

North Dakota Township Officers Association,

Board of Directors 2026 Third Quarter Regular Meeting

This third-quarter session of the North Dakota Township Officers Association focused on institutionalizing professional oversight and preparing for the 2026-2027 legislative session. The board reached a consensus on transitioning from defensive posturing to proactive relationship management regarding industrial development, specifically data centers and energy infrastructure.

Strategic Institutional Oversight

- **Financial Audit Engagement:** The board approved hiring Harold Rotunda for the 2025 and 2026 fiscal years at a rate of \$3,000 per year. The objective is to move beyond "cash picture" reporting to a "real picture" oversight model. Harold will present preliminary findings at the annual meeting to address deficit wealth concerns and improve financial transparency.
- **Lobbying Contract:** Clearwater Communications was retained for the period of October 1, 2026, through May 31, 2027. The total contract value is \$18,664.
 - **Core Mandate:** Legislative outreach, providing weekly board reports, and facilitating early contact with new legislative members post-election.
 - **Conflict Policy:** Clearwater confirmed that while they represent agricultural groups (Corn Growers, Ethanol), these interests generally align with township priorities.
- **Parliamentary Procedure:** Wendy Baggaley was approved to serve as parliamentarian for the annual business session.

Industrial Development and Zoning Friction

A significant portion of the session addressed the "fear factor" surrounding data centers, battery storage, and energy blocks.

- **Relationship Management:** The board discussed a strategic shift toward creating "orderly growth relationships" with industry players rather than flat opposition. Hostility is viewed as a liability that leads to townships being bypassed in legislative discussions.
- **Nuclear and Energy Concerns:** Discussions surfaced regarding the seven-year lead time for energy blocks in other states (e.g., Texas) and the potential for on-site small modular nuclear reactors to power data centers.
- **Zoning Necessity:** A comprehensive plan is now a prerequisite for effective zoning. The board intends to provide "Township 101" training to help officers navigate property rights versus community impact.

Legislative and Legal Directives

- **Tax Caps and Overrides:** There is ongoing confusion regarding the 3% tax cap. Townships may override this cap at the annual meeting, but the board noted that transparency in advertising the "maximum allowed" dollar amount is critical to avoid legal challenges.

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- **Recall Qualifications:** The board is evaluating a legislative push to change recall qualifications. Currently, "freeholders" (property title holders) are difficult to verify due to complex land titles, making the recall process for township officers administratively burdensome and expensive.
- **Road Litigation:** A high-cost litigation case in the northeast involving a 1921 road section highlights the necessity of maintaining rigorous FEMA and maintenance records (GPS indexing) to prove public access and ownership.

Annual Meeting Logistics

The 2026 Annual Meeting is scheduled for late November through early December in Bismarck.

- **Registration Fees:** Adjusted to \$50 for pre-registration and \$70 for at-the-door registration to cover rising facility costs.
- **Engagement Strategy:** The board will introduce "Round Table" discussions and social activities (e.g., cornhole) to encourage networking between older and younger generations of township officers.

Annual Meeting Timeline:

- **Notice Deadline:** October 30, 2026
- **Board Meeting, Committee Meetings, Vender Setup:** November 29, 2026
- **Guest Speakers and Panels:** November 30, 2026, 7:00 AM to 12:00 PM
- **Business Session:** November 30, 2026, 1:00 PM
- **Legislative Social:** November 30, 2026, 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM
- **Awards Banquet:** November 30, 2026, 7:00 PM
- **Workshops:** December 1, 2026, 7:00 AM to 12:00 PM
- **Conclusion:** December 1, 2026, 12:00 PM

Operational Constraints

- **Digital Communication:** The board is addressing jumbled email threads in Gmail. Larry emphasized the need for clean, separate communication rather than "collapsed" topics to ensure no directives are missed.
- **FEMA Documentation:** The board mandates that all townships maintain "blade by blade" GPS logs for road work to protect future federal funding eligibility.