

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING
FIRST MEETING, 2026 SESSION (1)
JANUARY 2, 2026**

The Buena Vista County Board of Supervisors met for the first meeting of the 2025 session on Thursday, January 2, 2026, at 8:30 A.M. in the Boardroom with Chairperson Merten presiding, and the following other members present: Croker, Hartman, and Ringgenberg, and with Auditor Susan Lloyd as clerk for the meeting. Absent: Snyder.

Prior to the start of today's meeting, Supervisors Merten and Hartman completed the **count of cash in the Treasurer's** office.

Unless otherwise indicated, all the following **motions** offered at this meeting were carried with the following vote: Ayes: Croker, Hartman, Merten, and Ringgenberg. Nays: none. Abstentions: none.

Motion by Hartman, second by Croker, to approve today's agenda as printed. Carried.

Motion by Croker, second by Ringgenberg, to approve the **minutes** of the 12/30/2025 meeting as presented and to adjourn the **2025 session**. Carried.

The first order of business for the 2026 session was the election of the Chairperson of the Board and Vice-chairperson. Chairperson Merten called for nominations for **Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors**. Motion by Croker, second by Ringgenberg, to nominate Paul Merten as Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors. Motion by Hartman, second by Croker to cease nominations. Carried. Merten was then elected Chairperson of the Board by the following vote. Ayes: Croker, Hartman, and Ringgenberg. Nays: None. Abstention: Merten. Motion by Merten, second by Croker to nominate Hartman as Vice Chairperson. Motion by Ringgenberg, second by Croker to cease nominations. Carried. Hartman was elected as Vice Chairperson by the following vote: Ayes: Croker, Merten, and Ringgenberg. Nays: none. Abstentions: Hartman.

Motion by Ringgenberg, second by Croker, that **Robert's Rule of Order Revised** (2020) shall govern the proceedings of the Buena Vista County Board of Supervisors, including the use of a second for all motions. Carried.

Chief Deputy Medical Examiner Dave Patton informed the Board that Tim Speers has stepped down as an MEI, and that he had a letter of recommendation to have the Board appoint a replacement. Motion by Croker, second by Hartman, to appoint Michele Ronfeldt as an **MEI**, replacing Tim Speers. Carried.

Chief Deputy Medical Examiner Dave Patton reviewed the **Medical Examiner FY'27 budget**. Patton informed the Board that the State is looking at increasing the cost of autopsies, but it must be approved by the legislature. Patton reviewed the changes to his budget, which adds funds for purchasing shirts and jackets for the new MEI's, funds for education, and increase in the cost of autopsies.

Treasurer Danelle Haberman presented her Investment Policy to the Board for their approval. Haberman stated that she had the County Attorney review the policy and approved it. Motion by Hartman, second by Ringgenberg, to adopt the Treasurer's **Investment Policy**. Carried.

Depository Resolutions 2026-01-02-A

Motion by Croker, second by Hartman, that the updated Depository Banks by the Treasurer, Recorder, & Sheriff will be used during 2026 in the amounts stated below, and, that the appropriate elected official be and is hereby authorized to deposit the designated office funds in amounts, not to exceed in the aggregate, named for said bank:

Treasurer:	Citizen's First National Bank, Storm Lake	\$2,000,000.00
	Central Bank, Storm Lake	\$2,500,000.00
	Security Trust & Savings Bank, Storm Lake	\$36,000,000.00
Recorder:	Security Trust & Savings Bank, Storm Lake	\$100,000.00
Sheriff:	Central Bank, Storm Lake	\$250,000.00
	Citizen's First National Bank, Storm Lake	\$50,000.00
Attorney:	Central Bank, Storm Lake	600.00

and, that the 2026 Federal Depository Bank shall be Security Trust and Savings Bank, Storm Lake, with the payroll deposits to be made by wire transfer. Carried.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 2nd day of January 2026.

/s/ Paul Merten, Chairman, Board of Supervisors..... /s/ Susan K. Lloyd, County Auditor

Chairman Merten asked if there was anyone online that wished to be heard during **Hear the Public**, with no response.

Official Newspapers

Having received a request for official newspaper designation from each newspaper, motion by Ringgenberg, second by Croker, to designate the following as official newspapers for legal publications for 2025: The Storm Lake Times Pilot and Buena Vista County Journal, and to direct the Auditor to publish all motions of the Board, any actions resulting in a consensus of the Board, on a quarterly basis - the list of claims paid from the minutes of the Board meetings, and annually - the list of salaries paid. Carried.

Board Appointments

Motion by Ringgenberg, second by Hartman, to appoint the following persons as delegates and representative to the committees, commissions and boards as noted for 2026, with changes, and pending any changes that may need to be made later. and to designate all the remaining Supervisors as alternates:

Snyder- representative on the **Third Judicial District Department of Correctional Services Advisory Board**.

Snyder—delegate, all the remaining Supervisors as alternates, to the **Local Emergency Management Commission** (Chapter 29C.9).

Snyder-representative, all the remaining Supervisors as alternates, to the **Region III Local Emergency Planning Council (LEPC)**.

Snyder-representative, all the remaining Supervisors as alternates, to the **Buena Vista E-911 Service Board**.

Hartman—delegate all the remaining Supervisors as alternates, to the **Buena Vista Solid Waste Commission**.

Croker and Hartman-representatives, to the **Lake Improvements Commission**.

Merten to the **Friends of Little Lake Discovery Center Board**.

Ringgenberg--representative, to the **3-County Early Childhood Iowa Board**.

Ringgenberg--representative, to the **Buena Vista Local De-Cat Board**.

Ringgenberg-representative, to the Board of Directors of the **Storm Lake United Development Board**.

Chair and Vice-Chair as members of the board of **Storm Lake United Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund**.

Snyder -delegate, to the **Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation**.

Bret Wilkinson, technical representative, Justin Anderson-alternate, to the **Region 3 RPA Transportation Technical Committee**, Snyder--Board's representative, all other board members as alternates, to the **Region 3 RPA Transportation Alternatives Committee**.

Snyder--representative, all the remaining Supervisors as alternates, to the **NW IA Juvenile Detention Center (YES)**.

Merten-representative, to the **Central Iowa Juvenile Detention Center**.

Becki Drahota, Don Diehl, and (one vacancy), to the **Judicial Magistrate Appointing Commission** for 6-yr terms expiring 12/31/2026.

Tom Ryherd (12/31/30), Don Diehl (12/31/29), and Dave Patton-appointed by the County Attorney (12/31/30) to the **BV County Civil Service Commission**. (341A.2)

Lee Dutfeld-representative, to the **Regional Housing Authority** until 12/31/2028.

Croker and (1 vacancy) to the **Northwest Iowa Regional Housing Trust Fund**.

Merten-as the Board representative on the **BV County Coop/COG Planning Committee** (Continuity of Operations).

Hartman-delegate, to the **Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc. Board**.

Snyder-delegate, to the **NW Iowa Planning and Development Commission**.

Dale Arends-citizen representative to the **NW Iowa Planning and Development Commission**.

Snyder-representative, to the **S.H.I.E.L.D. Board (12 County)**.

To the County **Safety Committee** (including the Right-to-Know program): Hartman, Kory Elston, Dan Bailey (as Bret Wilkinson's designee), Nathan Rubendall, Justin Anderson, Tracy Gotto, Joe Keller, Hunter Knudtson, Yvonne Sandhoff, Greg Johnson, Aimee Barritt, Tyler Van Houten, Louie DeRoos, Stacey Blee, Connie Jesse, Jo Fitchett, and Brian Blomme, with Mike Raner as Safety Coordinator.

Snyder-delegate to the **Regional Transit Board (RIDES)**.

Gary Armstrong as the Buena Vista County **Drainage Attorney**.

Snyder-delegate, to the **Drainage District #181, #274, #14-42, #22, & #150 Interim Boards**.

Merten as Buena Vista County **Equal Employment Opportunity Officer**.

Chairman-representative, for all county **labor negotiations**.

Danelle Haberman, Dan Hartman, and Susan Lloyd to the Buena Vista County **Deferred Compensation Board**.

Bret Wilkinson, Kory Elston, Joe Keller, Aimee Barritt, Paul Merten, and Kelly Snyder to the **Weather Committee**.

Board of Supervisor's Chair, Bret Wilkinson, Kory Elston, Danelle Haberman, Susan Lloyd, and Yvonne Sandhoff as members of the **Personnel Committee** (includes employee handbook updates).

Sheriff, Bldg./Grounds Supt., County Auditor, County Attorney, Clerk of Court, Member of the Board of Supervisors (Snyder), and District Court Judge Andy Smith to the **Courthouse/Judicial Security Committee**.

Curt Reis, Susan Lloyd, Joe Keller, Bret Wilkinson, Tyler Van Houten and Merten, to the **Buena Vista County Facilities Committee**.

Merten–Board's representative for **Whitney Pit Farm and South Hayes Pit Farm** for leases and Merten and Bret Wilkinson for grain sales at the South Hayes Pit.

Susan Lloyd-**ADA Coordinator**.

Public Health Administrator Tracy Gotto, Sheriff Kory Elston, County Attorney Paul Allen, Supervisor Kelly Snyder, and EMA Director Aimee Barritt to the **Opioid Abatement Committee**

Joe Keller as the **Lock-out/Tag-out Program** Coordinator for the Courthouse, DHS Annex, E. Richland Annex, Geneseo Annex. E5th/Seneca Annex and Cayuga St. Annex.

Alison Myrtue as the primary contact person, and Bret Wilkinson as the secondary contact person for **Drug and Alcohol Testing Alliance**.

Ben Mueggenberg as Buena Vista County **Zoning Administrator** and **Buena Vista County Floodplain Coordinator**).

Planning & Zoning Commission members: Kyle Hansen, Richard Marshall, Gary Sundblad, Marvin Engel, Melanie Anderson

Zoning Board of Adjustment members with 5-year terms as follows: Richard Langner-12/31/26, Mitch Sievers-12/31/29, Greg Sundblad-12/31/27, Steve Lind-12/31/28, and Jason Meyer-12/31/30.

Dr. Garrett Feddersen, **County Medical Examiner**, and Dave Patton-Chief Deputy Medical Examiner, and independent MEs Greg Ebersole, Jennifer Hustedt, John Dahl, Shawn Nagel, Nicole Mason, & Michele Ronfeldt, as **Deputy Medical Examiners** (Chapter 331.801). Terms expire 12/31/2026.

Hartman as representative to the **BV County Trails Advisory Council**.

Andrew Kelly (6-30-27), Corey Diischer (6-30-28), Paul Sennert (6-30-26), Ron Witham (6-30-26), and Lee Meth (6-30-27) to the **Veterans Affairs Commission** for the 2026 year, and until their terms expire (Chapter 35B).

Bret Wilkinson--**Title VI Coordinator**

Bret Wilkinson as **County Engineer** and authorized to close roads as necessary.

Greg Johnson as **Weed Commissioner**.

Brian Jones as **Deputy Weed Commissioner**.

Local Board of Health-members with 3-yr. terms as follows Dr. Robert Whitmore 12/31/2028, Julie Sievers-12/31/27, Shelly Rock-12/31/26, Rhonda Ringgenberg-12/31/26 and Jon McKenna-12/31/2027.

BV Co Conservation Board-Jeff Kestel-12/31/29 Erica Larson -12/31/30, Rick Meyer-12/31/26, Sarah Vanderhoff-12/31/27 Tyrone Seaman-12/31/28.

BV County Wellness Committee: Lacey Anderson, Jen Fulcher, Angie Wilkinson, Kathy Croker, Sharon Henkel, Eric Chase, Alison Myrtue, Angela Lai, Isabel Andrade.

BV County Insurance Committee: Ashley Herrig, Ashlyn Norse, Jon Buss, Josh Nielsen, Rob Danielson, Greg Johnson, Ben Mueggenberg, Yvonne Sandhoff, Lacey Anderson, Curt Reis, Rhonda Ringgenberg, Mark Van Hooser, Bret Wilkinson, and Tyler Van Houten.

EMS Board: Kelly Snyder, all the remaining Supervisors as alternates

Mike Raner as Buena Vista County **Safety Coordinator**.

Greg Johnson to the **B.V. Co. REAP Committee**.

Merten-representative to the **North Raccoon River Watershed Management Coalition Board**.

Croker and Snyder as Board of Supervisor representatives to the **Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee**.

Jake Heuton with a term expiring 6/30/2028 Tim Heuton with a term expiring 6/30/2026, and Mark Herrig with a term expiring 6/30/2027 to the **Lincoln Benefited Fire District Board of Trustees**.

Kathy Croker to the **SRFDC Committee** held Spring and fall at the ISAC meetings.

Croker and Merten with Hartman as alternate for the **Marina subcommittee**.

County Auditor, and in her absence the Deputy Auditor, as **Custodian of Supervisors' records** (including Supervisors Minutes, annual reports of County Departments and other organizations required to file their reports with the Board of Supervisors, Drainage District Minutes, Ordinances, Warrant Book, Claims Registers, Precinct Maps.)

The vote on the above appointments was carried.

Pursuant to Chapter 22.1.2 of the 2026 Code of Iowa, the Auditor informed the Board that she has named herself and her Deputies, Sharon Henkel and Karla Ahrendsen, as the lawful custodian of the records which are considered 'open records' in the Buena Vista County Auditor's office. (Records and Code of Iowa references: Bonds of Public Officers (62.6), Election records (62.3 and others), Budgets adopted by local taxing jurisdictions (331.502.3) Township records (331.502.30), Drainage Minutes & Assessment Schedules (331.502.33), record of Election results (50.39 & 50.40), Lost Property Record (556F), Mental Health Accounts prior to 1994 (230.26), assistance to Veterans (34B.10, Claims against the Board 331.504.4), Assessment Rolls (441.26), Tax Rate Book (444.6), Real Estate Transfer Books-Index-Plat Books (558.60-67), Survey Plats (354.25), Treasurer's report of Receipts & Disbursements (335.504.4), Valuation Report (331.510), Annual County Financial Report.

Holiday, Vacation, and Sick Leave Policy

Motion by Ringgenberg, second by Hartman, that the Buena Vista County Employee Handbook with the effective date of January 1, 2020 and amended 04-18-2023, along with the various Departmental Rules, Job Descriptions, and any amendments be declared the governing policy for all Buena Vista County employees under the jurisdiction of the Board of Supervisors for Buena Vista County, and that the Medical History, Physical Examination, and County Work Release forms be used in conjunction with the Handbook. Carried.

Motion by Hartman, second by Ringgenberg, that **election workers** for 2026 be paid \$14.00/hr. and chairpersons \$15/hr., effective this date. Carried.

Meal and Mileage Rate Reimbursements

Motion by Croker, second by Hartman, to approve the following reimbursement:

meal cost reimbursement to employees, and to others serving on boards and in other appointive positions, shall be meals eaten out of county during approved schools or meetings may be reimbursed at their actual cost, minus alcoholic beverages, up to a maximum of \$60.00 per diem which includes a gratuity and any additional charge for using a credit/debit card, following the handbook policy. (Reimbursements for meals, when no overnight stay is involved, will show on the employee's W-2). No reimbursement will be made for alcoholic beverages. To receive reimbursement, detailed receipts must be submitted. If the per diem is exceeded due to a meal/meeting, that fact shall be noted on the reimbursement claim. Carried.

Motion by Ringgenberg, second by Hartman, to approve the following reimbursement and the Lodging Expense policy:

mileage reimbursement rate for sheriff's service fees at the current IRS rate \$.725/mile on 1/1/2026.

mileage to employees (including deputy medical examiners, township elected officials, and election workers) at the rate of \$.04 cents under the current IRS standard mileage rate (.685), for each mile traveled by private vehicle (not for county owned vehicles) for county business in 2026.

The **Hotel Reimbursement & Human Trafficking Policy** which applies to county employees wanting reimbursement for hotels they stay in while under County employment for meetings and training went into effect January 1 of 2022 and remains in effect indefinitely. Carried.

Drainage Resolutions and Assessments

Motion by Hartman, second by Ringgenberg, that the County Drainage Attorney is hereby directed to research drainage and other assessments due and payable on parcels of Buena Vista County property prior to putting them on the list of properties for scavenger auction; to establish 5% as the rate of interest to be paid during 2026 on all stamped warrants, and charged on Improvement Certificates and Drainage District waivers, effective this date (for Buena Vista County drainage districts only); that the beaver control policy in 2026 shall be payment of \$50 per beaver tail for beavers trapped in drainage districts as adopted January 1, 1986, and, the beaver control program shall be \$50/beaver tail for the non-drainage district areas of the county; these programs require that the claimant possess a fur-bearer's license as required by law, and with a payout limit of \$2,500 in non-drainage districts areas in each fiscal year. Carried.

There being no further business, motion by Croker, second by Hartman, to adjourn the meeting at 10:22 a.m. until Tuesday, January 6 at 8:30 a.m. for a special meeting.