



August 18, 2026

Meeting called to order by Geerts at 1800

Commission members present: Jacob Hackman, Steve Geerts, Ryan Shawver, Randy Taylor, Mark Mueterthies, Jason Tenge

Absent: Jimmy Mitchell, Shelly Weiss, Jim Ashley, Burt Ostert

Guests: Jeff Bernatz, Scott Cerwinske, Jim Cook, Doreen Cook, Alan Kolbet, Eric Fibikar, Amy Norby, Jeremy McGrath, Steve Breitbach, Donna Geerts, Gina Fangman, Kerstin Schwickerath, Dawn Heying, Toby Schwickerath, Brannon Anderson, Adalberto Uribe, Lydia Uribe, Zach Nosbisch, Pete Zeien, Dixie Zeien, Joel Knutson, Brady Norman, Carly Sedivy, Terry Johnson, David Laudner, Garret Raum

Motion by Hackman, second by Shawver to add public comment as #5 and job description to #6 and approve the agenda. All Ayes. Motion Carried.

Motion by Taylor, second by Tenge to approve the May 27, 2026 Emergency Management Commission meeting minutes. All Ayes. Motion Carried

Bernatz invited the commission to the upcoming Iowa District 2 Legislation Day to be held on September 16, 2026 at 10 am at NIACC in Mason City. Bernatz had information packets and RSVP available for those who wanted to attend.

To address questions from the public on social media and other platforms Bernatz presented a PowerPoint presentation that described what Emergency Management does.

Bernatz discussed the current state of the emergency management funds and a proposal, including a transitional standard operating procedure that he and others had worked on to help with that status.

Laudner discuss the different ways that were looked at for a shared position and the requirements of federal law.

After a discussion on required overtime pay by federal law, Shawver discussed just taking the proposed salary and making the position exempt, that way the overtime is removed from the equation.

Knutson gave information if the position being discussed was just EMT only with the years of experience Bernatz has the salary would be roughly \$75,000. Hackman also added that the current full timers are in the \$75,000-\$80,000 range so the proposed salary amount would be roughly \$25,000 for the EMA work.

Geerts discussed that it is important to keep a local EMA coordinator because they know all disaster history, stakeholders, and infrastructure. Also, if there is a large disaster in both counties, where does that shared coordinator go.

Hackman discussed how the Full-Time EMT position is still posted on the county website, so the EMS department is still looking for a Full-time EMT. Hackman then confirmed that it would be ok to make the position an exempt

Assistant Administrator, Laudner confirmed that it would be and that there are already other departments in the county that do it.

Fibikar discussed if there was going to be a cap on this position or if it would be reassessed in the future so if the need for a full-time coordinator arises again, we would be prepared for that.

D. Cook talked about hours accountability and if Bernatz would keep track of hours. Bernatz explained that he keeps a personnel accountability report everyday of work and time spent on each. PARs are a requirement for the EMPG grant. D. Cook also advised Bernatz to go where your heart is and she would give \$10,000 towards Bernatz getting his paramedic certification.

McGrath discussed the option of making the EMS .6 FTE and EMA .45 FTE to have more time. Knutson advised that his concern with that would be that he would have to change the other full-time EMTs schedule to make that work. McGrath also supported the need for a local EMA coordinator.

Sedivy informed the commission that the paramedic duties are different than the EMT duties and she could not see a time that Bernatz could not get his EMT duties done and not have time for EMA work. Sedivy also stated that she did not see an issue with the pay because Bernatz does have other duties that he will be doing as EMA

T. Schwickerath agree with a lot of the comments already made, he questions what may suffer from this arrangement. The things that Bernatz done on scene is very important. T. Schwickerath asked if we could fund the EMA correctly and stay the course with Bernatz staying as full-time EMA.

Heying asked if the Board of Supervisors could amend the budget so that this isn't an issue. Hackman advised that it has not yet been asked and did not know if that was an option. Laudner advised that he thought yes it could be done but would have to confirm with Des Moines. Hackman brought up that the state wants consolidation.

Shawver stated that there are lot of counties that share positions and most of those are exempt positions. Bernatz questioned if that were the case why couldn't he be full-time EMS and be paid a stipend for EMA work. Laudner advised that you could do that, example is our Assessor who is also land use administrator.

Heying asked again if the Supervisors could amend the budget to make this work. Hackman reminded everyone that there are three options for funding for EMA. Fibikar confirmed that cities could impose a levy for EMA. D. Geerts also mentioned that cities pay into general supplemental fund.

Nosbisch stated that it would probably better to table this tonight and have a joint meeting with EMA Commission and the Board of Supervisors so that a decision can be made.

Mueterthies discussed putting an ad out for a part-time EMA and see what they get. Mueterthies also asked if Bernatz would be ok with that and drop EMA and just go work full-time EMS. Bernatz asked the commission what they are going to do if they don't find anyone.

Knutson advised the commission that trying to find a person to EMA duties at a minimum of 20 hours a week to keep the EMPG grant for a salary of \$30,000 is going to be very difficult. Knutson also discussed if the shared position will have work suffer and it would be no different with an out-of-county shared coordinator that has to cover two counties. Having a local coordinator here would most likely have less loss.

Fibikar reminded the commission that if the position was salary, hours don't matter, it would be based on performance. Heying asked if Bernatz could keep track of what he does during the shift, Bernatz reminded the commission that he keeps a personnel accountability record (PAR) every day, it is a requirement for the EMPG grant.

Anderson asked if there was currently money in the EMS budget to bring Bernatz on full-time. Hackman replied that was why he spoke of the position open on the county website and was there money there to do it. Knutson advised that there would need to be a budget amendment. Fibikar question it's ok to amend the EMS budget but not the EMA budget.

Shawver asked the commission if there was a consensus for the current proposal as presented. Shawver, Hackman, and Geerts advised that they do not like the hourly proposal and would rather see it as a salary exempt employee.

Bernatz asked the commission if they want him to redo the proposal with an exempt status, what numbers should be used. Laudner asked if the commission could just get a consensus to get on the Board of Supervisors agenda to see if they will even consider an exempt employee on the EMS department.

Laudner asked if it was possible to build a proposal with the employee working half of the 24 shift and being paid for that by EMS and the rest of the hours paid by EMA. Hackman advised that he thinks EMA should go to \$40,000 contribution. Taylor advised that for \$35,276.80 for 1040 hours would be 33.92/hr. Laudner asked is anyone has heard from Winneshiek County EMA if these numbers are still valid. Taylor asked if anyone had reached out to all the other surrounding counties, Shawver advised that when we started the job description committee he reached out to all surrounding counties and Winneshiek is the only one that replied.

Hackman addressed the commission of his disappointment with the importance of this discussion, why are not all cities at the meeting tonight.

Consensus of the commission was reached for Bernatz to discuss a shared EMS/EMA exempt position with the Board of Supervisors.

Motion by Taylor, second by Mueterthies to adjourn. All-Ayes. Adjourned at 1950



Jeff Bernatz, Coordinator
Chickasaw County Emergency Management