

**MINUTES OF THE HARDEMAN COUNTY
LEGISLATIVE BODY APRIL TERM
MAY 19, 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 19th day of May, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. Hon. Todd Pulse, County Mayor, was present and presiding, and a quorum of Commissioners, namely, Hon. David Bell, 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. John Vickers, Hon. Johnny Weems, and Hon. Bobby Wright were present. County Attorney Dale Conder and County Clerk Tonet Griggs were absent, and the meeting was opened in due form of the law and had to wit:

16 PRESENT 0 ABSENT

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the regular session on April 16, 2026, were approved as presented. Hon. Jackie Sain made the motion to approve, and Hon. Michion Gatlin seconded the motion.

CARRIED BY ACCLAMATION

APPROVAL OF NOTARIES

A list of notary public applicants was approved. Hon. Mark Gilliam made a motion to approve the notaries, and Hon. Russell Deberry seconded the motion.

CARRIED BY ACCLAMATION

DEPARTMENT AND OFFICIAL REPORTS

Hardeman County School — FY 2026-2027 Budget: Dr. Smith presented the first reading of the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 budgets for General Purpose (Fund 141), Central Cafeteria (Fund 143), and Capital Improvement (Fund 177).

- **Fund 141 (General Purpose Education):**
 - **Revenue Status:** Total estimated revenue is **\$36,012,472**. The district benefited from a state "hold harmless" funding floor, preventing a reduction in year-over-year revenue. The county was thanked for maintaining funding allocations.
 - **Major Expenditure Pressures:**
 - **School Buses:** Costs rose dramatically. A single bus that cost \$92,000 four years ago now costs \$178,000. Three buses are budgeted this year, increasing the transport expenditure line from \$150,000 last year to \$475,000.
 - **Textbooks:** Due to a K-12 social studies curriculum adoption cycle, the textbook fund alone increased by \$420,000.
 - **Personnel:** Built in a state-mandated 4% cost-of-living increase to bring starting teacher salaries up to \$50,000. The same 4% adjustment was made to all support staff to maintain internal parity. No support or teaching positions were cut.
 - **Healthcare:** Health insurance costs currently sit at \$3.8 million. The district budgeted a 7% increase but has been advised to expect closer to a 10% increase.
 - **Enrollment Trends:** Enrollment is currently around 3,700 students and trending downward across the district, mirroring statewide trends. This year, the district is graduating approximately 225 students while projecting an incoming kindergarten class of only 125.

- **Financial Discrepancy & Mitigation:** The calculated deficit between estimated revenues and expenditures sits at **\$494,997**. The district expects to close this gap via the county's historical property tax collection cushion (where the budget calculates a 92% collection rate, but actual county collections average roughly 98%).
- **Fund 143 (Central Cafeteria):**
 - Estimated to finish comfortably under budget by **\$9,083**, contingent on USDA commodity rates remaining stable.
- **Fund 177 (Education Capital Improvement):**
 - Funding is allocated toward primary facilities projects, focusing on elementary school restroom renovations.

Hon. Jeff Kennamore made a motion to accept the budget amendments, and Hon. Bobby Wright seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE 16 AYE 0 NAY

ELECTION COMMISSION REPORT

The Amber Moore thanked the budget committee for their collaboration. It was reported that the first election cycle of the year has been officially certified, and preparations are fully underway for the upcoming second cycle.

SPECIAL GUEST STATE REPRESENTATIVE JOHNNY SHAW

State Representative Johnny Shaw addressed the Commission to deliver a legislative update detailing major state-funded projects secured for Hardeman County:

- **Downtown Redevelopment Grant:** Successfully extended the shared state funding program for an additional 10 years beyond its 2028 expiration, securing revitalization funds for the next 12 years.
- **Middleton Library Expansion:** Awarded a **\$75,000** state building grant to build an addition onto the new library facility in Middleton.
- **Sand Beach Lake Project (Bolivar):** The Tennessee Department of Conservation (TDOC) awarded **\$358,000** to the City of Bolivar for infrastructure and recreational improvements at Sand Beach Lake.
- **Lone Oaks Farm:** Highlighted massive investments by the University of Tennessee, including the largest 4-H camp in the U.S., a world-class gun range, and a massive watershed management program estimated to draw up to one million visitors over the next three to four years.
- **Western Mental Health Institute:** Funding secured for a complete kitchen reconstruction, with work scheduled to break ground late this fall.
- **Whiteville Fire Department:** Secured a **\$100,000** grant to fund critical equipment and service upgrades.
- **Allen White School / Rosenwald Museum Project:** Secured **\$2,000,000** to construct a dedicated historical museum on the site of the former Allen White School, which was lost to a fire. Construction is slated to begin by the start of 2027.
- **911 Emergency Services:** Rep. Shaw confirmed he voted to allow local rate adjustments to secure more funds for emergency services, though the broader bill was ultimately vetoed by the Governor.
- **Blue Oval City & Regional Infrastructure:** Confirmed that while assembly production timelines shifted back slightly to late 2027/2028, Ford's infrastructure investment remains incredibly strong, including over

\$90 million already injected into regional school systems and Boys & Girls Clubs. Additionally, McKellar Airfield in nearby Jackson now offers 50-passenger jet service connecting locals directly to Atlanta (with future Chicago routes planned).

- **The Johnny Shaw Agricultural Innovation Act:** Rep. Shaw closed by highlighting his final sponsored bill before retirement—a legacy project carrying a \$1 million fiscal note aimed at establishing community gardens and teaching citizens sustainable home-growing methods. The Commission thanked him for his 26 years of continuous service on the state finance and budget committees.

RESOLUTIONS AND AGREEMENTS

Proposal & Easement Agreement (Sain Road Bridge, over Spring Creek)

- The State of Tennessee submitted a mandatory right-of-way and easement proposal to initiate structural work on the upcoming Sain Road bridge project.
- A brief discussion clarified that Highway Department Superintendent Casey Swift was absent due to an ongoing conference in Gatlinburg, but had reviewed the timeline expectations over the phone.

Hon. Jackie Sain made a motion to approve and authorize the signing of the proposal of Spring Creek Bridge; Hon. Cory Bufford seconded the motion.

CARRIED BY ACCLAMATION

ZONING RESOLUTION MANUAL & MAPPING COMPILATION

- A resolution was presented to formally approve a consolidated Zoning Resolution Manual and updated Zoning Map.
- The new manual compiles every single piecemeal amendment enacted since the original 1993 zoning regulations were passed. The county zoning map had not been fully compiled or updated since 2020.

Hon. Bobby Wright made a motion to adopt the updated zoning manual and map. Hon. Michion Gatlin seconded the motion.

CARRIED BY ACCLAMATION

BUDGET COMMITTEE ACTIONS & AMENDMENTS

Hon. Johnny Lanier presented the results of the committee meeting held prior to the full session:

Budget amendments **7, 9, 10, 12, and 13** were handled internally by the budget committee and required no full commission vote. Amendment **2** was officially tabled. Budget amendments 1, 3-6, and 11 needed to be approved by the commission. Hon. Lake made a motion to accept the budget amendments. Hon. Michion Gatlin seconded the motion.

ROL CALL VOTE 16 AYE 0 NAY

AMENDMENTS REQUIRING FULL COMMISSION APPROVAL:

- #1 Juvenile Court
- #3 Ambulance/EMS
- #4 Landfill
- #5 Sheriff's Office
- #6 Register of Deeds
- #11 Drug/Law Enforcement

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT BUDGET (FIRST READING)

The first reading of the Highway Department budget was presented (approximating standard base allocations). Hon. Mark Gilliam made a motion to approve the first reading of the Highway Department budget. Hon. Cory Bufford seconded the motion to approve. Superintendent Casey will be present for the second reading in June to handle specific inquiries.

ROLL CALL VOTE 16 AYE 0 NAY

COUNTY GENERAL & LANDFILL BUDGET DISCUSSION

The budget committee outlined critical items built into the first reading of the main county budget, noting adjustments before the decisive second reading in June:

- **Employee Longevity Bonus Plan:** The committee issued a positive recommendation for a new tiered longevity program to reward long-term workers without triggering baseline structural retirement liabilities. Under this plan, distributed annually at Christmas:
 - Years 5–9: **\$500** annual bonus
 - Years 10–14: **\$1,000** annual bonus
 - Years 15–19: **\$1,500** annual bonus
 - Years 20+: **\$2,000** annual bonus
- **Cost of Living & Health Insurance Restructuring:** The baseline budget contains a **2% cost-of-living increase** for all county employees. Initially, health care cost shares were structured at 90/10. The budget committee altered this to a **95/5 split**—the county will absorb 95% of the healthcare premium costs (which are rising 5%). Net take-home pay still increases positively for personnel. Additionally, an incentive was noted where employees who choose to opt out of county insurance onto a spouse's plan will save the county **\$9,342 per person annually**.
- **Clerk's Office Amendment:** A proposed bonus amendment out of the Clerk's office was officially tabled. The budget committee scheduled an active work session with the Clerk before the June second reading to audit internal office functions and participation rates before any structural funds are voted upon.

Hon. Jeff Kennamore made a motion to accept the First Reading of the County budget. Hon. Cory Bufford seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE 16 AYE 0 NAY

MAYOR'S REPORT & ADJOURNMENT

- **Regional Library Agreement:** County Mayor Todd Pulse announced that, following a collaborative meeting with the city administration, the county is extending its library service agreement. Per strict contract language, the obligation continues automatically ("successive in term") as long as both entities continue to hit performance benchmarks.
- **Southwest Human Resource Agency (SWHRA):** Commissioners were reminded of active summer safety nets available via SWHRA, including the summer youth food program, elder care utility relief, home weatherization/renovations, and dedicated veteran support services.
- **Election Infrastructure:** The new directional and informational signs requested for the Election Commission have arrived and are scheduled for prompt installation.

- **Sergeant Allen Bridge Renaming:** The official resolution to rename the local bridge in honor of Sergeant Allen has been returned from the state legislature. The Commission will formally ratify the return and handle local signage logistics next month.
- **Veteran Memorial Request:** The family of a deceased 20-year military veteran and former Sheriff's Deputy (who passed away due to complications from an on-duty accident) requested an honorary road designation in front of their residence. County Mayor Todd Pulse will present the formal legislative packet for commission approval next month to submit to the General Assembly ahead of their next session.
- **Civil Environmental Legal Update:** Regarding an ongoing county lawsuit over property maintenance and code violations, the legal counsel reported that the property owners have officially complied with a judge's order and begun actively clearing out the junked vehicles and debris. A brief discussion ensued, noting that some vehicles are being shifted to city limits, transitioning any further code enforcement to municipal oversight.
- **Adjournment:** Following a brief inquiry regarding county maintenance vehicle lettering updates, the meeting was adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Johnny Lanier made a motion to adjourn, and Hon. Mark Gilliam seconded the motion.

Next meeting to be held June 16, 2026.

COUNTY MAYOR Todd Pulse

COUNTY CLERK Janet Gregg