
OTTAWA COUNTY, KANSAS

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S MINUTES

MARCH 02, 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. Blue Store MOU with USD 239

Dr. Curtis Steves, Superintendent for USD 239, discussed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that he drafted regarding the Blue Store. The next school board meeting is March 9th. He stated they are not trying to get in the way if other entities are interested in purchasing, they want to see utilization of the building. Tammi Cox, County Clerk, read a message from Jeff Ebel, County Attorney, which stated he didn't see any problems with the MOU. Commissioner Morris asked about ADA requirements. Dr. Stevens stated they will be working on that first and will plan on trying to hold a school board meeting in the building. He stated there is a grant deadline April 1st and the first step would get the John Henry building ADA compliance. He stated after the school board reviews the MOU he will bring it back to the Commission to approve. Dr. Stevens stated the plan was to start with the John Henry building. Since the county owns the building, the grant would be accepted by the county. Commissioner Grund asked about including USD 240 in the MOU. Dr. Stevens stated once an MOU is approved, an addendum can be added. He stated we would like them to participate as well. Commissioner Morris asked if there are plans for the Blue Store. Dr. Stevens clarified the buildings consist of three separate areas; the addresses he is referring to for the MOU is 301 W 2nd Street and 303 W 2nd Street. This agreement would be for the John Henry building and the small building beside it. He stated he will provide updates and keep the Commission informed.

MOTION – To approve the 301 W 2nd Street and the 303 W 2nd Street draft MOU

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

Commissioner Morris discussed the possibility of putting the carousal in one of the buildings. Dr. Stevens stated this is the beginning and as dominoes fall, momentum tends to build. Commissioner

Grund requested to add the weekly Road & Bridge report to the agenda and request the Public Works Director to come to the meeting.

3. Public Forum

Brandon Copple discussed a possible sales tax increase for EMS and/or for general use. It was the consensus of the Commission to discuss next week with the County Attorney. Copple also discussed wind farms in other counties.

4. Scot Loyd Engagement Letter

Tammi Cox, County Clerk, presented the engagement letter with Scot Loyd for the 2027 budget. She stated the contract remains the same for the county; however, each special district would be \$1,000.00, this would mean each of the six fire districts would be an additional \$1,000.00. Commissioner Mortimer asked who would pay for the fire districts. Commissioner Grund stated she worked with the fire districts and their budgets last year and would be willing to prepare the fire district budgets for 2027, which will then be presented to the Commission for approval. It was the consensus of the Commission to let Commissioner Grund do the fire district budgets. Commissioner Grund asked about having the auditors do the budget. Commissioner Mortimer stated we didn't get good communication with them when they did the budget. Cox stated it isn't good practice to have your budget preparer also be your auditor.

MOTION – To accept the engagement letter from Scot Loyd and Carla do the fire districts separately this year

MOTION BY– Commissioner Morris

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Grund

MOTION PASSED 3-0

5. Paying Mileage For Boards Discussion

Tammi Cox, County Clerk, stated the Commission requested a list of boards to discuss possibly paying mileage. She also read an email from Sarah Hodges, Health Department Director, adding to the list and stating the representative from the North Central Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging and State of Kansas Silver Haired Legislature is offered mileage, but he declined it in 2025 and she has declined mileage in 2025 for the Central Kansas Mental Health Center Board. Commissioner Morris stated paying mileage kills the spirit of volunteerism. It was the consensus to check with Hodges to see if the mileage is in the bylaws before making a policy for the county.

6. Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month Proclamation

Tanya Paul, Outreach Specialist for DVACK, presented the Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month Proclamation. She stated DVACK serves teens 16 and over without parental consent and under 16 with non-abusive parent consent. She stated all services are voluntary. Teen dating violence remains a serious public health issue in the United States, with approximately 1 in 3 adolescents experiencing physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner, a rate that continues to exceed victimization rates of other types of youth violence; and 1.5 million high school students nationwide

experience physical abuse from a dating partner each year. About 1 in 10 high school students report being purposefully hit, slapped, or physically harmed by a dating partner, with emotional and digital abuse increasingly common among teens. High school students who experience physical or emotional violence in dating relationships are significantly more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors, including substance use and risky sexual behavior, face increased risk of depression and suicide, and may carry patterns of abuse into future relationships. Teens victimized by a dating partner often experience disrupted development of self-esteem and body image, report school absence, or unsafe feelings due to abuse, and may suffer long-lasting psychological trauma. Reporting rates remain alarmingly low with only about 1 in 10 teens disclosing abuse to an adult and the large majority suffering in silence, highlighting the hidden nature of teen dating violence and the urgent need for awareness and support from families, schools, and communities. Research indicates that a substantial proportion of parents either believe teen dating violence is not an issue or are unsure if it is, underscoring the need for a broader education on recognizing abuse and fostering healthy relationships. By providing young people, parents, educators, and professionals with education about healthy relationships, warning signs of abuse, respectful communication skills, and resources for support, and by challenging social attitudes that tolerate violence, we recognize that teen dating violence is preventable with proactive effort and community engagement. The Domestic Violence Association of Central Kansas calls on all of Ottawa County to work together to end teen dating violence by empowering young people to build healthy relationship skills, assisting victims in accessing resources and supportive services, expanding community awareness and prevention strategies, instituting effective intervention policies in schools, and encouraging open dialogue among families and peers. The proclamation is for the County of Ottawa Board of Commissioners to hereby designate February 2026 as Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month and urge all citizens to recognize, support, and assist all those who serve the rights and needs of victims of teen dating violence, and to promote healthy, respectful relationships throughout the community. Commissioner Morris asked if there was information in the classroom. Paul stated in other school districts they have done presentations and gave information to school counselors.

MOTION – To approve the Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month Proclamation for February 2026

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

7. Golden Wheel Senior Center Discussion

Debbie Blochlinger, representing the Golden Wheel Senior Center, discussed concerns she would like addressed to the North Central Area Agency on Aging. She stated there is a lack of response from the Manhattan office, lack of transparency, and stated there hasn't been a contract or lease in over ten years. She stated most of the major appliances are owned by the Golden Wheel. Blochlinger stated we need clear answers. She stated Ottawa County is contributing to the North Central Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging but receiving limited support. Blochlinger discussed a \$100,000.00 grant that was given to the South-Central Region to help senior food operations. Commissioner Morris asked how much it costs a senior for a meal. Blochlinger stated four dollars. Commissioner Grund added that it was the requested meal donation and that Golden Wheel can't require payment for meals. Blochlinger stated it's difficult

to qualify for a grant without making a certain number of meals, but how can we do that if we keep getting shut down. She noted that the NCFHAA pays only \$8.00 per hour for staff and the Golden Wheel subsidizes the wages paid. Commissioner Morris asked about the feasibility to get away from the Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging.

8. Emergency Management Update

Commissioner Grund asked about the state owned 800 Mhz radio system and what is being discussed in the legislature to pay for them. Jason Gipson, Emergency Managementg Director, stated it has been discussed to split the cost with the entities and the state, but nothing has been decided.

9. Road & Bridge Update

Chris Smith, Public Works Director, provided an updated quote from Carrico tractors. Commissioner Grund stated she wants a weekly update and thanked him for doing 200th Road. She also requested a copy of the waiting list for work needed to be done and requested by the townships. Smith stated its going to take several weeks to get all the projects together to do that. Smith also discussed a bridge that was falling in on Oxbow Road and US 81. He stated it will go from a bridge to a tube. Tammi Cox, County Clerk, asked if the Commissioners wanted the update on the agenda every week. Commissioner Grund stated she wants it once a week. Commissioner Morris stated he think twice a month. Commissioner Mortimer stated once a month. Commissioner Morris stated if he's doing a good job and the phone isn't ringing, he agreed with once a month. Commissioner Mortimer stated to let them do their job.

10. Approval of Accounts Payable

Commissioner Grund asked Keith Coleman, Facilities Director, about the gas bills. He explained how they pay for gas in bulk and the transmission of the gas. He stated he reviews the cost each year to make sure it is cost effective. Coleman will follow up to remove sales tax on the Symmetry bills.

MOTION – To approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$108,103.10

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

11. Executive Session – Non-Elected Personnel

MOTION – To move to executive session under the non-elected personnel exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act to discuss non-elected personnel for 10 minutes to return at 9:53 a.m. to the Commissioner's Room with Chris Smith, Public Works Director and Tammi Cox, County Clerk.

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

No action taken

12. North Central Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging Discussion

Julie Govert-Walter, Executive Director of the North Central Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging, discussed the challenges of filling the cook position at the Golden Wheel. Commissioner Mortimer asked what they do in Manhattan when seniors go without meals. He stated going without meals is serious and asked what can be done differently. Govert-Walter stated she wished there was a good answer. She stated they used to tap into the Lincoln Senior Center, but their cook is in training. Commissioner Mortimer asked about getting meals from somewhere else. Commissioner Grund asked about Saline County and independent contracting. Govert-Walter stated we are responsible for assessing the meals we are funding. Commissioner Grund about the lack of a current contract. Govert-Walter stated we are a direct service agency for our 18 counties and the paperwork is completed for each senior center but admitted to being behind. Commissioner Morris stated we need a definitive roadmap going forward and asked if we are the only county where seniors are not getting meals. Govert-Walter stated she thinks communication was a big factor and they are ensuring assessments are getting done. Commissioner Grund stated we should have a contract stating what services NCFHAAA provide and what assets they own at the Golden Wheel. Govert-Walter stated they are going off of long time practices for contracts. The commitment is to provide meals under the federal Older Americans Act for each person who has completed an assessment. She stated they used to provide equipment to the senior centers when there was plenty of funding, but funding has not kept pace with inflation. She stated the agency had a reduction in funds and worked with senior centers and asked them to purchase their own. Doug Plummer, Board President for the Golden Wheel, discussed the kitchen equipment. He stated some of the funding depends on how many people eat. He stated we have increased our stipend to the employees by 75%. Commissioner Grund asked about the health insurance that is paid by the county since the county pays 90% of the employee health insurance. Govert-Walter proposed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the county. Commissioner Mortimer stated we need to mend this and set out each entities responsibilities and improve communication, if it was asked about getting meals from Saline County if no cook is available. Govert-Walter stated they would have to talk to the Senior Center and have the money for it. She stated they do have the capacity to get frozen meals from NCFHAAA. The Commission asked about an assistant or substitute cook to employ with the regular cook. Commissioner Grund requested an MOU with the North Central Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging. Commissioner Mortimer stated he doesn't want any of the elderly to go without a meal.

13. Payroll Discussion

Commissioner Grund discussed the payroll reports. In 2024, the Commission elected to have the County Treasurer perform the payroll responsibilities. Commissioner Grund stated in 2025, the Commission received the payroll ledger; but in January 2026 the Commission received just a recap by department. She handed out research regarding payroll function within Kansas counties and incompatible offices and part of the Ottawa County audit report that discusses internal controls. Commissioner Grund discussed possibly outsourcing payroll and/or HR. Commissioner Mortimer stated the prior report had information they were not privy to and stated we have auditors who provide oversight. Commissioner Grund stated it's about accountability. Commissioner Mortimer asked why she wants to see what everyone is paid. He stated before the Treasurer did the payroll they checked with Jay Hall, KAC Attorney, and he stated it was not illegal. It was the consensus of the Commission to review the

information provided by Commissioner Grund. Commissioner Grund stated that in good faith, she cannot approve payroll based on the information that has been provided to the Commission.

MOTION – To approve payroll as presented

MOTION BY– Commissioner Morris

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Mortimer

MOTION PASSED 2-0-1

(Aye – Commissioners Morris and Mortimer; Abstain – Commissioner Grund)

14. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Grund discussed data center information she received and the concerns addressed. She stated she attended at the KSU Extension office about the Big Beautiful Bill regarding increased crop insurance subsidies and met with Schwartz Farms. She stated she spoke with Senator Bowers and Representative Wolf at the legislative coffee, discussed the legislative bills about property taxes and the improved Homestead exemption. She was thankful for the reciprocity of the fire departments within Ottawa County for the recent fire on 190th Road. It was the consensus of the Commission to not accept anything for signature at the meeting if the information is not given to the Commissioners prior to the meeting. Commissioner Mortimer stated he also attended the legislative coffee and met with Schwartz Farms. Commissioner Morris stated he attended the same and stressed the need to show stability at the Golden Wheel so numbers will increase. Commissioner Morris stated there will be a statewide tornado drill on Wednesday, March 4th, the Ottawa County Commission Foundation is having the March Match this Friday at The Farm and there is a storm spotter meeting coming up.

15. Adjournment

MOTION – To adjourn the meeting at 11:25 p.m.

MOTION BY– Commissioner Morris

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Mortimer

MOTION PASSED 0-3

16. Executive Session – Non-Elected Personnel

MOTION – To move to executive session under the non-elected personnel exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act to discuss non-elected personnel for 10 minutes to return at 11:38 a.m. to the Commissioner’s Room with Tammi Cox, County Clerk.

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

MOTION - To move to extend the executive session under the non-elected personnel exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act to discuss non-elected personnel for 10 minutes to return at 11:50 a.m. to the Commissioner's Room with Tammi Cox, County Clerk.

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

No action taken

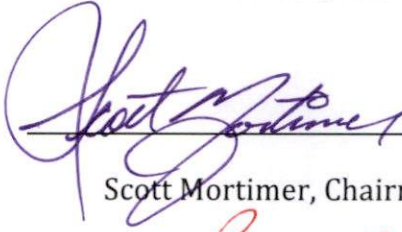
17. Adjournment

MOTION - To adjourn the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

MOTION BY- Commissioner Grund
SECONDED BY - Commissioner Mortimer
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

