Board of County Commissioners of Lincoln County
September 24, 2025

The Board will begin conducting reviews regarding preliminary 2026 budget requests. The following departments are scheduled to discuss their requests as follows:

9:00 Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance

9:00 Tom Nestor – Sheriff's Operations, Jail and Victim Assistance Budgets

9:45 Ty Stogsdill – Land Use Budget

10:00 Wayne Miller – CSU Extension Budget

10:15 John Mohan – Maintenance of Buildings/Plant Budget

10:45 Ashley Erwin – County Treasurer's Budget

11:00 Jeremiah Higgins – County Assessor's Budget

11:15 Patrick Leonard–Weed Control Budget

11:30 Kelly Meier – Public Health Budget

1:00 Chris Monks, Judd Kravig, and Tony Johnson – Road and Bridge Budgets

2:00 James Martin – Information Technology Budget

Other budget requests that will be reviewed during the day as time allows include the following:

Commissioners
Administrator
County Clerk and Recorder and Elections
Administrative
County Attorney
Grant
Land Surveyor
Fairgrounds
Health Inspector
Veterans Office
Library Fund
Conservation Trust Fund
Capital Projects
Landfill Fund
Lodging Tax/Tourism Fund
East Central Council of Local Governments
Fire Control
District Attorney
Emergency Medical Service
E.M.S. Subsidy
Developmentally Disabled
Community Development Block Grant
Rural Economic Development Initiative
Lincoln Community Hospital

The Board of Lincoln County Commissioners met at 9:00 a.m. on September 24, 2025, to begin reviewing preliminary 2026 budget requests. Chairman Wayne Ewing, commissioners Robert Safranek and Terry Jaques, county administrator Jacob Piper, and clerk of the Board Corinne M. Lengel attended. County Treasurer Ashley Erwin observed the other department presentations until she finished her own at 11:25 a.m.

Chairman Ewing called the meeting to order, led the Pledge of Allegiance, and asked Mr. Jaques to say a prayer.

Sheriff Tom Nestor and Captain Michael Yowell presented their requests for the Sheriff Operations, Jail, and Victims Assistance budgets. First, Sheriff Nestor wanted the Board to know how hard he and his staff work to obtain grant funds to cover large portions of department expenses; they will bring in over $500,000 by the end of the year. He noted that the Court Security and VALE grants were fiscal, meaning they wouldn't start until July 1. The Court Security Grant would fully reimburse the requested $218,000, which was $89,000 higher than the 2025 budget. The VALE grant only covered a portion of the Victim Assistant's salary.

The sheriff provided calls for service statistics and admitted he didn't know how much taking over the duties of the disbanded Hugo marshal's office would affect his department. Deputies respond to six or seven calls in town daily, leaving other, more remote areas at risk of inadequate coverage. While he didn't intend to request additional employees at this time, Sheriff Nestor warned the commissioners that he would do so eventually; currently, his primary concern is compliance with the Standards for Colorado Jails, which take effect on July 1, 2026.

In addition to salaries and social security, Sheriff Nestor increased the following line items in the 2026 Sheriff Operations budget: operating supplies, telephone, equipment/contracts, vehicle repairs & maintenance, gas, Limon substation utilities, the K-9 program, and special ops. He noted that they had moved the Victims Assistance telephone expense to the Sheriff Operations budget because it was difficult to separate it from the other phone bills, and the VALE grant doesn't cover the cost anyway. The sheriff explained that even though they will start leasing vehicles, there will still be ten to twelve cars with higher mileage that will require repairs and maintenance.

The commissioners and officers discussed gas prices and supply, LED lighting, unfunded mandates, leasing equipment, and promoting two POST-certified deputies to the corporal level before focusing on the Jail budget requests.

While the 2026 full-time line item reflected a significant decrease from the 2025 budget, the supervisor line item more than doubled. Captain Yowell said it was due in part to the level promotions requested for three deputies: one from corporal to sergeant and two from non-certified to POST-certified deputies. Medical supplies, operating supplies, equipment/contracts, contracts-food, prisoner clothing, and JBBS/mental health also reflected increases. Sheriff Nestor explained that the state legislature funded JBBS, so the $40,000 increase was 100% reimbursable.

Land Use Administrator Ty Stogsdill arrived at 9:40 a.m., as the sheriff explained that the food contract line item was significantly higher because the new company hired attorneys dedicated to fighting inmate-filed lawsuits and rolled the cost into the contract.

Aside from the salary, the Victims Assistance budget request was the same as in 2025, minus the telephone line item, which Sheriff Nestor reiterated he had removed and included in his budget.

Capital Projects requests included $130,000 for five patrol vehicles leased through the Unified Fleet Services program and $242,000 to replace the jail locks installed initially in 1992 during building construction. The request noted that the locks would be part of the audit under the Jail Commission Standards. The accompanying scope letter from CML Security, LLC, stated that the price included the control board, PLC, locks, installation, and training, with a 7% discount.

The sheriff noted that the jail's plumbing is also subpar, but commended John Mohan for his ongoing efforts to repair it. Mr. Jaques said it made sense to piecemeal the plumbing projects since they couldn't shut down the entire jail at one time anyway. He suggested that having a plan in place to fix the plumbing over a specific timeframe might help with the audit.

The sheriff and captain left at 10:10 a.m.; CSU Extension Agent Wayne Miller arrived for his 10:00 a.m. appointment. The commissioners explained they were slightly behind schedule and met with Mr. Stogsdill, who presented the 2026 budget requests for the Land Use Department. He would be eligible for a step raise in addition to the cost-of-living increase the Board recommended. While he increased the office supplies line item, he reduced the postage line item. Overall, the Land Use budget was about $2,500 higher.

Mr. Stogsdill left, and at 10:20 a.m., Mr. Miller presented the Extension Service preliminary budget request. The salary line items reflected cost-of-living increases, and Mr. Miller stated that he wanted to reclassify the Extension Office Assistant to Level IV instead of Level III. He wasn’t sure when it changed or why, but Mr. Miller felt the associated job duties justified the promotion. He had also increased the overtime line item and added a part-time fair assistant line item. Mr. Miller hoped to hire someone for twenty hours a week, one week before and the week during the fair, at $20 per hour. The repairs & maintenance, telephone, dues & meetings, fair expense, and programming line items also reflected increases. Mr. Miller had removed the miscellaneous line item and added a vehicle maintenance line item in its place. He explained that the $11,000 increase in the travel & transportation line item was due to a typo in the 2025 budget, which had listed $1,000 instead of $10,000; Mr. Miller hadn’t attended many meetings this year as a result. Mr. Miller had added three percent to the CSU position (his) salary based on a possible cost-of-living increase at the end of the state’s fiscal year (July).

John Mohan arrived at 10:25 a.m.

The Board reviewed the Extension office’s $22,000 Capital Outlay request for seventeen new windows, including installation, at the annex. Town and Country Hardware owner Terry Graham had quoted $16,499.35 for the windows and estimated $300 per window for installation; however, he didn't know if there would be residual repairs and didn't provide a quote for them. Mr. Miller said they were the original wood windows that leaked and were difficult to open and close; John Mohan added that replacing the windows would significantly reduce heating and cooling bills.

Mr. Miller had also included a Capital Outlay justification sheet for a 2022 or newer used vehicle to replace the 2011 Dodge Caravan. He requested something larger, with towing capability to pull the cargo and scale trailers they use for hauling trees and taking projects to the state fair, and suggested a Yukon, Suburban, or Expedition. The estimated cost was $50,000. Mr. Miller had checked with CSU Extension Southeast Area Director Brooke Matthew, who stated that any department considering a vehicle purchase had to buy a new one. It costs $25 a month to go through the motor pool; he would also have to pay for fuel, any damages, or liabilities out of his budget, and outsource repairs and maintenance. Mr. Jaques said a Suburban or similar vehicle wouldn't gain much if they planned to haul more than seven people. Mr. Ewing mentioned the lease program, and Mr. Jaques said they should discuss it with Sheriff Nestor.

Mrs. Lengel asked the Board to consider replacing the silver 2009 Dodge Caravan in the courthouse parking lot with the white 2011 Dodge van at the annex if Mr. Miller were to obtain a different vehicle. The Clerk's office uses the silver van to collect ballots from the Limon drop-box, but Mrs. Lengel said they took the white one to training last year because it was more reliable. James Martin had noticed earlier in the week that the driver's window on the silver van was down, yet no one had driven it lately, so they had to take it to Parmer's again to have it fixed. Mr. Piper asked Mr. Miller if Public Health ever uses the white van; he said they hadn't in the ten months he's been here.

Before he left at 10:40 a.m., Mr. Miller offered to return to discuss a couple of items in the Fairgrounds budget if the commissioners would call him when they were ready.

Mr. Piper typically presented the Grounds and Buildings budget without Mr. Mohan, but there were a few things he said he might need Mr. Mohan's input on. First, Mr. Piper said they had removed the part-time line item from the salaries section and added a full-time maintenance employee to help Mr. Mohan. Reagan Peck, who has helped for the past two summers, expressed interest in the 35-hour-per-week position. Mr. Mohan's justification for personnel indicated that Mr. Peck would start at Level 1, Step 1, at $3,366 per month. Since Mr. Mohan spends so much time working on the jail plumbing, other projects in various departments get put on hold; Mr. Peck would be able to catch up on those things that Mr. Mohan hasn't had time to do. Mr. Mohan said Mr. Peck is self-motivated, exhibits an excellent work ethic, and would be a good replacement when Mr. Mohan decides to retire. They expected the department's repairs & maintenance line item to be over by nearly $10,000 this year, so Mr. Piper said they increased it that much for 2026. However, they reduced the utilities-electricity line item by $5,000.

The Grounds & Buildings Capital Outlay requests included a $125,000-$150,000 Fire Panel,

$20,000 for two new furnaces at the annex, $9,000 for LED lighting at the annex, and $62,000 to replace the courthouse lobby floor.

Mr. Mohan explained that Nebraska Safety & Fire would provide a quote for the fire panel, but had estimated the cost to be between $125,000 and $150,000. The upgrade would allow the county to eliminate all twenty-six duct detectors, which were no longer necessary with the new furnaces, and smoke detectors were also no longer required due to the sprinkler system. Mr. Mohan said that the company's six-month inspections should be cheaper if they didn't have to test those items. Mr. Jaques assumed it would be one of the failures on the jail inspection if they didn't get it fixed. Mr. Mohan said the system was too old to obtain parts, and they could no longer ignore replacing it.

Mr. Mohan contacted Titan LED Lighting Solutions, the company that replaced the lights in the courthouse, for a quote on the annex lighting. He felt that a local electrician could probably complete the installation cheaper than Titan.

Patrick Leonard arrived at 11:05 a.m. to present the Weed Control budget requests.

Before he left, Mr. Mohan explained the issues with the lobby floor: the grout had dislodged in several areas, and the ceramic tiles had started chipping. The quote to replace the flooring was $62,000.

At 11:10 a.m., Ashley Erwin presented the 2026 Treasurer's budget requests. Although she had shifted and renamed some of her accounts, the overall increase was primarily for salaries, amounting to approximately $1,600. Mrs. Lengel asked her to discuss changing account names and numbers with the finance director, as most tend to be named the same across all funds and departments for easier tracking.

County Assessor Jeremiah Higgins arrived at 11:20 a.m.

Mrs. Erwin informed the group that she was working closely with three new investors and diligently replacing some of the funds she had used to cover monthly expenses. She had also found several new opportunities for investments and better interest rates, and felt things might start looking better soon. Mrs. Erwin left at 11:25 a.m.

Mr. Higgins stated that the most significant change to his budget was the increase in salaries. He mentioned that they don't sell as many maps as they used to, so their revenue is lower. Mr. Higgins has heard chatter that the reports he charges $1,500 for might fall under CORA, which means he wouldn't be able to charge as much for them. While they don't typically sell many, and the county attorney said it wasn't considered a "daily duty," Mr. Higgins wanted the Board to know that the meager income might disappear.

Public Health Director Kelly Meier arrived at 11:30 a.m., and Mr. Higgins left.

Patrick Leonard presented the 2026 Weed Control budget requests. Other than the salary and slight increases in the operating supplies and repairs & maintenance line items, Mr. Leonard hadn't changed anything. He noted that it was likely time for a new weed truck and provided a state bid quote of $79,704 for a 2024 F-550 from Ken Garff Ford in Greeley. He said that although the truck is white, it's in stock; a red one would cost another $9,000.

Mr. Leonard stated that the current weed truck is eight years old and has accumulated 140,000 miles. When Mr. Ewing asked if he would trade it in, Mr. Leonard said the commissioners usually agree to pass it down to one of the road districts or use it elsewhere in the county. Mr. Leonard does most of his own maintenance, stating he wanted to save the county money whenever possible. While his predecessor took the truck to Norstar in Seattle, Washington, every three years for maintenance, Mr. Leonard had never done so. He typically calls and tells them what he's done, such as rebuilding valves and pumps, and they tell him it's more than they would do if he brought it to them.

When Mr. Leonard repeated that the truck was in stock and would have all warranties in place, the commissioners reminded him that the new budget wouldn't take effect until January 1, 2026. If they ordered one, Mr. Leonard said it would probably still be in stock in January, but it would be $9,000 more. It would only take a couple of days to outfit it.

Mr. Ewing asked Mr. Leonard where he gets fuel; Mr. Leonard said he tries to get it from District 1.

Mr. Leonard left, and Mrs. Meier presented the 2026 Public Health budget requests at 11:40 a.m. There have been numerous budget cuts, affecting federal and state funding; Mrs. Meier said the Core Nursing funding dropped from $136,000 to $113,000 for 2026. She noted that, aside from salaries, the expenditures were roughly the same as those in 2025.

Mr. Piper explained that the Public Health Fund budget typically runs entirely on grants, which is why the county allocated it only a quarter of a mill. However, with the predicted revenue losses, it might be best to plan on allocating half a mill instead, which equates to an additional $40,000. While they expected the fund to start 2026 with a $156,000 fund balance, revenue was up at the end of August, so that could change.

The group took a lunch break at 11:50 a.m.

When the meeting reconvened at 1:00 p.m., although District 1 Road Supervisor Chris Monks and District 2 crew member Tony Johnson were there, District 3 Road Supervisor Judd Kravig hadn't arrived yet, so the commissioners reviewed the preliminary Commissioners' budget. The only increases were to the travel & transportation, CCI dues, and Economic Development line items.

As for the Administrator's budget, Mr. Piper had increased his Administrative Assistant's salary, mentioning that she was also due a step raise. He removed the part-time line item that he'd held to pay Roxie Devers for roundhouse-related hours; the county could pay her from the grant-writing line item if necessary. Mr. Piper had added $3,000 for a new computer, but wasn't sure if he needed one yet.

Mr. Kravig arrived while Mrs. Lengel presented the Clerk & Recorder and Elections budgets. She noted that most of the increases in the Elections line items (such as operating supplies, postage, advertising, professional services, and equipment maintenance) were due to an additional election in 2026. The Clerk's budget was basically the same as 2025, except for salaries and a slight increase in association membership dues. Mrs. Lengel pointed out her three justification sheets for staff step promotions and explained her reasoning.

At 1:20 p.m., the group discussed the 2026 Road & Bridge budget requests. Mr. Piper explained that he'd included both bridge projects in the Off-System Bridge Project amount of $5.4 million; he later realized the county would need around $1.1 million in matching funds for the grants the county already received. He said the commissioners needed to consider whether they would indeed plan to start both bridges in 2026; if so, they might have to draw money from the Capital Projects Fund, but would ultimately have to deny many of the other projects. Mr. Piper noted that the $5.4 million included the design fees. He also said that workers' compensation and liability insurance costs were unknown until the winter CCI conference.

Mr. Piper questioned the $900,000 amount in the maintenance of oiled roads line item, stating the road districts overspent it in the past couple of years. He asked if the commissioners wanted to increase it, but noted that doing so would reduce the fund balance.

IT Director James Martin arrived at 1:55 p.m.

Mr. Piper explained the budget amounts due to the municipalities, stating that he typically calculated the statutory amounts; however, these figures depended on the mill levies, as the assessed valuation drives them.

Mr. Monks, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Kravig left, and James Martin presented the IT budget requests at 2:15 p.m. While several items in his budget increased by about seven percent, such as antivirus, phishing security, server backup, infrastructure development, pro server support, and web tools and services, he decreased the user backup line item by $1,200. There would be cost savings in remote monitoring and ransomware bundling options in 2026. Mr. Martin said he continues to work on a computer replacement policy and a schedule for network equipment when time allows.

The IT department's Capital Outlay justifications included the migration to the CivicPlus website and expanding keycard access to other courthouse doors. The CivicPlus first-year migration amount was $38,479; the first annual renewal was approximately $16,604, with subsequent renewals seeing a five- to seven-percent increase. Mr. Martin said he'd been researching other options in the state, as SIPA (Colorado Statewide Internet Portal Authority) might no longer be funded in the new state budget next July. The county currently uses SIPA's free website hosting; it would likely take around six months to build and launch a new county website.

The other Capital Outlay request of $70,096.43 was for Multicard (the company used by the sheriff's department and elections office) to install keycard access to the remaining offices (excluding the courts) in the courthouse. The project would replace nine keypad entries with control points connected to the sheriff's door controller in the dispatch center. While it wasn't a necessity, it would provide better security, quicker access, and digital access logs with timed entry information.

Mr. Ewing asked if either request was an unfunded mandate; Mr. Martin said that the website must be ADA-compliant. The web tools and services run weekly scans on the website to ensure the county maintains that compliance. Mr. Piper said that the county's liability insurance included cybersecurity insurance, so any protection helped lower those premiums. Mr. Martin noted that enforcing more policies would also help.

Mr. Martin left, and the Board reviewed the preliminary Administrative, County Attorney, and Land Surveyor budgets.

When reviewing the Fairgrounds budget, Mr. Piper informed the commissioners that John Palmer sought to increase the part-time line item by $2,000 and was willing to forgo a portion of his own pay if necessary. Other line items reflecting increases were superintendents/judges, premiums, and the tent. Mr. Ewing said that Mr. Palmer disapproves of the tent and would do away with it if possible, as he feels it's a liability. Mr. Ewing commented that if they put up a new building, the tent would be unnecessary. The budget also reflected a $2,000 decrease in the utilities-electricity line item.

Mr. Piper called Wayne Miller to discuss the superintendents/judges and premium increases. Mr. Miller first said that the fair board wanted to hire a veterinarian for the vet check-in; the person would work the two-day horse show and Monday through Friday during the week of the fair. The fair board hadn't approved it yet, but Mr. Miller said that Lisa McCue with Eastern Colorado Veterinary Services had quoted them $3,526.25. However, she would give the county a fifty percent discount of $1,880.75, which included her hourly rate and mileage. Mr. Palmer had suggested paying her from the support staff line item.

As for the premiums, Mr. Miller said they had discussed doubling the champion and reserve champion awards to $10 and $5, respectively, and increasing the premiums for all first through fourth place winners to $10, $8, $6, and $4, respectively. He stated that several other eastern Colorado counties were doing it, and Lincoln County wanted to remain competitive. Premiums have not increased since 1978.

Mr. Miller said they paid superintendents and judges $14,237.56 this year, which was approximately $2,500 more than what they had budgeted. Of the total, $3,289 was for mileage, $9,675 was for wages, $444.50 was for food, and $828.94 was for hotel rooms. Mr. Miller

would like to increase the pay from $75/day to $100/day, except for livestock judges, who should receive $125/day, and add compensation for the PRCA and parade superintendents, who currently receive none.
The Board had no further questions for Mr. Miller, so he disconnected from the call.

The commissioners reviewed the preliminary budgets for the Health Inspector, Veterans Office, Library Fund, and Conservation Trust Fund.

Multiple department requests had put the preliminary Capital Projects Fund budget at close to $1.7 million, excluding the $80,000 for the weed truck and the estimated $110,000 in IT requests. Mr. Piper said that if the commissioners approved and completed every project, it would leave a dismal $145,135 fund balance at year's end. Mrs. Lengel noted that based on their discussions during meetings, the department heads considered the generator a priority. Mr. Piper stated that the sheriff claimed earlier that morning that he didn't want it. Mrs. Lengel didn't recall the sheriff making that statement and realized the conversation must have occurred before the meeting started.

The commissioners decided to remove $350,000 for the courthouse parking lot and $62,000 for the courthouse flooring and reduce the roundhouse maintenance line item to $10,000. They considered removing $100,000 allocated to roundhouse restoration, but agreed it depended on the State Historical grant. Mr. Piper said that if Bart O'Dwyer didn't submit a revised bid by the following Tuesday, they would have to accept the next bid. Mr. Ewing called Mr. O'Dwyer and reminded him that the county needed a revised bid by September 30.

While reviewing the preliminary Landfill Fund budget, the Board believed that the $40,000 allocated to the alternative daily cover line item was excessive, given that a roughly five-year supply of cover dirt was available. They called Allen Chubbuck, who said the alternative cover was the substance they spray on the trash in the summertime to save the dirt. He noted that they had two or three pallets left but should probably order more; the last time they received it, they had ordered a full semi-load. Mr. Chubbuck said they probably had a year's worth of dirt left. The commissioners had no other questions and made no changes to the Landfill Fund budget.

The commissioners reviewed the following preliminary budgets: Lodging Tax Tourism Fund, Council of Governments, Fire Control, District Attorney, Ambulance Service, Emergency Medical Services, EMS Subsidy, Developmentally Disabled, Community Development Block Grant, and the Rural Economic Development Initiative Grant (which was a pass-through previously used for the Hugo Garage and World's Wonder View Tower and had no funds allocated to it for 2026).

Emergency Manager Ken Stroud wasn't available to present his department's budget requests, so Mr. Piper did it for him. Mr. Stroud had submitted slight increases in all line items except dues & meetings, AED supplies, and utilities. The commissioners asked where Mr. Stroud paid utilities; Mr. Piper thought it must be for one of the towers.

Mr. Piper said that County Coroner Andrew Lorensen was at a conference and would present his budget requests at a later date.

The last budget listed for review was Lincoln Health's, but Mr. Piper said he hadn't received anything.

Mrs. Lengel said that she, Mrs. Erwin, Mr. Higgins, and Sheriff Nestor had discussed the courthouse closure policy again and tried to brainstorm ideas of how to inform the public about that and other county-related items of interest once the Limon Leader closed. They considered installing a digital message board at the courthouse entrance, visible from both sides of County Highway 109, to display holiday and building closures, election information, road closures or projects, and any other pertinent information. Sheriff Nestor had found programmable scrolling message boards for under $1,000. Mrs. Lengel asked the commissioners to consider the idea and decide if it was worth pursuing.

With no further business to discuss, Mr. Ewing adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m. The next meeting will be at 9:00 a.m. on September 29, 2025.

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Corinne M. Lengel, Clerk of the Board Wayne E. Ewing, Chairman