rodenberg

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Commission meetings play an integral part in shaping our communities, and this is especially true at the start of a new year. In many cases, the first gatherings of committee members often outline upcoming plans over the next twelve months. The Morton County Commission embodied this idea during their meeting on Tuesday, January 27, where members announced several changes to both budget plans and leadership.

At the first 2026 gathering, Morton County commissioners assembled in the Morton County Courthouse's basement to discuss many aspects that will shape their coming meetings, the first of which was selecting their latest Chairman and Vice Chairman. These titles were unanimously given to Nathan Boehm and Andy Zachmeier, respectively.

Once leadership was taken care of, the next topic turned to finances, where Treasurer Carrie Hutzenueller outlined the four depositories that Morton County will be investing in this year: First International Bank and Trust and Starion Bank out of Mandan, Dakota Community Bank in Hebron, and Multi-Bank Securities, all of which

were approved.

Tax Director Donald LaFleur then took the stand to introduce Abatement 7167, referring to a vacant lot. Paul Millner, the lot's owner, requested that it be exempt from property tax hikes due to violations by Coldwater Outfitters, and explained his thought process to the commission. Despite citing public opinion on valuation and expressing concerns about the location's groundwater, which he stated did not raise the property value, the request as-is was denied due to a lack of evaluation by the tax director. LaFleur stated that he cannot take positions on many of the concerns raised on health, and warned that fielding 'slippery slope' abatements could open up the floor to other requests for exemptions based on other subjective situations.

In addition to the abatements themselves, LaFleur discussed updates to the rules about abatement applications. Maps are now required for consideration, and while the commission is happy to help print maps for those who visit their office, anyone who submits an abatement request without a map will be denied. LaFleur has also requested the creation of a committee to handle applications, the members and meeting date of which are still being discussed.

An updated communication plan was also presented by Patrick Martin, which focused on addressing crises throughout the county. While the full document was not explained at the meeting, escribed as a framework for effective communication utilizing whatever resources are available, with particular attention given to the use of social media and partnership with local organizations (including the Red Cross, amateur radio, BISMAN transit, and local faith-based programs). Facilitating joint communication between city departments was also a major aspect, particularly as it pertains to the upcoming summer event season.

The next topic to be addressed was burn bans and fire restrictions, where Martin requested the approval of a burn restriction every time the ND Rangeland Fire rating is in the high, very high, or extreme categories, as well as whenever the National Weather Service issues a red flag warning for Morton County. This serves as a preemptive measure, and would make burning during a ban period a Class B misdemeanor. However, the commission only approved if smoking and outdoor hot work (such as welding) were exempt from the rule, citing concerns over officer discretion.

Morton County's Prairie Dog Fund was discussed afterwards, along with a request to reallocate funds to the road and bridge budget. This is meant to aid in updating the Kinesiski Bridge in Glen Ullin, east of County Road 88. This request was approved, and a reimbursement from ND is expected to come in the following weeks. Finally, police contracts for the Morton County Sheriff's Office—including those for the purchase of a drone and Back the Blue funding—were approved before the commission was disbanded for the evening.

The next Morton County Commission meeting is currently scheduled for Tuesday, February 10. More information on commission members, meetings, or agendas can be found at Mortonnd.gov/commissioners.

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF MORTON COUNTY, STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA

In the matter of the petition for name change of Ryder John Hofstad, a minor child

NOTICE OF PETITION FOR NAME CHANGE

1. PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that a petition will be filed by the Petitioner with the above-entitled court requesting an Order changing the name of Ryder John Hofstad to Ryder John Larson.

2. NOTICE IT FUTHER GIVEN that thirty days after publication, the Petitioner intends to file a petition requesting entry of the Court's Order changing the name of the minor child. Any objection to granting this name change must be given in writing to the address listed below within 30 days of the date of this publication. The written objection must also be filed with the Court. If no objections are given, the Court may respond to the Petition without further hearing.

Dated 1-28-2026
Jessica Larson
Petitioner
3350 CR 139
Mandan, ND 58554

Published February 4, 2026

Seeking CANDIDATES

for DFC Board of Directors



- One (1) New Salem Director
(Shane Tellmann running as incumbent)
- One (1) South Heart Director

*Anyone interested in filling one of the above listed positions, please contact one of the nominating committee members below:

Shane Tellmann • 701-400-1777

Kevin Volesky • 701-260-1562

Tyler Kostelecky • 701-260-5677

or obtain a Board of Director application form from Chris Duchsherer at the DFC Napoleon Office:
701-754-2252 ext. 112.

Filing deadline is Friday, Feb. 27, 2026

Election will be during DFC's Annual Meeting • March 24, 2026

No nominations will be taken from the floor



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