

# REPUBLICAN

A Daily Newspaper on the Santa Fe Trail in Council Grove, Kansas Since 1872



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## Briefly...

Drew Montgomery will be the speaker at the Tuesday meeting of the Men's Prayer Breakfast. It begins at 6:30 a.m., at the Council Grove Senior Center.

## History Shorts...

(Submitted by Ken McClintock)

Sixty per cent of the B-29 bombers in World War II were processed through the Herington Army Air Field. Some claim that Paul Tibbets and the Enola Gay (which atomic-bombed Hiroshima) passed through HAAF. However, when the B-29 which became the Enola Gay was completed in Omaha, the co-pilot flew it directly to the Pacific Theater.

## Obituary...Page 2

### Reservoir Lake Level

Normal elevation .....1274.00  
Current elevation .....1274.12

## THREE-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

### Corps of Engineers Readings, Council Grove Reservoir

High and low temperatures for the 24-hour period ending this morning were 82 and 52, with the 8:00 am reading 59°.

**Friday:** Sunny, with a high near 88. South wind 5 to 15 mph. Clear night with a low around 65.

**Saturday:** Sunny, with a high near 84. South wind 10 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph. Low around 64.

**Sunday:** Sunny, with a high near 83. South wind around 15 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph. A 30 percent chance of rain after 1 am. Low around 59.



FRIDAY FORECAST  
High 88  
Low 65

## USD 417 BOE faces key decision on 1918 Jr/Sr High School building

The future of the 1918 building at Council Grove Junior/Senior High School dominated discussion during a special meeting of the USD 417 Board of Education on Wednesday, October 1, 2025. The board is weighing whether to renovate the aging structure at considerable cost or to demolish it and build new space as part of a potential bond election set for March 2026.

Approximately two dozen people attended the session, which included presentations from Piper Sandler and SPT Architecture. Board member Don Alderman was absent.

**Why Demolition is on the Table**  
Demolition of the 1918 building is being considered because of the high price of repairs and renovations compared to new construction. The building suffers from leaking pipes, outdated systems with no replacement parts available, leaky windows installed only a few years ago into the building's brick openings, creaky wooden floors, an old electrical system, and an aging boiler.

Renovation options would expand classroom sizes by combining smaller rooms into larger, more functional spaces, but those upgrades come with significant expense. Demolition and new construction, meanwhile, would provide larger, modern learning areas and a new media center.

**Bond Financing Scenarios**  
Clayton Kelly of Piper Sandler outlined several financing options. With current district debt set to retire in 2028, USD 417 is in a strong position to consider new construction.

Three main bond scenarios were presented: 1) \$20.2 million – neutral, keeping the mill levy at its current rate. 2) \$25 million – an increase of 2.85 mills, equal to about \$5.46 per month for a \$200,000 home. 3) \$31 million – an increase of 6.5 mills, about \$12.46 per month for a \$200,000 home. The numbers were tied directly to 30-year financing assumptions with 2% assessed valuation growth built into the model.

Agricultural landowners would see increases ranging from 9 to 46 cents per acre depending on the bond amount and land classification.

The district's assessed valuation is \$83,913,733, with an enrollment of 746 students. According to SPT, of property taxes paid by residents inside the City of Council Grove, 38% goes to the county, 33% to the city, 27% to the schools, and 2% to other entities.

**A "Smorgasbord" of facility options**

SPT Architecture described a

### Braves to host the top-ranked Osage City Indians Friday Night

The stage is set for a marquee matchup Friday night at Legion Stadium in Council Grove as the Council Grove Braves host the Osage City Indians in a battle of unbeaten 2A powers. Kickoff is scheduled for 7 p.m., with the game broadcast on the Flint Hills Life Channel.

Council Grove (4-0, 3-0 Flint Hills League, 1-0 District) enters the contest ranked No. 5 in Class 2A. The Braves are coming off a hard-fought 28-26 victory over Riley County, their fourth straight win to open the season. The Braves are averaging 33.5 points per game while allowing just 10, relying on a balanced effort that has kept them on track in league and district play.

(See To host Osage City, Page 3)

"smorgasbord" of potential projects: **Prairie Heights Elementary (PHES)** – a secure entry and renovation of locker room areas currently used as classrooms, estimated at \$280,000.

**Council Grove Elementary (CGES)** – proposals included five new classrooms, removal of portable buildings, renovation of existing spaces, and added parking for safety. One option would convert the annex into a Pre-K/early childhood center linked to the main building. Costs ranged from \$3.2 million to \$6.3 million.

**Council Grove Junior/Senior High School** – multiple options were presented, from minimal HVAC upgrades to demolition and full replacement of the 1918 building. Other additions included a secure new south entrance, updated Career and Technical Education (CTE) space, and new media center.

**Transportation and district office improvements** were also discussed, with costs ranging from \$1.5 to \$2.3 million.

Two different approaches were reviewed: 1) Renovating the existing transportation/maintenance building for about \$1.5 million, while moving the district office into the 1918 building. 2) Constructing a new transportation building at a cost of about \$2.3 million, and then repurposing the current building for district office use.

A third "do nothing" option, leaving transportation as is, was also acknowledged, though concerns were voiced about limited space, buses parked outside the bus barn fence, and the inability to house or maintain the fleet efficiently.

While board members recognized the shortcomings of the current transportation facilities, the consensus was not to commit to including a transportation building in the initial scenarios for the October 15 community meeting. Instead, the board chose to focus on presenting a smaller set of options to keep the community discussion clear and manageable.

When asked what the total would

be if every project on the list were selected, board member Jamie Johnson was told the figure could reach \$45 million.

### Historical and Financial Context

The district's last bond issue was approved 17 years ago, funding the cafeteria, weight room, wrestling room, additional parking, and other improvements. That debt will be fully retired in 2028, creating budget capacity for a new bond without overlapping obligations.

In addition to construction, fixtures, furniture, and equipment (FFE) are expected to add about \$1 million to the total project cost.

### Community Input Will Be Critical

Survey results from steering committee and staff meetings showed safety and security as the top priority, followed by educational space improvements and expanded Career Technical Education (CTE) opportunities. Both community and staff responses leaned strongly toward prioritizing practical educational spaces over preserving the historic 1918 building.

More than 80% of respondents indicated willingness to support a higher mill levy, with many favoring bond amounts in the \$25-30 million range.

The board agreed to narrow the long list of possibilities to two main scenarios, which will be presented at a community-wide meeting on Wednesday, October 15, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Grove Junior-Senior High School auditorium.

USD 417 stakeholders are strongly encouraged to attend, as some in the community will focus primarily on costs, while others will be more concerned about the long-term educational and safety benefits for students. The board emphasized that choices made in the coming months will shape district facilities for decades.

Residents are encouraged to mark their calendars and participate in the October 15 meeting before a final bond package is set for the March 2026 election.

## Lilliana Blackledge named Scholar Athlete of the Week

Lilliana Blackledge, a member of the Council Grove High School Lady Braves volleyball team, has been named Scholar Athlete of the Week by FOX 43 KTMJ.



Blackledge is a senior at the high school, where she maintains a 3.8 grade point average. She plans on playing volleyball in college where she will study elementary education.

Blackledge will go into a random drawing for a chance to win one of two \$2,500 scholarships from sponsors, Briggs Auto and Kansas 811.

FOX 43 KTMJ recognizes local high schoolers performing well in sports and the classroom every week.

## From The Dale Linn Collection

The Dunlap Rustler published the following article on Saturday, April 15, 1916.

### DUNLAP-COUNCIL GROVE HIGHWAY

Dunlap and Council Grove will soon be connected by one of the best dirt roads in the country. The county grading crew is working on this road this week and making a good substantial grade, wide enough for two good tracks. Only one bad spot remains on this road, that is by the Linn place and the commissioners have promised to put in a good cement culvert here and grade in from each way. When this is finished, the road will be in good shape a few hours after most any kind of rain.

## 12 bridges to be inspected for \$3825.00, R & B receives water bill for \$2,443.44

The Morris County Commissioner meeting was called to order on Tuesday, September 23, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. Commissioners David Fox and Wayne Kohler were present. Bill Kassebaum, County Counselor, and Chelsey Schmidt, County Clerk, were present.

Others present: Billy Kryger- Pastor Berean Baptist Church  
Commissioner Barber attended the meeting via telephone for approximately 5 minutes, to check in with the commissioners.

Dave Owen, EMS Director, visited with the commissioners briefly. The new ambulance was picked up yesterday and is now at TBS Communications for radio programming. He will schedule time during an upcoming meeting for the commissioners to view the new ambulance.

Commissioner Fox (Kohler) moved to approve minutes from the September 16, 2025, Commission Meeting. Motion carried.

Commissioner Fox (Kohler) moved to approve the accounts payable vouchers as presented; in the total amount of \$48,359.13. Motion

carried. The breakdown by fund is as follows:

General: \$28,597.62  
Road & Bridge: \$13,940.06  
Reappraisal: \$581.80  
Noxious Weed: \$100.00  
Employee Benefits: \$560.00  
Morris County 911: \$112.15  
Capital Improvement: \$4,467.50

Commissioner Fox (Kohler) moved to approve payroll liabilities as presented; in the total amount of \$155,025.29. Motion carried.

Mary Halleran, Crisis Services Director, and Stephani Cervantes, Outreach Victim Advocate, with SOS Inc., visited with the commissioners regarding the month of October being declared as Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Commissioner Fox (Kohler) moved to proclaim the Month of October 2025 to be Domestic Violence Awareness Month in Morris County. Motion carried.

Jeff Falter and Shelly Lault gave the following public works report for the week of September 15 – September 19:

Road & Bridge:

Mid States Materials Quarry (Wilsey location) road rock was placed on DD Ave. from 2700-2800, Z Ave. from 1700-1800, 1600 Rd. from Z-AA, Z Ave. from 1600-1700, Z Ave. from 1900-CC, 2200 Rd. from Z-Diamond Creek, U Ave. from 2500-2600 and 4 Mile from Y-K177

Elmdale Quarry rock was hauled to 500 Rd. from F-G, 500 Rd. from G-H, F Ave. from 400-600 and Diamond Creek Rd. from CC-DD

Mid States Materials Quarry (Skiddy location) road rock was placed on J Ave. from 3000-3200, A Ave. from 2400-2600 and C Ave. from 2600-2700

A load of creek gravel was placed over an exposed culvert entrance on 400 Rd. between CC-DD

Shoulder work was done on 2400 Rd. from Q-T, 2600 Rd. from Q-T, T Ave. from 2400-2600 and 2200 Rd. (See Commissioners, Page 2)

## Lady Braves volleyball competes at Cair Paravel

The Council Grove High School Lady Braves volleyball teams traveled to Cair Paravel on Tuesday night, competing hard across both varsity and junior varsity matches.

In varsity play, the Lady Braves battled but dropped both contests. The first match ended with scores of 23-25 and 13-25, while match 2 concluded 11-25 and 15-25.

Despite the losses, the Lady Braves showed strong effort on the court. Lilliana Blackledge was a standout at the net, recording eight blocks on the night. Defensively, Marlee Gant and Neenah Hestermann each contributed double digits in digs, helping keep rallies alive.

The junior varsity squad had a successful evening, winning their match in three sets. After taking the first game 25-21 and narrowly dropping the second 23-25, the ladies came out strong in the deciding set to win 15-6. Serving proved key in the JV victory, with the team collecting 11 aces overall. Peytyn Eslinger led the way from the service line with five aces, while Khloe Lif anchored the defense with eight digs.



HOME JV INVITATIONAL GOLF CHAMPS -- The Lady Braves took first place Tuesday, at the Council Grove Junior Varsity Invitational Golf Tournament. Members of the winning team pictured are (L to R): Milo Nelson, Emily Teter, Desiree Bachura, Olivia Kennedy and Morgan Romme.

