

Bids

Continued from Page 1A

Academic Support Foundation because everyone involved wants funds to support the schools. It is also a goal to have the foundation not be board-run but be a community organization that supports the schools. Additionally, the group working on forming the foundation has reached out to the Eudora Schools foundation, which is very successful, and received a reply from the foundation president within hours, so they are setting up a zoom meeting with the Eudora foundation to talk to them about items such as how they got their foundation set up and what some of their successes have been. Patron Jay Hale apologized for his representation of the supreme court case regarding students leaving school for religious

programs at the Feb. 10 board meeting. He clarified that it was not an obligation of the school but more of a permission to the school to dismiss kids for religious programming. The board accepted, with regret, the retirement request of Julie Tempelmeyer as BES librarian at the end of the 2024-25 school year. At the end of the school year, Tempelmeyer will have taught for 26 years, 21 of which will have been with Burlington USD 244. The board held a 30-minute executive session to discuss non-elected personnel related to a complaint exception under KOMA with the board, Marshall, Chris Neff, Sarah Faircloth, Rustin Kimmell and Terelle Mock present. A second 10-minute executive session was held for consultation with an attorney and discussion deemed privileged by the attorney-client relationship. Upon return to open session, the

board unanimously approved a motion to deny an appeal as part of policy KN. Policy KN is the policy regarding complaints. In other personnel items, new hires included Sage Kuhlmann as a BMS fifth-grade teacher, Maise Totty as a BES pre-K teacher and Danyell Ziegler as a BHS special education teacher, all effective for the 2025-26 school year, Taylor Wilson as a BHS assistant track coach for the 2024-25 season, Jean Henson as a BMS custodian effective March 25, Kim Bashaw as a LeRoy-Gridley USD 245 paraprofessional effective March 14, Andrew Laird as a BHS paraprofessional and Stephanie Stone as a Lebo-Waverly USD 243 paraprofessional, both effective March 1. Transfers included Amy Birk from BES early childhood special education (ECSE) to CCSEC itinerant ECSE effective, Amy Ditto from BES second-grade teacher to BES

kindergarten teacher, Valencia Higgins from BMS fifth-grade teacher to BES second-grade teacher and Damon Schmidt from BMS fifth-grade teacher to BMS eighth-grade teacher, all effective for the 2025-26 school year, Alice Buckridge from BELC aide to BELC instructor effective March 3, Kara Bostic from BMS custodian to BHS secretary effective Feb. 24. Resignations included Jace Harsch as BHS concessions manager and Jordyn Saulsberry as a BMS eighth-grade teacher, both effective at the end of the 2024-25 school year, Julie McCann as a Lebo-Waverly USD 243 paraprofessional effective March 21, James Siebuhr as a BHS custodian effective March 14, Cierra Harrison as a BHS assistant track coach effective Feb. 21, Sherrie Aiello as a Lebo-Waverly USD 243 paraprofessional effective Feb. 16 and Tremaine Boyle as a district bus driver effective Jan. 24.

The board held one five-minute executive session to discuss certified contracts pursuant to the exception for employer-employee negotiations under KOMA with the board, Marshall and Graf present. No action was taken upon return to open session. In other action, the board approved: * A bid for upgrades for network switches and access points for BHS, BMS and BES in the amount of \$69,916.36 from Network Computer Solutions, contingent upon approval of E-Rate funding. Once approved, the E-Rate funding will cover \$48,941.45, and the district will pay \$20,974.91, which will come from the summer technology improvement budget. * The KASB membership renewal in the amount of \$12,696.40. This amount includes the annual membership dues totaling \$10,946.40 (up \$946.21 from last year) and a KASB season pass in the amount

of \$1,750. The season pass gives the board and staff unlimited registrations for KASB workshops, not including the annual convention, for the 2025-26 school year. Registration for a full-day seminar is typically \$150. * The KASB legal assistant fund renewal in the amount of \$2,750. * Donations in the amount of \$1,200 from an anonymous donor for National Honor Society (Pennies for Parks), \$300 from the Floyd Lewis Foundation for the BMS civics class for community service, Tegaderm transparent film dressing valued at \$63.75 from Terranda Grimm for the nurse's office and, for the Wildcat Trap Club, \$100 from Burlington Veterinary Center, \$100 from Fittings Export, \$500 from Jade Seed, trap club supplies valued at approximately \$100 from Jade Seed and \$250 from the Lonny Jasper Memorial.

Health

Continued from Page 1A

improvements and cost-saving measures are ongoing, including reducing reliance on costly contract labor, improving billing efficiency, evaluating service agreements for cost savings, and assessing profitability of hospital services. The Meadows assisted living facility is at full capacity and after a rate adjustment in January is profitable. Obstetrics (OB) had losses in excess of \$1 million in 2024. Declining births (68 in 2024) prompted a hospital board discussion about discontinuing obstetrics in the future. County support has a role in the hospital's sustainability. Augustyn said hospital leadership remains dedicated to maintaining essential health care services while addressing financial challenges.

ers to improve emergency response capabilities in Coffey County. Earlier, commissioners purchased a tract outside of Gridley and leased a tract outside of Lebo, as locations for the other two towers. Emergency Management Director Amber Presley said the National Weather Service (NWS) canceled the statewide tornado drill due to high winds and adverse weather. The NWS will present a public weather talk 7 p.m. Thursday, March 20, at the 4-H Building in Kelley Park. NWS also offers a virtual presentation. Emergency Management is preparing for a Wolf Creek pre-exercise on April 9 and evaluated exercise on June 3.

Health Department

Health Administrator Amilia Marchant said construction is nearly completed in the health department. A few minor items need to be completed. A community baby shower is planned 5 to 7 p.m. April 24 for expecting parents and caregivers of infants (0-18 months). Commissioners authorized the chairman to sign the SFY2026 Aid-To-Local Grant Signature page to secure Kansas Department

ment of Health and Environment (KDHE) funding for community health and emergency services. The application seeks a total of \$70,699.06 in funding broken down as follows: Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP), \$24,736.40; Maternal Child Health (MCH), \$10,501.03; Immunization Action Plan (IAP), \$3,761; State Formula, \$19,284.05; Family Planning, \$12,416.58.

Public Hearing

A public hearing was held at 10 a.m. to discuss the designation of certain roads as minimum maintenance roads. Road and Bridge Superintendent Ryan Durst said maintenance levels will remain unchanged on the proposed 13 minimum maintenance roads; only signage will be added. Wayne Harsch, Kevin Harsch, Luke Harsch and Robert Bilby attended the hearing and offered comments regarding one of the proposed roads, Oxen Road, between 25th and 26th roads. The road is believed to have originally been constructed with federal funds, which would prohibit the road from being designated minimum maintenance. Durst was not aware of any record

of federal funding for that section of road. He agreed further research was needed. Kevin Harsch suggested two minor improvements – clearing ditches to prevent pooling and mud holes, and the possible installation of a culvert for water crossing. Following the discussion, commissioners approved revising Resolution No. 2025-944 by removing Oxen Road, between 25th and 26th roads from the list of proposed minimum maintenance roads. They later adopted Resolution No. 2024-944, declaring certain roads or parts of roads located with the northeast quarter of Coffey County as minimum maintenance roads. The resolution appeared in the March 13 edition of The Republican.

Highway Department

Road and Bridge Superintendent Ryan Durst presented a contract between K Browning Engineering, LLC and the Coffey County Highway Department for ongoing engineering support, which commissioners approved. The contract is for up to 20 hours per week. Durst first talked about engineering support about a month ago. Commissioners also authorized the purchase of 15 and 25 percent, and unseasonably warm temperatures reaching 73 degrees. Kansas Division of Emergency Management officials monitored the situation as wildfires burned across multiple counties. Coffey County remained under a burn ban Monday and Tuesday as a precaution.

cold mix patching materials for 2025, ensuring road maintenance and repairs continue smoothly. Ergon Asphalt and Emulsions, Inc. was awarded the contract for CHFRS-2P and SS-1H, while Coastal Energy Corporation secured the bid for CQS-1F, as per the March 5 bid tabulation.

Executive Sessions

Commissioners entered into three executive sessions, all with Bowie: ➤ 15 minutes to discuss a legal document related to a claim settlement. ➤ 15 minutes with Planning and Zoning Administrator Heidi Harris regarding a contract for services with Marvin Planning Consultants. ➤ 10 minutes to discuss preliminary negotiations concerning the Economic Development Director position.

The only action taken upon return to open session was to approve, on a 4-1 vote, signing a release of all claims related to Bill Kneisley. Barker opposed.

Miscellaneous

The board passed Resolution No. 751-C, which cancels outstanding county checks issued before January 1, 2023, and returning the funds to the county treasury. Commissioners authorized the release of four real estate mortgage releases, as recommended by the Coffey County Housing Authority: for Logan, Raymond, and Melanie Beyer (Gridley); Heather Trammell (Burlington); Joshua and Tabitha Mason (Burlington); and Dorilee Conway and Anita Cummings (Burlington). The releases acknowledge full repayment of debts.

Fire

Continued from Page 1A

of Mission Health Communities. Despite mutual aid from nearby departments, the nursing home could not be saved. The fire spread quickly due to high winds, dry conditions, and intense heat. "This is a devastating loss for our community," Woodson County Emergency Management Director Johnny Atkin IV said. "Our hearts go out to the residents, staff, and their families." Firefighters continued working into Saturday to fully contain the fire. A 13-member Johnson County Task Force arrived Saturday night to provide relief, bringing equipment from Olathe, Topeka, and

other northeast Kansas departments. The Yates Center community rallied in support of first responders, donating food, water, and supplies. St. Joseph Catholic Church, G&W Foods, and Vaqueros Mexican Restaurant were among local businesses providing meals and assistance. "This fire has taken a toll on our community, but the outpouring of support has been incredible," said Atkin. "We may be united by grief right now, but love for our neighbors and town will help us move forward."

Coffey County Fire Response

Coffey County Fire Chief Administrator Randall Brown said in response to the Gridley fire, Coffey County deployed firefighting units from Gridley,

LeRoy, Burlington, and Jacobs Creek, with the county's highway department providing an 8,000-gallon water tanker. Brown did not immediately know the extent of the burned acreage. Early Friday evening Coffey County firefighters from Lebo assisted in Lyon County, where a wildfire forced the Kansas Department of Transportation to shut down a six-mile stretch of Interstate 35 near Emporia due to heavy smoke. The highway was later reopened.

Continued Fire Danger

The National Weather Service issued a Red Flag Warning Friday morning for Coffey County and surrounding areas, warning of high fire risk due to winds up to 70 mph, low humidity levels between

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