
OTTAWA COUNTY, KANSAS

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S MINUTES

FEBRUARY 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. Public Forum

Dwayne Brown discussed the solid waste assessment. Tammi Cox, County Clerk, stated he does have a solid waste exemption form currently in process.

3. Blue Store Discussion

Dr. Curtis Stevens, USD 239 Superintendent, discussed the Blue Store. He stated when kids have worked in something, they have an investment into that project. He proposed a collaboration between the county, school board, Ottawa County Community Foundation and museum board to have students work on small projects inside the John Henry building. Stevens stated he hopes this helps kids learn about the past and can connect with the future. He stated he hopes that by starting with a small project, it can open up grant funding to help finance more and shared future ideas to utilize the building for both the community and school. Commissioner Mortimer stated the Wedel's are on board and wants to keep them involved. Stevens stated he will discuss it with the school board. Commissioner Grund stated she loves the student involvement concept. Stevens stated this would be a neutral space as a catalyst to promote the county. He stated he is working on a project with the museum to have students scan in old newspapers. He stated he will present a Memorandum of Understanding draft to the school board and bring it back to the Commission for review. He stated hopefully next year we can have the pieces set up to do some projects. Stevens also stated the school is hosting a twirling competition on March 7th that will bring over 200 families.

4. Sheriff Vehicle Contract

Sheriff Russell Thornton presented a vehicle contract with Unified Fleet Services. He stated the vehicles they currently own have a three-year, 75,000 warranty with the oldest vehicle being a 2021. He stated the vehicles we have now are averaging 30,000 miles per year to cover the roughly 750 square miles of the county. Sheriff Thornton stated in the past they have tried to purchase two vehicles a year. He stated with this contract they would replace vehicles every three years with any equity going back to pay for

the next lease. He reviewed the different costs for types of vehicles. The price includes upfitting the vehicles. For Chevy Silverado's it would be \$1,580.00 per month and Chevy Tahoe's \$1,678.00 per month. He stated for five Tahoe's and one Silverado it would be \$119,640.00 a year. He stated he budgeted \$150,000.00. He stated if we replace two vehicles next year, it would be \$140,000.00. Commissioner Grund asked about maintenance costs. Sheriff Thornton noted the maintenance such as tires and oil changes would still be paid for by the county. He also stated there is no mileage cap on the warranty. Commissioner Mortimer asked about piggybacking with the city to get a cheaper rate. Sheriff Thornton stated he has been talking with the Minneapolis Police Chief. He also discussed switching from Omnigo software that is used for records, the jail and 911 system. He stated the bill is currently \$28,822.77 and is going up. He stated the current system also does not work well with the County Attorney's system. He stated he has been looking into Enterpol that is used in 70% of counties and cities in the State of Kansas and it matches with the County Attorney's software. The cost will be \$9,545.00 a year after the first year with installation costs of \$48,975.00. Sheriff Thornton also stated he will swear in two new deputies and the undersheriff next week.

5. Department Head Update

The following department heads/elected officials gave an update to the Commission – Jeff Ebel, County Attorney; Keith Coleman, Facilities Director; Jason Gipson, Emergency Management Director; Chris Smith, Public Works Director; Truette McQueen, County Appraiser; Shelby Walker, Register of Deeds; Sara Hodges, Health Department Director; and Tammi Cox, County Clerk.

6. Solid Waste Discussion

Chris Smith, Public Works Director, reminded the Commission about the solid waste meeting tonight. Commissioner Grund stated she sent him a revised schedule of costs.

7. Adjournment of Board of County Commissioners

MOTION – To adjourn the meeting at 10:09 a.m.

MOTION BY– Commissioner Mortimer

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

8. Convene as Board of Health

MOTION – To convene as the Board of Health

MOTION BY– Commissioner Mortimer

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

MOTION PASSED 3-0

9. Appointment of Health Positions

Sara Hodges, Health Department Director, presented a list of appointments that include: Ottawa County Health Officer – Trisha Smith; Ottawa County Medical Consultant – Dr. Peter Meier; Ottawa County

Pharmacy Consultant – Melanie Kuder; Ottawa County Council on Aging Representatives – George Powell and Jeri VanMeter (Ada Senior Center), Saundra Long and Judith Swaggerty (Bennington Senior Center), Susan Main (Delphos Senior Center), Doug Plummer and Sheila Reed (Golden Wheel Senior Center), Al Slater and Joan Sullivan (Niles Senior Center).

MOTION – To appoint Trisha Smith as Ottawa County Health Officer, Dr. Peter Meier as Ottawa County Medical Consultant, and Melanie Kuder as Ottawa County Pharmacy Consultant.

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

MOTION – To appoint George Powell and Jeri VanMeter (Ada Senior Center), Saundra Long and Judith Swaggerty (Bennington Senior Center), Susan Main (Delphos Senior Center), Doug Plummer and Sheila Reed (Golden Wheel Senior Center), Al Slater and Joan Sullivan (Niles Senior Center) to the Ottawa County Council on Aging.

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

MOTION – To appoint Sara Hodges as the Ottawa County Health Department Director

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

10. Health Department Update

Sara Hodges, Health Department Director, stated she is working on grant applications and discussed the state formula and the five-year strategic plan. She also asked the board how often they want to meet. It was the consensus of the Board to meet again in September. Hodges also asked the Commission to think about bringing other members onto the Board of Health.

11. Adjournment of Board of Health

MOTION – To adjourn the Board of Health at 10:30 a.m.

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

12. Reconvene as Board of County Commissioners

MOTION – To convene the County Commission meeting at 10:30 a.m.

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

13. Golden Wheel Discussion

Commissioner Grund asked about the cook at the Golden Wheel. She stated they have not had one for three weeks and was concerned that the North Central Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging is not actively searching for a replacement. Sara Hodges, Health Department Director, informed the Commission that the Golden Wheel hosts the food program, but it is run by the North Central Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging. They hire the cook and manager at the Golden Wheel and the staff in Bennington. Hodges stated the wages are really low and Golden Wheel subsidizes the pay. Commissioner Mortimer asked what they needed to do, we cannot have people go without food. Commissioner Grund stated there are two major components in Services for Aging, those being transportation and meals. It was the consensus to discuss this next week.

14. 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 10:50 a.m. to the Commissioner’s Room with Sara Hodges, Health Department Director and Tammi Cox, County Clerk.

MOTION BY– Commissioner Grund
SECONDED BY – Commissioner Mortimer
MOTION PASSED 3-0

No action taken

15. Bus Driver Vacancies

Commissioner Grund asked about hiring drivers and whether they needed a CDL. Sara Hodges, Health Department Director, stated they are looking and are strapped for drivers, noting they do not need a CDL. Tammi Cox, County Clerk, stated she has spoken to Hodges about hiring incentives. Commissioner Morris asked about 81 Connections. Hodges stated its not always a good match for everyone.

16. HAVA Grant

Tammi Cox, County Clerk, presented a HAVA grant that is being offered. She stated the grant will reimburse costs at 90%. She stated she is submitting the grant for updated cameras and building an enclosed space in her vault to secure election equipment. The total cost for the projects is \$18,220.93. If approved, the grant would cover \$16,398.84 and the cost to the county would be \$1,822.09. Cox stated Keith Coleman, Facilities Director, helped to identify ways to enhance security, organized the bids, and worked with potential vendors.

MOTION – Move to approve the acceptance of paying for improvements made through the HAVA grant knowing it will be reimbursed at 90%.

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

17. Upcoming Meetings Review

Tammi Cox, County Clerk, reviewed all the upcoming meetings for the Commission. The meetings includes: Solid Waste (February 2nd), NCKLEPG (February 4th), No Commission Meeting (February 16th), Township Meeting (February 19th), Ballfields/Fairgrounds (March 9th), Regional Commission Meeting (April 8th) and Ottawa County Health Center Board meeting (April 20th).

18. Approval of Accounts Payable, Commission Minutes and Payroll

MOTION – To approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$53,508.15

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

MOTION – To approve the minutes for January 26th as presented

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

MOTION – To approve payroll as presented

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

19. Clerk Comments

Tammi Cox, County Clerk, shared some feedback she received from the meetings being on You Tube and asked the Commission if they wanted to continue with their membership with the North Central Regional Planning Commission. It was the consensus of the Commission to pay for membership with the North Central Regional Planning Commission.

20. Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Grund stated as she was working on the Rural Champions grant, she has learned a lot about childcare needs in Ottawa County. She learned this grant is not a county grant, but is for an individual, a rural champion within our community. She discussed this with Lisa Newman, K-State Extension Office, and Jeff and Erica Shamburg, Bennington Family Center. The Bennington Family Center plans to discuss it at their board meeting. Commissioner Grund also reminded the Commission

about the K-State Extension Office open house on Tuesday from 3-6 p.m. Commissioner Mortimer stated he will be attending the NCKLEPG meeting in Smith Center. Commissioner Morris stated he is getting traction about small modular nuclear reactors and discussed data centers.

21. Adjournment

MOTION – To adjourn the meeting at 11:27 a.m.

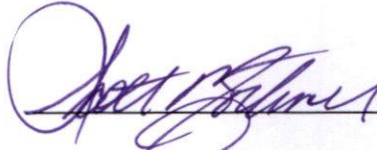
MOTION BY– Commissioner Mortimer

SECONDED BY – Commissioner Morris

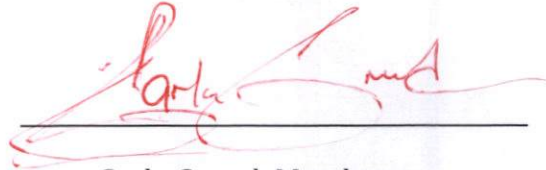
MOTION PASSED 3-0

ADOPTED this 9th 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

