



Commissioners hold special meeting to finalize appointment of appraiser

By Kati Latulip

The Rawlins County Board of Commissioners met in special session June 20, to hold an open discussion about the resolution that defines terms of the four year county appraiser appointment. The meeting follows an in-person special meeting held June 19 in executive session. The meeting was called to order at 8:33 a.m., chairman Alan Solko presiding.

Before discussion of the appraiser position began, County Attorney Christopher Rohr made a statement, saying, in part: “When I ran for county attorney, one prevailing issue that was consistently talked about was that [constituents] thought there was a lack of transparency. ...The only way we have transparency is if we effectively communicate to citizens what we are doing.” Rohr continued, stating his concern with the June 19 meeting is that the agenda was limited to only an unspecified executive session. “I understand that there are some who don’t agree with the advice I gave to the Commission yesterday,” Rohr said. He indicated that action would no longer be taken following executive sessions unless specified on a

special meeting agenda. “That’s not how I operate and that’s not how it’s going to operate while I’m the county attorney.” Rohr noted that he was more focused on how the Commission conducts meetings procedurally than he is with the substantive issues addressed in the meetings. “We want to create an environment where people want to come to the meetings,” Rohr concluded. “We are here to serve the public and the best way to serve the public is to be completely transparent in what we do.”

The meeting proceeded with discussion about Resolution 2025-06, which was voted on and passed at the Monday, June 16 regular Board of Commissioners meeting. Commissioner Solko stated that the commissioners have, individually, been receiving numerous calls from citizens about the terms of the resolution. He said the biggest concern expressed was the idea that the county appraiser would receive “full time pay for part time work,” and fairness of that aspect in relation to other county employees. Alicia Baumfalk, RMA, current Rawlins County Appraiser, is also employed as the county appraiser in Logan County since August 2023. Baumfalk was appointed to her position as

Rawlins County Appraiser in 2021, following the completion of Rachele Standley’s term. By that time, she had completed all of the required courses to obtain her certification and licensure as a registered mass appraiser, per state regulations.

County Employees, Residents Give Input

Stacey Mentlick, a county employee, stated that she has seen Baumfalk at work in her office, including on weekends when necessary. “She’s good at what she does, and she holds several [certifications],” Mentlick said of Baumfalk. “Instead of paying someone from the state to come in, or hiring somebody new and giving them a wage increase, why don’t we keep somebody who knows the county, and knows the people, and that is willing to help and willing to go that extra mile?” Dale Luedke, a resident of the county, acknowledged that Baumfalk “knows what she is doing” but questioned the decision to pay her a full salary while she is working in two counties. Gwen Maris, Rawlins County appraiser deputy clerk, expressed that Baumfalk was still learning when she first assumed the position, that any mistakes made early on have been corrected, and that she now knows

her position well. She added that the commissioners have been invited to contact Bob Kent, the head of the state’s Division of Property Valuation (PVD) with questions. Maris indicated that PVD office staff are pleased with Baumfalk’s performance. Commissioner Solko stated that issues with the terms of the resolution are not related to Baumfalk’s work performance, but rather taxpayers’ and other county employees’ perceptions that her compensation is unfair, given the amount of time she spends on site in Rawlins County each week. When asked to speak, Baumfalk stated that, at a previous meeting, she addressed work hazards associated with the duties performed by employees of the appraiser’s office. “I never once thought that these concerns would be used by a commissioner and a department head to mock and minimize not only me, but my staff and our office publicly,” she said. “Comparing our work hazards to other work hazards does not dissolve their legitimacy. These are real concerns and are as worthy as any identified work hazard in any profession.” “For the past four years, this county and I have had a contract, which I feel I have not only

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PBS hosts reading program at library



Young readers at the Atwood Public Library attend “Share a Story” – a summer reading program hosted by Smoky Hills PBS, on Wednesday afternoon. Activities included reading “Curious George Discovers the Rainbow,” watching a video related to the book and making a craft.

Harvest is here

By Rosalie Ross

June 22 was the magic date for the first loads of Rawlins County wheat to be delivered to local elevators. Decatur Co-op at Herndon received their first load June 21. It was cut in Decatur County from Rock Hill Land & Cattle Co. fields owned by Jay and Arnetta Ketterl. The test weight was 61.8; moisture 10.6 and protein 15. Scott Urban brought the first load into McDougal-Sager & Snodgrass Grain June 22. It was cut just southeast of Atwood and was 60# test weight, 10.1 moisture and 11.6 protein. “He was followed by Mark Ber-

gling and Chris and Jamie Niermeier,” Roger Snodgrass said. “It was all decent test weight with 10 to 12 protein. Mills expect to buy wheat that is 12 protein and 60# test weight per bushel for milling. So far, the harvested wheat we’ve seen looks good.” Don Orten brought his first load of 2025 wheat to Beardsley Equity Coop June 22 from his farmland north of there. It tested 60# with 14.3 moisture. Dampness in the air June 25 has slowed cutting down, but drying conditions will soon have combines in the fields and loaded trucks rolling grain to the bins.

KDOT issues text scam alert Atwood City Council hears budget requests

By Rosalie Ross

Prior to the opening of the June 19 regular meeting of Atwood City Council, a public hearing was held. The council approved the preliminary and final plat hearing for South 7th Street. Following the flag salute, amendments to the agenda and a vote to pay the bills, Dawn Gabel from Options spoke. She explained that her company serves Northwest Kansas from offices in Hays and Colby, with shelters for victims of domestic violence and abused children. She said members of their staff visit each county for counseling at least twice a month. The counseling is to build hope for survivors and help for the abuser. Her request was for \$1,500 from the city. The council agreed to consider it for their next year’s budget. Deb Minkler, economic development director, presented a report of her activities for the past three months. Several of the grant applications she has been

working on are nearing completion. She said she is resigning as Rawlins County Economic Development director. Jackie Portschy, chairman of the economic development committee, presented their budget request for \$45,000 from Atwood City. She was advised that her request would be taken into consideration. Rosalie Ross, representing Atwood Rotary Club, appeared before council to request police traffic control at the lake during July 4 activities and it was granted. Josh Wolters from 2 Homes LLC came to the council with a request for release of MIH funds for construction of a home on 711 Blaine Street. The council approved the request for disbursement #1 in the amount of \$25,000 for the basement completion expenses. Corina Cox, from Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission came to discuss several options the city could pursue for funding repair

of State Street. One of the steps forward will be city-wide financial survey. The proposed funding will require that a percentage of the households be of low to moderate income. Council agreed to participate in the survey later in the summer, David Blau from Miller and Associates presented pay application in the amount of \$99,097.44 for the ARPA water main delivery project. He said the delivery line project is about two-thirds completed by BSB Construction. Council voted approval of payment. Council invoked Ordinance 911 which agrees to the terms of a franchise with IDEATEK to construct, and operate a telecommunications system in Atwood. Mayor Stice was directed by council to sign the documents necessary for the AWAS system to be moved at the Atwood/Rawlins Airport. Councilman Mark Vrbas introduced information for discussion about the city’s respon-

sibilities for jailed inmates and for helping fund emergency dispatch services for city police and fire department. It was agreed that a joint meeting of city council and county commissioners would be of mutual benefit. “This shouldn’t be about us as law enforcement officers, but about concern over the safety and well-being of the people we serve,” Police Chief Brian Withington said. Councilman Dietrich Kastens referred to the upcoming budget planning session and included a plan to change deposits to the sewer and water savings accounts. Council voted acceptance of the 2025 Water Conservation Plan and Emergency Water Plan. The meeting was conducted by Mayor Janet Stice. Council members present were Sandy Mulligan, Diana Tongish, Dietrich Kastens and Dakota Dunker. Mark Vrbas attended remotely. The next regular meeting of the council is set for 7 p.m. July 17 in City Hall.

News at a Glance

Fourth of July

McDonald and Bird City are holding their annual 3rd and 4th of July activities. On July 4, Atwood will be hosting a bike race, talent show and fireworks display at Lake Atwood.

Basketball Camp

Lady Buffs Basketball Camp for boys and girls sixth through eighth grades is from 9 to 10 a.m. and third through fifth grades is from 10 to 11 a.m. July 7-11.

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.

Rawlins County Fair

The Rawlins County Free Fair is July 21-24, 2025.

Museum/Library Hours

Rawlins County Museum in Atwood will be open every Saturday from 1 to 4 p.m. through the summer. 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.

Health center board reviews finances

Chief Financial Officer Heather Prideaux reviewed the Rawlins County Health Center’s financials during their June 23 board meeting. She compared year-to-date figures to those of last year. Gross patient revenue is up 16% with net income 67% higher than this time last year. There are 278 days of liquid cash on hand. Prideaux presented the 2026 budget. She deemed it a conservative budget with an expectation of a three to five % increase in cost of supplies. The board voted to approve the 2026 budget after reviewing it.

There will also be a state budget prepared with a public budget hearing sometime in August. Amie Powell, chief operations officer, said there is a slight positive trend for patient visits this fiscal year compared to last year. Physical therapy and rehab had an active May with visits at Good Samaritan. Powell also reviewed the medical executive committee report in the absence of Dr. Travis Daise. She included the May and June policies and procedures report. Providers names were submitted for credentialing. The board voted acceptance of

the report and the providers’ credentialing. Human Resources Director Gail Shepherd said three Nex-Gen interns began work in June. They will be working in physical therapy, nursing and radiology. She shared screen photos with the board of RCHC employees enjoying a pool party sponsored by the EDGE committee. Jennifer Thompson, director of community outreach, spoke of the pool day and community movie sponsored by RCHC in celebration of their 75th anniversary. A Patient Family Advisory Council is being considered and

she invited others’ input. Ryan Marvin showed the board an architect’s rendition of potential building renovations and their square footage costs. Each phase was detailed and will be shown in even more detail at an informational meeting scheduled for Monday, July 7. CEO Lucretia Stargell reported that she has held nine strategic planning meetings with department heads and they are quite productive. She plans to meet with CEOs from surrounding hospitals for a get acquainted

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