

Unapproved Minutes
Board of Commissioners of Converse County
January 20, 2026

The regular meeting was called to order at 8:05 a.m. on January 20, 2026. Present in person were Commission Chairman, Jim Willox; Commission Vice-Chairman Rick Grant; Commissioners Robert Short, Trent Kaufman, and Donald Blackburn; and County Clerk, Karen Rimmer.

Mr. Jason Wilkinson, Road & Bridge Superintendent; Mr. John Shephard, Foreman; and Mr. Todd Mattson and Mr. Kenny Sisson, HDR Engineering, provided updates on major road projects. Following discussion, Mr. Short moved to recess into Executive Session pursuant to W.S. 16-4-405(a)(vii) to consider the selection of a site or the purchase of real estate when the publicity regarding the consideration would cause a likelihood of an increase in price. Mr. Grant seconded and motion carried. The regular meeting recessed at 8:09 a.m. and reconvened at 8:25 a.m.; no action was taken. Mr. Todd Mattson continued with updates for the Jenne Trail Road Reconstruction Project, Phase 3, including the mandatory pre-bid meeting to be held today. Mr. Mattson requested allowing the bid date to be revised to February 4 versus January 28, 2026. If approved, the change would be presented as an official addendum for the project; the Commissioners concurred. Other discussion included testing of crushed asphalt, signage on certain county roads, and blasting and crushing activities. Following discussion, Mr. Grant moved to authorize Mr. Wilkinson to move forward with development of contract amendments for additional crushing with B&B Aggregates and blasting with Buckley Powder at the Shawnee Gravel Quarry contingent upon review by the County Attorney and further authorized the Chairman to sign the agreement between meetings; Mr. Kaufman seconded; motion carried. Following discussion of gravel projects, Mr. Kaufman moved to authorize the graveling of all 5.2 miles of Leuenberger Lane at an estimated and unbudgeted cost of \$668,000 to be expended out of the 231 Misc. Road Fund; Mr. Blackburn seconded; motion carried. Departmental updates continued with updates on various training courses and meetings and the extreme dry weather and impacts on roads relating to magnesium chloride and dust suppression. Following discussion, the Commissioners authorized Road & Bridge to contract with trucking companies for the watering of county roads with heavy traffic and high impacts unless and until there are sufficient precipitation events.

Mr. Tony Carroll and Mr. Mike Smith, Vyve Broadband, provided an overview of a Vyve project along CR2/Anderson Dairy Road for which they failed to obtain authorization via approved permits for Bores and Public Utilities Parallel Rights-of-Way. Permits have been applied for but not yet approved for additional Vyve projects along CR9/Chalk Buttes Road and CR64/Ridgewater Road. Mr. Carrol requested permission to allow the depths of both the installed and pending coaxial cables to remain at the thirty-six inches versus six feet; they further stated that Vyve would sign a waiver ensuring any damage to their cable would be replaced exclusively at Vyve's cost. Mr. Jason Wilkinson, Road & Bridge Superintendent, shared concerns with the shallow depths and the additional costs the County incurs when dealing with shallow underground

utilities. The Commissioners directed Mr. Carroll and Mr. Smith to prepare the waiver language and submit for review, and that the waiver and pending permit applications will be considered at the next Commissioner meeting. No action was taken.

The minutes for the January 6 and 7, 2026 regular meeting and Executive Sessions were approved and ordered filed as amended.

Mr. Short moved to approve December monthly reports, Road & Bridge: \$29,795.65; Sheriff: \$2387.73; NOVCs: 2025-0578 Anschutz Exploration Corp. \$2304.47; 2025-0609 Anadarko E&P Onshore \$47,571.02; 2025-0611 \$1,060,108.16; Mr. Blackburn seconded; motion carried.

Ms. Kristin Watson, HR Director, provided departmental updates including new job openings and employees; annual and quarterly turn-over rates; health insurance fund monthly update; Wellness; completed professional development training; and ideas for budgeting. The Commissioners advised that the vacant Road & Bridge half-time position has been authorized to be filled. The new exemptions regarding taxes on overtime pursuant to the One Big, Beautiful Bill Act was discussed; all eligible employees will receive an earnings report for 2025. Other updates included ongoing interviews; an overview of the Employee Assistance Program provided by IMA; and various ongoing and upcoming items. No action was taken.

Mr. Kaufman moved to recess into Executive Session pursuant to W.S. 16-4-405(a)(ii) to consider the appointment, employment, right to practice or dismissal of a public officer, professional person or employee; Mr. Blackburn seconded. The regular meeting recessed at 10:18 a.m. and reconvened at 10:57 a.m.; no action was taken.

Mr. Clint Becker, Sheriff, discussed a proposed salary increase for the Undersheriff position, which the Commissioners did not authorize due to the adopted budget. The Commissioners approved a budgeted salary increase for one Patrol Deputy position.

Mr. Pete Rausch, Respec Engineering; Mr. Taylor Shilling, Montana Civil/Joint Venture; and Mr. Kenny Sisson, HDR Engineering, Inc. (remotely) provided updates pertaining to the LaPrele Dam Reconstruction Project. An overview of the construction schedule, staging areas, and mobilization was provided. The primary focus in 2026 would be excavation and foundation work; vertical dam construction in 2027; and 2028 would include concrete work for the spillway and other features. An agreement for access to the staging area was discussed and will need to be addressed at a subsequent meeting. No action was taken.

The meeting recessed at 12:00 p.m. and reconvened at 1:00 p.m.

Ms. Darcey Cowardin, Public Health Nurse Manager, provided departmental updates including a discussion of new childhood vaccination guidance from the CDC; open positions; and Board of Health updates. No action was taken.

The Commissioners interviewed Mr. Lonnie Sorenson as an applicant for the Glenrock Solid Waste Disposal District. Mr. Sorenson provided an overview of his qualifications, which included consulting work for landfills in other states, and his interest in a position for the District. No action was taken.

Mr. Chris Caskey, Technical Services Director, presented draft policy documents to address uniforms for the Maintenance department; IT data governance; and Technical Services

Internships. The policies were reviewed and edits recommended; Mr. Caskey will make revisions and present at a subsequent Commissioner meeting. No action was taken.

Ms. Jessie Dykehouse and Mr. Getty Babbitt (remotely), FDL Consulting, LLC, along with Jera Likely, Martin & Martin (remotely), provided updates on major construction projects. The Animal Shelter Expansion Project was briefly discussed; the project is on schedule and there are no concerns. The Glenrock Office Renovation Project was reviewed, and the structural engineering report completed by Martin & Martin resulted in the Commissioners determining the best option for the existing structure would be to demolish and design and build a new structure. The Courthouse Level 1 & 2 Study was discussed at length, and the design options and movement of offices as presented were reviewed by the Commissioners and several impacted departments present. Ms. Dykehouse requested each department review and provide comments for further discussion at the next Commissioner meeting. No action was taken.

The Commissioners discussed for the record the recent WYDOT STIP (State Transportation Improvement Program) presentation and the bridge and road projects identified as priorities for the next five years. The West Richards Street bridge abutment repairs will be completed by WYDOT in collaboration with the City of Douglas using federal BROS (Bridge Replacement Off System) funding. The Antelope Creek Bridge and the Boxelder Road Bridge are being repaired by WYDOT using IIA (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) funds, which is federal funding available for the replacement of bridges considered poor quality and in critical need of repair as determined by WYDOT using their inspection criteria. WYDOT inspects all bridges across the state every other year and advises the owning entity of the quality, applicable weight limits, and associated signage. The County has also repaired bridges and culverts in the past using these federal funding sources as well as general funds. Wyoming State Highways 93 and 95 were listed as priorities for WYDOT. No action was taken.

The Commissioners, along with Mr. Quentin Richardson, County Attorney, reviewed the State Board of Land Commissioners (State Board) meeting held in Douglas on January 8, 2026, regarding the potential Pronghorn H2 Project; outcomes of that meeting; the WCCA Zoning Regulations document; and the County Commissioners official statement regarding this project. Lengthy discussion ensued including Mr. Richardson's opinion of the motion to vacate the lease by the State Board, which was an initial lease versus a renewal lease. He discussed the determination by the Eighth Judicial District and the statement from the Courts that the State Board violated their own rules. Mr. Richardson stated that the Courts would be restricted to the opinion in front of them, and if the Supreme Court were to overturn the District Court Judge decision, then it would only then be appropriate for the State Board to act on the lease. The Commissioners provided a timeline of the Pronghorn H2 Project to date, which began in November 2022 with all leaseholders in the area receiving a boiler plate lease agreement stating a wind farm would be built and requesting execution of the lease. Landowners, leaseholders, and residents began communicating with the Commissioners their concerns and questions, which continued through early 2023. Not having received any communication from Pronghorn H2 at any point, the Commissioners requested that Aspen Consulting, a firm representing Pronghorn H2's interests, attend a regular Commissioner meeting and provide information. At the May 2,

2023 regular Commissioner meeting, Mr. Paul Martin, Focus Clean Energy, and representatives of Aspen Consulting (collectively referred to as “Pronghorn”), presented information about the Pronghorn H2 project. This presentation, while not dissimilar to presentations from other firms and wind projects, was vague, and the Commissioners advised Pronghorn that they failed to meet with landowners/leaseholders prior to sending the lease. At that time, the project was presented as a wind farm from Niobrara County to Natrona County with a hydrogen plant in Niobrara County. On August 1, 2023, Pronghorn submitted an application for the erection of metrological towers, some of which were in Converse County. From August 2023 through January 2025, Pronghorn reportedly continued to work with local landowners and develop leases and agreements, including a lease with the State of Wyoming. During this time, the Commissioners had no contact with or from Pronghorn. On February 3, 2025, the Commissioners learned through outside sources that the lease between the State of Wyoming and Pronghorn was being presented to the State Board of Land Commissioners regular meeting that same day as a consent agenda item. Commission members requested both in person in Cheyenne and via phone calls that the Board remove the Pronghorn lease from the consent agenda due to the Commissioners and citizens’ concerns and questions and the lack of communication from Pronghorn. The State Board honored this request and removed the lease from the consent agenda. The Commissioners then received a copy of the lease agreements and internally prepared a map showing all impacted properties. In the following months, the Commissioners continued to receive calls and emails from residents and landowners concerned about the project. On March 18, 2025, Pronghorn presented an updated plan proposal to the Commissioners at a regular meeting at their request, including turbine layout and impacted properties. The Commissioners discussed on the record concerns and issues with turbines on the Duncan Trail as well as serious concerns about the water usage for the project despite neither was under the Commissioner’s purview. The Commissioner continued to receive communication from concerned Converse County residents through April 2025 and learned that one leaseholder had rescinded their lease consent for the State-owned Duncan Ranch sections, thereby impacting the turbines planned near the trailhead. Also in April 2025, the State Board of Land Commissioners approved the State lease, which resulted in an appeal filed by Stephens Land & Livestock, LLC, with the Eighth District Court District. On December 8, 2025, District Court overturned the State Board’s lease approval, which the State Board could appeal to the Wyoming Supreme Court. On January 8, 2026, the State Board of Land Commissioners met in Douglas, publishing agenda items “Misc. Matters” and “Public comment Regarding Wind Leasing”. This meeting was widely publicized due to comments made by Board members during the meeting. Following this meeting, the Converse County Board of Commissioners released a public statement to clarify important facts regarding the Pronghorn H2 project, most notably that to date, no application has been submitted by Pronghorn or any of the associated firms. It was noted for the record that a pipeline being installed by True Ranches south of I-25 near Glenrock at the Bixby Ranch is being considered an irrigation pipeline [and did not require Commissioners approval]. In an effort to address concerns raised by citizens across multiple Wyoming counties, the Commissioners met with the WCCA (Wyoming County Commissioner Association) along with other impacted counties to discuss how counties can move forward and manage industrial projects whether the

counties have zoning or not. Both Niobrara and Goshen County have recently been impacted by these types of projects; the Industrial Siting Commission (ISC) procedures are complicated and strict. The WCCA sought legal and statutory review and developed a comprehensive guidance document to assist Wyoming Counties in the process of industrial applications. An important fact to note is that there is little authority in the absence of zoning laws and regulation. This was also advised by Mr. Richardson during the regular meeting on October 7, 2025. The Commissioners stated for the record that it is a dereliction of duty to form an opinion on a project unless and until the County receives an application. The first wind project in Converse County located south of I-25, is very different from the proposed Pronghorn H2 project, but the concerns of the citizens at that time are similar to the concerns now. Mr. Richardson restated that the Commissioner's authority is limited without any zoning regulations, which creates a basis for review, revisions, and greater opportunity for public participation. The Commissioners made additional statements for the record. Zoning regulation is the only tool that exists that allows denial by a County if an application meets all other requirements, particularly projects exclusively on private land. Moratoriums on industrial projects only delay the project because moratorium cannot be indefinite. Establishing zoning regulations is complicated and can be costly, and approximately half of Wyoming counties currently have zoning regulations in place. Even with zoning, Counties have no authority over water rights as these are exclusively owned by the State of Wyoming. A bill was presented in 2024 that would require a severance tax on water, but the Legislature did not consider the bill at the time. Although the Pronghorn project may or may not come to fruition, particularly considering the water usage, the need to protect Wyoming's waters is crucial, particularly given the likelihood of other industrial projects coming forward. Based on current lack of zoning, the public would have only two opportunities to address concerns with any industrial project, which is when the Commissioners and the ISC each independently consider the application. The ISC has authority over many other impacted sectors, including water, wildlife, air quality, and others, for which the Commissioners have no authority. A basic overview of the application process was reviewed for the record, which begins with an application submitted to and thoroughly reviewed by the Special Projects Coordinator; followed by presentation to and determination by the Commissioners that the application is complete; then presentation of the complete application to the Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z), who performs a second thorough review of the application. Next, P&Z makes formal recommendation(s) to the Commissioners, as P&Z does not have authority to approve or deny an application and are required to submit the application to the Commissioners. The Commissioners then must hold a public hearing; the decision to approve or deny can be during the same meeting as the public hearing, or it can be deferred for a specific amount of time. During that time, the Commissioners can continue to receive public comments if they authorize it, which they have done. If the application is denied, a reason must be provided; the Commissioners can also make recommendations on the application prior to approval. However, impacts to neighboring properties is not legally a consideration in the absence of zoning laws and regulations allowing such factors. Commissioners expressed concerns with misinformation and disinformation presented by some individuals. The Commissioners acknowledged that they should have been

making more public statements to ensure the public had a better understanding of the project's status, including that they as a board are bound to follow the law. Typically, the County permit comes before the ISC application, but there is no requirement that one be submitted prior to the other. In addition, the personal feelings of the Commissioners have no bearing in relation to the approval or denial of any project, which must be subject to laws and regulations in place. The Pronghorn H2 project does not seem economically or otherwise feasible due to significant water usage and the change in subsidy credits resulting from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Economic feasibility is a requirement of the ISC for approval, as is reclamation and renewable third-party reclamation bonds. The single landowner/lease holder involved in the Pronghorn H2 project has not spoken for or against this project or made any public statement, and it is unclear why there has not been more focus on this fact. No currently seated Commissioner has any involvement with the Pronghorn H2 project and therefore has nothing to gain, which would be a conflict of interest by law and would remove any such Commissioner from acting on any aspect of the project. Ms. Cindy Stimson, Douglas Budget/Glenrock Independent, asked for clarification on whether a County and State-approved application would be required if the project moved forward strictly on the privately owned and leased lands of True Ranches, based on the District Court Order from December 2025. Per the Commissioners, the applications would still be required regardless of whether a project is on private or state lands, and that the vast majority of all other approved projects to date in Converse County have been exclusively on private property. Those few projects with any state lands were leased lands only. Further, the granting or losing of the lease does not remove the ability of the applicant to present an application for consideration. No further discussion and no action taken.

Mr. Short moved to recess into Executive Session pursuant to W.S. 16-4-405(a)(vii) to consider the selection of a site or the purchase of real estate when the publicity regarding the consideration would cause a likelihood of an increase in price. Mr. Grant seconded and motion carried; the regular meeting recessed at 4:50 p.m. and reconvened at 5:05 p.m. No action was taken.

Mr. Short moved to approve the Cooperative Agreement Between Converse County Firewise and Local Grant Program Administrator/Converse County for the financial administration of the various grants for Hazardous Fuels Reduction by the Converse County Firewise Committee and Converse County for a term from full execution until Jan. 31, 2027 ; Mr. Kaufman seconded; motion carried.

Mr. Short moved to approve the State of Wyoming Easement Applications for Roadways pursuant to House Enrolled Act 59 for the dedication of public roads within Converse County as presented for portions of CR14/Windy Ridge Rd; CR17A/Hiser Rd; CR18/Mormon Canyon Rd; Mr. Blackburn seconded. It was stated for the record that these easement applications will continue to be presented at the second Commissioner meeting of each month until completed; motion carried.

Mr. Grant moved to appoint Lonnie Soreson to the Glenrock Area Solid Waste Disposal District for an unexpired 3-year term from January 20, 2025 through July 31, 2027, contingent upon a favorable background check; Mr. Kaufman seconded; motion carried.

The Commissioners discussed scheduling a quarterly meeting with the Town of Glenrock and the Town of Rolling Hills and the scheduling of a work session to review speed studies and speed limits on CR1/Irvine Road, CR2/Anderson Dairy Road, and CR52/East Antelope Road.

The Commissioners directed that the electrical service for two meters at the County-owned shooting range be transferred into the name of Converse County.

The regular meeting adjourned at 5:24 p.m.

A regular meeting of this Board will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday, February 3 and 4, 2026, at 8:00 a.m., unless otherwise posted, at the Converse County Courthouse within Commission Chambers, located at 107 N. 5th Street, Douglas, Wyoming. The public is invited to attend. To get on the agenda, call the Clerk's Office by the Thursday before the meeting. Per W.S. §18-3-516(f), access to county information can be obtained at www.conversecountywy.gov or by calling the County Clerk's Office at (307) 358-2244.

James H. Willox, Chairman

Karen Rimmer, County Clerk

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