2026 Budget & Levy Minutes

A public hearing on the proposed 2026 budget was held at the Government Center in Chaska on November 25, 2025. Chair Workman convened the meeting at 6:01 p.m.

Commissioners present: Tom Workman, Chair, Tim Lynch, Vice-Chair, John P. Fahey and Matt Udermann.
Absent: Lisa Anderson

Chair Workman explained the purpose of the meeting was to hold a public hearing to take comments on the 2026 proposed budget and not market values that were set earlier this year. Workman clarified if there were concerns related to market values, the Assessor's office was available to address those issues. He pointed out tonight's meeting would be on the proposed taxes to be levied by the County for 2026 and not on taxes to be levied by the school districts, cities or townships listed separately on tax statements. He stated that the Board would be setting the final budget at their December 2nd Board meeting.

County Administrator Dave Hemze opened the public hearing by outlining the statutory property tax process, beginning with property valuations. He summarized state legislative impacts and introduced the proposed 2% levy surcharge, which is part of a broader strategy to address budget gaps from 2026 through 2028. The preliminary budget reflected an 8% increase, which remained unchanged in the final administrative recommendation. Hemze emphasized the value residents receive for their taxes, including services such as roads, bridges, parks, and trails.

Finance Director Dave Frischmon highlighted that $2 million of the levy increase is attributed to new construction. He noted shifts in the tax burden due to average value increases across residential, commercial, and agricultural properties. Frischmon presented a budget summary showing a $6 million county levy increase, with $1.5 million tied to legislative impacts. He also reviewed projected legislative impacts through 2028, including a $4 million increase anticipated in 2027.

The hearing included a review of the $82 million Master Space Plan and the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), which maintains 2025 levy levels for roads and bridges, while other areas like parks and regional rail are funded through non-levy sources. Staffing adjustments resulted in a net reduction of 1.8 FTEs, saving $265,000. One-time funding for 2026 totals $4.1 million.

The 2026 budget calendar was reviewed, with final board action scheduled for December 2, 2025. No board decisions were made during the hearing, which was held solely for public input. Budget strategies include implementing the 2% levy surcharge through 2028, maintaining capital financing, continuing a soft hiring freeze, and exploring workforce realignment and outsourcing. The long-term plan includes the Government Center redevelopment, partially funded by levy and bond sales.

Two members of the public, Don Giacchetti and Neal Whatcott, attended the meeting and provided comments. They commended the County for its strong financial management but encouraged greater emphasis on improving external communication and public outreach. Both expressed concern about the projected increases over the coming years and raised questions regarding the legislative impacts and their implications. They also noted disappointment over the limited public attendance at the hearing.

Adjourned the meeting at 6:57 pm.

Dave Hemze (Dec 2, 2025 09:19:28 CST)

Dave Hemze, County Administrator

Tom Workman (Dec 2, 2025 09:24:03 CST)

Tom Workman, Board Chair