

Approved Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2026

A meeting of the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission (MSGC) was held on January 8, 2026, in the Afton Room at the Department of Corrections, 1450 Energy Park Drive, Saint Paul, MN 55108; and by telephone and/or electronically.

Present in person were Kelly Lyn Mitchell, Chair and Designee of the Commissioner of Corrections; Vice-Chair Michelle A. Larkin, Minnesota Court of Appeals Judge; and Commissioners Leonardo Castro, District Court Judge; Amirthini Keefe, Public Member and Executive Director, Domestic Abuse Project; Marlin Meszaros, Director of Housing & Support Services, Partners Behavioral Healthcare; Cathryn Middlebrook, Chief Appellate Public Defender; and Latonya Reeves, Hennepin County Career Probation Officer. Also present in person were MSGC Executive Director Nate Reitz; MSGC staff members Matthew Hlina, Jill Payne, and Devonte Roache; and members of the public Judge Keale Ede, Minnesota Court of Appeals; Ethan Ellis; and Professor Christopher Uggen, University of Minnesota.

Commission members present by telephone and/or electronically were Richard Frase, Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota Law School; Kyra Ladd, Wadena County Attorney; Tim Morin, Public Member; Gordon L. Moore, III, Minnesota Supreme Court Justice; Chief Brian Mueller, Stillwater Police Department; and Surya Saxena, Public Member, the notice required by Minn. Stat. § 13D.015 having been posted on the MSGC website on December 19, 2025. Also present by telephone and/or electronically were staff members Kathleen Madland, Leah Bower, and Linda McBrayer; and members of the public Aaron Sojourner, Elizabeth Ruhland, and Gina Kubits.

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Mitchell called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

Director Reitz called the roll. Present were Chair Mitchell, Vice-Chair Larkin, and members Frase, Keefe, Ladd, Meszaros, Middlebrook, Moore, Morin, Mueller, Reeves, and Saxena. Twelve members were present; one member was absent. A quorum was present.

2. Adoption of Draft Meeting Agenda (Action)

This was on the agenda as an action item.

Motion by Commissioner Reeves and second by Commissioner Middlebrook to approve the draft meeting agenda for January 8, 2026.

Motion carried unanimously on a 12–0 roll-call vote.

Voting “Yes” were Chair Mitchell, Vice-Chair Larkin, Frase, Keefe, Ladd, Meszaros, Middlebrook, Moore, Morin, Mueller, Reeves, and Saxena.

3. Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes from December 18, 2025 (Action)

This was on the agenda as an action item.

Prior to the motion, Director Reitz brought one correction to Chair Mitchell’s attention. On page 2 under the public hearing statement, the date was corrected to read “After the public hearing, the record remained open for five calendar days, through November 25, 2025, to accept written comments.”

Motion by Commissioner Reeves and second by Vice-Chair Larkin to approve the draft meeting minutes, as corrected, from December 18, 2025.

Motion carried unanimously on a 12–0 roll-call vote.

Voting “Yes” were Chair Mitchell, Vice-Chair Larkin, Frase, Keefe, Ladd, Meszaros, Middlebrook, Moore, Morin, Mueller, Reeves, and Saxena.

4. Recognition of Service: Vice-Chair Larkin (Discussion)

At 1:37 p.m., Commissioner Castro joined the meeting in person.

This was on the agenda as a discussion item.

The Honorable Michelle A. Larkin was recognized with a plaque for her more than six years of service to the Commission, as both the Minnesota Court of Appeals representative from 2019–2026, and as the Vice-Chair from 2024–2026. Executive Director Reitz outlined her distinguished career in the Minnesota criminal justice community, and Chair Mitchell thanked Judge Larkin for her service on the Commission, and her leadership and work on the Commission’s Comprehensive Review.

Judge Larkin thanked the Commission for the recognition and introduced Judge Keale Ede, who was appointed to serve as the next Court of Appeals representative.

5. Approval of the 2026 Report to the Legislature (Action)

This was on the agenda as an action item.

Chair Mitchell called on Director Reitz to present on the near final draft of the 2026 Report to the Legislature, dated January 8, 2026. This report was to be presented to the Legislative Committees that have jurisdiction over criminal justice policy no later than January 15, 2026, as required by law.

Director Reitz noted a few changes made to the report. In addition to correcting typographical errors, the changes made now include a footnote recognizing the resignation of Vice-Chair Larkin effective January 9, 2026, explaining the replacement appointment, with Vice-Chair Larkin’s name remaining on

the masthead as Judge Larkin was involved in all the work and decisions described in the report; inclusion of language drafted by Chair Mitchell to provide an explanation of the accelerated comprehensive review completion plan and its rationale; the addition of footnotes to offer more evidence-based explanations on the Commission's recommended policy changes; and the addition of "Suggestion 2" which is now offered as a suggestion rather than a recommendation to the Legislature and highlights the statutory maximum sentence issues that may exist with some of the severity level changes. Director Reitz noted that the county attorney firearm reports that are received after today's approval of the draft report would be added if received before final publication. Director Reitz suggested a motion to approve the report, with authorization for staff to make minor editorial changes and corrections prior to the report's publication date.

Chair Mitchell called for a motion.

Motion by Commissioner Reeves and second by Commissioner Meszaros to approve the 2026 Report to the Legislature, as submitted to the Commission in near-final form, with authority for staff to make non-substantive, or technical, corrections, as well as data additions for the county attorney firearm report.

Motion carried unanimously on a 13–0 roll-call vote.

Voting "Yes" were Chair Mitchell, Vice-Chair Larkin, Castro, Frase, Keefe, Ladd, Meszaros, Middlebrook, Moore, Morin, Mueller, Reeves, and Saxena.

6. Commission's 2026 Priorities (Discussion)

This was on the agenda as a discussion item.

Chair Mitchell noted that, due to the changes in the Commission likely to occur upon the inauguration of the 42nd governor in early January 2027, the 2027 Report to the Legislature will need to be approved at the December 17, 2026, meeting. Given the escalated timeline, Chair Mitchell reviewed her memo (item 6 in the meeting materials) regarding the 2026 priorities. The possible list of priorities was derived from Commission discussions and input the Commission received during the comprehensive review stakeholder discussion. Included were rankings targeting specific offense groups (select drug offenses, motor vehicle theft, and offenses resulting in death); *Hernandizing* policies related to multiple offenses sentenced in the same; and, reorganizing, renumbering, and simplifying the structure of the guidelines. Commission members then discussed additional Commission priorities including domestic violence crimes, felony murder and culpability, recidivism issues, and trauma-informed justice. Several Commission members agreed that the items outlined in the memo presented a large task and agreed that focusing on those may be the best approach.

Chair Mitchell asked that staff prepare information on the restructure and *Hernandizing* for the February Commission meeting, after which members can determine what their individual focus will be.

7. Executive Director's Report (Discussion)

This was on the agenda as a discussion item.

Chair Mitchell called on Director Reitz, who reported that the Legislature will begin its 2026 session on February 17, 2026. In the meantime, Chair Mitchell and Director Reitz will attempt to meet with the chairs of the legislative committees with oversight over criminal justice policy and provide them with details regarding the Commission’s legislative recommendations and proposals to change the Guidelines.

The Minnesota Campaign Finance Board has sent letters to Commission members, with responses due back by January 26, 2026. Director Reitz encouraged members to reach out with any questions on the form.

8. Public Input

Chair Mitchell asked if there were members of the public who wished to speak.

The Chair recognized Judge Ede, whose service on the Commission was to begin the following day. Judge Ede presented Commissioner Larkin with a traditional kukui lei as a token of gratitude for “lighting the way” through her leadership on the Commission and support to him.

9. Adjournment

Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 2:41 p.m., without objection.