

# Personnel, equipment highlight county commission meeting

BURLINGTON — Action taken by the Coffey County Commission on Monday, March 17, included personnel hires, equipment changes and disaster relief. Present for the meeting were Commissioners Wayde Thomsen, chairman, Mark Petterson, Todd Barker, and Steve McCurry were present, along with County Clerk Angie Kirchner and County Counselor Wade Bowie II. Commissioner Tom Hugunin was absent.

Cole Stockton, of River City Construction, gave a

brief update concerning the law enforcement center construction. Level two is nearing completion with installation of carpet, vinyl tile and door hardware and dropping ceiling tiles. Level one work includes painting offices, progress in the kitchen and miscellaneous work. The construction trailer should be removed later this week and curb and gutter work should start next week.

**Personnel Updates**

Commissioners approved hiring two indi-

viduals as summer help for the Road and Bridge Department. Danny Frye and Tim Austin will work as heavy equipment operators, at \$21.68 per hour, not to exceed 1,000 hours.

Jared Shepard, a heavy equipment operator in the highway department, will receive a step increase from \$21.28 to \$21.68 per hour.

In the sheriff's office, Dalton Rush was hired as a jailer at \$19.73 per hour and Kelly Baker was hired as a dispatcher at \$20.89 per hour.

**Highway Department**

Commissioners authorized soliciting bids for a compact track loader.

They approved the purchase of a 2024 John Deere 524P Wheel Loader for \$183,750, from Murphy Tractor & Equipment, Topeka, utilizing government purchasing pricing. Two older Caterpillar wheel loaders - a 1991 Caterpillar 966F and a 1981 Caterpillar 950B - were deemed no longer useful and will be traded in with a \$27,000 and \$17,000 value, respectively. The trade value is reflected

in the price.

Commissioners approved advertising to hire a mechanic to fill a vacancy.

**Disaster Relief**

Tax abatements were granted to two property owners whose homes were destroyed by fire in 2023, per state statute. Robert and Beverly Foster received \$627.70 in relief for their home at 115 N. Sixth St., New Strawn. Thomas and Michelle Hugunin received \$705.44 for their home at 590 16th Rd, Burlington.

sioners:

- > Approved a tax abatement of \$2,553.82.
- > Approved the 2025 Management Plan for noxious weeds on county and state-owned rights of way and to assist land owners in their weed control efforts as well as other county departments and agencies.
- > Signed the Annual Noxious Weed Eradication Progress Report 2024.
- > Entered into a 15-minute executive session with Bowie to discuss matters deemed privileged in the attorney-client relationship, concerning a legal update with a proposed agreement regarding the former Marie Belle's building.

**Other Business**

In other action, commis-

## Humanities Kansas seeks board members

Humanities Kansas is seeking nominations to fill vacancies on its 21-member Board of Directors.

"I joined the board of Humanities Kansas to support the great work of the HK staff and their commitment to ensuring Kansans enjoy access to the humanities," said Brad Allen, chair of the board of directors. "As a native Kansan, I have learned so much more

about my state ... HK engages Kansans with stories and ideas and helps improve the quality of life in communities."

Members serve for a three-year term. Candidates must live in Kansas. Nominations are due April 4 and can be submitted through HK's website. To nominate yourself or another candidate, visit [humanitieskansas.org/about](http://humanitieskansas.org/about).

# Lawmakers push forward on judicial elections, Medicare oversight

Week 10 was the conclusion of non-exempt committees meeting to hold hearings and work bills, as well as the non-exempt bills to be considered in either chamber. Week 11 will be packed with conference committee meetings, where the committee chair, vice chair, and ranking member from each chamber's respective committee, where the bill/resolution was "worked", will negotiate the differences between the Senate and House versions of the bill or resolution. There are a lot of important bills/resolutions that will be worked through this process, including taxes. I'll update you next week on the outcome of those committees, but in the meantime, I'll brief a few



**Brad Barrett**  
State Representative  
76th District

bills/resolutions that had action this past week.

**HR 6016 – Denouncing the Satanic “Black Mass”:** On a vote of 101/15, the Kansas House of Representatives passed House Resolution 6016, which condemned the planned satanic “black mass” at the state capitol. This event is an act of anti-Catholic bigotry and blasphemy against the Christian faith. In addition to this resolution, a new policy now requires legislative or gubernatorial sponsorship for Capitol events, ensuring public spaces uphold respect and decency.

**SCR 1611 – Judicial Selection:** In August 2026, Kansas voters will have the opportunity to decide whether to directly elect Kansas State Supreme Court Justices or maintain the current system, which relies on a commission where five out of the nine members are attorneys elected only by other attorneys. The legislature ap-

proved this constitutional resolution to be placed on the ballot following a two-thirds majority vote in both chambers. I supported this resolution because I believe that the citizens of Kansas should have a voice in selecting who serves as our Supreme Court Justices, just like citizens in 22 other states.

**SB 29 – Public Health Orders:** SB 29 limits the power of state and local health officials to unilaterally ban public gatherings. It ensures public health measures are based on evidence, subject to legal review, and respect constitutional rights, preventing unchecked government overreach.

**HB 2402 – Blue Ribbon Commission on Higher Education:** On a vote of 98/24 the Kansas House approved HB2402, which creates a new commission that will review Kansas' higher education system, focusing on governance, funding, accessibility, and affordability. With a di-

verse membership, it aims to improve student outcomes and strengthen the state's workforce.

**HCR 5013 – Medicare Consumer Protection:** The Kansas House passed HCR 5013, a resolution urging the U.S. Congress to allow state oversight of Medicare Advantage plans to protect seniors from deceptive marketing and misinformation. Local control ensures stronger consumer protections and accountability.

**SB 250 – Right to Try Individualized Treatments Act:** The Kansas House approved SB 250, which allows terminally ill Kansans access to personalized, investigational treatments when no other options remain. It removes bureaucratic barriers while maintaining patient protections, reinforcing the right to medical freedom. An amendment was made on the House side, so it will need to go to conference before being sent to the governor.

# Senate passes tax, election, and public safety legislation

(March 21) — It was a difficult week in the legislature. Over 80 bills were worked on the Senate floor. It was intense and made for a long week. There were too many bills to discuss in this update. All the legislation is posted at [www.KSLegislature.gov](http://www.KSLegislature.gov).



**Caryn Tyson**  
State Senator  
12th District

olution (SCR) 1603, 28 to 12 on February 5. So, the Committee voted to put the same language in 1603 into 5011. The Senate then passed 5011 on a bipartisan vote of 30 to 10. I voted Yes.

The Tax Committee also rejected repealing Revenue Neutral notices, but did move forward on a protest petition that would block local governments from increasing their property tax revenues (i.e. taxes). The Senate lowered the threshold to 3% or an inflation index, whichever is lower, plus new construction and voted on bonds. If the local government unit increases property taxes greater than that amount, voters could block the increase by signing a protest petition. Some of the logistics still need to be worked out, but it is being considered. One thing that most of us can agree on is that the current system is taxing people out of their homes and needs attention.

**Slowing State Government Growth** by passing

SB 259, automatic income tax reductions would be set in place based on taxes collected the previous year. For years Kansas taxpayers have been paying more, growing the beast that is big government. SB 259 would trigger a personal income tax cut for the next year when taxes collected are greater than inflation until the personal income tax bracket is 4.5%. Once 4.5% is reached, the trigger would be used to decrease corporate and privilege taxes until comparable reductions are reached. The bill passed 30 to 10. I voted Yes.

**Illegals Voting in Kansas** elections would be exposed if HB 2020 becomes law. It would require the Department of Revenue to notify the Secretary of State of any noncitizens drivers licenses issued. The Secretary would then be required to investigate any names on the noncitizen list with voter registrations and direct county clerks to remove the registered voter from the voter

rolls. The bill passed 32 to 8. I voted Yes.

**Special Elections** that often increase taxes will only be held in April, August, or November if HB 2022 becomes law with the Senate changes. A recent election in Sedgwick County cost taxpayers \$136,000. If it would have been on the August or November ballot, there wouldn't have been an extra expense. I voted yes. It passed 24 to 16.

**Artificial Intelligence** generated visual sexual images of children will be a sex crime if HB 2183 becomes law. It passed the Senate unanimously.

Prayers for those who have lost loved ones. It was a difficult week in the Kansas Senate, as a few senators lost loved ones. It is one of the hardest things we face in life. For all who have lost a loved one, their life was a gift from God and may their memory continue to bless you.

It is an honor and a privilege to serve as your 12th District State Senator.

# Strawn

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that a Third Street property is 99% compliant. A municipal court judge extended a case involving a retaining wall to August, allowing Gary Haehn time to appear before the Board of Zoning Appeals.

**Insurance:** Kimberly Robrahn of TrustPoint Insurance reviewed the city's insurance policy with EMC. The annual premium increased by 8.3% to \$39,450. The council approved the renewal, which covers property, vehicles, liability, cyber threats, workers' comp, and more.

**Training and Staffing:** Maintenance Operator Steven Dwight will attend the Kansas Rural Water Association conference March 25–26 in Wichita. The city will cover regis-

tration, meals, and travel. The city will also advertise for a seasonal employee (up to 30 hours/week at \$15/hour).

**Road Work and Dust Control:** Dwight is preparing for the summer road project and researching the use of magnesium chloride for dust control on Industrial Road. The council approved up to \$2,500 from the special highway fund for dust control if Dwight determines it's effective.

**Emergency Funds Discussion:** Dwight and the council briefly discussed establishing emergency funds, using the water line under the Neosho River as an example. Dwight also asked about maintaining the flagpole area in front of the now-closed Robert Lee's building.

**Water Report:** The Feb. 25 water report showed a 25.41% loss, attributed to a main line break on Jan. 26.

The city pumped 1,021,148 gallons and sold 761,697 gallons across 254 meters, averaging 2,999 gallons per meter.

**Strawnfest:** Planning is underway for Strawnfest, scheduled for June 7. Further discussion is planned for the April meeting.

**Executive Session:** The council entered a 10-minute executive session with Johnson, Dwight, and City Attorney Philip Wright (via phone) for preliminary discussion on acquiring real property. No action was taken.

**City Hall Remodel:** A committee consisting of Christiansen, Baker, Dwight, Johnson, and Taylor will draft a request for proposal (RFP) to proceed with remodeling city hall.

**Council Approvals:**

- Minutes of meetings held Feb. 13, Feb. 20 (special), and Feb. 26 (special)
- Warrants totaling

\$25,824.10 and additional warrants of \$962.47

- February payroll of \$8,710.30
- Auditor representation letter from Jarred, Gilmore & Phillips, P.A.
- Receipt of a \$1,316.17 check from the dissolved Coffey County Chamber of Commerce

**Special Meetings Recap:**

Feb. 20: The council voted to terminate the \$107,702 city hall remodel contract with Truman Builders, giving 14 days' notice.

Feb. 26: The council approved a \$1,300 payment to Wright Tree Service to bore a new water service on Kafir Road.

**Upcoming Meetings:**

The next regular council meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m., Thursday, April 10, at New Strawn City Hall.

A budget workshop will be held at 6 p.m., Wednesday, April 16.

## Join us on Easter Sunday, April 20!

at the 4-H Building at Kelley Park

9 a.m. - Free Breakfast  
10:30 a.m. - Easter Worship Service  
11 a.m. - Children's Church

Easter Egg Hunt will be in Kelly park after services.

**NEW - 927 Sylvan Street, Emporia**  
2 bedroom 1 bath. Central heat and air. Rented for \$850 a month. Renter pays all utilities and maintains the yard. Great turnkey rental property. Renters expressed the desire to stay. **\$93,000**

**NEW - 728 Neosho Street, Emporia** This is an amazing 5 unit apartment building. Each unit features a full kitchen, big living room, a big bedroom and bathroom. Each unit has its own separate door to enter the apartment. This property also features 4 single car garages, each separated with a wall. The landlord pays water, trash, sewer and gas. **\$189,000**

**New - 824 State Street, Emporia at \$113,000**  
Duplex located in a great central area of town. Both units are 2 bedroom and 1 bath units. Net Income is \$1285. The Landlord pays Water, Trash, sewer and gas. The owner is offering \$18,000 allowance to use for basement repairs or other repairs. This property is also being offered in its present condition (As Is) for \$100,000

**117 N. Osage St., New Strawn** Previously used for office space, 5 sectioned offices: open front room; conference room & break room; high speed internet; 3 phase power. **\$129,500**

**1277 Thompson Street** **CONTRACT PENDING** **\$145,000**

**NEW - 520 N Kansas Street - Lebo**  
3 Bedrooms, 1 bath with full unfinished basement with 1 car attached garage on corner lots. The beautiful wood floors recently refinished and dining room off kitchen offers a lot of natural light. This home in Lebo is a **PRICE REDUCED \$189,900**

**NEW - 710 Cottonwood, Emporia** 2 bedroom, 1 bath completely remodeled home with detached garage. **PRICE REDUCED \$86,000**

**NEW - 2606 W Hwy 50, Emporia** Approx 1.7 acres of development land in west Emporia zoned as Commercial. Road frontage and great exposure. **PRICE REDUCED \$480,000**

**Investment Opportunity 716 East 12th Street, Emporia Car Wash** with 5 bays and 51 self-storage units. Easy property to manage with minimal time investment. Check out [www.tri-county-real-estate.com](http://www.tri-county-real-estate.com). for all details. Call Victor to view property and financials. **\$875,000**

**Commercial Listing at 314 Neosho, Emporia** with offices, meeting room, storage and workspace with large overhead doors and 51/2 vacant lots. **PRICE REDUCED \$235,000**

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