
OTTAWA COUNTY, KANSAS

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S MINUTES

JANUARY 27, 2025

Commissioners Present:

Commissioner Carla Grund, First District

Commissioner Duane Morris, Third District

Commissioner Absent:

Commissioner Scott Mortimer, Second District

1. Call To Order

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

2. Commission Agenda

Commissioner Grund asked to move the consent agenda to the end of the meeting.

3. Golden Wheel Discussion

Doug Plummer and Sheila Reed from Golden Wheel Senior Center gave an update on the Golden Wheel Senior Center. They stated they have been working on updating the kitchen in order to serve meals again at the Golden Wheel. Commissioner Grund asked if they were a 501c3. Doug Plummer stated no, 2009 was the last time they were a 501c3. Sarah Hodges, Health Department Director, stated things had changed. In the state of Kansas they are a 501c3, but not on the federal side. Commissioner Grund asked if they received operating grants. Sheila Reed stated no, the grants they receive go through a non-profit. Commissioner Morris asked if they receive funding through the Department of Aging. Sarah Hodges stated yes. Doug Plummer explained the role of the Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging. He stated Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging hires the cook and the site manager. He stated when they were in-between cooks, it was discovered the stove was leaking gas and the stove was owned by the Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging. Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging stated they do not replace equipment but would pay to have it repaired; however parts are no longer available for this stove. Doug Plummer stated they were having other issues with items owned by the Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging including the freezer. Commissioner Grund asked about the money for meals. Sarah Hodges stated this is a Flint Hill Area Agency on Aging program this includes the Meals on Wheels program. She also stated they pay for the employees, but the staff wages so are low that they have to supplement the pay for the cook and site manager. She stated the Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging pay rent for the Golden Wheel, they buy all the food, they supply the staff and pay a driver to provide meals in Bennington. Doug Plummer stated they did get a residential professional grade gas stove and has someone ready to install it. Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging stated when the kitchen is ready they will hire a cook. He also stated there is a commercial stove that can be brought by a grant/donor. The money is secured, it just needs to be

installed; however while doing this, they have found other issues in the kitchen they are currently working on. Commissioner Grund asked what is the Golden Wheel's financial position. Sheila Reed stated there is \$2,000.00 leftover from last year, but they are using it; they are waiting for the apportionment money. Commissioner Morris asked what the Commission can do to get the kitchen functioning again. Doug Plummer stated funding. He stated the kitchen and exhaust hood has been professionally cleaned and they are working on getting the stove installed. Commissioner Grund asked what the Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging still own. Doug Plummer stated the fridge, dishwasher, two freezers that are still on the property, and food storage pieces. Sheila Reed stated we still need half the kitchen replaced. Commissioner Grund stated it sounds like you need the appropriation funding; but wanted to ensure they were progressing in getting meals to seniors. She stated she would like to see the apportionments put back on accounts payable. Tammi Cox, County Clerk, stated they can get them put on to be approved at the end of the meeting.

4. Health Department Update

Sarah Hodges, Health Department Director, discussed the vaccine billing from last week. She explained they no longer were receiving paper invoices and the billing had switched to online only. The Health Department lost the discount due to the delayed payment, but will now know for the future. Commissioner Grund asked if they use the national membership they paid for. Sarah Hodges stated yes. Sarah Hodges discussed the North Central Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging. Commissioner Grund asked if Sarah Hodges writes her own grants. Sarah Hodges stated yes, she works with the K-State Extension Office. She stated most grants are specific to a program, but there is some state funding that goes to the operating fund.

5. High Plains Resources

Chris Smith, Public Works Director and Jimmy Jeffcoat, Contracting Agent from High Plains Resources presented a request from High Plains Resources to conduct a geophysical survey on or along public roads. Jimmy Jeffcoat described what the seismic theory is and how it is utilized. He stated they put sensors down in the ground about 12 inches and described how the process works. The sensors read down to 12,000 feet. Commissioner Grund asked if they are searching for hydrogen. Jimmy Jeffcoat stated yes, that's the target. He stated it is not in pools, it's all in rock layers. Chris Smith stated they have filled out a permit and have insurance. This has been done in neighboring counties. Jimmy Jeffcoat stated they do ask the landowners even though it is being done on public right of way. He stated by getting this information, they can decide where they might want to put up wells. He showed the Commission a map of the different areas they will be working in. Commissioner Grund asked if we contact the township boards. Chris Smith stated other than road traffic it doesn't harm the road, but he stated he can reach out to the townships and let them know. Commissioner Grund stated she would like him to do that as a courtesy. Commissioner Grund asked about a timeframe for the project. Jimmy Jeffcoat stated he is not sure yet, it has to do with how quick they can get permission from the landowners as a courtesy, he is estimating closer to spring. He also stated they pay for additional insurance for the County for this. Commissioner Grund asked to accompany Chris Smith when speaking with the township representatives and wants to defer a decision after speaking with the representatives. Jimmy Jeffcoat stated there is also a traffic control plan in place and would request

Chris Smith tell him where to use it; it can add a lot of people and vehicles, so sometimes it's not necessary.

6. Road and Bridge Equipment Allocation Discussion

Chris Smith, Public Works Director, discussed Road and Bridge Equipment Allocation. He stated the finances have never been available to have an equipment plan and just buys what can be afforded each year; however moving forward he is working on changing that in the budget. Commissioner Grund asked questions on accounts payables and asked about the grant for widening the road from the Saline County line to Highway 18. Chris Smith stated it is a grant for high risk rural roads and the county is responsible for ten percent of the costs and the engineering costs. He also discussed a grant he received last year to replace the bridge west of the elevators in Minneapolis. Commissioner Grund asked if he had a bridge capital improvement plan. Chris Smith stated yes, there is a special bridge fund, the next project is the bridge by Delphos. He stated there is a registry of bridges and there are 251 bridges in Ottawa County. This year we had 13 bridge inspections, the inspections alternate because of bridge requirements from the state and the state says what bridges need to be inspected. Commissioner Grund stated we need to start looking strategically at this with the budget process. Chris Smith stated yes, this should have been started years and years ago.

7. Recess

MOTION – To take a five-minute recess

MOTION BY– Commissioner Morris

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Grund

MOTION PASSED 2-0

8. Sheriff's Department/Jail Discussion

Sheriff Russell Thornton answered questions about accounts payable. He stated they purchased a TV to put in the admin hallway for information for the community. He also discussed an AT&T bill in which the late fee was not paid. The money itself does not come from the county budget, it comes from the 911 budget which is fully funded by the state. We received two different bills and once in a while they do not put the money towards the correct bill. They have been working with AT&T on correcting this. The bill wasn't late, it was put to the wrong account. He also stated the funds for the 911 fund comes from cell phone taxes, home phone taxes, etc. No ad valorem tax dollars are used. Commissioner Morris asked about the Kansas Department of Corrections cutting funding. Sheriff Russell Thornton stated the cuts in funding affects Community Corrections and stated the role Community Corrections plays in Ottawa County. He also stated he is on the Board of Community Corrections. Commissioner Grund asked about JAG grants. Sheriff Russell Thornton stated yes, they have applied for JAG grants and discussed what they were used for. Sheriff Russell Thornton also discussed getting ICE detainees into the jail. He stated ICE has done a walk through of the jail over a year ago. They liked our jail, but at the time there were no funds. They contacted him last week, but it is going to take a lot of money to get our jail up and running for ICE detainees. We would be a 30 day housing contract, but it's not just housing but also transportation. He went over the specific requirements for vehicles and stated it would cost \$12,500.00 for each vehicle and would have to have two. He also stated we would need 14 additional

staff not including kitchen staff and an area setup for detainees to talk to their legal advisors. Sheriff Russell Thornton stated he has been talking with Dickinson County and being available to surrounding counties in an emergency situation. He has also looked into housing juveniles, but the jail is not equipped for juveniles. We would still have to be able to house adults and there are lots of rules when housing juveniles and adults because have to be kept separate.

9. Emergency Management New Hire Request

Marie Ballou, Emergency Management Director, requested to hire a replacement for the Emergency Management position. She stated it is important to train someone to take over the position as she will be retiring at the end of the year. She stated she has already budgeted for this employee. Commissioner Grund asked about training someone for a full year. Marie Ballou stated the Emergency Management Plan is up to renew in 2026, there are two open FEMA requests with another one that just opened. She stated Emergency Management coordinates all of the FEMA grants. She also stated there are trainings and certifications that have to be completed. Part of the requirement is to be a certified Kansas Emergency Manager within two years and this requires several trainings. Commissioner Grund asked if it was just Marie in the office. Marie Ballou stated yes, Keith Coleman, Facilities Director, covers when she is not here and that is part of his salary. Commissioner Grund stated she would like to see a monthly calendar of trainings and where they land along with grants and monthly tasks. Maire Ballou stated Ottawa County will host a lithium battery training on April 19th. Brandon Sauers, Noxious Weed Supervisor, proposed combining the Emergency Management department and his position. He stated this is done in Jewell County. He stated a lot of counties combine the noxious weed department because his job responsibilities are contingent on weather. He also stated he has some of the certifications required for the position because he has had an interest in Emergency Management and has considered doing it in the past. He feels it would be a benefit to the county as far as cost savings and not paying benefits for an additional employee. Marie Ballou stated she doesn't agree with combining the departments. She also discussed different aspects of the position including burn permits, trainings, employee ID's and new addressing, she is also the safety officer for the county. Commissioner Morris stated he wants to give the best services, but we may have an opportunity to look into saving money. He stated he would speak with Jewell County.

10. Township Appointments

Tammi Cox, County Clerk, presented the following Township appointments: Sharon Bacon – Concord Township Treasurer; Jim Struble – Concord Township Trustee; Janet VanMeter – Fountain Township Trustee; Bruce Crouse – Richland Township Trustee; Greg Jackson - Richland Township Treasurer.

MOTION – To appoint Sharon Bacon as Treasurer of Concord Township

MOTION BY– Commissioner Morris

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Grund

MOTION PASSED 2-0

MOTION – To appoint Jim Struble as Trustee of Concord Township

MOTION BY– Commissioner Morris

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Grund

MOTION PASSED 2-0

MOTION – To appoint Janet VanMeter as Trustee of Fountain Township

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 2-0

MOTION – To appoint Bruce Crouse as Trustee of Richland Township

MOTION BY– Commissioner Morris

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Grund

MOTION PASSED 2-0

MOTION – To appoint Greg Jackson as Treasurer of Richland Township

MOTION BY– Commissioner Morris

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Grund

MOTION PASSED 2-0

11. Transient Guest Tax and Liquor Tax Discussion

Jeff Ebel, County Attorney, discussed the transient guest tax and liquor tax. He stated the county can charge a transient guest tax, they just have to determine the rate. The Department of Revenue will contact businesses regarding the change. He stated in order to implement a transient guest tax the Commission would need to pass a charter resolution and allow for an appeal period. The Charter Ordinance would be sent to the Department of Revenue for approval. He stated the liquor tax is already in place and explained the different types of liquor taxes and how they are distributed. He stated 2% is the minimum transient guest tax, but other cities and counties charge on average between 5-10%. It was the consensus of the Commission to have Jeff Ebel draft a resolution to bring before the Commission to discuss the percentage. Commissioner Morris stated he will follow up with the appraiser's office for an updated list of businesses that would be affected by a transient guest tax.

12. Clerk/HR/Payroll/IT Reorganization

Tammi Cox, County Clerk, presented a reorganization of office. The reorganization would keep HR under the Clerk's Department, Payroll with the Treasurer's Office, and IT with the Register of Deeds. She reviewed the current HR budget and stated she could save approximately \$10,000.00 by not using all of the salary fund and other funds such as supplies. This would be absorbed from the other offices. She presented hiring an HR clerk for \$16.00 per hour, receiving \$10,000.00 per year for supervising/filling in for HR, and \$12,000.00 per year for the Treasurer for taking over payroll. She also discussed the role of IT moving to the Register of Deeds office. This position would be in charge of the IT contracts, paper ordering, and keeping the website up to date. She presented the computer budget and the savings. The IT position would pay \$2,400.00 per year. All salaries would be retroactive from December 25, 2024. Commissioner Grund asked if payroll in the Treasurer's office is sustainable. JoDee Copple stated yes, she has done payroll in the past. It was the consensus of the Commission to follow all staff recommendations.

13. Executive Session – Non-Elected Personnel

MOTION – To move to executive session under the Non-Elected Personnel exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act to the discuss non-elected personnel for 10 minutes to return at 1:18 p.m. to the Commissioner's Room with Tammi Cox, County Clerk

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 2-0

No action taken

14. Resolution 25-03 Compensation for Employees

Tammi Cox, County Clerk, presented Resolution 25-03 Compensation for Employees. This resolution reflects the changes made earlier in the meeting.

MOTION – To approve Resolution 25-03 as presented

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 2-0

15. Resolution 25-04 2025 Commission Meeting Dates

Tammi Cox, County Clerk, presented Resolution 25-04 2025 Commission Meeting Dates. This resolution sets the dates for all of the 2025 Commission Meetings, but allows for changes by the Chair.

MOTION – To approve Resolution 25-04 as presented

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 2-0

16. Approval of Accounts Payable, Correction Orders, and Commission Minutes

MOTION – To approve accounts payable for \$96,559.75

MOTION BY– Commissioner Morris

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Grund

MOTION PASSED 2-0

MOTION – To approve correction orders

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 2-0

MOTION – To approve the minutes of January 21, 2025

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 2-0

17. Envisioning Session

The Commission discussed the updated envisioning session. It was the consensus to change the goals to one year, one to four years, and four to ten year goals. Commissioner Morris stated he will ask Choose Ottawa County to talk to the Commission about economic development. They also discussed the department head meeting. Commissioner Grund believes salaries are low and would like to see employees choose what benefits are important to them. The Commission also discussed different ideas for the museum.

18. Recess

MOTION – To recess for 15 minutes to meet at the Blue Store for a tour

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 2-0

19. Blue Store Tour

Keith Coleman, Facilities Director, gave a tour of the Blue Store for the Commission to review the state of the building.

20. Adjournment

MOTION – To adjourn the meeting at 4:10 p.m.

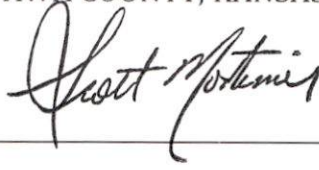
MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

ADOPTED this ___ day of ___ 2025.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF OTTAWA COUNTY, KANSAS



Scott Mortimer, Chairman



Carla Grund, Member



Duane Morris, Member

ATTEST:



Tammi Cox, County Clerk

