

**MINUTES OF THE HARDEMAN COUNTY
LEGISLATIVE BODY JUNE TERM
JUNE 16, 2026**

Be it remembered that a Regular Meeting of the Legislative Body for the County of Hardeman, State of Tennessee was conducted in the Hardeman County Courthouse in the City of Bolivar, on the 16th day of June, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. Hon. Todd Pulse, County Mayor, was present and presiding, and a quorum of Commissioners, namely, Hon. Cory Bufford, Hon. Russell Deberry, Hon. Michion Gatlin, Hon. Mark Gilliam, Hon. Brad Grantham, Hon. Bobby Hensley, Hon. Joe Jenkins, Hon. Jeff Kennamore, Hon. Chandra Y. Lake, Hon. Johnny M. Lanier, Hon. Bethany Miller, Hon. Jackie Sain, Hon. Johnny Weems, and Hon. Bobby Wright were present. Hon. David Bell and Hon. John Vickers were absent. County Attorney Dale Conder and County Clerk Tonet Griggs were present, and the meeting was opened in due form of the law and had to wit:

14 PRESENT 2 ABSENT

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Hon. Bobby Wright made a motion to approve the minutes for May 19, 2026.
Hon. Michion Gatlin seconded the motion to approve the minutes.

CARRIED BY ACCLAMATION

APPROVAL OF NOTARIES

Hon. Mark Gilliam made a motion to approve the list of notaries brought forth to the commission, and Hon. Johnny Weems seconded the motion.

CARRIED BY ACCLAMATION

COUNTY OFFICIALS & DEPARTMENTS

- Highway Department Superintendent Casey Swift presented the pre-approved lowest (FY2026–2027) yearly bids for county operations. Hon. Mark Gilliam made a motion to approve, and Hon. Bobby Hensley seconded the motion.

CARRIED BY ACCLAMATION

The second reading of the budget for the Highway Department FY 2026-2027 was approved. Hon. Johnny Lanier made a motion to accept the second reading of the budget, and Hon. Jackie Sain seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE 14 AYE 0 NAY

- **Administrator of Elections Amber Moore** reported that the State of Tennessee will be reimbursing Hardeman County for approximately \$45,000. This covers the cost of protective security cages locking the voting equipment, and vendor fees tied to the recent congressional redistricting shift from District 8 to District 9. Preparations are actively underway for the upcoming July 17 election.
- **Animal Control:** Commissioner Wright commended Hardeman County Adoptable Animals, the Sheriff's Department, and local dispatchers for their collaborative efforts. The public was reminded of local leash laws and the vital importance of spaying and neutering pets. An open call was made for shelter volunteers.
- **Little Courthouse Museum:** It was noted that a new air conditioning system had been installed, and other maintenance repairs were made for the opening during the July 4th celebration weekend.

SCHOOL BOARD BUDGET & AMENDMENTS

Dr. Smith presented fiscal clean-ups and specific educational budget items:

- Summer School Allocation: Clean-up funding covering instructional materials, transportation/bus driver personnel, and school supplies.
- Volunteer Pre-K Program: A state-funded grant adjustment to match finalized employee medical insurance selections during open enrollment.
- General Purpose School Fund (Fund 141): Adjustments making up for higher-than-anticipated homebound teacher needs and mandatory school board meetings. Legal fee surpluses were reallocated to absorb these costs alongside liability and health insurance updates.
- University of Kansas Grant (CW-PBIS): Formally recognized \$40,000 (\$10,000 each across 4 local schools) earmarked for Positive Behavior Support professional teacher development.
- CCIS Disproportionality Grant: Dr. Smith announced that Hardeman County successfully worked out of the programmatic requirements of this restrictive grant, freeing up remaining designated funds to merge directly back into the general-purpose fund.
- Ice Storm Insurance Recovery: Formally acknowledged a recovery payout of \$151,650, utilizing funds to fix widespread school floor damage, drainage blockages, a destroyed greenhouse, and blown central AC units.
- Fund 143 (Cafeteria): Staffing adjustments and increases covering sick-leave substitutes and utility hikes, balanced by reductions in food service equipment spending.

Hon. Johnny Lanier made a motion to approve the budget amendments to clean up the year-end budget. Hon. Jeff Kennamore seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE 14 AYE 0 NAY

There was also a vote taken for the second reading of the FY26-27 school budget. Hon. Johnny Lanier made a motion to accept the second reading, and Hon. Michion Gatlin seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE 14 AYE 0 NAY

AGREEMENTS & MEMORANDUMS

- Hardeman County Arts Council Sublease Extension: Brandon Burvee from the Arts Center outlined the property layout. The property is leased from the State of Tennessee to Hardeman County and then subleased to the Arts Council. The commission unanimously approved the 25-year renewal, which extends beyond the current January 2027 expiration date. Hon. Bobby Wright moved to approve the lease agreement. Hon. Cory Bufford seconded the motion. The center will maintain its state-mandated commitment to hosting Western Mental Health patients free of charge.

ROLL CALL VOTE 14 AYE 0 NAY

- Structural Update on Arts Center: Recent structural engineering inspections revealed critical truss damage inside the main hall. While navigating an active 75-day insurance claim, the center has moved back to its roots by keeping all events active through external community spaces, churches, and central high school auditoriums.
- AirMedCare contract needs to be in place before July 1, 2026. Hon. Johnny Lanier made a motion to accept the contract, and Hon. Mark Gilliam seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE 14 AYE 0 NAY

- Sergeant Tyrone Allen Memorial Bridge: The commission officially ratified Senate Bill No. 1478, formally naming the bridge on Murphy Lane in Whiteville as the Sgt. Tyrone Allen Memorial Bridge. Hon. Chandra Lake made a motion to officially ratify the Senate Bill No. 1478. Hon. Bethany Miller seconded the motion.

CARRIED BY ACCLAMATION

- EMS Director Rusty Thigpen proposed adding SAVVIK as an authorized secondary cooperative purchasing service alongside current state contracts to streamline emergency service vehicles and equipment purchasing. Hon. Jackie Sain motioned to approve and accept SAVVIK Resolution, and Hon. Johnny Lanier seconded.

CARRIED BY ACCLAMATION

- EMS Director Rusty also provided call metrics from May 1 to mid-June, which recorded 568 total runs (including 88 hospital transfers), bringing in nearly double the average revenue streams.
- Zoning Compliance Office Fee Schedule Resolution: Following adjustments signed into law by Governor Bill Lee, building code definitions were updated to cap double and triple-wide manufactured home inspection rates down to \$150 to keep overall flat rates below the statutory \$250 limit. Clarifying language was added, adjusting accessory alterations to a \$4 rate per \$1,000 valuation (\$40 minimum). Hon. Bobby Wright made a motion to accept the fee schedule resolution, and Hon. Johnny Weems seconded.

CARRIED BY ACCLAMATION

FY 2026–2027 COUNTY BUDGET & RESOLUTIONS

Budget Chair Hon. Johnny Lanier led the second reading and voting for the formal county operating FY26-27 budget, which was compiled ahead of schedule alongside Finance Director Linda Ernest. Hon. Bethany Miller motioned to accept the FY26-27 county budget, and Hon. Chanda Lake seconded.

ROLL CALL VOTE 14 AYE 0 NAY

- No Property Tax Increase: Left completely flat.
- Employee Raises: Include a standard 2% cost-of-living adjustment for county workers (with employees taking on a 5% health insurance cost-share). State-mandated raises for elected officials stand at 2.63%.
- County Employee Longevity Program: A historic, unanimous initiative rewarding long-term county laborers (exempting elected officials) distributed every November 1 based on total service years:
 - 5 to 9 Years: \$300 annually
 - 10 to 14 Years: \$500 annually
 - 15 to 19 Years: \$1,000 annually
 - 20+ Years: \$1,500 annually (Cap)
- Debt Service Allocation: Shifted a baseline surplus of 4 cents into the dedicated debt service fund to rebuild balances used for prior legal fees. Total net revenue over expenses sits at a positive \$69,000.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Tax Rate Fix: Maintained at 1.8102. Hon. Jackie Sain made a motion to accept the resolution, and Hon. Chandra Lake seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE 14 AYE 0 NAY

2. Tax Levy Breakdown (Resolution 06172026-02): Designated 86 cents to the general fund, 85.93 cents to public schools, and 9.09 cents to debt service. Hon. Bobby Wright made a motion to accept the tax levy resolution. Hon. Jeff Kennamore seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE 14 AYE 0 NAY

3. Appropriations (Resolution 06172026-03): Approved allocation parameters for the General, Drug, Landfill, Debt Service, Highway, and School funds. Hon. Johnny Lanier made a motion to approve the Appropriations Resolution. Hon. Johnny Weems seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE 14 AYE 0 NAY

4. Longevity Funding Resolution: Formally established and funded the long-term employee payout program. Hon. Johnny Weems made a motion to accept the Longevity Funding Resolution. Hon. Johnny Lanier seconded the motion to accept the resolution.

ROLL CALL VOTE 14 AYE 0 NAY

BUDGET AMENDMENTS

The Commission evaluated and approved a series of year-end balance ledger adjustments. A major driver for these itemized updates was a new IRS mandate requiring tracking and breaking out half-time overtime payouts on employee W-2 forms under Line 87 across all administrative departments.

All forty (40) budget committee clean-up line items passed on a definitive roll-call vote, with major entries touching landfill maintenance, Veterans Services office equipment, state adjustments for General Sessions judge pay, and a \$52,578 opioid reserve account allocation establishing a juvenile court drug-intervention system starting July 1. Hon. Jackie Sain made a motion to approve the budget amendments. Hon. Johnny Weems seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE 14 AYE 0 NAY

MAYOR'S REPORT & CLOSING BUSINESS

- Community Clean-Up: Mayor Pulse extended a special thank you to Rusty Keltner from Porters Creek for launching localized road trash clean-up groups through local churches. The mayor issued an open invitation for residents to join the anti-litter campaign.
- Grants: Over \$2 million in grants have been secured since 2022. Active grants are backing community ambulances, the landfill, and the historical archives restoration project.
- Economic Highlights: A recent industrial tour of the TKE manufacturing facility in Middleton acknowledged their baseline of 930 local jobs. Appreciation was also extended to the Towns of Whiteville and Middleton, along with the Hardeman County Board of Education, for their financial participation in assisting with the countywide 911 Emergency service fee.
- Memorial Resolution: Work is beginning on a state-level naming part of Highway 125 South, honoring Deputy Dale Wyman, a local sheriff's deputy who passed away in the line of duty several years ago.

CORECIVIC CONTRACT RENEWAL

Hon. Mayor Pulse presented the new five-year renewal contract with CoreCivic. Hon. Chandra Lake made a motion to accept the five-year renewal contract, and Hon. Cory Bufford seconded the motion. Mayor Pulse also stated that CoreCivic Hardeman, as well as CoreCivic Whiteville, will be giving \$50,000 each to help with 911 Emergency. Hon. Johnny Lanier made a motion to accept the memorandum. Hon. Cory Bufford seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE 14 AYE 0 NAY

Next meeting July 21st, 2026

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Mark Gilliam motioned to adjourn, and Hon. Russell Deberry seconded.

COUNTY MAYOR



COUNTY CLERK

