

Youth agriculture takes the spotlight

Dickinson State prepares to host area schools for FFA, 4-H event

By Gaylon Wm. Parker
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Dickinson State University is getting ready to host one of the most-popular events on the Future Farmers of America and 4-H Clubs' calendars on Saturday, Feb. 7 that will see nearly every area school in attendance and more than 350 students participating. The Roughrider Judging Contest is typically hosted on the first Saturday in February, and this year's installment will allow them to get a look inside the refurbished and updated agriculture building at the campus and a view of the new rodeo arena that should bring a major boost to the area.

"It allows area kids and teams to come to Dickinson and go through a livestock judging contest and agronomy contest ... typically, this is the first contest of the season – at least here in the Southwest – that those kids will come to," said Dr. Chip

Polard, who serves as the university's Ag Club adviser. "I've spent six weeks or so kind of getting ready, and we put a contest together for them to judge live animals – cattle, sheep, pigs and a pen of goats – and from the livestock side they come and get an opportunity to evaluate pens of those animals and put them in order from best to worst.

"Then, they come back and study their notes and on three of those pens they have to give a set of oral reasons why they placed them in a particular order in front of a judge."

Among the opportunities the students will get to participate in include livestock judging, ag sales, and agronomy, while giving college students a chance to mentor the middle and high school students in the process. It also offers these individuals the chance to network with area agriculture representatives and potentially get a head start for

their future careers and education.

"We have a history, particularly here in the Southwest, of having very good livestock judging teams, and part of that is they start as Cloverbuds – even before they're old enough to be in junior 4-H – scared to death and soon they're working their way through the process," Polard said with a laugh. "By the time they become 16, 17, 18 years old, they're pretty good at it, but they've been doing it forever."

The students also are evaluated based on their abilities to judge agronomy in the form of plant species, weed species and be able to know what the various seeds look like, while also determining – through a green sample – the sorting and qualities of green and non-green components and whether there is foreign material or insects in the mix. Their grades also are evaluated by judges to determine the accuracy of their observations for wheat, barley, corn, soybeans and other crops.

"We're pretty excited, because we're trying



photo | Gaylon Wm. Parker

Area schools like Belfield Public School will be sending their students to Dickinson State University this weekend for the 4-H and Future Farmers of America Roughrider Judging Contest, which will be hosted at the campus's refurbished and renovated Ag Building and rodeo arena.

to build some of these young kids – and typically the agronomy contest has been primarily a n FFA event – but I think we have 12 junior 4-H members registered that are going to be in the agronomy contest, which is a big number for us," Polard said.

"If we could get 18 or 20, I would be ecstatic, because it's just getting them started younger, so as they get older and transition from 4-H to FFA, they just get that

much better."

Ben Krebs, who is the New England FFA adviser, said the Roughrider Judging Contest is one of his students' favorite events, and he also is looking forward to seeing the improvements to the Ag Building and rodeo arena for the first time.

"I haven't been there since they got done renovating that place, so I'm excited to see how that all turned out," Krebs said. "It's put on by the Ag Club, so it's used as a leadership opportunity

for the collegiate club in prepping things and working with the younger kids. I think it's a good two-way street."

For more information about this event, please visit the website at www.dickinsonstate.edu/events/?trumba-Embed=view%3Devent%26eventid%3D194433587. Registration is \$15 and includes lunch and is open until the day of the event. Checks can be made payable to the Dickinson State University Ag Club.

Special Joint Commission Meeting February 17, 2026

The Billings County Commission will hold a special meeting jointly with the Golden Valley County Commission at the Billings County Courthouse in the Commissioners' room at 9:00am on Tuesday, February 17, 2026 for the following:

- Discussion regarding upgrading Buffalo Gap Road.

Marcia Kessel
Billings County Auditor

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2026 ZONING MEETING SCHEDULE

The regular meetings of the Billings County Planning & Zoning Commission are held on the third Thursday of the month, unless otherwise stated. Meetings are held in the Commissioner's room of the Billings County Courthouse at 1:00 p.m. If you would like to be placed on the agenda for a meeting, you will need to submit an application to the county zoning department.

Due to our advertising requirements, the deadline for your zoning application will be 3 weeks prior to the meeting date. If no items are brought forth for the agenda, the meeting may be cancelled. Dates and times for regular meetings are subject to change. Please see the zoning website at <https://www.billingscountynd.gov/169/Planning-Zoning> for the most current schedule and to download applications.

Meeting dates are as follows:

- Thursday, January 15, 2026
- Thursday, February 19, 2026
- Thursday, March 19, 2026
- Thursday, April 16, 2026*
- Thursday, May 21, 2026
- Thursday, June 18, 2026
- Thursday, July 16, 2026*
- Thursday, August 20, 2026
- Thursday, September 17, 2026
- Thursday, October 15, 2026*
- Thursday, November 19, 2026
- Thursday, December 17, 2026

Note * If any applications are received that are within the 1-mile extraterritorial zoning district (ETZ) of the City of Medora for the April, July, or October zoning meetings, the regular County Zoning Board meeting may be rescheduled to accommodate applications within the ETZ.

Notices of the Billings County Zoning Board will also be posted at the following locations:

1. Billings County's official website: <https://www.billingscountynd.gov/>
2. Billings County Courthouse bulletin board

Dated at Medora this 30th day of January, 2026.

Stacey Swanson
Zoning Director

Published February 5 & 12, 2026

GOLDEN VALLEY MANOR BENEFIT

Spaghetti Dinner & Pie/Craft Auction at the Beach Community Center Sunday, February 22



Serving dinner from 12 noon to 1:30 p.m. (Gluten free noodles available)
Live Auction at 1 p.m.
Free-will Donation for the Dinner

All donations of pies and crafts to be auctioned are gladly accepted! Just bring them with you to the Manor!

Sponsored by St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Thrivent and the Golden Valley Manor

Make all checks out to the Golden Valley Manor Foundation

OPEN YOUR HEARTS and Give Children Help, Healing and Hope

By donating \$10 or more to Home On The Range, you can do just that!

Beginning Today until Feb. 12, 2026 you can make an online donation by visiting www.givingheartsdays.org and searching for Home On The Range OR send a check to Home On The Range with Givings Hearts Day written in the memo line.

Our Children Thank You for Your Giving Hearts!



Home On The Range
16351 I-94
Sentinel Butte, ND 58654



NOTICE OF ZONING MEETING

The Billings County Planning & Zoning Commission will hold a regular meeting on Thursday, February 19, 2026 at 1:00 PM in the Commissioner's Room at the county courthouse, to consider recommending to the Board of County Commissioners the approval or denial of the following items:

Applications: None

The board will also review any zoning applications submitted to the zoning department for projects within the Medora Area Plan boundary prior to the final review and administrative approval by the zoning director at the meeting.

Other business:

Review requirements of floodplain management in North Dakota based on changes to state law adopted in SB 2027 during the 2025 legislative session. See ND Department of Water Resources website for details: https://www.dwr.nd.gov/reg_approp/floodplain_management/nfip_fm_senate_bill_2027.html

Review draft of the Billings County Floodplain Management Ordinance based on the Model A Ordinance for communities NOT currently mapped by FEMA provided by the ND DWR and make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners.

Review regulations and zoning ordinances related to camping, campgrounds & RV parks. Make a recommendation for amending Section 5.3.2(a) Conditionally Permitted Uses in Recreational Districts for Recreational Vehicle Parks, & Campgrounds and associated definitions.

Review regulations and zoning ordinances related to Mobile Food Units, Transient Merchants, and Temporary Use Permits and make a recommendation for amending Article VI: Special Provisions 6.17 for Temporarily Permitted Uses and add Special Provision 6.19 for Transient Merchants and Mobile Food Units.

Standing agenda items:

- TRMF Project Updates
- The board will also address potential & pending zoning violations and recommend any action needed by the Zoning Director, State's Attorney, or Board of County Commissioners.

General meeting information:

- Applications and ordinances are available for review during regular office hours at the Billings County Courthouse. If special accommodations are needed, please notify the auditor so that appropriate aids may be made available.
- To attend the meeting remotely via TEAMS, please see the meeting notice posted in the calendar on the Billings County website at <https://www.billingscountynd.gov/> for instructions.

Dated at Medora this 30th day of January, 2026.
Stacey Swanson, Zoning Director

February 5 & 12, 2026