

January 23, 2025

House Political Subdivisions
HB 1380

CHAIRMAN LONGMUIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

My name is Jason Nordmark. I'm the owner of the Turtle Mountain Star in Rolla as well as the Towner County Record Herald in Cando, the Dickey County Leader in Ellendale, the Oakes Times in Oakes, the Mouse River Journal in Towner and the Walsh County Press in Park River.

All papers are printed in Rugby, ND, at the North Central Printing plant in which I am a majority owner along with other newspaper publishers.

Please accept this testimony OPPOSED to the amendment in House Bill 1360.

The amendment the committee will consider would give counties the okay to post minutes on their website instead of in newspapers.

In my experience, this is not what voters want.

In my 30-plus years as a newspaper publisher, I've yet to experience any public vote which declined the printing of county minutes in any of our publications. In addition, none of those ballots outcomes were even close in Rolette County.

Our state association has researched this issue in depth. In fact, last June's vote on the publication of city minutes confirms the high percentage of voters who want minutes published. An average of 85 percent of voters in 208 cities in North Dakota voted YES to publication of minutes in newspapers, with approval rates as high as 90 percent.

More importantly, poll respondents chose newspapers over city/county websites TWO to ONE as the most appropriate, reliable and transparent location for public notices.

Eight out of 10 North Dakota adults – 82 percent – said public notices belong in newspapers over government websites. Only 18 percent said governments can be trusted to be the only source of public notices.

The people trust their small-town newspapers such as the ones we produce and print every week. We serve them best we can and one of the ways is through the publication of minutes.

I would formally request that the honorable members of this committee submit a "do not pass" decision on on HB 1380.

Thank you for your time and service to our state.

Kindest regards,
Jason Nordmark
Editor/Publisher
Turtle Mountain Star

Rolla, ND