THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTH DAKOTA TOWNSHIP OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

GRASS ROOTS REPORT

FALL 2026

NDTOA

NDTOA 60th Convention and Annual Meeting

Zoning for large scale developments will be featured in this conference. Applied Digital, NextEra, and other large-scale developers will take part in a panel discussion on Monday morning. Other topics and speakers are being added to round out the morning. The 60th Annual Business session will be held on Monday afternoon. There will be elections for three district directors, and two potential by-laws changes to vote on. (see other articles in this issue for details). There will be a report from the newly hired auditor given during this session.

There is still a vacancy on the state board for district 6, the south-east district. If you know someone that would be interested, please speak with them and try to get them nominated.

Legislators and other officials are being invited to the social that we will be hosting, running from 5:00 to 6:30 PM, Monday evening. This will be the evening before the beginning of the pre-session of the legislature so we expect numerous legislators will stop by. There will be many new legislators coming in and we need to get to know them. This will be a chance for us to speak with legislators, new and returning, as they prepare for the session. The Awards banquet will follow the social at 7:00 PM, with the Grassroots Leadership Awards and other awards presented. If you have someone in mind for the Grassroots Leadership Award, please check out the application included in this issue. We can now give five awards each year so there is a better chance that any nominee will be selected, however the individuals must be currently serving in office to receive the award, so nominate that deserving officer now before they leave the board.

Tuesday morning will be workshops including mock township annual meetings, conditional use hearings, zoning amendments, and parliamentary procedure.

Several vendors have been invited to set up booths in the exhibit area so there will be some interesting displays to visit.

The dates for the convention are Monday, November 30 and Tuesday December 1. It will be held at the Bismarck Hotel and Conference Center, 800 S 3rd St, Bismarck. Rooms may be reserved by calling (701) 258-7700. The NDTOA block rate will be available until November 16th. Please pre-register for the conference before November 20, the form is in this issue. The cost is $50 pre-registered by that date and $70 after that date and at the door.

WHAT'S INSIDE

President's Report 2

NDDOT - NDTOA with Rail/Hwy Crossings. 2

The Future of Local Government: A Call for Civility 3

Legal Counsel 4

Recordings of NDTOA Meeting now on NDTOA.com 4

Treasurer's Report 5

NDTOA Board of Directors Institutes Program of Routine Annual Audits. 5

Grassroots Government Leadership Award. 6

NDTOA 2026 60th Annual Meeting Registration Form 7

NDTOA Elections to be Held 7

Help For the ATLR Offered 7

By-Laws Amendments to be Offered at 60th Annual Meeting

There will be a by-law change and a constitution change brought for consideration at the 60th Annual Meeting business session on Monday afternoon, November 30th.

Articles 3 and 4 of the Constitution require that the association and board of directors meet in December, the proposal would add the month of November to both articles. This is needed because of the scarcity of venues that have conference facilities and the competition for desired dates. The words "November or" would be added to both articles. A constitutional amendment requires a 2/3 affirmative vote.

III.

The membership of this association shall consist of Township Officers of the State of North Dakota for the townships which have paid the membership dues hereinafter provided for. The association shall meet annually in ***November or*** *December. The Board of Directors shall have the power to allow attendance by electronic means. The Quorum for said meeting shall be the number of members present at that time. If a county township association has not designated two members to represent and vote on behalf of the county association, then and in that event those members present at the annual meeting shall meet with and*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

NDTOA Officers

DALE SCHMITZ, President
1923-40th Ave NE
Harvey, ND 58341-8471
701-693-6099
dale@ndtoa.com

JULIE BRANDVOLD, Vice President
20100-317th Ave SW
Ryder, ND 58779
701-721-8186
julie@ndtoa.com

LARRY SYVERSON, Executive Director
465-150th Ave NE
Mayville, ND 58257-9011
(701) 430-1735
larry@ndtoa.com

BARB KNUTSON, Treasurer
2600-236th St. NE
McKenzie, ND 58572-9609
(701) 391-6767
barb@ndtoa.com

LEE BRANDVOLD, Past President
20100-317th Ave SW
Ryder, ND 58779
701-720-5457
lee@ndtoa.com

MARK VERKE, Safety Coordinator
(701) 220-0495
markverke@gmail.com

KIM HRICHENA, District I Director
2500-22nd St SE
Minot, ND 58701-7701
(701) 240-1103
kim@ndtoa.com

VACANT, District 2 Director

JASON JOHNSTON, District 3 Director
600 Cooper Ave
Grafton, ND 58237-1535
701-270-7726
jason@ndtoa.com

LEON MONKE, District 4 Director
5645B-106 Ave SW
Regent, ND 58647
(701) 563-4498
kmonke@ndsupernet.com

TOM DUTTON, District 5 Director
19500-62nd Ave SE
Menoken, ND 58558-9637
(701) 220-7964
tom@ndtoa.com

TIM GEINERT, District 6 Director
509-2nd St
Nortonville, ND 58454
(701) 320-6120
tim@ndtoa.com

LEGAL COUNSEL

THOMAS R. MOE, Attorney-at-Law
39-1st Ave NW, Mayville, ND 58257

JAYME TENNESON, Attorney at Law
103 Main St., Sutton, ND 58484



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BY DALE SCHMITZ

Hello fellow Township Officers

With October's end right around the corner, another summer and autumn have just about passed us by. I hope every township was able to get their graveling and road maintenance projects completed or at least close to being completed.

I would like to take the time to thank all the township officers who took the time to log on and be a part of our monthly Township Tuesday Zoom meetings. To find out the date and time check the NDTOA Calander on the association's website.

Moving ahead we are about a month from our annual township officer's meeting in Bismarck. This year's meeting will be at the Bismarck Hotel and Conference Center on November 30th and December 1st. This is your annual meeting please reach out to your state officers if there are any speakers or topics that you would like us to try to line up.

I look forward to seeing all of our township officers at the annual meeting, and I would like to thank each and every one of our township officers for the work and service that you do.

NDTOA President Dale Schmitz

October 21, 2026

NORTH Dakota | Transportation
Be Legendary.™

Township Officers' Association of North Dakota with Rail/Hwy Crossings

The North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) requests your assistance in identifying locations within your jurisdiction where rail/highway crossing safety could be improved. The information you provide should include the street or road name of each grade crossing and the distance and direction to the nearest town or towns. Please be specific about your concerns or suggested improvements.

NDDOT administers annual federal funds dedicated to safety enhancement projects at rail/highway at-grade crossings and roadway-over-track locations. These funds support the installation of active warning devices (such as flashing light signals with gates), crossing signs, surface improvements, and incentive funding for permanently closing redundant or infrequently used crossings.

Please submit your concerns or suggestions before December 31, 2026, so they can be included in the annual review process. Past submissions have been incorporated into the statewide pool of prioritized crossings, and your continued participation is appreciated.

Crossing concerns or suggestions may be emailed to: jstyron@nd.gov

Thank you for your cooperation and supporting highway/rail crossing safety.

Jim Styron
Highway/Rail Crossing Safety Manager

The Future of Local Government: A Call for Civility

Across North Dakota, local governments are facing increasingly difficult discussions that affect our communities, families, and future. Local elected officials are being asked to navigate complex and often emotional issues on behalf of the people they serve, from tax rates and infrastructure to schools, roads, electric transmission lines, Co2 pipelines, community amenities, and data centers.

At the same time, there has been a troubling increase in incivility directed toward local government officials and staff. Throughout North Dakota, elected officials are resigning, choosing not to seek reelection, or deciding not to run for office at all. Some communities have experienced threats involving bodily harm and even death threats directed at elected officials, staff, and their families.

Local government works best when citizens and leaders work together, even when disagreements exist. Civil discourse is an important part of governing. Once conversations become uncivil, the exchange of ideas and positions becomes unproductive and unfruitful. We can disagree without fighting. We can debate issues without attacking one another.

North Dakotans have long valued government that is closest to the people. In fact, our state has more elected officials per capita than any other state in the nation. This accessibility is something we should continue to take pride in and protect. More than 5,000 local elected officials serve communities throughout North Dakota. In addition, tens of thousands of local government staff help deliver essential services every day. Our local elected leaders are our neighbors. They are members of our communities who give countless hours to serve the public and make decisions they believe are in the best interest of their communities.

These positions involve difficult conversations, tough decisions, and a willingness to work collaboratively with people who may not always agree. That collaboration becomes impossible when conversations turn hostile or threatening.

We ask everyone to help lower the temperature in these discussions and bring civility and decorum back to public discourse. Treat local government officials and staff with professional courtesy and respect. Work with your local leaders on these tough issues rather than approaching them combatively. Educate yourselves on the issues using trusted sources and engage thoughtfully in the democratic process. Respectful engagement and civil dialogue are essential to productive conversations and strong communities.

We all have families, livelihoods, and deep roots in our communities. Bringing civility and decorum back to public discussion is not about avoiding disagreement. It is about ensuring we can continue to have productive conversations that move us forward.

Prepared in partnership by the North Dakota League of Cities, the North Dakota Association of Counties, and the North Dakota Recreation and Park Association.

By-Laws Amendments *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1*

caucus with other members from their same county of residence for the purpose of designating two (2) members to represent and vote on any issue presented at the annual meeting. Each county's caucus shall have two (2) votes. The Board of Directors shall have the power to allow voting by electronic means.

IV.

The membership of the Board of directors shall consist of those members as outlined in the By-Laws of the Association. There shall be elected from the membership of the association during annual meetings held in odd numbered years a president and vice-president who shall hold office for a term of two years, not to exceed three consecutive terms. At the time of the election, the president and vice-president must be currently holding an elected township office. The Board of Directors shall meet annually in ***November or*** *December and at other special meetings as called by the president or any five members of the Board of Directors.*

Article 6 of the By-laws specifies how officers are elected. Currently, Directors represent the separate districts but are elected at large, everyone votes for them. The proposed change would be that they are elected by the district they represent. A by-laws amendment requires a simple majority affirmative vote.

VI.

The membership of the Board of Directors shall consist of the President, Vice President, immediate Past President, and six (6) members, each representing a separate district, ***~~but elected by the association~~ and elected by that district****. Directors must be elected township officers and members of the association as defined in Article III of the Constitution. District boundaries shall be determined from time to time by the association. The members elected to the Board of Directors shall serve for a term of two years, said terms staggered so that the odd-numbered district directors are elected in odd-numbered years, and the even numbered district directors are elected in even numbered years.*

If these proposals are adopted they would become effective in 2027.



NDTOA LEGAL COUNSEL

BY JAYME TENNESON, ATTORNEY AT LAW

I think I say this every year, but man, this summer went quick. It looks like a lot of you in my area will be firing your combines up to start bean harvest very shortly. Before we know it, we will be making the annual trek to Bismarck for the NDTOA Annual Convention.

In addition to your normal busy, you've all recently had your second budget hearing of the year. It appears that this may have been an oversight by the legislature that we hope to get corrected during the 2027 session.

Speaking of the 2027 legislative session, now is the time to start speaking with us about changes that you would like to see in state law. Take some time to meet with your legislatures, develop relationships, so they know your face and name when the heavy lifting happens next session.

I see that there is another proposed data center coupled with battery storage and solar located on the eastern part of the state. It appears that that North Dakota is on the radar of development companies and it will continue in the state. Now, is the time to review your township's comprehensive plan and zoning and make the changes that you see fit to steer the development of your township. For those of you that don't have zoning regulations in place, this may be the time to consider adopting a comprehensive plan and zoning.

2026 marks the 60th year of the NDTOA Annual Conference which is being held at the Bismarck Hotel and Conference Center On November 30 and December 1. The conference is open to all township officers. It's is a great opportunity for you listen to township issues throughout the state and network with your peers. Please make plans to attend the conference. I hope to see you there!

Here are a few questions I've been asked over the last few months.

QUESTION: Is our township subject to the 3% budget cap.

ANSWER: Yes, townships are subject to the 3% budget cap. If you need to exceed the 3% budget cap this can be a question that you can ask the citizens at your annual meeting. The citizens can vote during the annual meeting to approve a budget that exceeds the 3% cap, subject to the notice requirements.

QUESTION: A farmer in our township owns the property on both sides of the unimproved section line and has been farming through the section line and planting crop. Can he do this?

ANSWER: Yes, if there is an unimproved section line the farmer has the ability to farm to the boundary line so long as the section line can still be traveled and that the farming practices don't obstruct the normal travel on the section line. The farmer also must realize that he risks having the crop driven over by someone traveling on that section line.

QUESTION: Our township would like to get zoned so we can stop wind towers from coming in. How do we start?

ANSWER: Zoning regulations that prohibit an activity generally are not going to be successful if challenged. You can however establish zoning that protects those who are already in your township with restrictions by establishing setbacks. Using templates from neighboring townships and counties are helpful in establishing your zoning so it is acceptable to those in your township. Remember your zoning should follow the plan you set forth in your township's comprehensive plan.

QUESTION: We provide snow removal for resident's driveways, but we have a couple of "snowbirds" whose driveways we don't plow after they have left for the South. One of them thinks we should continue to remove the snow even when no one is there. Do we have to continue?

ANSWER: First of all, using public funds to clean private driveways is probably not a proper use of those monies. I know of several townships which do this kind of work, but charge a small fee for work done on each residential driveway—so that no public funding is theoretically used. At the very least, whichever method is used (charging a fee or not); the practice must be approved by the residents at each succeeding annual meeting. The decision of whether to do the snowbird driveways should also be left up to the annual meeting participants.

Recordings of NDTOA Meeting now on NDTOA.COM

A page has been added to the website for association meeting information. It lists the agenda, documents, recorded audio, recorded video, meeting minutes and a summary of each meeting. To find the page on NDTOA.COM, on the home page click on "about us" go to the bottom of the list on the left side. On that page the links will be activated once that material is completed.

To facilitate the recording of board meetings, a device called a Meeting Owl is now being used. The Meeting Owl sits in the center of the meeting and quickly detects where someone is speaking and focuses the camera and microphone in that direction. Software that records the meetings and can summarize them to variable detail levels is also being used. That provides the summaries that are now given for most meetings.



TREASURER'S REPORT

BY BARB KNUTSON

Another change of season is coming up. Don't know where summer went.

Once again, I will start on my request for all that have not paid their dues for this year, due May 1 and delinquent October 1. Thanks to those that have paid and there is still time to get them into this year if yours are owing. I would also like you to furnish me with the names and contact information of those on County Association boards for counties that have associations.

Mailing lists have become quite a project as some of the counties are not keeping up the lists even if townships do send information in. One county only keeps track of emails for townships, not addresses or much of anything else. That county being Cass. Any contact information that you could share with me from any or all townships would be much appreciated! For anyone not receiving the Grass Roots Report, this could be part of the problem. Make sure your county auditor has the latest on all officers, names, address, phone numbers, office held and email addresses. If you have changes, let me know. Emails have become more important, as when there is something that we need to get out to the townships that is time-sensitive, emails work well. Counties can only give us as good as they get. Please help us keep them up to date. If you, or someone you know, are not getting the Grass Roots Report, let me know and I will get you on the list. Thanks to the counties that have been helping us for many years and continue to do so. I will be very much appreciative of any help that comes my way in being more effective in getting information to you all. On another note, the counties that do have lists on their website, could it maybe be listed as "townships"? Some are so cleverly hidden that it is like a scavenger hunt to find them.

Getting geared up for our annual convention in Bismarck, November 30 and 31, 2026. It will be held at the newly refurbished Bismarck Hotel and Conference Center at 800 S 3rd St. Bismarck. Look for information and dates for room reservations in this issue. There will be a block of rooms reserved for our conference. Check the dates on that. Looking forward to interesting speakers, venders show, breakout sessions and time to spend learning from each other. It has never been more important than it is today for us to hang together and keep up to speed with what is going on in our state that affects us all. Bring questions and ideas when you come. I encourage you all to get these dates on your calendar and decide to spend time with us in Bismarck.

Thanks to each one for the work you do. It is important! Look forward to seeing you in Bismarck.

NDTOA Board of Directors Institutes Program of Routine Annual Audits

In response to interest expressed at last year's annual meeting, the NDTOA Board has begun annual audits by an outside service. Harold Rotunda has been engaged for this purpose. Mr. Rotunda conducts audits for some counties and cities as well as non-profits.

The association has depended on internal audits conducted by the Audit Committee since the external audits were discontinued as a cost saving measure some twenty years ago. Self-auditing is what township boards do each year when the supervisors, acting as the board of audit, examine the books and accounts of the township and certify the figures to the county auditor.

Mr. Rotunda has indicated the 2025 audit will be complete in time for the 2026 annual meeting on November 30th. His work on the 2026 audit will begin after the books close on October 31.



Thomas Moe received the 2025 NDTOA President's Award in recognition of 40 years of service to North Dakota Townships. The award was presented virtually at the Park River workshop in February as he was unable to attend the 2025 convention last December. Tom was on Zoom helping with the workshop program.

Grassroots Government Leadership Award

To recognize the leadership, creativity, and dedication of township officials, the NDTOA has established a leadership award to pay tribute every year to an individual whose community service exhibits the highest standard of dedication, ability and service. (Up to five awards may be given each year.)

ELIGIBILITY

The award will be presented to an individual, locally elected official, currently in office. It will recognize him or her for their outstanding contributions on a sustained basis or from a single performance.

Nominees should have responsibility for accomplishing or causing to be accomplished significant programs or projects within their area of responsibility, to the ultimate benefit of the general public.

Examples of such professional accomplishments include local government cost-cutting, coordination of a major local volunteer effort, and promoting townships at the national level, establishing new local services or programs, and success in securing public or private funding for local projects.

SELECTING CRITERIA

Nomination should include as much information as possible, such as:

- **Complexity of the problem(s) addressed.**
- **Measurable improvements resulting from nominee's accomplishments.**
- **Use of original, innovative or creative approaches and solutions in difficult situations.**
- **Long-term or lasting benefit of the nominee's accomplishments.**

NOMINATING PROCEDURE

Nominations may be submitted by member townships and counties of the NDTOA. A nomination form is below for your convenience. Just complete and mail (or e-mail larry@ndtoa.com). **Nominations must be received by November 15th.**

North Dakota Township Officers Grassroots Government Leadership Award

NOMINATION FORM

NOMINEE: Name, office, Township, County, address and phone numbers.

_____

_____

Your name, office, address and phone numbers.

_____

_____

Other objective references: name, office, address, phone numbers.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please attach a summary of the major accomplishments for which the Township official is being nominated. Also attach as much information as you can, such as a brief biography of the nominee summarizing positions held, civic and professional affiliations, and other relevant personal data. The more information you can provide the better chance your candidate will be selected.

The award will be presented at the NDTOA Annual Convention in December.

Mail (or email) the completed form to: NDTOA; 465-150th Ave NE; Mayville ND 58257-9011

For questions or for copies of this form please phone 701-430-1735 or email larry@ndtoa.com.

This form is available as a fillable PDF on NDTOA.COM under Resources / Forms.

There now may be as many as five Grassroots Leadership Awards given each year!!
So your nominee would stand a great chance of being selected for an award!!!

NDTOA 2026 60th Annual Meeting Registration Form

November 30 and December 1, 2026 Bismarck Hotel and Conf, Bismarck ND

Name(s),and Title(s) FIRST LAST TITLE

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

Address:_____

City, State, Zip _____ _____ _____

Township _____ County _____

Total No. Attending _____ @ $ 50 per township officer **PRE-REGISTRATION before 11/20/26 ($70 at the door)**

_____ @ $ 25 per spouse attending the Monday night banquet

_____ @ $ 20 per spouse attending the Monday luncheon **Total Amount Due $_____**

Please complete and send this registration form, along with your check payable to NDTOA by November 20, 2026, to Barb Knutson, 2600 236th St NE, McKenzie, ND 58572.
NOTE: Townships may pay from their general fund for officer's registration fees and expenses.
There is no discount for attending only part of the convention.

For hotel reservations call the Bismarck Hotel (701)258-7700 by Nov. 16th

NDTOA Elections To Be Held

District Directorships to be filled this annual meeting are as follows:

District 2 consists of the following counties: Benson, Eddy, Foster, McHenry, Pierce, Ramsey, Rolette, Towner and Wells. *Directorship is currently held by Deb Reinowski, Anamoose.*

District 4 consists of the following counties: Adams, Bowman, Billings, Dunn, Golden Valley, Grant, Hettinger, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sioux, Slope and Stark. *Directorship is currently held by Leon Monke, Regent.*

District 6 consists of the following counties: Barnes, Cass, Dickey, LaMoure, Ransom, Richland and Sargent. ***Directorship is currently vacant.***

At the time of election a candidate to be an officer or director of NDTOA must be a currently elected township officer of a township that is a dues paying member of NDTOA.

Anyone interested serving on the NDTOA Board of Directors for those districts should contact a nominating committee member: District 1 Director – Kim Hrichena; District 3 Director – Jason Johnston; or District 5 Director – Tom Dutton. (Contact information for these directors can be found on page 2.)

Help For the ATLR Offered at the 60th Annual Convention

If you have any questions or problems with the ATLR township bookkeeping program, there will be help available throughout the conference, a help desk will be set up in a booth in the exhibitor area. Bring your laptop and Julie Brandvold will help you and answer your questions.

Grass Roots Report

NDTOA

North Dakota Township Officers Association
2600 236th St. NE
McKenzie, ND 58572

PRSRTD STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT 256
BISMARCK, ND

Check Out The New NDTOA.COM Website!

New look! The site is also mobile friendly so check it out on your phone. Resources, important township information is added frequently – check back often.

NORTH DAKOTA
NDIRF
For North Dakota. For Local Government. For You.
INSURANCE RESERVE FUND
PO Box 2258 Bismarck ND 58502
Local (701)224-1988
Toll Free 1-800-421-1988
Fax (701)224-0609
www.ndirf.com