

# Ottawa County Board of Commissioner's Minutes

February 1st, 2024

The Board of County Commissioners met in emergency session in Suite 201 at the Ottawa County Courthouse.

## **Those present were:**

Second District Commissioner Scott Mortimer, Heather Maddox, County Clerk, Third District Commissioner D. D. Malmberg, Stephanie Watkins, Deputy Clerk, Chris Smith, Road and Bridge Administrator, Richard Buck, County Attorney, Michelle Campbell, Human Resources, Sheldon Daugherty, Russ Thornton, Tyler VanCoevern, Jim Kay, Dawnie Plunkett, Tanya Daugherty, Diana Peck, Rodger Peck, Betty Steinbrock, Kim Winsett, and Karl Leech.

Commissioner Malmberg called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm and Kim Winsett led in prayer followed by flag salute.

Malmberg stated that the reason for the meeting is because Saline County pulled their inmates from the Ottawa County jail. Buck discussed that Saline County spent 9 years of this counties budget to help build their new facility. Saline County pulled inmates as of Wednesday afternoon. Malmberg asked what we were getting paid from Saline County to house their inmates. Thornton said that it was \$45 a day per prisoner. Buck said that the sheriff isn't having a lot of luck keeping the jail open. Thornton said that he discussed this with another sheriff and a few other counties are having this issue as well. Buck said the law says that the sheriff is able to close the jail. Buck said staffing is a concern. Mortimer asked how many employees will have to be let go.

Thornton said there will still need to be staff to book and transport inmates when Officers bring detainees in. Malmberg asked how we will pay for the bond for the existing building. Mortimer said Thornton isn't just sitting here not trying to figure out what to do with the jail, he has looked into a lot of options. Thornton said that March is supposed to be the earliest they will hear from INS if they can move forward for new options for the jail. This would be to house deportees for the government. Thornton said as it stands, we have 10 in-house inmates, this would mean they would have to have 6 correction officers to operate safely. Malmberg asked if INS comes through and we do qualify for this, what if these other 3 facilities in the same boat as we choose to do INS contracts too. Thornton said there is more than enough deportees for other facilities. Mortimer said that he discussed any other possibilities with Elaine Bowers, and she said she thinks that prisons are filling up since Covid. Mortimer said we can't just close it down and hope it doesn't get worse. Mortimer asked Thornton if he checked into any country club prisons. Thornton said he looked into it but nothing came of it. Malmberg asked if Thornton will keep inmates or outsource them. Thornton said honestly it will cost less to house them out of county. Thornton said they have at least 4 that will be incarcerated for a lengthy amount of time. Malmberg asked what is a lengthy time, Thornton said 6 months to a year. Mortimer said he wouldn't like to close it. Thornton said that there are a couple of people who are looking at short term placement. Thornton said if he is keeping those inmates he will need to keep 4-6 employees. Malmberg wants to know what the budget is. Thornton said they will still have to operate the jail as is so we will have to keep the budget. Thornton said that there will be cuts with the food service. Buck said there are 6 employees that need to be down sized. Buck said he has been working with Campbell to see if other county departments can with stand new employees. Buck said there are departments that answer to the board of Commission. Buck said there is only one employee that would go across at the same rate of pay. Buck said there is one elected official that could take an employee, and has it in her budget. Buck said that he would like to discuss this with the employees so they know what is happening. Mortimer would like to know if they need to make a decision now. Buck said the pay is not going to be transferable. Campbell said If they don't accept the position they will be voluntarily terminated. Mortimer said he thinks they should be given a choice. Campbell said she has spoken to department heads, and they are accommodating, but they need firm answers from the board. Malmberg wants to know how vacation and sick would get paid out. Thornton said that if an employee leaves this year he will help the department with the pay out. Malmberg asked if the department will hire these at starting wage. Campbell said that Buck and Campbell spoke with outside counsel and he suggested that the board will need to create these new positions.

Campbell wanted an office clerk in the Appraiser office.

Kim Winsett said that their office needs special education. Winsett said Truette isn't interested in an additional help at this time.

Campbell said that outside counsel said that it isn't the appointed departments choice, the Board of County Commission will decide. Mortimer asked starting wage \$14.50

Clerk's office is starting at \$14.00

Assistant custodian position needs to be open or recreated starting at \$15.00

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Emergency Management Admin Assistant, Board of County Commissioners will have to make a starting wage for this position.

Campbell said those are the only positions that will need to be created.

The two that already exist are with Road and Bridge and Noxious Weed they start at \$16.50 with CDL for R&B. Noxious Weed would be starting at \$15.00. Malmberg asked what happens when we create the position, do they go away? Campbell said yes. Mortimer said he doesn't want to shove anything down someone's throat. Campbell said they will make more with this choice than with unemployment and looking for a new job. Mortimer said he is not going to create new jobs. Russ said that he needs things done in his facility so as of now he can keep his employees busy for the rest of this month. Mortimer said Thornton should tell them what's going on. Campbell said if we do this then we will be back here in a month making these decisions again. Mortimer said no to creating new jobs. Buck would like to have the positions created to have the frame work. Malmberg asked what if they create jobs for a janitorial job in the courthouse. Jim Kay left the meeting at 7:55 pm. Thornton said he will keep his employees on for the remainder of the month. The employees will be cleaning and painting in the jail during this time.

With no further business before the commission the meeting was adjourned at 8:02 pm on motion by Mortimer and seconded by Malmberg. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

ADOPTED this 5th day of February 2024.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
OF OTTAWA COUNTY, KANSAS

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Dawn Wolf, Chairman

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D.D. Malmberg, Member

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Scott Mortimer, Member

ATTEST:

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Heather Maddox, County Clerk