
OTTAWA COUNTY, KANSAS

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S MINUTES

FEBRUARY 03, 2025

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., followed by the flag salute.

Commissioner Morris led the group in opening prayer.

2. Commission Agenda

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

3. North Central Regional Planning Commission

Commissioner Morris discussed the meeting he attended with the North Central Regional Planning Commission. He stated it is worthwhile and would like to see the County recoup the costs we pay in dues by utilizing their programs.

4. Miltonvale EMS Update

Karl Leech, Minneapolis EMS Director, stated the Miltonvale EMS will be shutting down in the near future. They have informed the surrounding areas. They have not been able to cover calls and satisfy the state requirements. He stated there is a meeting with the other EMS agencies tomorrow to discuss boundary lines. Commissioner Grund asked to attend the meeting since Miltonvale EMS provides services for two townships in her district.

5. Transient Guest Tax Discussion

Jeff Ebel, County Attorney discussed the transient guest tax. He stated the next step is to decide on a percentage. Ebel gave examples of surrounding counties with the range being 2-7%, with the majority being 5%. He stated the county will collect 98% of the tax, the state keeps 2%. Once the Commission determines the tax rate, he will prepare a charter resolution.

MOTION – To collect a 5% transient guest tax for Ottawa County

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

6. IT Discussion

Shelby Walker, Register of Deeds, discussed updating the website. She asked about phone numbers and photos of the Commissioners. She also asked about expectations for the role. Walker also stated LockIt has recommended a computer use policy.

7. High Plains Resources

Chris Smith, Public Works Director; Joe Mullens, Assistant Public Works Director, and Commissioner Grund met with representatives from five townships in District #1 to discuss the geophysical survey requested by High Plains Resources. Smith stated the township representatives had mixed feelings. Smith stated he has not been able to contact anyone from High Plains Resources to get information on what happens next. Based on Commissioners discussion with the landowners, surveyors came into Ottawa County when previously surveying adjacent counties prior to contacting Smith. Smith stated he will try to discuss this with Jimmy Jeffcoat, the contractor for High Plains Resources, and try to get ahold of High Plains Resources. He also stated he will review the road permit to make sure it provides reimbursement for damage to roadways.

8. Sheriff's Department Uniform Allocation

Sheriff Russell Thornton discussed uniform allocation for Sheriff's deputies. Currently they receive \$120.00 at the beginning of each year for boots or other equipment. He is proposing matching the uniform allocation with the Road & Bridge Department and increasing it to \$250.00. This would also include correction officers since they are now boots on the ground. Sheriff Thornton stated they will provide their receipts to the Sheriff, and he will track the allocations. He stated this allocation would be used for boots, vests, and other equipment. Commissioner Grund asked if he had enough money in his 2025 budget for this increase. Sheriff Thornton stated yes.

MOTION – To increase the annual uniform allocation from \$120.00 to \$250.00 for deputies and corrections officers to begin in 2025.

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

9. Jail Update

Sheriff Russell Thornton presented a spreadsheet outlining the costs of housing ICE detainees. It showed an approximate cost of almost half a million dollars to do the required building upgrades, increased staffing, vans, and locksmiths. The locksmith is located out of Texas. Commissioner Mortimer asked if there is a guarantee that we will be able to recoup those costs once we start receiving the detainees from ICE. Sheriff Thornton stated there is no guarantee, but it will be money coming in. He stated as long as the facilities are in compliance with inspections held, there are inspections once or twice a month, we could house the detainees. Commissioner Grund asked if we have staff available. Sheriff Thornton stated not right now, it would take at least two months to get four officers fully staffed

and trained. The spreadsheet does not include benefits for new employees or the cost of current staff that may be utilized.

10. 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 9:28 a.m. to the Commissioner’s Room with Sheriff Russell Thornton and Undersheriff Jerry Ziolkowski.

MOTION BY– Commissioner Mortimer

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Grund

MOTION PASSED 3-0

MOTION – To extend the Executive Session for five minutes and reconvene at 9:34 a.m.

MOTION BY– Commissioner Mortimer

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Grund

MOTION PASSED 3-0

No action taken

11. Proposal to Combine Noxious Weed and Emergency Management

Brandon Sauers, Noxious Weed Supervisor, proposed integrating the Noxious Weed Department with Emergency Management. He provided a list of benefits and stated he believes it would benefit the county to consider this proposal. Commissioner Mortimer stated there are a lot of things to consider. Commissioner Morris stated other counties other than Jewell have combined Noxious Weed with other departments, not necessarily Emergency Management. Commissioner Mortimer stated they would need to talk with the Department Head Chris Smith. Commissioner Mortimer stated he appreciated the information presented and wants to do whatever is best for the county. Marie Ballou, Emergency Management Director, then stated she is no longer considering retiring and is no longer looking to hire anyone for her office.

12. Accounts Payable and Payroll Discussion

Commissioner Grund asked about the process of notifying the Commission of changes in payroll. JoDee Cople, County Treasurer, stated the department heads come before the Commission to request any payroll changes. She stated elected officials usually come before the Commission prior to initiating pay raises as well. Commissioner Grund discussed the opportunity of utilizing open positions in multiple ways, such as grant writing or cross of job responsibilities. Commissioner Grund stated benefits were 51% of total payroll costs in January.

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

MOTION – To approve accounts payable for \$68,735.90

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

MOTION – To approve payroll ending January 24, 2025

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

MOTION – To approve the minutes of January 27, 2025

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

14. North Central Regional Planning Commission Board

MOTION – To approve Commissioner Morris to replace Commissioner Mortimer on the North Central Regional Planning Commission board

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Mortimer

MOTION PASSED 3-0

15. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Grund read an email she sent to Scot Loyd with Loyd Group, LLC CPAs about doing the County budget in house. Commissioner Grund discussed the Culver Fire Department and asked Commissioner Morris if he would reach out. Commissioner Morris stated he would reach out and see if there was anything to help with.

16. Adjournment

MOTION – To adjourn the meeting at 12:01 p.m.


MOTION BY– Commissioner Morris

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Mortimer

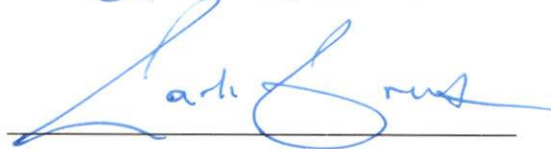
MOTION PASSED 3-0

ADOPTED this 10 day of Feb 2025.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF OTTAWA COUNTY, KANSAS



Scott Mortimer, Chairman



Carla Grund, Member



Duane Morris, Member

ATTEST:



Tammi Cox, County Clerk

