

Benton County Commission
September 21, 2026

Convene

Presiding Commissioner Steve Daleske called the meeting of the Benton County Commission to order at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, September 21, 2026, in the County Commission Room. Attendance: Larry Berry, Present; Scott Harms, Present; and Steve Daleske, Present.

Approval of Prior Minutes

District 1 Commissioner Larry Berry made the motion to approve prior minutes dated September 18, 2026. District 2 Commissioner Scott Harms seconded the motion. The motion passed by vote: Larry Berry (Yes), Scott Harms (Yes), and Steve Daleske (Yes).

District 2 Commissioner Scott Harms made the motion to approve prior executive session minutes dated September 18, 2026. District 1 Commissioner seconded the motion. The motion passed by vote: Larry Berry (Yes), Scott Harms (Yes), and Steve Daleske (Yes).

David Malecki/Major Kelly Lowe

David Malecki and Major Kelly Lowe are present at today's meeting.

Visitors

The following citizens were present: Kat Tye, Cody Wilson, Joby Hauser, Sandy Harris, Kendall Nowack, Brian Smith, Ronald Dent, Valerie Dent, Sharon Eldridge, Patty Richardson, Linda Creswell, George M. Hall, Baron Pennington, Sr., Jeff Sims, Jan Bundy, Liza White, Steve Warne, Kent Campbell, Fred Verstraete, Joan, Ava Aabak, Rita Legg, Sharon Guess, Veletta Autry, Cynthia Smith, Rosa Valentine, Jordan Kauffman, Taylor Banner, Bob D. Smith, and Nola Smith. Some citizens that were present did not sign the roster.

Fuel Bid

District 2 Commissioner Scott Harms made the motion to accept the bid for diesel fuel for Road District #2 from MFA Oil Company at a cost of \$5.41 per gallon; District 1 Commissioner Larry Berry seconded the motion. The motion passed by vote: Larry Berry (Yes), Scott Harms (Yes), and Steve Daleske (Yes). Other bid was received from Warsaw Oil Company at a cost of \$5.62 per gallon; the County accepted the low bid price.

County Clerk

County Clerk Susan Porterfield reported that she is in correspondence with a representative from Mike Keith Insurance pertaining to the mid-year insurance review; information will be compiled and sent as requested. Bills were submitted for approval and payment.

Rosa Valentine

Rosa Valentine questioned bills that are paid and wants a ledger provided to taxpayers that states what bills are paid each week. She further requested that an ordinance be signed and adopted that will ban data centers from the County. She asked Commissioners collectively and individually if they had signed a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA), each Commissioner responded no. Presiding Commissioner Daleske stated that a letter with information has been received from DNR, and Commission continues to research information in the matter of data centers.

Jamie Warne

Jamie Warne had an appointment with Commissioners but did not appear.

Jeff Sims

Jeff Sims spoke to Commissioners, voicing opposition to data centers but did not provide any new information.

Kat Tye stated that the County has several endangered plants, such as meads milkweed, purple prairie closers, Indian paintbrush, goats rue, and pale purple coneflower; she is worried that a data center will kill these plants and believes that these plants should be protected.

George Hall stated that Commissioners are governed by State statutes and do not have authority to work outside those guidelines.

Most visitors left at approximately 10:00 a.m.; Rosa Valentine, Kat Tye, Rich Chiles, and Rebecca Minks remained.

Benton County Tourism

Benton County Tourism Director Lynette Stokes met with Commissioners to provide an update of tourism efforts within the County and presented a marketing summary from January 1 through August 31, 2026. Ms. Stokes also requested the reappointment of Brad Blankenship to the Benton County Tourism Board. District 2 Commissioner Scott Harms made the motion to reappoint Brad Blankenship to this Board, District 1 Commissioner Larry Berry seconded the motion. The motion passed by vote: Larry Berry (Yes), Scott Harms (Yes), and Steve Daleske (Yes).

Treasurer

Treasurer Rebecca Minks presented a financial report. She also said that she has had no issues since April and reported to Commissioners that the treasurer's books are now reconciled to the penny, and she intends to request that a representative from the State Auditor's Office come to review what she has done.

Rosa Valentine exited the meeting at 11:04 a.m.

Rich Chiles exited the meeting at 11:12 a.m.

Kat Tye exited the meeting at 11:14 a.m.

Social Media and NDA Concerns

Commissioners discussed recent social media statements that falsely allege that Presiding Commissioner Steve Daleske and Associate Commissioners Larry Berry and Scott Harms, and Economic Development Director Jo Ann Lane had signed NDA's (non-disclosure agreements) concerning a potential data center project. Concerns were raised regarding publication of information that is false, and the potential impact such statements may have on the individuals involved, as well as future economic development endeavors within the County. The possibility that the statements could be constituted as defamation of character was noted, and the matter will be referred to legal counsel for review and appropriate guidance.

Adjourn

District 1 Commissioner Larry Berry ordered that the Commission adjourn until September 28, 2026; District 2 Commissioner Scott Harms seconded the motion. The motion passed by vote: Larry Berry (Yes) and Scott Harms (Yes). Meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Signature



Steve Daleske
Presiding Commissioner