

# DICKEY COUNTY LEADER

*The Official Newspaper of Dickey County*

Ellendale, ND 58436 • 701-349-3222 • dcleader@drtel.net • \$1.50 per issue



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January 21, 2025

Ken Smith  
Editor, *Dickey County Leader*  
Ellendale, North Dakota

Re.: House Bill # 1380,

Dear Representatives Longmuir, Fegley, Jonas, Bolinske, Davis, Hager, Hatlestad, Heilman, Klemin, Motschenbacher, Ostlie, Toman and Warrey:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to House Bill # 1380, which would make the newspaper publication of county commissioners' minutes optional.

While as engaged citizens we value the online publication of our commissioner's minutes (which our auditor's office posts regularly), we believe that maintaining the requirement to publish in the newspaper is a good policy.

**First**, as a newspaper, we take seriously the need to cover the actions of our commissioners in articles and notices as well as published minutes. The inclusion of the minutes in our newspaper for a nominal fee is a strong motivation for us to stay connected to the auditor's office and to the commission.

**Second**, our readers have come to expect to be able to find the minutes in our newspaper, and to them it is a valuable service.

**Third**, the newspaper is a reliable and permanent record that will remain long after county websites have become defunct. The North Dakota State Historical Society subscribes to every single paper in the state, and every week they microfilm every page of every issue and store them securely.

As a trained historian (M.A., UND, 1999 and D.A., UND, 2001) I greatly appreciate this. I have also overseen the digitization of our newspaper and our newspaper and historical society have made it available free online going back to 1882, when we were founded. Incidentally, we take pride in being the oldest business in Dickey County. Our archives area at <http://ellendalehistoricalsociety.advantage-preservation.com>

**Fourth**, we believe the cost to the county is minimal. In our case, the commission minutes are run in two newspapers, the *Dickey County Leader* (the county's official paper) and the *Oakes Times*, our sister paper. The dual publication comes at no extra cost to the county, and helps us serve our county residents though they may not subscribe to our paper. We love the Tornadoes fans as well as the Cardinals fans.

**Fifth**, we believe that the small financial boost that county papers receive by publication of the minutes is a practical and moral encouragement to local editors, writers and staff to keep up the task of producing papers.

It is my experience and those of others who do similar work, that we do it out of love and commitment to our local communities, both town and country dwellers, and we think of it as a public service as much or more than we think of it as simply a job. I could never count the number of conversations I've had, over the last six years since I've been editor, of our readers telling me in person, by email, by phone or by written letter, how much they appreciate our paper.

We are not politically partisan. We champion the cause of our schools and all sorts of local businesses, be they large or small. We constantly talk up the value of our government agencies (city as well as county), our fire and rescue departments, and voluntary organizations, whether they be churches, Masonic lodges, 4-H, history organizations, preservation and improvement committees, bridge clubs, saddle clubs and much more. We record present history and write about our past history. We believe we are an important part of the "glue" that helps hold the community together.

These are some of the reasons we favor keeping the requirement that counties publish their commission minutes in our papers. We would regard voting "no" on House Bill # 1380 as a vote of confidence in our work.

Thanks so much for considering our perspectives.

Sincerely,

Ken Smith  
Editor, *Dickey County Leader*

