



Feeding a Nation

Agriculture, cooperation, civic duty

BY STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF ND, ND250 COMMISSION

Throughout 2026, the ND250 Commission, administered by the State Historical Society of North Dakota, is leading the state's commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States. Through meaningful, inclusive and inspiring projects and events, the commission celebrates North Dakota's rich history, diverse people and bright future while honoring the state's heritage, individual values and spirit of community.

With spring seeding underway across North Dakota, it's a timely reminder that agriculture has always been more than a livelihood. It has been a foundation for national leadership, helping feed a growing nation while shaping how communities organize, cooperate and govern.

North Dakota has a rich history in agriculture. We can go back nearly 2,400 years and find records of people who lived near the Red River and the James River who began harvesting wild seeds and growing plants for the harvest of food and fiber. Additionally, around 800 years ago, the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians were the first to begin farming as a business. It's clear that from the earliest days, North Dakota was one of the most productive agricultural regions in the country. And as settlements grew, fertile soils, expansive land and determined farmers positioned the state as a national leader in crops such as wheat, barley and flax, and later canola, pulses and sunflowers.

But production alone was not enough.

Farmers could grow the crops. The challenge was everything that came after.

Distance from markets, railroad shipping costs, grain grading systems and limited access to capital often left producers at a disadvantage. North Dakota farmers were helping feed the nation, yet they saw little profit for the crops they produced.

That reality became the driving force behind one of the most defining characteristics of North Dakota agriculture: cooperation.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, farmers began organizing locally to solve these challenges together. Early cooperative elevators such as Valley United in Reynolds (1899), Hoople Farmers Grain Company (1906) and Finley Farmers Grain and Elevator (1911) allowed producers to market their own grain, improve pricing and gain more control over their operations.

By the 1910s, the cooperative movement had taken hold across the state. These were not just business ventures. They were community institutions, owned and governed by the people they served.

This spirit of cooperation extended beyond economics and into civic life.

During the early 1900s, many



Bank of North Dakota



ND State Mill and Elevator

North Dakota farmers faced mounting financial pressure. In response, they organized politically through the Nonpartisan League, a grassroots movement that sought to give farmers more control over their economic future.

Their efforts led to the creation of two of the most unique public institutions in the United States: the Bank of North Dakota in 1919 and the North Dakota State Mill and Elevator in 1922. Both organizations were designed to keep more value within the state and support local producers.

As agriculture expanded, so did the need for larger-scale coordination. Cooperatives extended beyond grain marketing into fuel, supplies and infrastructure. Farmers Union Oil Companies, now known through the Cenex brand, began as local buying groups, helping producers access essential inputs at competitive prices as early as the late 1920s.

These systems built the foundation for a resilient agricultural economy and strong local communities.

Grower-owned cooperatives also advanced value-added agriculture. Organizations such as American Crystal Sugar Company and Golden Growers Cooperative allowed producers to share in the returns of processing and marketing their crops, expanding North Dakota agriculture beyond production and into long-term economic leadership.

At the same time, agricultural organizations helped unify farmers' voices. ND Farmers Union and the ND Farm Bureau were two of many that

emerged to advocate for producers, strengthen rural communities and influence policy.

At its core, cooperation was not only an economic strategy. It was a civic one.

Farmers who helped build cooperatives often served on school boards, township boards and held local leadership roles. They understood that strong communities required participation, shared responsibility and long-term thinking.

This reflects a broader American principle first introduced in 1776 -- that government derives its authority from the people. In North Dakota that principle took shape through agriculture, where individuals worked together not only to produce food but to build systems that supported entire communities.

Today, North Dakota remains a national leader in agriculture, consistently ranking at or near the top in the production of numerous commodities. The state's farmers continue to feed communities across the United States and around the world.

More than a century later, the systems built by North Dakota farmers -- grower cooperatives, organizations and institutions -- continue to ensure that agriculture thrives not just for one generation but for many.

As part of ND250, North Dakotans are encouraged to reflect on their role in the American story and on the people and industries that shaped not only the state's economy, but its civic identity.

To learn more about North Dakota's role in the 250th anniversary and events happening across the state, visit ND250.com.

Rural health grant deadlines approaching

Deadlines are nearing for several grant opportunities from the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP). These competitive grants are designed to strengthen health care access, workforce development, behavioral health, and prevention and community wellness initiatives across the state.

Deadline May 22:

Health Care System and Community Wellness Opportunities

• **Rightsizing Health Care Delivery Systems for the Future:** Provides technical assistance and analysis to help rural health care facilities evaluate service models and future community needs.

-- Eligible applicants: Rural critical access hospitals, federally qualified health centers and owned/operated clinics

-- Funding: Approximately \$42,000 per award, with additional funding available for select analytics participation

• **Zero-Hour PE Initiative:** Supports before-school physical activity programs for middle and high school students.

-- Eligible applicants: Rural and tribal public and private schools, REAs and school consortiums

-- Funding: \$10,000 to \$70,000 per award

• **Community Gardens Project:** Supports community garden initiatives that increase access to fresh foods and strengthen community connection.

-- Eligible applicants: Rural schools, civic groups, municipalities, health care facilities, parks and recreation entities, public health units and nonprofits

-- Funding: \$5,000 to \$30,000 per award

• **Community-Based Walking Program:** Supports organized community walking initiatives, outreach campaigns and wellness engagement activities.

-- Eligible applicants: Civic groups, municipalities, health care facilities, parks and recreation entities, public health units and nonprofits

-- Funding: \$25,000 to \$125,000 per award

Deadline May 29:

Behavioral Health and Community Support Opportunities

• **Behavioral Health Promotion Community Grant:** Supports projects focused on mental health promotion, sui-

cide prevention and substance use prevention.

-- Eligible applicants: Health care providers, tribes and tribal health organizations, schools, law enforcement, nonprofits, childcare providers and community organizations

-- Funding: Approximately \$160,000 per award

• **Ensuring Safety Net Service Delivery:** Supports efforts to address gaps in health care and behavioral health services for vulnerable populations and specialized care needs.

-- Eligible applicants: Health care providers, transportation providers, nonprofits, education systems and community organizations

-- Funding: Approximately \$300,000 per award

Tree renewal project coming to Lakota park

The city of Lakota has announced plans for a major tree renewal project at the city park through a grant application submitted to the ND Forest Service Emerald Ash Borer Mitigation Program, utilizing grant funding of up to \$25,000.

This project is an important investment in the long-term beauty, safety and health of one of Lakota's most loved community spaces. As part of the project, 19 aging and declining trees will be removed due to concerns related to tree health and the anticipated impact of emerald ash borer. Tree removal is expected to begin on or around May 26, weather permitting.

While some trees will be coming down, even more trees will be going back up. The city plans to plant 25 new trees this fall, each a minimum of eight feet tall at the time of planting. The new mix of tree species will help create a healthier, more diverse tree canopy that can better withstand future pests and diseases while continuing to provide shade, beauty and enjoyment for generations to come.

The city of Lakota acknowledges the community's patience and support during this improvement project and looks forward to seeing the park continue to grow and thrive for years ahead.

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING ANETA CITY COUNCIL April 6, 2026

The Aneta City Council met on April 6, 2026 at 5 p.m. at the Aneta Community Center. Present at the meeting were Jaima Curry, Manley Hegna, Kelly Kueber, Danny Hamlin and Todd Whitman.

Brad from Moore Engineering was at the meeting to discuss the progress of the water and sewer line project and stated that KPH should be back early summer to finish up. He also discussed what he found out in regards to new automatic water meters. We should have estimates from Ferguson and Core & Main for the May meeting.

Todd called the regular council meeting to order.

Minutes from the previous meeting were read and approved.

Financials were discussed and approved. A motion was made by Kelly and seconded by Jaima to approve the financials. A vote was taken and all approved.

Old business was discussed. Rodney Brudvig seemed satisfied with what the city reimbursed him for his Ness Plumbing bill.

Automatic meters will be discussed more at the May meeting. Michelle got the business online set up and everything set up to have residents sign up for automatic payments to their city bills. It will also get put on the city of Aneta Facebook page.

Heidi from the café said she would pay the Ness Plumbing bill. The café condiment bar, fridges and freezers were running on extension cords. This was the issue and no new coolers are needed at this time. More to be discussed under new business.

New business was discussed.

Kelly Kueber stated he was willing to mow again this summer for the city.

The first reading was held regarding raising rates for water base by \$2, water usage by \$3 and sewer by \$5. These rates would go into effect for May usage. Jaima made a motion to raise the rates, seconded by Manley. A vote was taken and all approved.

There is electrical work that needs to be done at the café to fix the coolers, freezers and fridges running on extension cords. Heidi got an estimate and it would be around \$2,000 to update the electrical. Todd was going to check with the Aneta Booster Club to see if they would chip in for this update. Jaima made a motion that if the Aneta Booster Club isn't willing to chip in on this, the city would pay the whole bill, seconded by Manley. A vote was taken and all approved.

Billings were discussed.	
Otter Tail Power	\$2,021.58
Nelson Co. Sheriff	1,170.00
Brager Disposal	1,500.00
Todd Whitman	401.25
Michelle Middlestead	321.00
Aneta Park District	235.31
GF Utility Billing	26.00
Dakota Rural Water	8,278.00
Polar Communications ..	277.15
Farmers Union Oil	1,015.34
ND Job Service	98.05
IRS	1,379.10
Jody Kieven	168.08
Moore Engineering	4,762.50
Karen Retzlaff	220.68
Lakota American	24.96
Ness Plumbing	125.42

Delinquent bills were discussed. Todd will talk to them.

Motion to adjourn was made by Kelly, seconded by Danny.

Next meeting will be May 4, 2026 at 5 p.m. at the Aneta Community Center.

Submitted by Michelle Middlestead City of Aneta Auditor

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING ANETA CITY COUNCIL May 4, 2026

The Aneta City Council met on May 4, 2026 at 5 pm at the Aneta Community Center. Present at the meeting were Jaima Curry, Manley Hegna, Kelly Kueber, Danny Hamlin and Todd Whitman.

Brad from Moore Engineering was at the meeting to discuss the progress of the water and sewer line project and stated that KPH should be around town doing some troubleshooting soon. He brought the quotes for the water meter replacements to the council. It was decided to go with Ferguson Waterworks for the AMI meters.

Todd called the regular council meeting to order.

Minutes from the previous meeting were read and approved.

Financials were discussed and approved. A motion was made by Jaima and seconded by Kelly to approve the financials. A vote was taken and all approved.

Old business was discussed.

The Aneta Booster Club agreed to pay \$1,000 toward the café electrical update. Todd stated that the work has been completed. Heidi has since realized that the condiment bar and a couple freezers went out. Heidi was able to find a one used freezer and is still looking for another one. She would like a new condiment bar before the Aneta Turkey BBQ, though. Manley made a motion to allow Heidi to buy a condiment bar, seconded by Jaima. A vote was taken and all approved.

Automatic meters were discussed.

A motion was made by Kelly to go with AMI meters from Ferguson Waterworks, seconded by Manley. A vote was taken and all approved. These meters will make it so meters won't need to be read by residents and will allow Michelle to download the readings once a month from all the meters and have a more accurate number for gallons used vs. gallons we are paying for. The project will start in mid-August and should be completed by October. There are funds left from the clean water loan to cover the costs of this project. There was also a discussion about the meters at Aneta Parkview and a letter will be sent to them requesting them to pay for the 1-1/2-inch meters and the city would cover the other two meters.

Michelle stated that there was a good response from residents signing up for automatic water payments. There is no cost to the residents for this.

New business was discussed. The second reading was held regarding raising rates for water base by \$2, water usage by \$3 and sewer by \$5. These rates would go into effect for May usage. Jaima made a motion to raise the rates, seconded by Danny. A vote was taken and all approved. The rates will be reflected on the June bill for May usage.

Kelly stated he got asked if the city was going to do a dumpster again for cleanup week. A discussion was had and it was decided to have one dumpster again. Kelly will contact Zaub Roll Off to get the dumpster.

Billings were discussed.

Otter Tail Power	\$2,234.04
Nelson Co. Sheriff	1,170.00
Brager Disposal	1,500.00
Todd Whitman	401.25
Michelle Middlestead	321.00
Aneta Park District	250.89
GF Utility Billing	26.00
Dakota Rural Water	4,564.00
Polar Communications ..	277.15
Farmers Union Oil	118.83
Moore Engineering	8,214.00
Karen Retzlaff	220.68
Mary Wall	174.26
Meland Lumber	28.79
ND One Call	1.50
lhry Insurance	2,993.00
Mundy Electric	2,140.00
USPS	83.80

Delinquent bills were discussed. Todd will talk to them.

Motion to adjourn was made by Kelly, seconded by Danny.

Next meeting will be June 1, 2026 at 5 p.m. at the Aneta Community Center.

Submitted by Michelle Middlestead City of Aneta Auditor

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