



Commisioners hold special meeting

By Kati Latulip

The Rawlins County Board of Commissioners held an in-person special meeting at 8 a.m. Wednesday morning.

Commissioners Alan Solko, Mark Mosley and Lincoln Pochop, County Clerk Rachel Finley and County Attorney Christopher Rohr, via phone, entered executive session for 15 minutes.

No action was taken upon return to regular session. The meeting was then adjourned.

Another special meeting is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. Friday, June 20. There will be an open discussion, with possible action taken, on rescinding the motion and vote taken at the May 16 meeting, regarding the county appraiser position.

June 16 Regular Meeting

The commissioners met in regular session Monday, June 16, board president Alan Solko presiding. The agenda began with the monthly meeting of the county's department heads.

During the department head meeting, concerns were expressed regarding the fairness in compensation and expectations for non-elected county employees.

County Attorney Rohr then led the wage study discussion, outlining the potential benefits for implementing a uniform pay scale, which would reduce the need for executive sessions and provide more transparency.

Thomas County has adopted a similar type of pay scale for entry level employees, with additional classifications added to account for education and experience.

Mark Loop, supervisor of the Road and Bridge Department, reported that the county's bulldozer will be repaired by L&M Steel in Colby and the maintainer will be hauled back. He states that the newly-hired employees are doing well.

Diana Skiles, of Pine Branch Real Estate, presented another offer for land owned by the county. Following discussion, there was no action was taken. The offer will be addressed at the next regular meeting.

Corey Castens, supervisor of the county landfill and the recycling center, asked that a request for sealed bids be published for the crushing of waste concrete at the Rawlins County landfill. The notice is published on page 7 of this newspaper. Bids open at 9 a.m. Monday, July 1 and must be sealed and returned to the Rawlins County Clerk's Office, 607 Main Street, Suite C, Atwood, KS 67730 by that time. Bids will be read aloud at the July 1 board of commissioners meeting.

Kyle Grafel appeared on behalf of the Herndon Community Museum to request continued budgeted funding for the upcoming fiscal year. The museum is run by a volunteer-only staff and board and funds are used to cover operating costs such as utilities and insurance.

Minutes from the June 2, 2025 meeting were signed and approved.

The county will waive dumping fees for the disposal of demolition waste from the old Atwood city hall building, as agreed upon at a joint meeting between city and county officials earlier this year.

The commissioners resumed discussion about the county appraiser resolution. Due to feedback received, it was clarified during the meeting that Rawlins County should be the priority.

Alicia Baumfalk, county appraiser at both Rawlins and Logan Counties, confirmed that the appraiser's office can be managed remotely on days she is working in Logan County. She also stated that she turns in time cards each month to account for hours spent on work related to Rawlins County.

Baumfalk was appointed as the interim county appraiser in 2021, following the resignation of Rachele Standley.

Following discussion, Commissioner Mosley moved to approve the resolution, with changes noted, seconded by Commissioner Pochop. Motion carried.

The commissioners approved the hiring of Wayne Lanning as the new supervisor of the Road and Bridge Department, upon the retirement of current supervisor Mark Loop. The county will now begin seeking a road foreman.

The commissioners also ap-

proved the hiring of accounting firm Lindburg, Vogel, Pierce, Faris Chartered to assist with the county's budget.

End of year transfers from the 2024 budget year will be done during the upcoming budget workshop in July.

The meeting adjourned at 10:26 a.m.

Commissioners Solko, Mosley and Pochop, County Clerk Finley, Deputy Clerk Renee Sagel, County Attorney Rohr, Loop, Castens, EMS Director Megan Rippe, County Appraiser Baumfalk, Register of Deeds Janice Bohme, Stacey Mentlick, Skiles, Grafel, Matt Wilson and others were present in person and remotely via GoToMeeting.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting is scheduled for 9 a.m. Tuesday, July 1 in the Rawlins County Courthouse courtroom.

Attend Meetings Remotely

To attend meetings remotely, join via GoToMeeting at <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/742762989> or dial in by phone by calling 1-646-749-3131 and using access code 742-762-989.

For laptop and desktop computers, download the GoTo-Meeting application at <https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/742762989>.

For mobile devices and tablets, download the GoTo application through the device's app store.

County wheat harvest on horizon

By Rosalie Ross

The day for the first load of wheat to be delivered to a Rawlins County elevator is fast approaching. The date most often hit in the last two decades is June 23. Farmers across the county will almost always mention the drought when they speak of 2025's crop.

"Things weren't looking too good," Paul Hayden, who farms in the southwest part of the county said. "Then we got these last rains and the wheat is perking up a little."

Some farmers in the eastern part of Rawlins County report on wheat that never came up to some that is spotty, even in neighboring fields.

"I think there's some wheat to harvest," Lynda Hurst commented. "I don't think the yields will be great, but we will have a harvest."

Kyle Grafel, who farms in the Herndon area, agreed about the crop varying even in the same fields. "Some of it looks pretty decent and some not so good," he said. "The big thing is whether the heads filled well. Looking around the nearby area, I'd guess the usual number of acres have been planted, although planting conditions last fall were a long way from ideal. The thing about wheat harvest is that you never know the yield outcomes until

you get into the field and start cutting.

"Right now, prices for grain are not good," he continued. "You have to compare what it costs to produce to what you can sell it for. We will probably cut some wheat next week and see how it goes from there."

"Our wheat looks really good with heads thick and full," Merle Leonard, who farms north of Beardsley said. "Harvest is still awhile away. The fields are still green around here, but this rain is great for the fall crops. What's amazing is the difference in the price of wheat in a year, but it has been this low before. So we need a good yield to stay even."

Roger Snodgrass from McDougal-Sager & Snodgrass Grain made this observation about the county's current crop: "It looks like the wheat is best along the Nebraska state line and yields taper off the farther south you go," he said. "The northern most fields caught more moisture earlier. A few fields in southern Rawlins County have already been adjusted out."

"I think we'll see 50 bushel wheat this year," Snodgrass continued. "That spell of cool weather the last of May did a lot to save this crop. The funny thing about wheat harvest—seems like in the end you are usually pleasantly surprised and not disappointed in the outcome."

Plan to celebrate July 4 in Atwood

A family day is being planned for July 4 at Lake Atwood. Most of the activities will be in the evening with a tremendous fireworks display by the Ambassadors at dark.

Flags will be flying and the Blue Train will encircle the lake with happy children on board, courtesy of Atwood Rotary Club.

A county challenge race around the lake beginning at 7 a.m. will get the celebration started. It is a run for county glory, no other prizes. However, the children's bike races are at 5 p.m. and there every racer gets a prize.

A morning red, white and

blue 9-hole golf tourney begins at 10 a.m.

A patriotic salute to the U.S.A. begins at 7:30 p.m. with a horse and rider parade of the colors and a sing-along of American songs. Volunteers are being sought for a talent show. There will be live music from the gazebo all evening.

Food vendors are welcome. Tournaments for Corn hole games, 3 on 3 basketball, horseshoes and sand volleyball are possible if teams are formed for the challenges. Call the Square Deal at 785-626-3600 to register a team or to volunteer for the talent show.

Minkler pinned Rotary District Governor

By Kati Latulip

Rotary District Governor elect Deb Minkler was recognized in a "Passing of the Pin" ceremony held Friday evening in Atwood. The ceremony signifies the change in leadership of the Rotary district, which governs individual clubs. Minkler will serve as District Governor of Rotary District 5680 for 2025-2026. She will assume her position July 1 and serve through June 30, 2026.

Minkler was installed by outgoing District Governor Jeff Horlacher, of Colby, and presented her with his pin.

As District Governor, she will set annual district goals, plan the district conference and conduct

meetings and training seminars as well as the district assembly. She was selected for the role by the district's Nomination Committee in 2023.

Rotary District 5680 was formed in 2019, and brought District 5670 and District 5690 together for a total of 61 individual clubs. The district covers the western two-thirds of the state, to the Nebraska, Colorado and Oklahoma borders, as well as four clubs located in the Oklahoma Panhandle.

Rotary is an international service organization comprised of local leaders who volunteer their time and skills, usually through service projects, to "address community needs and promote peace and goodwill."



Deb Minkler, Rotary District Governor elect, receives her pin from Jeff Horlacher, outgoing Rotary District Governor, Friday evening at the Shirley Opera House in Atwood. Minkler will serve as District Governor for Rotary District 5680 for the 2025-2026 term.

News at a Glance

Theater Festival

Main Street Arts Council will present Dare to Dream, a Disney musical revue featuring 40 local children at 3 p.m. Saturday, July 12 and 7 p.m. Sunday, both in the Elementary gym in Atwood. Tickets \$15 for adults, \$10 for seniors and kids age 6 through 12.

Share a Story

Smoky Hills PBS is bringing an hour-long program to Atwood Public Library at 2 p.m. Wednesday, June 25. Children ages 2 to 7 may "Share a Story" see a video and do a related craft.

Kids Get Free Lunch

Any child age 18 or younger may come to lunch provided by USD 105. Lunch will be served from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. every weekday through Friday, June 27 at the elementary school cafeteria. There are no income requirements and there is no registration. A packaged afternoon snack will be sent home with each child.

Museum/Library Hours

Rawlins County Museum in Atwood will be open every Saturday from 1 to 4 p.m. beginning May 24. Regular hours are 10 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday.

The Atwood Public Library children's summer reading program, "Color My World" is underway. The library is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

School building project remains on track

By Kati Latulip

The USD 105 Board of Education met Monday evening in regular session.

There were no comments made in open forum.

Board members viewed an update of the school building construction project via video-conference. According to the update, all demolition at the site and the commons area is completed, mass grading is being completed and will be finished when the south and west foundation walls are built. Footings are complete in Area A and plumbing is being laid. Electric work rough-in work has also been scheduled for the end of the week. Depending on weather, the concrete slab will be done next week. Brick masons are on site to begin window in-fills to

As of Monday, the project is approximately two to three days behind schedule due to weather and it is expected that the school will be completed as originally projected.

Decisions about property insurance quotes were tabled for the next meeting.

Administrators conducted a first reading of potential handbook updates. There will be a second reading of the proposed changes at the next regular meeting. If no further changes are made after the second reading, the proposed changes will become policy.

School principals gave an overview of needs assessments for their respective school buildings, including performance, attendance and other data. Jr.-Sr. High Principal Jeff Samson noted that students in the district had an average

composite ACT score of 16.8 in 2024 vs. the state average of 19.2 and identified this as a target area to address.

No action was taken on this agenda item.

Superintendent Report

Superintendent Eric Stoddard reported the following that he will be attending a KSDE budget workshop in Oakley and reviewed certain budget items that may potentially be impacted in the future.

Jr.-Sr. High Principal Report

Principal Jeff Samson reported the following:

- Staff members have been working on the needs assessment and handbook changes.
- Staff members have attended crisis management trainings in Oakley, addressing subjects like tornado and fire drills.

- Construction of the new school building is ongoing, but there has been some interruption due to rain.

Elementary Principal Report

Principal Lacy Sramek reported the following:

- Updates were made to the student handbook, classified staff handbook and certified handbook
- There was summer school from May 27 to June 6. There were 25-30 students in attendance every day. She noted that there are extended Title services for reading and math as well.
- The summer food program started May 27 and there have been a lot of students who come every day, usually from 125 to 160.

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