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LIBERAL, KANSAS

**2 GREAT TASTES
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222 NORTH KANSAS AVENUE
SUNDAY - THURSDAY: 11 AM - 9:45 PM
FRIDAY - SATURDAY: 11:00 AM - 10:45 PM
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BRICKHOUSE BARBECUE & BREW
24 EAST SECOND STREET
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Organic ...

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years in, it's further along than I thought it would be. We've got one route going. We're about to start a second route and do it bi-weekly."

Also attending the farm tour were officials with the Kansas Black Farmers Association (KBFA), and Director Dr. Tammy Counts said there are five powerful reasons for transitioning to specialty crops.

"One, a higher profit potential per acre," she said. "Two was resilience in the market because of its diversity. The third one was the strong demand for local, healthy and ethnic food."

Counts said KBFA works with farmers in Oklahoma, Texas, missouri and Nebraska, as well as Kansas.

"We work with those states helping to build communities and support our farmers," she said. "We want our farmers not just to survive. We want them to thrive. We have a strong education component with that. That's why we have the organic certification program for the new and beginning farmers."

Counts gave the final reasons for transitioning to specialty crops.

"The fourth one was a better use of small and marginal land," she said. "For a lot of the farmers we work with, we don't have the best land. Our soil has to be treated, mended, worked with in order for us to produce for us the things we're wanting. The last one was our environment and how it's changing and how we can make our soil healthy from a pot to a plot to acreages."

Justin Howard, director of KFBA's USDA 2501 grant program, said the association recently started a program for new and beginning farmers.

"It was somewhat amended from the USDA," he said. "We thought it was necessary for our network to



Local community members and leaders with the Kansas Black Farmers Association take part in the Organic Transition Farm Tour hosted by Ogallala Commons and the K-State Research and Extension Wild West District.
L&T photo/Robert Pierce

give some strategies and different building blocks for our farmers to start on their operations."

Howard said a new and beginning farmer is defined as an individual or entity who has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and is the main person doing it.

"I'm encouraging people to check into that because it may be something that will help their operation and find some resources," he said.

Howard said KBFA, through the program, helps people start business and farm plans for their operations.

"We noticed in our network, around 80 to 90 percent of all our farmers are beginning farmers and ranchers," he said.

Those applying for the program, Howard said, will need to meet some thresholds such as at least \$1,000 of profit to be considered a farm.

"If you're transitioning from

traditional practices into organic certification, there are some perks to that," he said. "There's a premium for products once you get the label. It does cost to get certified. It could be expensive, but if you group together and do some of the programming as a group, it cuts down on some of the costs."

Counts said the new and beginning farming course is available in person and virtually twice monthly.

"That will conclude in October. It's about a 12-week program," she said.

The audience also heard from a few producers, including Reggie Moten of Righteous Roots Community Garden, an urban micro-farm in Kansas City, Kan., who talked about the growing trend of composting when it comes to organic farming.

"We're working on building on top of things," he said. "We discovered straw and oats and other mediums, and something I

realized along the way is plants are cannibals. All plant material has nutrients in it even after you cut it and it's dead. As you compost plant material, you can always build on top of what's already there."

Moten said those at Righteous Roots have discovered a good way to build new soil fast through composting straw of wheat, oat and barley varieties.

"You can compost Johnson grass if you take the seeds off," he said. "Since the seeds of most of these grasses and plants are used for other purposes, once you cut the seeds off, you can compost just about any plant material and turn into new soil and build with that. We started straw-build farming."

Moten said this type of farming will likely soon become a big trend because it does not require bales as some older practices did.

"You can compost it," he said. "You can just spread it out on your land and compost it loose. Your cornstalks can be composted. Any

plant material from any crops you grow, once you take out the part you use, you can compost the leaves and the stalks and the rest of it and turn it into new soil."

Moten said this goes far towards organic farming due to the abundance of nitrogen and oxygen available.

"If you apply nitrogen and water, you'll soon see things will grow from that," he said. "What you're growing this year is next year's compost, and compost is a boundless nutrient. It adjusts the pH of your soil automatically. It adds all the micronutrients to your soil. It balances it out to where you don't need chemicals."

Moten said an advantage to wheat straw is it resists plant diseases, as well as many insects.

"You can use natural substances to deter them from going in," he said.

Moten said much of what those at Righteous Roots discover is from trial and error, and the available of the Internet in today's age, as well as people who travel and share information about new techniques

in organic farming, more information is likewise available on how to make farming work naturally and organically.

"We're increasing the health of our food, which is going to increase our health," he said.

Moten said leftover plant materials need to be used and treated with natural substances in order for it to become nutrient dense for crops and plants, which makes the foods people eat healthier.

"That's the way we're going to replenish and save the Earth – by using what's natural here and stop going to the other things that are harming us and causing disease," he said. "Cancer is rampant, and we're causing cancer ourselves by our growing practices, by feeding our animals hormones before we eat them. We need to go to natural organic practices and growing for our own health and for the health of the planet itself. The better we take care of the Earth, the better the Earth is going to take care of us."



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City ...

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included 49,473 mills (final amount of 50,367 mills based on valuations) with a total tax levy of \$6,932,800. The 2026 Budget includes an estimate of 50,367 mills with a tax levy of \$8,131,453.73. Due to the increase in 2026 valuations over that of 2025, an additional \$1,198,654 of property tax dollars would be generated at the 50,367 mill rate. The quantity of estimated 2026 mills is subject to change, dependent upon the final assessed valuation in November. City staff anticipates, through final budget talks, to land somewhere between RNR and last year's final number of mills, which will add increased valuation dollars without exceeding the previous year's number of mills. Staff recommends the review of this information with the input of taxpayers in attendance, followed by the approval of Resolution No. 2437."

Up next for the commission will be discussion of Resolution No. 2438 concerning the authorization of the Water Project Funds Grant.

"The Kansas Water Authority Project Funds Grant serves to help identify Kansas entities to obtain the up-front technical assistance and the on-the-ground actions needed to address various water quantity and quality needs," the agenda information noted. "The funds are generally directed to supporting water-related infrastructure activities. We have identified several projects we could potentially apply for. Staff recommends approval of Resolution No. 2438, allowing for the application of the Water Project Funds Grant, and allowing the mayor, city manager, and finance director to execute grant documents."

The commission will also be discussing the Ortuño Addition.

"The City received the final pay voucher for the Ortuño Housing Project Aug. 11. This will be scheduled for payment on the Sept. 9 check run. With this contract fulfilled, it is necessary for the City to accept responsibility for the following new streets in the addition: 1200 Block of South Lincoln Ave.; 1200 Block of Sinanche Ave.; the 100 & 200 Block of McCray Blvd.; and Linn Court. City staff requests consideration to accept the dedication of the above listed streets within the Ortuño Housing Addition, with maintenance responsibilities transferring from O.C. Quality Custom Homes to the City of Liberal effective Aug. 26," the agenda information noted. "With the completion of the Ortuño Housing Addition Development, it is time to discuss the retention pond built within the area. Over the years, the city has either accepted or declined

responsibility for the ponds within the city limits. This decision is typically based upon whether or not the city has vested interests in the area, such as water and sewer infrastructure nearby. Brad Beer and Edgar Ortuño will present comments for the Commission to consider in order to move forward with a decision on whether or not the city will assume responsibility of the pond. City staff recommends review of the comments from both the assistant city manager and developer, followed by a vote on assuming responsibility of the Ortuño retention pond."

The commission will also be asked to approve the purchase of water meters for the Water Department and firearms for the Liberal Police Department.

To conclude the meeting, the commission will be asked to approve the appointment of Kathleen Alonso to the Liberal Memorial Library Board.



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