Cameron County Commissioners
Driftwood Senior Center
7806 Bridge St., Driftwood PA
Meeting Agenda
Thursday, March 19, 2026 @ 11:00am

Commissioner Herzing called this meeting to order at 11:00 am, with a moment of silence and pledge to the flag.

Visitors: Natalie Aiello, 4-H Educator PS Extension; Dannielle Mason, Recreation Director; Sophia Fragale, Press; Laura Narby and Blaine Manginell, EMA; Debra Johnson, Robert Bushar, Charles Lowe, Gary Grove, Linda Burrows

Public Comment:
Natalie Aiello, 4-H Educator from Penn State Extension mentioned she works in both Elk and Cameron Counties running the 4-H programs and that this week March 15-21 is PA 4-H Week, which the Commissioners will be passing the Proclamation at this meeting.

Dannielle Mason, Cameron County Recreation Director, gave us an update on all things recreation. The Recreation Director reported on a range of successful programs, ongoing projects, and upcoming initiatives:
Youth Programs & Activities: Last year's playground program served 33 students (grades 1–6) and offered free STEM, fitness, and enrichment activities. Basketball season recently concluded, and a new shoot-a-thon fundraiser raised over $3,000 while helping build participants' confidence.
Staffing: Plans are in place to hire a part-time seasonal employee to support the upcoming playground program.
Facility Improvements: Major renovations are underway, including new meeting and technology rooms, a telehealth/private space, updated flooring, and an elevator lift. The facility is expected to partially reopen soon, with additional exterior and accessibility work continuing through fall.
Parks & Recreation Enhancements: Improvements are planned for South Park and 3rd Street playgrounds, including repairs, new equipment, and the addition of a small volleyball court to better serve teenagers.
Outdoor & Environmental Initiatives: Efforts are underway to expand and improve the Dark Skies site in May Hollow, including grant funding for road access, trails, ADA parking, and low-impact lighting.
Youth Education Programs: Upcoming opportunities include Elk Camp (in partnership with the Keystone Elk Country Alliance), state park educational days, potential kayaking lessons, and transportation support for participants.
Family & Community Engagement: A free "Guardian & Me" art class series promotes family bonding through shared creative activities.
Recreation Access Improvements: A collaborative project is in progress to upgrade a kayak launch area, improving safety and accessibility for community use.
Community Collaboration: The Director encouraged residents and municipalities to share ideas and partner on recreation initiatives.
Overall, the report highlights strong program participation, successful fundraising, facility upgrades, and a continued focus on expanding inclusive, community-based recreation opportunities.

Laura Narby and Blaine Manginell provided an update on recent Emergency Management Agency (EMA) activities, focusing on winter weather response and preparedness efforts:
Winter Event Response: EMA has been actively monitoring and managing multiple winter storms, including snow events and high-wind incidents that caused power outages. One major event resulted in outages affecting over 80% of the county, prompting coordination for warming shelters and community support.
Outage Coordination & Public Guidance: Residents are encouraged to report power and phone outages to service providers and to contact EMA if issues persist beyond 24 hours. EMA also assists in escalating unresolved service disruptions.

Wildfire Season Preparedness: With changing seasonal conditions, EMA warned of increased wildfire risk due to dry debris and windy conditions, advising residents to use caution with outdoor burning.
Emergency Planning Improvements: Blaine Manginell has been updating emergency response and annex plans since joining the office.
VOAD Implementation: The county has established a **Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)** program to coordinate volunteer groups in emergency situations, such as operating warming shelters.
Donation Management Planning: A new system has been implemented to better manage and organize donations during large-scale emergencies, improving efficiency and preparedness.
Overall, the report emphasized proactive emergency response, improved coordination, and increased preparedness for both seasonal hazards and large-scale disaster events.

Meeting minutes: The meeting minutes of March 5, 2026, were unanimously approved as presented.

Correspondence:

* Notifications (3) of New Tower Submission Packet at 4328 Mason Hill Road, proposed construction of a wireless telecommunications facility, information is available for public viewing.
*Received results of the Title IV-E quality assurance compliance review of Cameron County CYS conducted April 1 through September 30, 2025. The County achieved a 100 percent compliance rate. Yeah!!!
*Received a letter from the Cameron County Music Booster President, the CCHS marching band is planning a trip to Hawaii in December 2026 performing in the Pearl Harbor Memorial Parade, they are looking for donations if anyone is interested in supporting them.
*DHS grants approval of the compensation plan for reimbursement purposes and for use in monitoring salary actions for CC CYS employees.
*DHS has informed Cameron County of the final Child Welfare Needs-Based Plan and Budget allocations for state FY 26-27.

Chief Clerk Report: The Chief Clerk reported on a mix of administrative, policy, and operational activities:

Right-to-Know Requests: There has been an increase in Right-to-Know requests, which the office has been actively managing and responding to.
Policy Development: Several policies have been developed or updated, including an information systems disaster plan and a safe driving policy for county employees. These efforts, along with a previously approved sexual harassment policy, support risk management and help reduce insurance costs.
Technology Improvements: The Clerk participated in discussions with Tyler Technologies to explore new accounting software aimed at improving and automating accounts payable processes.
Facilities & Contracting: An interview was conducted with a potential cleaning service provider for courthouse and EMA office maintenance.
Staffing Support: The Clerk assisted with interviews for a Children and Youth Services (CYS) caseworker position, with a candidate selected, bringing the department to full staffing.
Overall, the report highlights a focus on compliance, risk reduction, operational efficiency, and supporting departmental staffing needs.

Commissioners' Reports:
Commissioner Herzing: Commissioner Herzing's report highlighted efforts in financial system improvements, economic development, planning, and education:

- She attended a Tyler Technologies meeting and is working to modernize the county's accounting system, including a grant to improve the chart of accounts and reporting transparency. A new accounts payable system is expected to fully digitize processes, speed up payments, improve responsiveness, and reduce costs through electronic payments.
- She noted DCED updates, including Terry Cunkle's new role focusing on municipal mergers, shared services, and consolidation support for rural communities.

- Through the Industrial Development Authority, she reported ongoing planning efforts focused on workforce opportunities (such as student co-ops), potential emergency service improvements like a helipad, and strategies to better utilize and market vacant buildings.
- At the Planning Commission meeting, significant attention was given to data center development discussions. The county is proactively drafting an ordinance, coordinating with multiple agencies, and planning for public review and a town hall to ensure transparency and preparedness.
- She completed required opioid fund reporting and continues working to keep the recreation center revitalization project moving forward by addressing funding gaps and project challenges.
- As a board member of the Northern Pennsylvania Regional Community College, she highlighted expanded educational opportunities, including dual enrollment programs for both college-bound and vo-tech students, workforce development initiatives, and efforts to reduce "brain drain" by keeping students and talent in the region.
- Overall, her report emphasized modernization, transparency, proactive planning, and expanding opportunities for both economic growth and education within the county.

Commissioner Moate: Commissioner Moate's report focused on facility updates, training, and extensive involvement with the CCAP conference:

- He noted a transition within DCED, with Terry Cunkle being promoted and Jake DeCarli stepping into the regional representative role.
- He attended a grant writing seminar hosted by DCED and Marty Causer, which was well attended and provided useful guidance on grant applications and the state's online portal.
- The majority of his report highlighted his expanded role at the CCAP conference, where he now serves as Chair of the Technology Committee and sits on the CCAP Board, giving Cameron County stronger representation and influence.
- He participated in multiple meetings and discussions, including a joint committee session on the impact of AI and data centers on Pennsylvania's power grid. He emphasized concerns about energy demand, infrastructure strain, and water usage related to data center cooling.
- He attended sessions on DCED's housing action plan, which aims to increase housing availability, reduce costs, streamline permitting, and support vulnerable populations.
- He also learned about the new "Ready Communities" initiative from the Department of Aging, designed to improve collaboration and services for older residents.
- Overall, he emphasized the value of CCAP for networking, sharing solutions, and bringing ideas back to improve county operations, while also noting that state-level solutions to major issues like energy, healthcare, and housing take time to develop.

Commissioner Zucal Commissioner Zucal reported on several key activities and initiatives:

- He attended the CCAP conference in Harrisburg, emphasizing the value of networking with other counties, sharing ideas, and learning different operational approaches. He also highlighted a breakout session on ethics, stressing the importance of avoiding personal gain in public service and maintaining accountability with taxpayer dollars.
- He is working with Dannielle on a greenways and trails grant, including plans to develop the May Hollow Dark Sky Park area. After a previous DCNR grant denial, they are pursuing alternative funding through DCED, focusing on road access, parking, and trail improvements to boost tourism.
- He participated in an agribusiness call, noting that Cameron County is a food desert and exploring ways to support local food production using federal resources and grants.
- He continues involvement with the Lumber Heritage Region board and is developing new ideas to better utilize those funds for community benefit.
- He met a new DCED representative following staff change, ensuring continuity for ongoing grant projects.
- Lastly, he is working to establish a land committee to guide the potential purchase and development of approximately 370 acres near Emporium, with the goal of creating recreational and community assets rather than leaving the land unused.

Treasurer's Report: Expenses for the month of February were $802,520.38.

Old Business:

New Business:

- Motion to approve the Proclamation naming March 15 - March 21, 2026, as PA 4-H Week. Commissioner Moate made the motion to approve the Proclamation, with a 2nd from Commissioner Zucal, all in favor and so moved.
- Motion to approve Tyler Technologies agreement for AP Automation program. Commissioner Zucal made a motion to approve this agreement, with a 2nd from Commissioner Moate, all in favor and so moved.
- Motion to approve PSA Renewal with Johson Controls annual contract value $1,689.13. Commissioner Moate made the motion to approve the PSA Renewal, with a 2nd from Commissioner Zucal, all in favor and so moved.
- Motion to accept resignation of Michelle Clark from the Zoning Hearing Board. Commissioner Zucal made a motion to accept the resignation, with a 2nd from Commissioner Moate, all in favor and so moved.
- Motion to approve Lori Reed to fill the remainder of Michelle Clark's term on the Zoning Hearing Board, according to the by-laws. Commissioner Moate made the motion to approve Lori Reed's appointment, with a 2nd from Commissioner Zucal, all in favor and so moved.
- Motion to approve Mid Cameron Authority Wastewater Treatment Plan Upgrades Land Development Plan. Commissioner Zucal made a motion to accept the plan upgrades, with a 2nd from Commissioner Moate, all in favor and so moved.
- Motion to approve Letter of Support, to Lumber Heritage Region for the Team Conservation Camp of 2026. Commissioner Moate made the motion to approve letter of support for LHR, with a 2nd from Commissioner Zucal, all in favor and so moved.

Good of the Order:

Ms. Aiello's "good of the order" report focused on explaining and highlighting the impact of STEM programming within 4-H:

- She explained that STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (sometimes including Agriculture or Arts), and is designed to engage youth in hands-on, interdisciplinary learning.
- The program helps develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills using concepts like scientific methods and engineering design, preparing youth to be thoughtful and capable community members—even if they don't pursue STEM careers.
- She emphasized the strong partnership between 4-H and local facilities, noting recent improvements (like a kitchenette and better storage) that enhance the learning environment for students.
- The program has grown significantly, particularly in areas like animal science, requiring expanded space and accommodation.
- STEM activities have adapted creatively, including virtual participation options (e.g., Zoom), allowing students to stay involved even when facing challenges like illness or weather.
- She also highlighted the variety of program formats, including camps and conservation programs, with overnight camps offering valuable social development opportunities alongside education.

Overall, the report emphasized STEM's role in fostering youth engagement, adaptability, and life skills through diverse, hands-on learning experiences.

A visitor raised concerns and asked several questions regarding potential data center development in Cameron County:

- They asked whether any data centers are currently planned in the county and were informed that while no official projects exist, certain sites are being marketed by a developer.
- The visitor expressed concern about the county's reliance on spring water and questioned whether data centers—particularly their water usage for cooling—could negatively impact local water supplies.

- They also asked about potential environmental impacts, including whether air-cooled systems could cause pollution or other issues.
- Additionally, they emphasized the importance of keeping the public informed about any developments.

Overall, the visitor's comments centered on environmental impacts (especially water use), transparency, and the need for clear communication with residents about any potential data center projects.

A visitor raised concerns about the condition of utility lines—particularly those maintained by Windstream—and requested stronger action:

- They urged the county to put more pressure on utilities to clean up and maintain lines, citing widespread issues with downed trees and damaged lines that could threaten communication services.
- The visitor noted that other providers, like Tri-County, have done a much better job maintaining their lines, highlighting a clear contrast.
- Ongoing problems were emphasized, including long-standing reports of downed poles and lack of right-of-way clearing, with some issues persisting for years.
- The concern centered on reliability and safety, stressing that residents pay for service and expect proper maintenance of infrastructure.
- Overall, the request called for increased accountability and engagement with Windstream to address poor line maintenance and prevent future service disruptions.

The Chief Clerk provided a brief update on upcoming meetings and community requests:

- Announced upcoming Driftwood meetings scheduled for May 21st, July 16th, and September 17th.
- Shared additional donation requests supporting local students:
    - The post-prom committee is seeking donations (food, gift cards, or monetary contributions) to provide a safe and enjoyable event with prizes for students.
    - The Cameron County School District is hosting the Elk Cameron Special Olympics on May 8th and is looking for financial support, vendors, and volunteers.

Overall, the update focused on scheduling and encouraging community support for youth-focused events.

The update on Core Connect highlighted a major regional broadband initiative and recent progress:

- A 10-county open-access internet project has been awarded over $90 million in federal funding through the BEAD program, with final approval pending. Cameron County is included in the project.
- The initiative will build out fiber ("glass") infrastructure to serve unserved and underserved areas, improving access to high-speed internet for residents, businesses, and institutions.
- The open-access model will allow multiple service providers to use the same infrastructure, increasing competition and driving down costs—potentially offering high-speed plans around $50/month and more affordable lower-tier options.
- The project is expected to be a significant economic driver, supporting business growth, education, and overall connectivity, while also being future-proof with very high data capacity.
- Construction is anticipated to begin as early as fall, though timelines depend on final federal approval.
- Additional funding is still being pursued to fully complete the buildout, but the awarded funds will cover substantial progress across all participating counties.
- Overall, the project aims to modernize broadband access, improve reliability, and reduce dependence on existing providers by creating a more competitive and accountable system.

Adjournment: with no further business Commissioner Zucal moved to adjourn this meeting at 12:26 pm, with a 2nd from Commissioner Moate, all in favor and so moved.

The next regular Commissioner Meeting will be Thursday, April 2, 2026, at 11:00am, Commissioners' Conference Room, at the Cameron County Courthouse, 20 E 5th St., Emporium, PA 15834.

Submitted by,

Annette Campbell
Chief Clerk, Secretary to the Commissioners