
OTTAWA COUNTY, KANSAS

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S MINUTES

APRIL 06, 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

Dr. Curtis Stevens, Superintendent USD 239, stated the Board of Education reviewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the Blue Store. He stated he told the School Board that the County Commission is in agreement with the MOU and the School Board wanted time to look at it. They will take it up as an action item at their April 13th meeting. Dr. Stevens questioned the addresses on the buildings in the MOU, noting that he will work with the County Clerk and the Register of Deeds to confirm the addresses. Dr. Stevens stated once the board acts on the MOU, he will communicate with the Commission and keep them updated as they move forward. He stated we can work together and apply for grants. Dr. Stevens stated the school district is working on the schedule for next year and, if the MOU is approved, they will mobilize what the internship looks like. He stated it may not start until the January term. Commissioner Grund asked about having a School Resource Officer (SRO) this year. Dr. Stevens said yes but wasn't sure if Twin Valley has approved one yet and the MOU for the SRO is with all three entities. He stated that if Twin Valley doesn't approve the SRO, he would like to see what kind of agreement can be reached. Dr. Stevens stated the first year, the SRO was paid for by the school and the second year, there was a grant. He stated he will be meeting with the Sheriff and is open to conversations with the City as well. He stated he has worked well with the Sheriff.

3. Sanitary Code Discussion

Phillip Murrow, County Sanitarian, requested the Commission approve that the Local Environmental Planning Group (LEPG) or the county sanitarian be the only ones allowed to do inspections in the County. He stated there was a septic company that asked permission to do an inspection. Commissioner Grund asked about the eight other counties in the LEPG and stated Commissioner Scott Mortimer is on the LEPG board. She also stated Ottawa County utilized the sanitarian more than any other counties in the LEPG.

MOTION – To approve that all sanitarian inspections will be by the LEPG or the county sanitarian

MOTION BY- Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY - Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

Commissioner Mortimer asked Murrow to explain the issue that came up regarding this. Murrow stated he met with a homeowner and contractor regarding a septic system. He approved the permit and it was questioned, saying it was out of compliance. He stated he checked the LEPC code and called the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and stated we are in compliance with the state. Murrow also stated the state is working to update the sanitary code. Commissioner Grund asked if we are following the Ottawa County sanitary code. Murrow stated we are following the KDHE code that covers everything. Tammi Cox, County Clerk, offered to provide Murrow with a copy of the Ottawa County sanitary code.

4. Community Corrections Update

Michelle Callam, 28th Judicial Community Corrections Director, gave the semi-annual Community Corrections update. She stated they have started a care closet for people who go to jail in one season and come out in another season. She said it also has other items they use to incentivize clients for good behavior. Callam stated they have also implemented a program for staff that involves dealing with first and secondary trauma. She stated they also hired a company to do quality assurance assessments, and they will be audited quarterly. Callam stated they have been involved in the Youth Practice Model; this allows everyone who is involved in juvenile offenders a chance to come to the table. She stated they are currently serving 396 adults (3 from Ottawa County), 79 of those are on drug court; 97 pre-trial clients (3 in Ottawa County); 88 juveniles (2 from Ottawa County); and 3 Intake and Assessment Response in Ottawa County. She stated they have two officers that come to Ottawa County and pre-trial is getting off the ground. Callam stated she has been appointed to the North Central Regional Juvenile Detention Center Board. She stated they have looked at the Ottawa County jail as a potential place for juveniles. She also discussed conferences and trainings that staff attended. Callam stated the Department of Corrections has entered into a two-year agreement with the state that put a hold on cutting funding to analyze the funding formula. She stated she has mailed in the comprehensive plan which tells the Kansas Department of Corrections what is being done with the money that is allocated. Commissioner Grund asked what funding is allocated for Ottawa County. Callam stated the Kansas Department of Corrections money is from the state and is not divided out, but they receive the Ottawa County portion.

5. North Central Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging Memorandum of Understanding

Julie Govert-Walter, North Central Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging (NCFHAAA) Executive Director; Darrel Rieckenberg, NCFHAAA Board Member; and Linda Semple, NCFHAAA staff presented a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Golden Wheel Senior Center. Govert-Walter pointed out that the MOU did not discuss the health insurance because that is an agreement with the County and it's a required expense that must be paid to friendship meal employees who work 30 hours or more a week. Commissioner Grund asked if NCFHAAA does a request for funding. Govert-Walter stated they sent out letters. Commissioner Grund stated her comments would be secondary to the Golden Wheel Board since the MOU is with NCFHAAA and the Golden Wheel Board. Commissioner Morris asked if

Rieckenberg looked at the MOU as the NCFHAAA or the Golden Wheel. Rieckenberg stated he looked at it to see if it covered the issues that need to be covered. He stated it did a pretty good job, there might be some things that weren't addressed. He stated if they want the County Agency on Aging to review it, they have a meeting coming up. Commissioner Grund stated one of her concerns with the MOU is that it states the Golden Wheel is responsible for recruiting staff. She stated NCFHAAA is the employer and it is NCFHAAA criteria that is used for hiring. Govert-Walter stated there are workforce challenges and it comes down to local folks to help identify who is available to work. Commissioner Grund stated that ultimately, they can't hire without the NCFHAAA, and the NCFHAAA should be primary. Govert-Walter stated the document does state the NCFHAAA is the employer of record. Commissioner Grund also asked about the annual inventory, noting that the inventory hasn't been done in the past few years. Govert-Walter stated the document is in accordance with how the agency would have the relationship with any senior center in the region. Commissioner Grund noted that the MOU states if the board isn't getting active assistance from NCFHAAA, they have to give 60 days' notice, that's two months without meals. Govert-Walter stated that is if they don't want to continue with the organization. She stated NCFHAAA has hired another staff member to assist with oversight and are looking into a more dedicated way for communications when someone calls. Commissioner Grund stated the MOU also does not say what the Golden Wheel does to subsidize the meals. Rieckenberg stated this is the first shot at this. Commissioner Mortimer stated we don't want it to get back to where it was. Rieckenberg stated one thing that would help would be to have a substitute cook. Commissioner Grund stated the MOU discusses staffing and asked what it would take to get an assistant cook. Semple stated there is a difference between a substitute cook and an assistant cook. Commissioner Grund stated she felt we are moving in the right direction, noting she will reach out to board members and share her concerns, but ultimately, it's their agreement. She also stated the MOU doesn't talk about the other senior centers in the county. Commissioner Morris stated there were frustrations, they felt ignored by the NCFHAAA organization. Govert-Walter stated Semple will still be the contact person, we are looking for more robust ways to do communications. She stated our responsiveness will be better than in the past. Kayla Paige, Delphos Senior Center, asked about backups when there isn't a cook; and asked about networks across different senior centers. Govert-Walter discussed challenges with workforce. Semple discussed transportation of meals and ordering of food. Kayla Paige asked if NCFHAAA is working on meeting the needs of counties and analyzing needs. Govert-Walter stated yes, they do a survey of participants and do an assessment every two or three years. It was the consensus of the Commission to have Commissioner Grund contact the Golden Wheel Board to review the MOU.

6. Department Head Meeting

The following department heads gave a department head update: Jeff Ebel, County Attorney; Keith Coleman, Facilities Director; Sarah Hodges, Health Department Director; JoDee Copple, County Treasurer; Shelby Walker, Register of Deeds; and Tammi Cox, County Clerk. The Commission gave direction regarding the presentation of budgets including doing their best to keep the budget flat and using a 2.5% COLA for salaries. Commissioner Grund stated she would rather the departments tell the Commission where to roll back their budget. Commissioner Grund thanked Copple for preparing the payroll report that lists each employee.

7. Executive Session – Attorney/Client Privilege

MOTION – To move to executive session under the attorney/client exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act to discuss non-elected personnel for 10 minutes to return at 10:23 a.m. to the Commissioner’s Room with Jeff Ebel, County Attorney and Tammi Cox, County Clerk.

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

No action taken

8. EMS Discussion Continued

Tony Swetson, Bennington EMS and Karl Leech, Minneapolis EMS stated they want to answer questions from the previous meeting. Commissioner Morris asked if a 1% sales tax would help with the needs on the budget. Commissioner Grund stated funding from the county is the primary source of revenue and the secondary source comes from medical billing. There’s also money from grants and memorial money. She stated she has a hard time going from 6 mills for EMS to 10.5 mills. Leech discussed grants that had been received and said a 1% sales tax would help cover the payroll, but they still have the expense of equipment. Commissioner Grund stated in the past, we only went up one mill at a time. Leech stated nothing has been done significantly for EMS for years. Commissioner Mortimer stated the private services aren’t great. Commissioner Morris asked if they would be able to hire or just stay status quo. Swetson stated they can’t afford benefits; they either have another full-time job or are on their spouse’s insurance. He stated Ottawa County needs two crews, they’ve had to back each other up about 20 times so far this year. Commissioner Grund stated the study that was done suggested three options: continue with the two county services; go to a county-wide service, but it would be more costly; or use an outside service. Commissioner Grund asked about the future of the Mobile Integrated Health (MIH). Swetson said he does not see it as funding source for EMS. Commissioner Mortimer stated we need to get the dollar amounts and have town hall meetings to talk about the sales tax. Commissioner Grund stated if they were our employees we could control their medical billing. Commissioner Morris stated they are billing everything they can. Commissioner Grund asked what are we going to cut in the budget to help fund EMS.

9. Approval of Accounts Payable, Commission Minutes, and Payroll

MOTION – To approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$490,386.54

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

Commissioner Grund stated she wanted to be noted that \$304,908.60 is for the Master Tech truck payment.

MOTION – To approve the Commission minutes for March 16th and March 23rd, 2026

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

MOTION - To approve the payroll for March 2026

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

MOTION - To move to approve the KDOT project programming for the High-Risk Rural Road for a grant total of \$1,185,000.00.

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

10. Clerk Comments

Tammi Cox, County Clerk, reminded the Commission about the Regional Commission meeting on Wednesday. She stated she was approved for the Help America Vote Act for \$18,220.93 and the state will reimburse 90% at \$16,398.84.

11. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Grund stated she participated in a multi-county zoom meeting with the North Central Regional Planning Commission going over strengths and weaknesses for communities. She stated she attended the Ottawa County Conservation local work group, and they discussed concerns including woody invasion, prescribed burning and discussed cost share programs. Commissioner Grund stated she attended the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) meeting; and there were 32 grant applications and only 13 were granted, and Ottawa County was one of them. She stated that KDOT noted Road & Bridge maintenance costs have increased 50% over six years. Commissioner Grund stated she registered to go to the Kansas Association of Counties (KAC) meeting in Hutchinson and prepared an agenda for the regional Commission meeting on Wednesday. The Commission reviewed the agenda and made suggestions. It was the consensus of the Commission to have Commissioner Grund revise the agenda and have Tammi Cox, County Clerk, send it out. Commissioner Morris discussed dust control and discussed data centers.

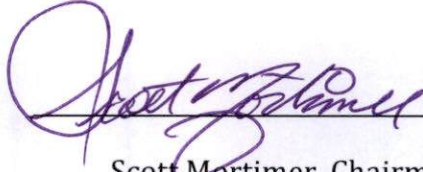
12. Adjournment

MOTION - To adjourn the meeting at 11:54 a.m.

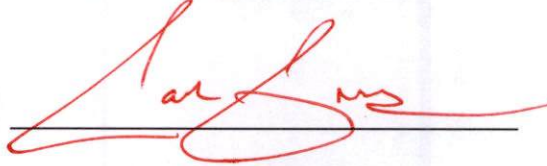
MOTION BY- Commissioner Mortimer
SECONDED BY - Commissioner Morris
MOTION PASSED 3-0

ADOPTED this 13 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

