
OTTAWA COUNTY, KANSAS

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S MINUTES

FEBRUARY 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 Morris led the group in opening prayer followed by Commissioner Mortimer with the flag salute.

2. Public Forum

Jim Kay presented his resignation for the museum board. He stated he has been on the board for five years plus 12 years as Commissioner. Brandon Cople asked about the jail and discussed working with the Kansas Department of Corrections. He also asked about cash carryover for road & bridge and townships. Cople asked Commissioner Grund the difference between a recap and official meeting. Commissioner Grund rose to a point of order, noting it had been five minutes for his public comments. Dr Curtis Stevens, Superintendent for USD 239 stated he met with the school board for a potential Memorandum of Understanding. He stated it is not formal, but to give an idea and articulate what the school district is thinking about for the John Henry and smaller building. He provided a copy to the Commission. Dr. Stevens stated the idea is to have students do work-based learning through building improvements. He stated an attorney has not reviewed this yet, it is a simple first draft. Commissioner Grund asked when this needs to be implemented. Dr. Stevens stated before August.

3. After Prom Discussion

Bree Levin, Bennington High School Class of 2026 Senior Parents representative, requested funding for After Prom activities. She stated After Prom is a free, substance-free event supervised by senior class parents. It is held immediately following prom open to all juniors, seniors, and their guests. It is designed to keep students safe from approximately 11:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. This year's theme is Western Themed. Food and snacks are provided all evening with prizes and random drawings throughout the night. The goal is not just supervision, it is to make the safe choice, the fun choice. She stated approximately 90 students are expected to attend. Historically, 100% of prom attendees participate in After Prom. Levin stated the total event budget is \$9,080.00 and they are requesting \$1,500.00 from the County's Drug and Alcohol fund, 17% of the budget. She stated parents and students have been fundraising for the past year and a half. They have raised 83% of the budget needed. The funds will be used for: entertainment and activities, prize drawings, and insurance. Parents will cover most of the food and drinks. Levin stated they will track attendance, document volunteer participation, gather

feedback from students and parents, and collaborate with school administration and parents. She stated by supporting After Prom through the Drug & Alcohol fund you are investing in prevention, supporting law enforcement efforts, and strengthening community partnerships. The Commission discussed doing it for all three schools. Commissioner Grund stated since we haven't used the fund very much; she is all for using it for our kids. We have the money for all three schools this year if they request it.

MOTION – To give \$1,500.00 to After Prom for Bennington High School event from the drug and alcohol fund.

MOTION BY– Commissioner Morris

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Grund

MOTION PASSED 3-0

4. Museum Discussion

Commissioner Morris discussed the museum building. He stated they are working on becoming a 501c3 and discussed retaining ownership of the building and paying the insurance to help the museum board. He suggested a 5-year lease on the building to the museum board for \$1.00 per year, if they want to expand in the future, it can be discussed then. Commissioner Morris stated they are making progress with becoming a 501c3 including bylaws and meeting with their attorney. Commissioner Mortimer discussed the Sinclair items. Commissioner Morris stated there are a few building concerns like the HVAC system. He stated his job as a Commissioner is to see how they can succeed and maybe draft an MOU.

5. Solid Waste Exemptions

The commission discussed two solid waste exemptions. Tammi Cox, County Clerk, reviewed the exemptions that have already been given. Commissioner Grund stated we usually go with the appraiser's recommendation. Commissioner Morris stated we have to have a fair assessment to keep the landfill open. Commissioner Grund agreed with Commissioner Mortimer that once we make an exception, it can cause a snowball effect. Commissioner Morris stated he would like to revisit the criteria given to the appraiser in the future.

MOTION – To deny the two appeals on solid waste fees and revisit the criteria in the coming year

MOTION BY– Commissioner Morris

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Grund

MOTION PASSED 3-0

6. Active Alert 911 Discussion

Commissioner Grund asked about the Active Alert 911 billing Bennington EMS received. It was the understanding from the former emergency management director that it would be paid through emergency management. Jason Gipson, Emergency Management Director, stated he had received the bill from the Sheriff's Office and had been contacted by Delphos Fire Department. He stated when he contacted the vendor, Ottawa County Emergency Management was not an account holder on the

account. Gipson stated the Active Alert 911 system replaces the antiquated beeper system and allows dispatch to communicate with first responders through SMS messaging. He stated each subscriber is the account holder and currently, emergency management is the bill payer, but not on the account. He stated this falls under communications, not emergency management. Commissioner Grund noted that these expenses were included in the Emergency Management budget for 2026 and recommended paying these invoices in 2026 and communicating to the separate entities to include it in their budgets in 2027. Karl Leech, Minneapolis EMS, explained how the app is utilized. It was the consensus of the Commission to pay for 2026, but not 2027 and to have Gipson added to the account to pay it in 2026. Leech stated the cost for 22 phones is a little over \$300.00 for a year. Gipson also discussed a meeting he had with a K-State PhD student doing a dissertation revolving around prescribed burning and the positive and negative effects on a community. Gipson also discussed possible legislation regarding the 800 radio towers.

7. Resolution 26-05 Rural Opportunity Zone Student Loan Repayment Program

Tammi Cox, County Clerk, discussed Resolution 26-05 Rural Opportunity Zone (ROZ) Student Loan Repayment Program. She stated the Board has already chosen not to participate; however, in order for other companies or organizations to participate, Ottawa County has to pass a resolution.

MOTION – To approve Resolution 26-05 to allow the ROZ program to be available in our county

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

8. Executive Session – Attorney/Client Privilege

MOTION – To move to executive session under the attorney/client exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act to discuss attorney/client information for 10 minutes to return at 9:15 a.m. to the Commissioner’s Room with Jeff Ebel, County Attorney and Tammi Cox, County Clerk.

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Mortimer

MOTION PASSED 3-0

MOTION – To move to extend the executive session under the attorney/client exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act to discuss attorney/client information for 5 minutes to return at 9:21 a.m. to the Commissioner’s Room with Jeff Ebel, County Attorney and Tammi Cox, County Clerk.

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Mortimer

MOTION PASSED 3-0

No action taken

9. Executive Session – Attorney/Client Privilege

MOTION – To move to executive session under the attorney/client exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act to discuss attorney/client information for 10 minutes to return at 9:33 a.m. to the Commissioner’s Room with Jeff Ebel, County Attorney and Tammi Cox, County Clerk.

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Mortimer

MOTION PASSED 3-0

No action taken

10. Bridge Discussion

Chris Smith, Public Works Director, stated the grant for the bridge on Frontier and 180th was accepted. Commissioner Grund asked if they would straighten it out. Smith stated they don’t have the plans yet. Smith gave the Commission a copy of the agreement and stated they pay 0% of construction, but 100% of engineering.

MOTION – To accept agreement 1205-25 with KDOT regarding the bridge on 180th and Frontier

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

11. Tractor Bids

Chris Smith, Public Works Director, presented the one bid that was received for leasing three tractors for the 2026 mowing season. He stated this bid would be for 12 months or 350 hours and would be the same tractors they already have used. The bid was for the same amount as last year, \$21,756.00. Commissioner Mortimer stated they will wait for the contract before approval.

12. Right of Way Use Permit

Chris Smith, Public Works Director, presented a right of way use permit for Schwartz Farms. It is an extension to the original permit. This is an update to move forward with boring under 120th Road in locations. The first permit expired after 120 days, this will allow for an additional 120 days.

MOTION – To approve the right of way for Schwartz Farms for boring as presented

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

13. Township Meeting Update

Commissioner Grund discussed the township meeting that was held last week. She stated people were thankful their phone calls were being returned and asked about culvert tubes. Joe Mullen, Road

Supervisor, tubes can be contracted out, but the ditches also have to be done at that time too. Chris Smith, Public Works Director, stated it's the ditches that take the time. Commissioner Grund asked if there was a motor grader report. Smith stated yes. Commissioner Grund asked about not grading the road when rock is put down. Smith stated, if they ask for a longer time to have the rock sit, we try to accommodate, but your neighbor may want it graded. He stated we try to accommodate every phone call if we can, most of the townships do a good job of communicating with us. Smith stated there are 1500 miles and 20 guys with probably four tubes per mile on average. Commissioner Grund asked who is responsible for the base of the road. Smith stated he is not able to find anything written, but in the past, if it's bad, we take care of it. Commissioner Grund asked about township roads damaged by railroad trucks. Smith discussed the difficulty of working with the railroad. Commissioner Grund requested a list of all repairs requested and completed in the townships to see progress made. Mullen stated they are starting every other Friday to have motor grader operators drive around to look at ditches and culverts that need improvements and make minor improvements as needed. Smith stated contracting out asphalt has helped with keeping guys doing ditches and tubes.

14. Policy Review

Tammi Cox, County Clerk, reviewed the following policies: 20.03 Vacancy Posting; 20.04 Applications for Employment; 20.05 Employee Selection Process; 30.02 Pay Deductions and Administrative Pay Corrections; 30.04 Timesheets, Work Schedules, Meal Periods & Breaks; 30.06 Employee Vacation Leave; 30.06a Employee Sick Leave Policy; 30.07 Employee Benefits; 30.10 Unpaid Leave of Absence (LOA); 30.11 Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA); 30.12 Military Leave; 30.14 Professional Memberships & Continuing Professional Education; 30.15 Employee Assistance Program (EAP); 30.16 Jury Duty; 30.17 Time Off to Vote; 40.01 Employee Identification / Key Cards; 40.02 Ottawa County Credit Card Policy. The Commission discussed changes to the policy. Policies 30.06, 30.06a, and 30.07 were pulled for further review.

MOTION – To approve policy 20.03, 20.04, 20.05, 30.02, 30.04, 30.10, 30.11, 30.12, 30.14, 30.15, 30.16, 30.17, 40.01, and 40.02

MOTION BY– Commissioner Mortimer

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

15. Approval of Accounts Payable and Commission Minutes

MOTION – To approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$1,933,323.32

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

Commissioner Grund noted the accounts payable include the 2026 year appropriations and FEMA reimbursements.

MOTION – To approve the minutes for February 9th as presented

MOTION BY– Commissioner Morris

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Mortimer

MOTION PASSED 3-0

16. Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Mortimer stated he met with Senator Dr. Roger Marshall and Representative Dawn Wolf at a ribbon cutting at the new kitchen at AVI that he attended. Commissioner Morris stated he will be attending the CDBG meeting, a data center seminar, Big Beautiful Bill meeting at the extension office, and Legislative coffee. Commissioner Mortimer stated there is craft fair and benefit soup supper coming up in Delphos. Commissioner Grund stated she is excited the townships received the FEMA reimbursements from the 2024 event. She stated she spoke with an Ellis County Commissioner about fleet leasing. Commissioner Grund stated she attended the Department on Aging meeting, and the Golden Wheel has a cook again she stated they serve 300—400 meals a month. She stated in November they had 258 riders on their buses and vans. She stated Delphos fire went down to help with the wildfires and discussed other FEMA claims. Commissioner Grund discussed paying mileage for certain board and stated Jim Davidson wrote a grant for the Bennington Fire Department. Commissioner Grund asked about payroll reports and requested more information. Commissioner Mortimer stated its not our business where people put their money. Commissioner Grund stated she is requesting how much each employee makes and how many hours they work and employer deductions. Commissioner Morris stated we can get totals without knowing who subscribes to what. Commissioner Grund stated we are accountable for payroll, she stated she wants to see, by person, what they are making and examine payroll before we pay them. Commissioner Mortimer stated there is private information that doesn't need out. Commissioner Grund asked about motor vehicle distribution. Tammi Cox, County Clerk, state she would need to get with the County Treasurer.

17. Clerk Comments

Tammi Cox, County Clerk, discussed the upcoming North Central Kansas Commission meeting, the Central Kansas Library appointment, and a refund check that was received from KWORCC.

18. Executive Session – Confidential Data

MOTION – To move to executive session under the confidential data exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act to discuss trade secrets for 5 minutes to return at 11:56 a.m. to the Commissioner's Room with Tammi Cox, County Clerk.

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Mortimer

MOTION PASSED 3-0

No action taken

19. Adjournment

MOTION - To adjourn the meeting at 11:57 a.m.


MOTION BY- Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY - Commissioner Morris

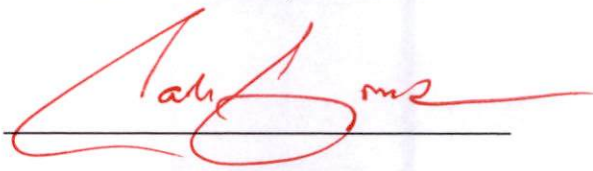
MOTION PASSED 3-0

ADOPTED this 9th day of March 2026.


BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF OTTAWA COUNTY, KANSAS



Scott Mortimer, Chairman



Carla Grund, Member



Duane Morris, Member

ATTEST:



Tammi Cox, County Clerk

