

# County commission receives budget proposal

By: Chad Frey  
NEWTON KANSAN

The Harvey County Commission got a first look at a proposed 2026 budget on July 8, a process that started in February. Assistant County Administrator/Director of Finance.

The proposal contains a mill levy increase while making use of increased property evaluations

throughout the county. The commission will hold an all day work session on July 9 to go through the budget in detail and prepare a more finalized proposal. Next week the commission will set a not-to-exceed tax rate and determine if the county will exceed the revenue neutral rate.

Budget adoption, and a budget hearing, are currently planned for Aug. 26.

“We did go through some cost saving measures after we received budget requests” said . Assistant County Administrator/ Director of Finance Shannon Kingsley said. “We talked to department heads about things we could do to pare things down a little bit.”

That includes new extended warranties to add a couple years of life to computer systems, not adding

new positions, trimming more than 900,000 in supplemental request and moving more thn \$200,000 in equipment purchases out of the county general fund. The proposed budget also said no to more than \$1.2 million in requested road improvements.

The recommended increase to the mill levy stands at 1.886 mills. one mill is equal to one dollar per \$1,000 of assessed

value.

Although the commission did express interest in keeping the mill levy flat, we did make an attempt to do that but ultimately we are present a budget that maintains current services and also includes some capital projects that need to be addressed,” Kingsley said.

The assessed value of property in the county grew about 5.66 percent, or

about \$995,320 in values.

“The 2026 recommended tax levy is \$19,314,576 which is a recommended budget tax rate of 45.749 mills,” Kingsley said.

Within the capital improvement plan are three projects which are not yet funded – renovations to the courthouse, renovations for the detention center and replacement of the road and bridge facility.

# Demo of old Dillons moving forward

By: Chad Frey  
NEWTON KANSAN

A plan to demolish an old grocery store in the 300 block of Main Street too take a step forward at the July 8 city commission meeting.

The commission approved issuing a request for proposals to solicit bids for the demolition of 320 N. Main, a building that has housed a fitness business, Salvation Army thrift store, Dollar General and Dillons Grocery Store in the past.

“As you are aware 320 N main has been slated for demolition for several years,” said Ed Bonham,

director of public works for the city of Newton. “We have had several investigations of contamination at the site.”

Those investigations led to a decade of negotiation between the city and the BNSF railroad to ensure the railroad pays for mitigation of what was found on the site.

The city will seek bids for the demolition and pollution mitigation work after a 4-0 vote, with Kathy Valentine absent, on July 8.

“I think it is wise to pair the end of the negotiations with BNSF with this bid package,” said Rod Kreie, city commissioner.

The city purchased the



Demolition of the old grocery store at 320 N. Main took a step forward July 8. [Chad Frey/Newton Kansan]

property in 2015, with initial plans of a new police station on the lot.

However, in 2016 a city and KDHE investigation showed petroleum related compounds evident after

a nearby railroad fuel spill. The lot needs pollution clean up, and that cleanup must include funding by the BNSF Railway.

The city and BNSF have been negotiating an

agreement ever since.

The agreement obligates BNSF to reimburse the City for cost increases associated with the clean-up and disposal of special waste up to 250 tons. The City is required to take certain steps to not encumber BNSF’s operations during the demolition and clean-up.

Initial plans to turn the space into a new police station went away after a renovation to the current law enforcement center on Seventh street occupied by the Harvey County Sheriff’s Department, Newton Police Department, 911 dispatch and community

corrections juvenile intake.

The city discovered contamination in the soil of the lot the building sits on, a lot currently evaluated at about \$103,000 by the county appraiser. The appraiser also lists a value of \$352,720 for the building which has set mostly empty for a number of years.

The plan, as reported by the Newton Kansan in 2024, is to remove the building and its footings and testing soil as the project advances. Any material contaminated material around the building footings will be removed, with the railroad paying that cost.

# City to hold mill levy, increase senior center funding

By: Chad Frey  
NEWTON KANSAN

During a discussion of a preliminary budget package for the city of Newton on July 8, the question arose as to what level the commission would like to fund the Newton Area Senior Center in the next budget.

A budget that will exceed the revenue neutral rate, a move approved by the commission on July 8, while likely holding the mill levy flat from year-to-year.

The city funded the senior center with \$5,000 in 2024, using economic development funds to fund the center. The same mechanism for funding is used for the Newton Area Chamber of Commerce and Health Ministries

Clinic.

At one time the city had cut funding to zero for the Newton Area Senior Center.

“We did away with funding when we did not believe in the data they were giving. ... They are doing better and I am impressed,” said commissioner Rod Kreie.

The city started funding the center with \$15,000 in 2017 before bumping up to \$25,000 in 2018 and 2019 before in 2020 funding dropped to \$10,000. Funding remained at that level for 2021 and 2022.

This year the center requested \$20,000 during budget hearings with departments and organizations.

“I would be in favor of finding a way to fund them at the level they are

asking,” said commissioner Leroy Koehn.

“Their board is very motivated and dedicated,” said commissioner Melanie Watson.

The commission took no formal action on the funding request, but did reach a consensus on finding a way to fund the full request of the senior center.

City staff told the commission the balance of economic development funds is about \$2 million and would be a source of funding for the senior center.

“We stay around that, so it is coming in good and it is going out well,” said Donna Pickman, director of finance for the city.

The proposed budget on July 8 held the city mill levy flat while increasing spending — making use of an about 5 percent increase in property evaluations to provide increased tax revenues for the city. That would mean about

\$610,000 in increased collections for the city.

The city set a hearing for the revenue neutral rate at 7 p.m. Aug. 26.

In other business the commission:

Approved a request for proposals for action planning services for a Safe Streets 4 All grant.

Approved an agreement with the State Historic Preservation office for Newton to be a certified local government.

Approved documents for grants and contracts for a runway reconstruction project at the Newton City/County airport.

Approved a temporary alcohol permit for Sand Creek Event Center for a corn hole tournament on July 20.

Approved use of an economic development grant for Olympus Filters LLC.

Approved an agreement with Olsson company for an update of the city’s comprehensive plan.

# City, county give final go ahead for runway project

By: Chad Frey  
NEWTON KANSAN

The Newton City Commission and Harvey County Commission agreed to sign construction contracts and final grant awards l for a runway reconstruction project at the Newton City/County Airport July 8, a project that was delayed earlier this year after bids came in too high.

The city and county commissions started the bid process for the project in February, finalizing the bids in April.

The project will cost about \$4.275 million overall, with much of the cost paid using the FAA grant funds. Costs to be paid with grant funds include: design, construction administration, construction services, and construction closeout.

The local share of project funding required by the grant is \$570,757, to be split evenly by the City and County at \$283,378.50 each. This exceeds the original project budget of \$512,025, split evenly by the city and county

at \$256,012.50 each.

Overall the cost increase to the city and county as the result of rebidding is \$29,366 each.

Construction time is 190 days.

The crosswind runway, or secondary runway, at the airport has been targeted for reconstruction this year, using a combination of city, county and Federal Aviation Administration grant funds.

As a result of the work, the airport will be closed for about 30 days this fall/winter. Just when that closure will occur will come into focus after pre-construction meetings with Dondlinger Construction.

With the help of HNTB, the engineering firm contracted for airport work by the city, the engineer’s estimate was adjusted, and the project was re-bid.

One new bid was received, from Dondlinger and Sons Construction. The bid submitted by Dondlinger and Sons has been reviewed HNTB, and is found to be in concurrence with FAA requirements.

ESTATE AUCTION

Fri., July 18, 2025

BACKHOE, TRAILERS, TRACTOR, SAW MILL, FORKLIFT, FIELD IMPLEMENTS,  
BOAT & MOTOR, 4-WHEELERS, METAL LATHE, LAWNMOWERS, AIR  
COMPRESSOR, WELDERS, WOODWORKING TOOLS, GENERATORS, PARTS BINS,  
JOB BOXES, BUILDING SUPPLIES, PATIO & HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE & MORE!



Address: 1832 US-62 W • Fort Gibson, OK 74434  
ESTATE OF: Richard Trey Thompson  
OWNERS: Richard & Edna Thompson

STARTS @ 9:01 AM

CHUPPSAUCTION.COM    DALE CHUPP (918) 630-0495

PLACE YOUR  
AD HERE!

Building the  
AMERICAN DREAM  
from our Kansas locations for over  
Hundreds of design ideas @  
MortonBuildings.com

50 YEARS



MORTON  
BUILDINGS®

LOCATIONS ACROSS KANSAS  
800-447-7436

©2024 Morton Buildings, Inc. A listing of GC licenses available at [mortonbuildings.com/licenses](https://mortonbuildings.com/licenses)

Honesty & Fair Prices  
Built To Last Generations  
Sold by local reps, built by skilled local crews



SCAN ME





Garages | Shops | Man-Sheds  
Machine Shops | Ag Buildings  
➤ [QualityStructures.com](https://QualityStructures.com) ➤ 800-374-6988  
Richmond, KS | Haven, KS



Miller  
Insurance  
Agency Inc.



• Auto  
• Home  
• Farm  
• Crop  
• Flood  
• Recreational Vehicle  
• Commerical  
• Life  
• Medicare Supplement



Call Us For A Custom Quote & Personal Attention



616 N Main St, Newton KS  
316-283-7281  
[www.millerinsagency.com](https://www.millerinsagency.com)

