



GRASS ROOTS REPORT

WINTER 2026

TOWNSHIP OFFICER WORKSHOPS SCHEDULED – FREE OF CHARGE!

No need to preregister – Just walk in! All Township and County Officers are Welcome!

BY LARRY SYVERSON

The NDTOA Township Officer's Workshops for 2026 will be held in the second and fourth weeks of February (look for the schedule in this newsletter). Each is a two-hour program and will feature President Dale Schmitz as the MC, he will also give his report on NDTOA activities; NDTOA Safety Director, Mark Verke will give a presentation on township liabilities; NDTOA association legal counsel will discuss township legal matters and will field questions from the crowd; the NDLTAP crew will present part of their leadership training course, dealing with change; Executive Director, Larry Syverson will present the changes in the new 2026 Township Officer's Handbook.

The updated NDTOA Handbook inserts will be available at the workshops free of charge to Township Officers. This is again a

complete revision courtesy of the ND Insurance Reserve Fund.

We will attempt to stream each of the workshop sessions on Zoom. These will be viewing only sessions, if you have questions or comments, please arrange to attend in person. Use the workshop Zoom link at the time listed for each location, the connection may not always work, if a particular session fails, please try for a later session. The Zoom link and any updates on the workshops will be found at: <https://ndtoa.com/latest-news/>

If you watch on Zoom, and you wish to have a printed book, you will need to make some arrangement to

get the handbook update. You can check with me at: 701-430-1735 or larry@ndtoa.com to find out how you can get one in your area. If we must mail you a copy, the mailing cost is \$8 per update. Members may order the update inserts by sending \$8 per copy to Barb Knutson, 2600-236th St NE, McKenzie ND 58572.

The handbook is also available on the website <https://ndtoa.com/resources-downloads/officers-handbook/>

Those that wish to attend the Devils Lake workshop can find maps of the Lake Region College campus on Workshops page and the calendar on NDTOA.COM.

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2026 NDTOA WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Feb-9	Newburg - Senior Citizens Hall	1-3 PM
Feb-9	Minot - NDSU Research Center, 5400 Hwy 83 South	7-9 PM
Feb-10	Stanley - South Complex - Community Hall	1-3 PM
Feb-11	Wildrose - Fire Hall	1-3 PM
Feb-11	Williston - Research Extension Center, 14120 Highway 2	7-9 PM
Feb-12	Bowman - Bowman Lodge & Convention, 207 US-12	1-3 PM (MST)
Feb-12	Regent - The Enchanted Castle	7-9 PM (MST)
Feb-13	Steele - Steele Vets Club	1-3 PM
Feb-23	Larimore - American Legion Club	1-3 PM
Feb-24	Park River - City Hall - Auditorium	1-3 PM
Feb-24	Langdon - Courthouse - meeting room	7-9 PM
Feb-25	Devils Lake - Lake Region State College - Dining Room	1-3 PM
Feb-25	Jamestown - Baymont Inn, 507 25th St SW	7-9 PM
Feb-26	Lisbon - Ransom County Fairgrounds - Expo Center	1-3 PM
Feb-26	Casselton - City Hall Auditorium	7-9 PM
Feb-27	Fessenden - Fairgrounds - Festival Hall	9:30-11:30 AM

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BY DALE SCHMITZ

Happy 2026 Township officers,

Hello everyone, I am Dale Schmitz. I was elected as President of the NDTOA at the 59th annual meeting in Bismarck, ND, in December. I reside in Manfred Township in Wells County and have been a township officer since 2008, (the town of Manfred boasts a population of 3 people and a museum). I live one mile east of Manfred. I raise red angus cattle and drive a truck for Arthur Companies.

The 59th annual meeting is in the books. I would like to thank all the township Officers who attended the annual meeting with a special thanks to all the first-time attendees, a very impressive showing. I hope we can count on seeing everyone again at the 60th annual meeting in December of 2026.

Thanks again to everyone for attending.

Moving forward to this February. We will be conducting 16 handbook update workshops around the state. Please watch for times and locations. I look forward to traveling around the state to meet fellow township officers.

I would also like to congratulate all the new directors: District 1, Kim Hrichena; District 3, Jason Johnston; District 5, Tom Dutton and the Vice President, Julie Brandvold. I am very honored to also be able to work with our Past President Lee Brandvold, our Executive Director Larry Syverson, our Treasure Barb Knutson,

District 4 Director, Leon Monke; and District 6 Director, Tim Geinert, as well as NDTOA legal counsel, Tom Moe and Jaymee Tenneson. We will also be looking for a candidate to fill the District 2 Director position.

Best wishes to everyone,
President Dale Schmitz



Five lucky attendees received \$100 bills from the 2025 NDTOA Annual Convention cash drawing.



**Julie Brandvold,
NDTOA Vice
President**

Hello from
Cameron Township,

My name is Julie Brandvold, I am your newly elected Vice President of NDTOA. I would like to take this time to give a brief description of my experience in township government. It all started in 2010 after the flood. Due to a mass resignation in our township, I was appointed Clerk/Treasurer of Cameron Township. Cameron Township resides in Ward County. Being interested in township government, I attended the Ward County Township Officers Association meetings. The association was looking for some new people to fill district director's positions. I was elected to represent District 6 in 2015. I currently serve as District 6 Director and Secretary/Treasurer. Our WCTOA is a strong and active association which continues educating township officers.

I have attended several NDTOA annual conventions. In 2016 I listened to a speaker about the Annual Township Ledger Report (ATLR). The only way to purchase the ATLR software was for the whole county to purchase it, however one individual needed to be the IT person for the entire county. I approached the WCTOA board with the idea that I would take on the IT position if they purchased the software. For several years Ward County has used the ATLR software. I serve as the IT support person for Ward County, working closely with our County Auditor. I have also provided training sessions throughout the state for NDTOA and assist individual townships which do not receive support from their own counties.

I would like to focus this term on the idea that local government thrives when trust is strong and people step up to participate. Let's continue to work together to uphold the reputation that NDTOA has built for years.



**Kim Hrichena,
District 1 Director,
Northwestern District**

Hello, ND Township
Officers.

I was born and raised in Minot, where I graduated from Bishop Ryan Catholic School, and later attended the University of Mary and Minot State University for Chemistry and Business Management.

I am on my 25th year working for Certifiedlabs, headquartered in Dallas Texas, with a focus on the Energy Industry. I have served on various boards over the last 20 years. My board experience is as follows; Minot Hockey Boosters, Bishop Ryan Catholic School Board, currently serving as the President of Bishop Ryan Catholic School Foundation, along with the Chair of Nedrose Township, Liaison Member for Catholic Foundation of Western North Dakota and newly the NDTOA Director 1 position.

My various board experience has taught me that transparency, listening and communication is vital for productivity and progress. I would like to encourage all townships to reach out; let us know how we can be of assistance to further strengthen our partnership. Inevitably, progress does bring about change and as an Association, we must work together cohesively to achieve the greater good.



**Tom Dutton, District 5
Director, South Central
District**

Just a little about myself. My wife and I live in Burleigh County in Boyd Township, south of Menoken where we ranch and run a welding business there. I also work as a truck mechanic in Bismarck on the weekends. I currently serve as chairman for Boyd Township and the Burleigh County Township Officers Association; I am on our local zoning association board. I also serve on the board of the Mandan Rodeo Days Committee and now I am proud to represent district 5 in NDTOA. Thank you.



**Jason Johnston,
District 3
Director,
Northeast
District**

Hello, ND Township Officers!

I grew up in Nash, graduated High School from Grafton, and attended NDSU for Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering. My background since NDSU has pretty much been project management. I bring over 20 years of government experience from my time at ND Parks and Recreation as a Project and Maintenance Coordinator (aka Project Superintendent) and now as the Walsh County Highway Superintendent. This experience covers not only roads and bridges but also working with state and federal agencies for disaster response, permitting and compliance.

One of the topics that was brought up at the State Convention was ideas on how to restructure the NDTOA. Two options were brought up. One was to shrink our district sizes up and create 3 new Districts and leave our governing board at its current size. The other to add a 2nd Director to each of our existing Districts. Whether we like it or not change is inevitable.

What we need to know is how can we learn from our past, and expand into our future. We simply can't do that without communication. As your new District 3 Director I want to encourage all townships to reach out. Let us know what your problems are or you see coming. Without hearing from you it only leads to assumptions and we all have heard what assume means. I look forward to hearing from you and working towards a stronger township partnership.



NDTOA LEGAL COUNSEL

BY JAYME TENNESON, ATTORNEY AT LAW

Happy New Year everyone! I hope 2026 brings health, wealth, and happiness to you all!

It's the time of year when we all try to get some time in the office and get some things accomplished before the outdoor activities start. I know there are quite a few of you that are spending some time this winter making some changes to your current zoning regulations and others who are looking at adding new zoning regulations to your townships. There is a group from NDTOA, NDACo, ND League of Cities, and other organizations working on putting together model zoning regulations for data centers and solar farms. We should have some model ordinances for you all soon.

We will be coming to you in February for workshops. I'm

looking forward to getting out and meeting you out there. If you have the opportunity to get out to local workshops, I encourage you to take the time and do it.

I've had a couple questions lately that may come up often for you all throughout the state.

Can you explain conflict of interest? How should I handle a conflict? First, conflict of interest occurs when an individual's personal or financial interest in a matter where that interest may lead to bias or unethical outcomes. Some examples of a conflict of interest would be a township supervisor voting to hire their spouse to do work for the township or a township supervisor who owns or is invested in a company which is requesting a change in zoning.

If a supervisor has a conflict,

he or she has a duty to recuse themselves and refrain from participating in all deliberations, discussions and voting on that matter.

A landowner in my township has caused damage to the statutory thirty-three-foot right-of-way, how should our township handle it? If a landowner causes damage to the right-of-way, the township shall notify the landowner and give the landowner thirty days to repair that damage. If the damage is not repaired in the appropriate time frame the township has the ability to hire the contractor to make the repairs and assess the costs to the landowner.

Stay warm! I hope to see you all at the workshops.

HB 1176: PROPERTY TAX RELIEF &

House bill 1176 was passed by the 2025 Legislative Assembly, it provides a generous rebate to primary residential property and puts restrictions on all taxing districts. Basically, a township may not increase its levy by more than 3% without holding an election complete with newspaper notice that gives required information.

LIMITATIONS:

- Effective for 2025
- CAPS Local Government at 3% growth in dollars levied
 - Can not exceed: greater of either
 - base year levy increase by 3% or
 - adjusted year levy increase
- Political Subdivisions can carry over unused percentage one time within 5 years
- Counties, Cities & Schools allowed to vote to exceed 3% cap in

General Election

- Townships can vote to exceed 3% cap at annual meeting (with proper notice)
- Vote good for 4 years, indicate the percentage increase & proposed dollar amount increase (majority vote)
- If ZERO mill authority – allowed to exceed 3% CAP if levy has not previously been used
- CAP does not apply to:
 - Taxes levied to pay the principal & interest on obligations
 - Taxes levied to pay bonds, obligations or evidences of indebtedness issued by BND from infrastructure revolving loan fund
 - Emergency Fund levies
 - Taxes levied to pay special assessments; taxes levied for

water resource districts

- New or increased levy authority approved by the electors of the taxing district

TOWNSHIPS & THE 3% CAP - VOTER APPROVAL

- **NDCC 58-04-01:** Electors of each township shall meet annually in month of March.
- **NDCC 57-15-19:** Electors vote on budget at annual meeting. Township supervisors levy annual taxes fourth Tuesday in March or within ten days after each year. Limited to budget amount voted at the annual meeting.
- **NDCC 57-15-20:** Townships can levy up to 18 mills for General Fund purposes.
 - Additional 18 mills with voter approval (effective for 5 taxable years).



TREASURER'S REPORT

BY BARB KNUTSON

Happy New Year to all!

Annual dues are coming up and are due May 1 of each year and delinquent on October 1. Any association that has spring meetings would do well to send notices to all officers and a bill for the membership dues at the same time. Could be mailed or emailed, whichever works for your township. I get questions all the time from townships that don't know who their treasurer is or where to send dues. It makes it simple to send meeting notice and dues notice at the same time with the address of where to send dues. That way the county can keep their portion and send states portion on. We don't want the counties missing out on their dues if the township sends state dues directly to NDTOA.

A few other things that need addressing. Please make sure you send your officer information to

your county auditor! I am seeing more evidence that new officer's information is getting lost along the way. In one week's time, I heard from two different townships, not in the same county, that the person I was looking for to correct the address had not been on the township in three years. Is it that the information never got to the county or is it that the county did not change it? I don't know. It makes it real hard to keep people informed if we have poor information. We are requesting name, mailing address, office held, home and or cell phone numbers and email addresses. Please help us get this up to date! I would also appreciate getting a list of the officers on county association boards where there are associations. It is important that we know who to contact on those boards to keep all more informed. Please send me an

email with that info. Thanks!

The counties that do have their township officers listed on the website might consider making it a little more obvious or easier to find. I really appreciate the help that we get from the counties. We need to continue to work together.

Workshops are coming up in February. Always look forward to seeing those that attend. Bring your questions and invite others to join you. Pick up your new updates for handbooks and meet new board members. If you are looking for information on dates and places for workshops, go to www.NDTOA.com. There is also a wealth of information on other items there as well.

Thanking each one of you for doing the work you do! It is important! Mark your calendar for the workshop in your area. Hope to see you there.

CAPS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- **OPT OUT VOTE:** HB 1176 allows township electors to approve a levy exceeding the 3% cap for up to four taxable years.
- **Must be voted on at the annual meeting.**
- **Electors must be notified of the proposed percentage increase and dollar amount before the vote.**
 - **Notice of election must be included with the meeting notice – newspaper notice**
 - **Must state there will be an election to exceed the levy cap**
 - **Must state the amount by which the cap will be exceeded**
 - **Must state the percentage by which the cap will be exceeded**
- **HB 1176:** New or increased levy authority approved by the electors of the taxing district are exempt from the cap. (for first year)

57-15-01.2. (3.b.) Limitation on levies by taxing districts without voter approval.

A majority of the qualified electors in a township voting on the question at an annual township meeting may approve a property tax levy exceeding the limitation under subsection 1 for four taxable years at a time, beginning with the taxable year during which the annual township meeting vote under this subdivision is held. The notice and voting procedures applicable to the approval of a township tax levy under section 57-15-19 and approval of increased township general fund levy authority under section 57-15-20 apply to the vote under this subsection. The electors of the township voting on the question must be notified of the proposed percentage increase and the proposed dollar amount increase exceeding the limitation under subsection 1 before the vote.

57-15-19. Township tax levies.

The electors of each township have power at the annual meeting to vote to raise such sums of money for the repair and construction of roads and bridges, and for all township charges and necessary expenses as they deem expedient, within the limitations prescribed in section 57-15-20, and on the fourth Tuesday in March, or within ten days thereafter, of each year, the board of supervisors of each civil township shall levy annual taxes for the ensuing year, as voted at the annual township meeting, and the tax levy must be limited by the amount voted to be raised at such annual meeting. The electors at such annual meeting may direct the expenditure of the road tax, or a part of it, in an adjoining township under the joint direction of the boards of supervisors of the townships interested and furnishing such funds.

NDTOA AWARDS

Some of the award winners were not able to be at the 2025 NDTOA Annual Convention, we will be presenting those awards during the 2026 workshops and county meetings. Those awards will be announced after those presentations, with photos.

The awards policies have been amended to now allow up to five awards for the Grassroots Leadership Award, so more deserving township officers might be recognized for their efforts. The award nominations must now be received by November 10 of each year so please get your nominations in early or they will be held till the next year. There is still the requirement that the award goes to a sitting township officer, so if the individual retires from the board they are no longer eligible.

We know there are many deserving township officers out there that have served their township and community for decades, please help us give them the recognition they deserve.



Layne O'Neill received the Grassroots Leadership Award for 2025 from NDTOA President Lee Brandvold.

Layne O'Neill continues a life full of service, to his nation, he is a Vietnam veteran, in his community he

served on the Renville County Soil Conservation District for several years, and on the board of the local farmers elevator. He serves as the Secretary/Treasurer of the Rose Hill Cemetery, has been on the Church of the Nazarene board for 40 years, taught teen Sunday School for a dozen years.

He has served as the Secretary/Treasurer of the Kenmare Rural Fire District since 2010, he has been active in the Renville County Township Officers Association for more than 30 years serving as Chairman for several of those years. His service to Stafford Township began in the 1970's and he continues as the current Clerk/Treasurer.



Senator Mark Weber (right) receives the NDTOA Legislator of the Year Award plaque from NDTOA Vice President and Legislative Committee Chair, Todd Weber.

Senator Weber, of Casselton, has been and continues to be a

fervent township supporter, always looking to increase township funding, seeking improvements to the laws that regulate townships and working to resist proposals that would detriment townships. As the current Chairman of the Senate Tax Committee, he is an important friend for townships and all rural interest across the state. In the Senate he is referred to as Mr. Township, a title well deserved.

And yes, Senator Weber and Todd Weber are brothers. Their father, Francis "Hank" Weber of Gill Township and Ralph Cameron of Ayr Township, led the effort to start the North Dakota Township Officers Association back in 1966.



Outgoing NDTOA President Lee Brandvold received a plaque from the newly elected President, Dale Schmitz, commemorating his many years of service as President and Vice President.

Lee will continue to serve NDTOA as the Past President, an important source of institutional knowledge in the coming years.



First-Time Convention Attendees



Road Scholar
6
Credits

LEADERSHIP

SKILLS TO LIVE BY

Leaders aren't just needed in the workplace; they are required in our everyday life. They aren't born, but developed. A leader is a team player that works for the success of the entire team. Leaders empower the people around them.

Why?

- Develop Core Leadership Skills
- Increase Self-Awareness
- Build Confidence

How?

- Define your leadership style
- Find your core qualities to be an effective leader
- Address challenges in being a leader
- Team building
- Generational differences in the workplace
- Addressing change
- Developing your leadership skills

Join us!

February 19, 2026

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

NDSU Ext. Office

502 10th Ave SE

Jamestown, ND

**REGISTRATION FEE \$25, NDLTAP WILL INVOICE
(NO CHARGE FOR TOWNSHIP OFFICERS)**

NDSU does not discriminate in its programs and activities on the basis of age, color, gender expression/identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, participation in lawful off-campus activity, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, public assistance status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, spousal relationship to current employee, or veteran status, as applicable. Direct inquiries to Vice Provost, Title IX/ADA Coordinator, Old Main 100, 701-231-7708, ndsuoaa@ndsuo.edu.

LUNCH SPONSOR



BRYON FUCHS

NDLTAP Director and TTAP Co-Director. Bryon has over 25 years of Transportation Engineering experience. He led the Rural & Special Programs area in Local Government Division overseeing oil- impact funds provided to local agencies. He focuses on collaborating with federal, state, local, and tribal partners to make a successful transportation system across the state.

GENNY DIENSTMANN

Assistant Director of Operations with the ND Association of Counties. She is also responsible for management assistance to the ND Association of County Engineers and the ND Association of County Recorders. Genny has degrees in accounting and business administration and has achieved designation as a Certified Association Executive by the American Society of Association Executives.

Details or Registration

☎ 701.612.8632

🌐 www.ugpti.org

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Grass Roots Report

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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

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