

North Dakota and Dickey County Celebrate National AG Day

By Aidan Thurber

National Ag Day, organized by the Agriculture Council of America (ACA), is celebrated every year to commend farmers and ranchers across our nation. This year, National Ag Day is celebrating 250 years of farming and ranching. 250 years since our country declared independence on July 4th, 1776, when farmers officially put their spades into the ground of U.S. soil.

115 years later, Dickey County was founded in Dakota Territory. Farmers and ranchers homesteaded the area, and it's sufficed to say that, when you view the statistics below, that they haven't stopped working hard.

In 2022, the USDA's Census of Agriculture (a census conducted every five years) indicated that Dickey County had a total of 423 farms, covering a total of 610,307 acres. As a whole, Dickey County is made up of about 737,280 total acres. That means that farm and ranch land makes up about 82.7% of the total land in Dickey County, an astoundingly large amount—an amount that has only continued to grow over the years.

As reported in the March 25th, 1976 edition of the *Leader*, it was estimated that Dickey County farm land made up about 436,293 total acres, or about 64% of the total land. That means that in fifty years,



Above is a quiet, country-side view often customary to the 830 farmers and ranchers who work in Dickey County. **SOURCE?**

are today.

According to that same census, there are about 830 of the 4,930 people in Dickey County who work on a farm or ranch. That's about 16.8% of our population. 16.8% of our population tends to 82.7% of our land. So, next time you see a farmer out and about, make sure to give them a friendly wave, and, if you get the chance, thank them for all the hard work they do!

NFIB SURVEY: Small Business Optimism Remains Above 52-Year Average

Bismarck, ND, Feb. 11, 2026 – The NFIB Small Business Optimism Index fell 0.2 points in January to 99.3 and remained above its 52-year average of 98. Of the 10 Optimism Index components, three increased and seven decreased. Expected real sales volume was the only component with substantial change, increasing by 6 points. The Uncertainty Index rose 7 points from December to 91. A rise in owners reporting uncertainty about whether it is a good time to expand their business was the primary driver of the rise in the Uncertainty Index.

"While GDP is rising, small businesses are still waiting for noticeable economic growth," said NFIB Chief Economist Bill Dunkelberg. "Despite this, more owners are reporting better business health and anticipating higher sales."

"With 62% of small businesses still feeling the sting of nationwide supply chain disruptions, North Dakota needs a stronger focus on logistics and reducing the red tape that many small business owners say is their single most important problem," said NFIB North Dakota State Director Don Larson.

One major highlight of this report is the new NFIB Small Business Employment Index, which translates multiple jobs-related questions into one single number. Currently, this index tells a story of a balanced labor market, coming in about 1.5 points above its historical average (101.6 current vs 100 average).

In conjunction with the January report, NFIB also released a new episode of the NFIB Research Center's "Small Business by the Numbers" podcast. Listen to the latest episode here.

Key findings include:

- In January, 13% reported the cost or availability of insurance as their single most important problem, up 4 points from December. The last time insurance reached this percentage was December 2018.

- Sixty percent of small business owners reported capital outlays in the last six months, up 4 points from December and the highest level since November 2023.

- In January, a net negative 6% of owners reported paying a higher interest rate on their most recent loan, down 3 points from December. This suggests that credit markets are turning more favorable for small borrowers.

- In January, 16% of small business owners cited labor quality as their single most important problem, down 3 points from December. This is the third consecutive month that labor quality reported as the single most important problem, has declined.

- The net percent of owners expecting higher real sales volumes over the next quarter rose 6 points

from December to a net 16% (seasonally adjusted).

- The net percent of owners reporting inventory gains rose 4 points to a net 3% (seasonally adjusted), the highest reading since January 2023. Not seasonally adjusted, 14% reported increases in stocks (up 1 point), and 17% reported reductions (up 2 points).

- In January, 62% of small business owners reported that supply chain disruptions were affecting their business to some degree, down 2 points from December. Four percent reported a significant impact (up 1 point), 17% reported a moderate impact (down 4 points), 41% reported a mild impact (up 1 point), and 37% reported no impact (up 2 points).

- The net percent of owners raising average selling prices fell 4 points from December to a net 26% (seasonally adjusted). Price increases remain well above the historical average of a net 13%, suggesting continued inflationary pressure. Looking forward to the next three months, a net 32% (seasonally adjusted) plan to increase prices, up 4 points from December.

- In January, overall reported business health improved from December, with more reporting it as excellent and fewer reporting it as fair. When asked to evaluate the overall health of their business, 14% rated it as excellent (up 5 points), 54% rated it as good (unchanged), 27% rated it as fair (down 7 points), and 4% rated it as poor (up 1 point).

As reported in NFIB's monthly jobs report, a seasonally adjusted 31% of all small business owners reported job openings they could not fill in January, down 2 points from December. Unfilled job openings remain above the historical average of 24%. Of the 50% of owners hiring or trying to hire in January, 88% reported few or no qualified applicants for the positions they were trying to fill. A seasonally adjusted net 16% of owners plan to create new jobs in the next three months, down 1 point from December.

The NFIB Small Business Employment Index fell nearly 1 point in January to 101.6, erasing about half of the large gain in December, which reached the highest level since March 2025. The Index remains above the historical average of 100, and just slightly above the 2025 average of 101.2.

In January, 16% of small business owners cited labor quality as their single most important problem, down 3 points from December. This is the third consecutive month that labor quality, reported as the single most important problem, has declined. Labor quality reported as the single most important problem was the highest in the construction, manufacturing, and professional services industries, and lowest in wholesale and finance.

ND Industrial Commission announces \$100M in additional loan funding for BND 2026 Farm Financial Stability Program

Bismarck, N.D., March 17, 2026— The Industrial Commission today allocated an additional \$100 million to support Bank of North Dakota's (BND) 2026 Farm Financial Stability Loan Program. This brings total support to producers, including the 2026 Grain Inventory Loan Program, to \$500 million.

"Producers are facing an unusual convergence of challenges, from severe weather last summer to high input costs, trade policy uncertainty and low commodity prices. This additional loan funding ensures producers' financial needs are supported for the 2026 growing season," the Industrial Commission said in a joint statement. The Industrial Commission, comprised of Gov. Kelly Armstrong as chairman, Attorney General Drew Wrigley and Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring, oversees BND.

The 2026 Farm Financial Stability Loan Program is designed for ag producers with an operating shortfall in 2024 or 2025. It can be used to replenish working capital, term out operating carryover or restructure

existing term debts. The loans have a fixed interest rate of 3.75% for five years

for BND's share. The local lender's share of the loan may not exceed BND's Base Rate plus 1%.

The program is offered through BND, and ag producers should consult with their local lender, who will handle the application process. The program application period will close June 30, 2026, or when funding for the program is exhausted, whichever comes first.

More information on the two loan programs can be found at bnd.nd.gov/ffslp and bnd.nd.gov/gilp.

For more information:

Kelvin Hullet, Chief Public Affairs Officer
khullet@nd.gov 701 220 9430



ELLENDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD MINUTES, FEBRUARY 12, 2026

The Ellendale Public School Board met on February 12, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. with the following board members present: Michele Thorpe, Kristi Gilbert, Jeff Goehring, Val Wagner and Cresta Miller. Others present were Jeff Ringstad, Lana Norton, Cindy Rall, Allison Radermacher, and Brian Vance.

Mrs. Thorpe called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. She welcomed visitors Pamela Cook, Jason Elliot and Grant Hewitt. There were no communications or changes to the agenda.

The consent agenda included the minutes, financial reports and bills as presented. Wagner reviewed the bills and the following bills were presented for payment:

- January Payroll DD 396-399, 7425-7481 Ck#16186-16198 \$275,122.01
- 27762 10 Pin Bar and Grill 1,143.90 Staff Taco Bar
- 27763 Baymont Inn & Suites 297.00 Lodging
- 27764 Blumhardt Chevrolet 1,587.85 Service Buses
- 27665 Cenex FleetCard 6,306.74 Gasoline & Diesel
- 27666 Central Business Systems Inc 1,033.78 Manage Printed Service
- 27667 Cole Paper Inc 1,831.36 Custodial Supplies
- 27768 CREA 18,175.00 Membership Assessment
- 27769 DPCU 6,243.72 Barr Conf. Air Fair/Reg.
- 27770 DPCU 2,968.25 Office Supplies/Books
- 27771 Dickey County Highway Dept 80.00 Bus Washing
- 27772 Dickey County Leader 210.54 Publishing
- 27773 DRN 1,936.43 Telephone/Hosted Server
- 27774 Ellendale Chamber 400.00 Chamber Membership
- 27775 Ellendale City of 1,731.72 Sewer-Water-Garbage
- 27776 Ellendale Grocery 222.26 FACS Supplies
- 27777 Ellendale True Value 127.84 Custodial Supplies
- 27778 EPS Activity Fund 175.00 ND ACDA Honor Band
- 27779 Farmers Union Oil 469.67 Gas/Anti-Gel, Heating Oil
- 27780 Heartland Heating & Cooling 320.28 Fuel Tank Gauge
- 27781 J & M Elliott LLC 2,700.00 January Owners Rep
- 27782 Josten's Inc 13.05 Diploma Signature Update
- 27783 LEAF 448.00 Copier/Printer Lease
- 27784 Mission Mechanical, Inc 4,840.00 Glycol Fill/Pressure Testing
- 27785 Nadine Julson LLC 16,039.90 2024-2025 Audits
- 27786 Napa 46.20 Supplies
- 27787 NDCEL 275.00 NDASA Conf Fee
- 27788 NDMEA All State 105.00 All State Registration
- 27789 Leroy Nelson 598.00 Online Coursework
- 27790 Olson's Pest Technicians 175.00 Monthly Service
- 27791 Petty Cash 25.53 Postage
- 27792 Quadient Leasing USA, Inc. 174.63 Postage Meter Lease

- 27793 Allison Radermacher 100.87 Supplies Resource Room
- 27794 Radisson Hotel Bismarck 227.00 Lodging
- 27795 Jeffery Ringstad 433.02 Resource Rm Sink/Supplies
- 27796 Lisa Ringstad 239.69 Flash Cards
- 27797 SEEC 2,057.16 1st Semester reading Corp
- 27798 Smartsign 74.88 Sign
- 27799 Taylor Music 45.00 Repairs
- 27800 Valley Plains Equipment 12.27 Fuel Filters
- 27801 Verizon Wireless 443.15 Hot Spot Billing
- 27802 ND Center for Distance Education 9,449.00 Coursework
- 20260202 MDU 14,421.94 Electricity
- 20260206 EPS 260.95 eFunds Fees
- 20260210 TMS 53.55 Monthly Service Fees

Total \$98,520.13

It was motioned by Wagner, seconded by Gilbert to approve the items on the consent agenda. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

EPS Spotlight:

- EHS Little Cards performed at halftime on Friday, 2/6.
- The EPS student section creating the "Brian Vance" theme. Imitation is the greatest form of flattery - Mr. Vance is loved and respected!
- Mackenzie G (choral), John B (trombone), and Katherine P (choral) were selected for all state music.
- Ivan C named senior wrestler of the year and Tom Nitschke was named coach of the year in the SE Sub-Region.
- It is National School Counselors week and we are grateful for Colette Middlestead, Valerie Jordan, and Anna McLean for the wonderful work they do with our students.
- Ellendale Math Counts team beating Oakes and named as Dickey County champs. Waiting to find out if we qualify for state competition. Aden E placed 1st overall.
- Aidyn B won the EPS Spelling Bee

Ringstad shared committee reports which included updates from Collaborative Bargaining, Budget & Finance and School Safety Committees. A staffing update was provided as well as a winter ND Full Service Community Schools report.

Rall reported on high school enrollment. Scheduling discussions are beginning, and that committee will be meeting in the near future. This is very dependent on staffing. Upcoming activities include SEEC walkthroughs, continued Infinite Campus training, and administration of the Engagement Survey. The school's security project has advanced to the federal level for potential funding of exterior door access and cameras. Students are completing their shadowing experiences. Other upcoming events were shared.

Radermacher reported on January attendance. The district earned a top score on its Reading Curriculum and Professional Development report; students are completing engagement surveys as well as preparing for spring NDA+ assessments. Red Flag, Green

Flag training is underway for all K-8 students, curriculum reviews and Secret Stories professional development are in progress. A behavioral health services update was provided as well as upcoming events.

Vance reported on coaching openings, upcoming tournament dates as well as spring athletic seasons. It may be time to revisit using the streaming service, as overall feedback has been positive with only minor technical issues that have mostly been resolved. Coaches value Hudl Assist and appreciate having game film available for teaching, especially at the younger levels. Additionally, rSchools has been acquired by Arbitr, which will result in some changes to the calendar system.

Jason Elliot provided a construction update, noting progress on security system conduit routing and that concrete work is anticipated within the next two to four weeks. He shared that he is in contact with a company regarding fitness center equipment, which may include flooring as part of the overall package.

Ringstad and Grant Hewitt shared information regarding the Open Ed Distance Education Service Agreement. Miller motioned, Goehring seconded by move ahead with the agreement as presented. Discussion was held. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motioned carried.

The board reviewed the 2024- and 2025-year end audited financial statements from Nadine Julson, LLC. Wagner motioned, seconded by Gilbert to approve the audit statements as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Miller motioned, seconded by Gilbert to approve the 4-year old preschool program. This program is contingent on approved funding. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Miller motioned, seconded by Wagner to declare the wrestling mats that are stored on the stage as surplus and will be sold on bids. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

It was motioned by Miller, seconded by Wagner to set June 2, 2026 as the School Board Election date with

polls open from 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM in the south gym lobby. The Ellendale City seat currently held by Kristi Gilbert and West Rural seat currently held by Jeff Goehring are up for election. On a roll call vote, all voted yes. Motion carried.

Gilbert moved, seconded by Miller, to approve payment of invoice from Co-op Architecture for \$8,588.00 from the building fund, as well as the Olaf Anderson Construction invoice for \$163,753.20 using loan proceeds. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Next Regular School Board Meeting is Wednesday, March 11, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

Since there was no other business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Lana Norton, Business Manager
 Formally Approved by the Board

(March 26, 2026)

Landfill Hours Dec. 1 - March 31 Saturdays: 10am-4pm

OPENING FOR ELLENDALE PUBLIC WORKS EMPLOYEE

The City of Ellendale is looking to hire a Public Works Employee to oversee the following maintenance to keep the City in good working order and sound condition:

- Streets
- Alleys
- Water system
- Sewer system
- Landfill areas
- General maintenance of equipment
- Mowing
- Cutting and trimming trees
- Cemetery
- Perform a variety of manual labor duties which will include all maintenance, heavy equipment operations, snow removal and other duties as required.
- Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationship with other employees, public officials and the public.
- The employee must occasionally lift and/or move up to 75 pounds or more.
- This job typically works 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday – Friday and will be required to be on call during scheduled evenings and weekends.
- Must be legally authorized to work in the United States. No sponsorships

considered.

- A valid ND Driver's License is required and the ability to obtain a Class B CDL.
- A high school diploma/GED is required; the ability to pass and obtain all required ND State licensing and certification requirements when eligible.
- Successful applicants will be highly motivated and self-directed.
- Successful applicant will require a background inquiry.
- Experience preferred; and essential that the public works employee be service oriented.
- Must live within 30 minutes of the city limits.
- Wages DOE

Applications/Resumes will be accepted until filled, please submit to City Hall (P O Box 267 - 55 3rd Ave S - Ellendale ND 58436).

Benefits included: BCBS - Health, Vision, Dental, Retirement, Vacation, Sick Leave, On-Call pay, Overtime past 40 hrs, Garbage/Water discount if live in city limits

For further details, please contact Mayor Don Flaherty; Council Member Justin Meidinger or City Hall -701-349-3252.

NOTICE OF HEARING BY CITY OF ELLENDALE

The City of Ellendale Zoning Commission will hold a public hearing after two consecutive weekly publications of this Notice to discuss Zoning Amendments covering the City of Ellendale and relating to the change Hasz Family Subdivision, an addition to the City of Ellendale from its current zoning of Commercial to Residential-1 (R-1). The hearing shall be held the 30th day of March, 2026 at 5:50 p.m. at City Hall located at 55, 3rd Ave South, Ellendale, ND 58436. The property involved includes Hasz Family Subdivision, an addition to the City of Ellendale, located within the City of Ellendale, North Dakota, a map of which is available for inspection during the City's regular business hours. The nature, scope and purposes of the proposed changes are to change the zoning in the affected area from its current zoning of Commercial to R-1. The proposed zoning amendments are available for public inspections during the City's regular business hours at the auditor's office at 55, 3rd Ave. South, Ellendale, ND 58436. Following the public hearing, the city council shall consider holding a second reading of the proposed ordinance amendments at a city council meeting immediately following the public hearing.

BY ORDER OF THE CITY COUNCIL
 (March 19 and March 26, 2026)

Prayer to the Blessed Virgin

Oh, most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel, fruitful vine, splendour of Heaven. Blessed Mother of the Son of God; Immaculate Virgin, assist me in my necessity. Oh, Star of the Sea, help me and show me. Oh, Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth, I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart to succour me in my necessity (Make request). There are none that can withstand your power.

Oh, Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee. (3 times)

Holy Mary, I place this prayer in your hands. (3 times)

Say this prayer for three consecutive days and then you must publish and it will be granted to you in full. Thanks

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BY ORDER OF THE ELLENDALE ZONING COMMISSION
 (March 19 and March 26, 2026)

Bring Us Your 2026 Building Ideas!

The best start for any building project is a call or email to Century Builders
Our experienced team will be with you at every stage, from design through completion.

And our initial layout drawings and options of cost are free!

■ Commercial ■ Shops ■ Sheds ■ Livestock Barns ■ Shouses

