
OTTAWA COUNTY, KANSAS

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S MINUTES

MARCH 23, 2026

Commissioners Present:

Commissioner Carla Grund, First District

Commissioner Scott Mortimer, Second District

Commissioner Duane Morris, Third District

1. Call To Order

Commissioner Mortimer called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Commissioner Grund led the group in opening prayer followed by Commissioner Mortimer with the flag salute.

2. Public Forum

Brandon Cople stated the Governor has grants for roads. He stated there is a lot of grant money for roads and infrastructure they are giving away. He stated he thinks the county should get a grant writer, someone to just focus on Ottawa County. Mortimer asked if this was for the \$57 million safer streets and roads. Cople stated yes. Commissioner Morris stated Chris Smith, Public Works Director, has a grant in the works. Cople stated the Sheriff has also done a bunch of grants.

3. Fairground Meeting

The following representatives were present for the Fairground Meeting: Fair Board – Brian Kindall and Sheldon Dougherty; Rec Commission –Owen Kindall. Commissioner Morris stated he is part of the Ottawa County Service Corporation, and he has sent out three apps for insurance quotes. Commissioner Mortimer stated he will call an insurance agent as well. Commissioner Grund suggested changing the agreement to state that Service Corporation owns the carnival rides and fencing around the rides under Real Estate and Building Ownership since Ottawa County does not provide liability insurance for these. Dougherty stated the rides are not a building or real estate, so he doesn't think we need to add that. Brian Kindall asked about the appraisal from KCAMP. Tammi Cox, County Clerk, stated they asked, but the person who came does appraisals only, they aren't the insurance company. Cox asked if anyone has contacted the list of event insurers that was provided by KCAMP. Dougherty presented a list of Fair Board appointments for 2026.

MOTION – To approve the Fair Board appointments as presented.

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

Brian Kindall stated he wanted to thank the County for the parking lot at the fair grounds. He stated Chris Smith, Public Works Director, and his crew did a great job.

MOTION – To approve the Fair Grounds Property / Land Use Agreement as presented

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

4. EMS Discussion

Commissioner Grund presented the information she put together for EMS. She stated she met with Bennington EMS and sent an email to Barry Hodges, Minneapolis City Administrator. She provided the information about Minneapolis EMS, adding the City has assisted with cash flow for large equipment purchases when needed. Commissioner Grund pointed out that the City does all the administrative work and that healthcare costs for the four full-time employees are included in the salary line. Commissioner Grund stated Bennington EMS is also a 24/7 service, but doesn't provide healthcare. They are part of the Bennington Fire Department; prior to 2018 they were an all-volunteer EMS service.

5. Weed Department Annual Report

Chris Smith, Public Works Director, presented the Weed Department annual report that includes the Annual Noxious Weed Eradication Progress Report and the Noxious Weed Management Plan. Commissioner Grund discussed her changes to the Progress Report to match the general ledger. It was the consensus of the Commission to sign the Noxious Weed Management Plan; Smith will make changes to the Progress Report and resubmit it to the Commission. Smith also gave an estimate on the fairground parking lot costs.

MOTION – To pay the costs for the fairground parking lot for \$4,406.33 to be taken out of the Special Parks and Recreation Fund

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

Smith also gave a road & bridge update. He stated they continue to work on the list they provided the Commission. They have completed some of the projects and moving forwards on others. Once the list is complete, they will put another one together. Commissioner Grund asked if they have done any projects in District 1. Smith discussed all the projects they are currently working on are in District 1.

6. Emergency Operations Plan Promulgation

Keith Coleman, Facilities Director, presented the Emergency Operations Plan Promulgation. The Emergency Operation Plan has been approved by the Kansas Department of Emergency Management

and needs Commission approval before being turned into the state. Commissioner Morris stated he didn't agree with everything in the plan. Coleman stated it is a living document that can be changed, it can always be modified. The plan belongs to Ottawa County; we can change to whatever or whenever we want. Commissioner Morris stated he has confidence in the document and commended everyone for their effort. Coleman stated the document is meant to be kept up to date, in the past, the plan is done by a company and then modified to fit the needs of the county. He stated he was not involved in the making of this plan. Commissioner Morris stated he is impressed with the different scenarios, its flexible.

MOTION – To adopt the Emergency Operation Plan submitted to the Kansas Department of Emergency Management

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

Smith stated the County had been awarded another grant he applied for. This grant is for 2028 and is for Highway 18 going north to either Ivy or Homestead. It will be for widening and overlay. The County will be responsible for the overlay. Commissioner Grund asked about the Governor's Grant. Smith stated he has submitted some projects to the Safe Streets and Roads grant. Commissioner Morris asked about the grant that was received and stated the County got \$1.2 million but asked how much will it cost the County. Smith stated \$500,000.00-600,000.00 to pay for engineering and overlay.

7. EMS Discussion Continued

Commissioner Grund continued the discussion about EMS. She stated when she looks at the wages, they seem so low. She stated one of the reasons is EMS used to be a part of the Kansas Department of Transportation, and they were considered drivers. Commissioner Grund stated Bennington EMS operated at a loss in 2023, 2024 and 2025. She stated the fire department approves all their expenses. She stated Bennington Fire takes care of the building, utilities, and property insurance, including for the ambulances. Two ambulances are owned by the fire department. Commissioner Grund also gave an overview of surrounding counties and their EMS budgets. The Commission discussed different ways to fund EMS. Commissioner Grund stated she wanted to give preliminary information for the Commission to consider. The Commission also discussed making EMS a county-wide service. Commissioner Grund asked how we are going to sustain EMS in the future.

8. Budget/COLA Discussion

Tammi Cox, County Clerk, discussed the 2027 COLA. She stated there is a department head meeting on April 6th for the Commission to give staff direction. Staff will meet with Scot Loyd on April 3rd.

Commissioner Grund put together a spreadsheet showing what different COLA's would look like. She stated she was happy with the payroll information she received from the Treasurer. Commissioner Grund stated she would like to not increase taxes. She suggested giving staff direction with the COLA amounts and see what they would recommend to keep the budget flat. Commissioner Morris stated keeping the budget flat is a great idea if we can make it work. He stated we are losing ground with the Consumer Price Index. Tammi Cox, County Clerk, encouraged the Commission to let the department

heads do their salary line items. Commissioner Grund discussed federal law on overtime and asked if employees would be more likely to take overtime rather than comp time. Commissioner Grund stated the state is doing a 2.5% raise. It was the consensus of the Commission to use the 2.5% COLA. Commissioner Mortimer stated he feels we have come a long way with wages and asked that we try to keep the budget as tight as we can. Commissioner Grund encouraged department heads to use notes on their budgets. Cox stated she has started scheduling appropriation presentations for May and asked the Commission, other than dollar amount of the request, what other information they would like to see. Commissioner Grund stated she would like to see financial statements. She stated appropriations are where we need to scrutinize more, noting her goal is to find extra money in appropriations.

9. Approval of Accounts Payable

MOTION – To approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$207,992.58

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

10. Clerk Comments

Tammi Cox, County Clerk, stated there is no meeting next week. The next meeting will be April 6th. Cox also discussed an email she received from the North Central Regional Planning Commission asking to participate in a jail discussion. Commissioner Mortimer stated it's a no-brainer; we need to be apart of it. Sherriff Russell Thornton agreed we should be apart of the conversation. He also stated that a bill in the Senate has passed that would require jail time for a second offense for adult or juvenile. Sheriff Thornton stated Ottawa County currently averages 2-4 adult inmates per day.

11. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Grund stated the Ottawa County Conservation District Workday is next Monday. She also discussed the email about ordering shirts for Ottawa county and thought it would be nice if the County bought each employee one Ottawa county shirt; that way when employees are out they can represent Ottawa county. She suggested giving each employee \$30.00 towards an item. If every employee ordered, it would cost approximately \$2,100.00 that could come from the Employee Benefits Fund's miscellaneous account.

MOTION – To give each employee a \$30.00 credit to the Minneapolis Messenger Clothing Company to order clothing with an Ottawa County insignia on it, including the Commissioners

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Mortimer

MOTION PASSED 3-0

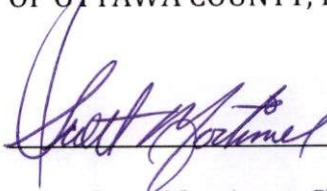
12. Adjournment

MOTION – To adjourn the meeting at 10:13 a.m.

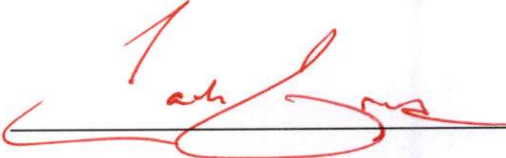
MOTION BY- Commissioner Morris
SECONDED BY - Commissioner Grund
MOTION PASSED 3-0

ADOPTED this 6th day of April 2026.


BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF OTTAWA COUNTY, KANSAS



Scott Mortimer, Chairman



Carla Grund, Member



Duane Morris, Member

ATTEST:



Tammi Cox, County Clerk

