



Photo by Holly Allen

## Pioneer Cemetery gains an angel

A vacation to Eureka Springs has resulted in a 25-year hobby for Vicki Langton, Perry. The \$245 cost for a small carved bear was more than she wanted to pay for a souvenir, so she returned home with a chainsaw instead.

After determining a carved angel would be appropriate for the old Pioneer Cemetery (formally called Lone Tree), Valley Falls, Langton began her work. Completed the first week of May, the angel has a small lamb laying at her feet.

Preservation of the angel will require a yearly treatment of deck sealer. Donations to this project can be mailed to Joe Heinen, 7384 154th Street, Valley Falls.

## CDO issues a dozen dwelling permits for Q1

Jefferson County's Community Development Office handed out 12 dwelling-related permits during the first quarter of the year, according to one of two reports Community Development Director Stephan Metzger shared with the Board of County Commissioners when it met May 13.

The total matched the total for the first quarter of 2023 but was below the totals for the second, third and fourth quarters last year, 20, 14 and 14, respectively.

The "Quarterly Report of Dwellings from 1998-2024" put the combined estimated cost of construction for the 12 dwellings connected to the permits issued in January, February and March at \$2,238,500. That figure yields an average cost per dwelling of \$186,542. By comparison, the combined estimated cost of construction for the 12 dwellings built a year earlier

was \$3,066,000, which translates into an average cost per dwelling of \$255,500.

The 12 dwelling-related permits the CDO handed out from Jan. 1 to March 31 were among 38 permits it handed out altogether, according to the other report, "2024 Building Permit Report - 1st Quarter." That latter figure beat the first quarter totals for 2023, 37, and 2021, 29, but was surpassed by the first quarter totals for 2022, 47, and 2020, 42.

The categorical breakdown for the latest permits issued is as follows:

Addition to dwelling, 2; Barn, 1; Cabin, 1; Carport, 1; Commercial, 1; Dwelling, 8; Garage (detached), 2; Greenhouse, 1; Lean-to, 1; Loafing shed, 1; Park shelter, 1; Photovoltaic system, 1; Replacement dwelling, 2; Shed, 2; Shelter house, 2; Shop, 2; Storage building, 8; and

Swimming pool above or in ground, 1.

Nine of the permits were for projects to be undertaken in Fairview Township, eight for projects in Rock Creek Township. Four of the permits were for work to be done in Jefferson Township, while three apiece went to Kentucky Township, Rural Township and Sarcoxie Township. Kaw Township, Ozawie Township and Union Township each received two permits, and the remaining two permits were divided between Delaware Township and Norton Township. No one in Oskaloosa Township applied for a permit.

The issuing of the permits brought in a total of \$6,500, which equaled the total for the first quarter of 2023.

The first quarter revenue totals for 2022, 2021 and 2020 were \$7,950, \$4,250 and \$9,625, respectively.

## County 4-H news

### Valley Victors 4-H Club

The meeting of the Valley Victors 4-H Club was called to order April 14 by president Brodie Hollis at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds. The Pledge of Allegiance and 4-H Pledge were recited. Roll call was answered to "How much will it rain this month?"

The club voted on a royalty nominee. Maggie Witkop was voted as princess nominee. Tommy Welsh was voted as

prince nominee.

Project talks were given by Ciera Steinlicht, Maggie Witkop and Adalynn Witkop, and Hayden Allen. Jokes of the month were given by Conner Pence and Jovie Heinen.

Club leader Toni Reeves announced that there are many upcoming project meetings such as horse, pets, crafts, rocketry, and woodworking.

—Megan Malone, reporter

## County...

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the day after Memorial Day.

The board ultimately voted 3-0 to table for eight days a possible decision on the matter.

Bringing some welcome news, Public Works Director Ben Domann reported that the replacement concrete bridge on US-24 over the Delaware River at the west edge of Perry had reopened for two-way traffic three days earlier. For more than a year the bridge was reduced to alternating one-way traffic as workers methodically removed the old structure to free up space for a new one.

Domann also reported that he had reserved the spacious room at Oskaloosa City Hall for a meeting scheduled for that Thursday at 1 p.m. for which Kansas Department of Transportation personnel would be present to discuss the planned replacement of the bridge located north of Oskaloosa along McCall Drive. He said the KDOT party would be traveling to the site of the bridge after the meeting to do a "field check" there. He also said the meeting and the "field check" would put the state agency in a favorable position for proceeding with the letting of bids on the project and the subsequent construction of the new bridge.

Domann informed the commissioners that after Memorial Day, 90th Street between K-92 and Osage Road would be closed to traffic to allow the Road and Bridge Department to replace a 10' x 60' culvert that has deteriorated over time. He said that section of the road would be shut down for a week.

Voting 3-0, the board OK'd the proposed issuance of a right-of-way permit to Jefferson County Rural Water District No. 13, clearing the way for it to install 13 miles' worth of plastic water line in the southeastern part of the county. In presenting the water district's application for a permit to the commissioners for their consideration, Domann said the water district would be boring under roads as opposed to cutting into them in laying the line. He also noted that most of the right of way the line will be entering is located on private property and not county-owned property.

Metzger gave the board a report on the May 14 meeting he, Walbridge and Domann attended virtually, at which the Solid Waste Management Plan for Jefferson and Douglas counties was reviewed. He said concerns over the waste being created through the construction of the Panasonic battery plant near De Soto and the renovation of Memorial Stadium on the University of Kansas campus were expressed at that time.

Metzger told the commissioners that the county needed to identify any changes to the plan it would like to see made, as, according to him, the current five-year plan is going to be revised during the next year or so.

Chris Schmeissner, the county's Geographic Information Systems/Information Technology Director, reported that the installation of surveillance cameras around the exterior of the courthouse was completed on May 15. He went on to say his office

would be adding more hardware to permit the storage of up to 90 days' worth of footage recorded by cameras. According to him, the existing hardware only allows for the storage of up to 30 days' worth of footage.

Schmeissner reported that the effort to create wireless connectivity between the various county-owned buildings was finished up on May 16.

Finally, the GIS/IT director informed the commissioners that the aerial photographs of the county taken earlier this year by Surdex Corporation, Chesterfield, Mo., had been turned over to his office. He said these photographs would be made available to other county departments for their use in the near future and that later on the general public would be able to view the images online. According to him, the entire project was wrapped up four months early.

County Appraiser Janet Allen provided the commissioners with copies of a two-page report covering the appraised and assessed values for 2024 and 2023 for real property in the county. According to the report, the appraised values for this year exceed the appraised values for last year by 7.9 percent overall, while the assessed values for this year top the assessed values for last year by 6.9 percent overall.

Allen told the commissioners that the county had gained 27 parcels of land year over year and that the appraised value of new construction was \$22 million. She also told them that agricultural land had declined in value during the past year and that she looked for it to probably fall off in value again the following year.

The county appraiser said she would be putting together an abstract for appraised and assessed values for personal property that week.

More information about the 2024 valuations for real property and personal property in Jefferson County will be published in a future issue of the paper.

Mary Luse, the treasurer of the Jefferson County Historical Society, appeared before the board to present to it the organization's budget request for 2025, \$20,895, a figure that is \$440 higher than what the organization asked for last year.

According to a five-page report Luse shared with the commissioners and used extensively in her presentation, the JCHS spent a total of \$20,895 on insurance, utilities, internet service and maintenance of the grounds at Old Jefferson Town in Oskaloosa, including mowing, last year. That was \$2,848 more than what the organization actually received from the county in 2023, \$18,047, and it is \$440 more than the approved budget number for this year, \$20,455.

The report mentioned various activities that are held at OJT during a typical year. These include the annual Easter Egg Hunt sponsored by the Oskaloosa Lions Club, the Easter Sunrise Service, the five-month-long Farmers Market, the honoring of deceased veterans during Memorial Day weekend, the displaying of wedding dresses, the displaying of quilts, and the Tractor Ride and Show, the primary fundraiser for the JCHS.

The report also covered the improvements that have been

made to the 10-acre pioneer village during the past year or so. These include the replacement of most of the original water line, the installation of leaf guards along the guttering for Edmonds Chapel and the research library, the repainting of Reynolds General Store and the John Steuart Curry Boyhood Home and Museum, the replacement of the roofs atop the Tibbott Building, the Curry home and Wellman School, and the replacement of surge protectors and an internet modem that had been damaged as a result of a lightning strike. The Tibbott Building roof and the Curry home roof had to be replaced because of storm damage.

Luse's report also detailed the ongoing effort to preserve and organize historical materials in the research library, and the continuing push to make all of the back issues of The Oskaloosa Independent, which predates Kansas statehood, available to historians and genealogists by way of newspapers.com.

The board accepted five sealed bids on county-owned lots on a 3-0 vote, a move that made the county \$2,919 richer.

The bids were supplied by Rodney Gilbert, 11047 McCall Drive, Oskaloosa, who was willing to hand over \$700 for Lot 6 in Block Z of Lake Shore Estates and another \$700 for Lot 7, Delmar Kruse, 6178 Ridgeview Drive, Ozawie, who was ready to part with \$519 to get Lot 35 in Block E of Lake Ridge Estates, and Team Jones LLC, Overland Park, which offered to buy two lots in Lakewood Hills, Lot 505 and Lot 506, for \$500 apiece.

The bids were brought forward for the commissioners' consideration by County Treasurer Lisa Buerman.

At the request of Buerman, and on a 3-0 vote, the board passed Resolution 2024-015, thus voiding all of the checks that were written by the county in 2021 but which were never cashed by the payees. The checks totaled \$2,922.46.

Lake Shore Estates resident Sharon Blankenship showed up at the meeting to ask the commissioners about the status of the "No Trespassing" signs the county reportedly was going to be purchasing and installing at the improvement district in an effort to keep people from living as squatters on county-owned lots there. Christy told Blankenship that the board was seeking legal advice from Ney in regard to the matter.

Voting 3-0, the board OK'd the proposed appointment of Paul R. Shirey Jr. to the position of Trustee for Union Township. He replaces Walbridge, who resigned April 30.

The proposed issuance of a county purchasing card to Chase Elliott, who works for the Sheriff's Office, was approved by the board on a 3-0 vote.

It was the consensus of the board that it table for the time being the consideration of various different budget requests for 2025, among them the one that has been submitted by the Jefferson County Service Organization.

In a related matter, in response to a question posed by Christy, County Clerk Julie Dunkle said all of the department heads had turned in their budget requests for next year by May 17.

### Executive Session

At the request of Christy, the commissioners met privately with Ney for five minutes right off the bat so that they could be given legal advice under the attorney-client privilege exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act. When the meeting reopened to the public, Christy announced that no binding action had been taken behind closed doors.

## USD 339 bond defeated at polls

A bond election May 21 in Jefferson County North, USD 339, has gone down to defeat, 144 yes votes to 163 no votes.

The school board was proposing to finance \$5.5 million over 30 years to upgrade heating and air, roof replacement, upgrade lighting, improve ADA accessibility, and improve security district-wide.

The bond would have added classrooms, made parking lot improvements, and renovated restrooms in the high school as well.

The bond passed in the Jefferson precinct by 52%, 83-76, and failed in the Norton precinct by 58%, 61-87, in the unofficial tally provided by the Jefferson County Election Office.

The bond would have increased the district tax levy by 6.5 mills.

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# Valley Falls Area Chamber of Commerce

Meets the 1st Thursday of each month at noon at Kendall Bank. Call 785-945-3231 to make a reservation.

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- Assured Title of Northeast KS, Inc. – DeDee Skaggs, 785-863-2224, [DeDee@AssureTitleKs.com](mailto:DeDee@AssureTitleKs.com)
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- Country Harvest Apple Market – Valley Falls, 785-945-3315, [www.CountryHarvest.MyAppleMarket.com](http://www.CountryHarvest.MyAppleMarket.com)
- Delaware Township Library – 785-945-3990, [www.ValleyFalls.MyKansasLibrary.org](http://www.ValleyFalls.MyKansasLibrary.org)
- Denison State Bank – Meriden, 785-484-3322, [www.dsbks.com](http://www.dsbks.com)
- DirtRoad JunkFest, LLC – Oct. 11 & 12, [www.DirtRoadJunkFest.com](http://www.DirtRoadJunkFest.com)
- The Elevator Bar & Grill – 785-573-1667, [fb@TheElevatorBarAndGrill](http://fb@TheElevatorBarAndGrill)
- FreeState Electric Co-op – McLouth, 800-794-1989, [www.FreeState.coop](http://www.FreeState.coop)

- Friends of Hospice, Jefferson County – 785-403-0025, [www.FriendsofHospiceOfJfCo.org](http://www.FriendsofHospiceOfJfCo.org)
- F.W. Huston Medical Center – Winchester, 844-536-9449, [www.fwhuston.com](http://www.fwhuston.com)
- Gambino's Pizza – Meriden, 785-484-2323, [www.GambinosPizza.com](http://www.GambinosPizza.com)
- Giant Communications, LLC – 785-362-9331, [www.GiantComm.net](http://www.GiantComm.net)
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- Jefferson County Fire Department #11 – Valley Falls, 785-945-3731, [VFFire11@gmail.com](mailto:VFFire11@gmail.com)
- Jepson Insurance – Mark Jepson, 785-945-6211, [www.JepsonIns.com](http://www.JepsonIns.com)
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- Kearney & Son Construction, Inc. – 785-945-6279
- Kearney Lawn Service, LLC – Jake Kearney, 785-220-4506
- Kendall Bank – Valley Falls, Nortonville, Winchester, and Overland Park branches, 785-945-3231, [www.KendallBank.com](http://www.KendallBank.com)

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- Phillips Insurance – Jim Phillips, 620-727-3883, [Jim@AnswerManJim.com](mailto:Jim@AnswerManJim.com)
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- The Rustic Baker, LLC – Jamie Tankesley, 316-258-3626, [fb@TheRusticBakerLLC](mailto:fb@TheRusticBakerLLC)
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- Sew Fine Quilting – Monica Mackison, 785-231-4145, [fb@SewFineQuilting](mailto:fb@SewFineQuilting)
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- Sprang Heating & Air Conditioning, LLC – Aaron Sprang, 785-220-7600, [AaronSprang@gmail.com](mailto:AaronSprang@gmail.com)
- St. Paul's Lutheran Church – 785-305-0756, 701 Frazier, Valley Falls
- Thistle and Thread, LLC – Megan Belveal, 785-224-7781, [ThistleandThreadCo@gmail.com](mailto:ThistleandThreadCo@gmail.com)
- Turner Designs – Megan Turner, 785-640-3278, [www.instagram.com/TurnerDesignsVF](http://www.instagram.com/TurnerDesignsVF)
- City of Valley Falls – 785-945-6612, [www.ValleyFalls.org](http://www.ValleyFalls.org)
- Valley Falls Chiropractic Clinic – Dr. Vickie Robert, 785-945-3261, [facebook.com/ValleyFallsChiro](http://facebook.com/ValleyFallsChiro)
- Valley Falls First Christian Church – 785-945-6757, Pastor Mike Kirby, [www.ValleyFallSCC.org](http://www.ValleyFallSCC.org)

- The University of Kansas Health System St. Francis Campus, Valley Falls Family Medicine – 785-945-3263
- The Wash Spot – Car Wash – Jerry Heinen, 785-851-7284
- Valley Falls Community Foundation (VFCF) – [ValleyFallsCF.org](http://ValleyFallsCF.org)
- Valley Falls Historical Society – Museum open 1st & 3rd Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Check us out on Facebook
- Valley Falls Housing Authority – Trey George, CEO & Management, 785-357-8842
- Valley Falls Music Academy, LLC – Marley Hamon, 785-851-7284, [MarleyHamon.mmm@gmail.com](mailto:MarleyHamon.mmm@gmail.com)
- Valley Falls Pharmacy, LLC – Tyler Williams, 785-945-3711, [ValleyFallsPharmacy@gmail.com](mailto:ValleyFallsPharmacy@gmail.com)
- Valley Falls Recreation Commission – [vfRecComm@yahoo.com](mailto:vfRecComm@yahoo.com)
- Valley Falls Rotary Club – Meets every Thursday at 6 p.m. Call for reservations, 785-224-8112
- Valley Truck & Trailer, LLC – Bob Long, 785-945-3554, [Bob.Long@valleytrucktrailer.com](mailto:Bob.Long@valleytrucktrailer.com)
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