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liberalfirst.com | Wednesday, August 27, 2025 | Vol. 140 | No. 67





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County commissioners study some of the information presented at a recent town hall meeting in Kismet. L&T photo/Robert Pierce

Tax exemptions, assessed value and mill levies discussed at Kismet town hall

ROBERT PIERCE
• Leader & Times

As Seward County continues to struggle with the possible reality of having to pay back nearly \$6 million in taxes from a Board of Tax Appeals case, commissioners and staff continue to search for answers to how to provide services without a significant rise in the county's mill levy.

The commission hosted two recent town hall meetings, one in Liberal and one in

Kismet, and at the Kismet meeting, Administrator April Warden explained how close county officials monitor the budget to make judgments about spending to ensure the budget is balanced at the end of the year.

"That is something we and the commissioners take pride in to make sure we always have a balanced budget," she said. "This annual financial plan specifies the level of county services and the resources to be provided in the coming year, including personnel positions, capital expenditures and

operating expenses needed to provide those services."

Warden then educated audience members about the county's mill levy rate, the amount of tax payable per dollar of assessed value of property.

"A mill is one-thousandth of a dollar," she said. "In property tax terms, that means \$1 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. Appraised value represents the market value of the property, which is decided by the county appraiser's office, and your assessed value is

the actual value on which you pay taxes."

In Kansas, residential property is assessed at 11.5 percent of its appraised value, with commercial and industrial properties being assessed at 25 percent of appraised value and agricultural property being assessed at 30 percent of its actual production value.

The assessed value, Warden said, is then divided by 1,000 in order to determine the value of one mill.

See TOWN HALL/Page 2

CDC launches new campaign to address youth substance use and mental health

ELLY GRIMM
• Leader & Times

Back-to-school time is officially here, and for some youth, it can be a particularly stressful time.

To help with that, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced a new program earlier this month.

"The back-to-school season is a great time to engage with youth about mental health and substance use to promote their well-being throughout the academic year," a

release from the CDC noted. "To support these conversations, the CDC has launched Free Mind, a new national campaign that provides youth ages 12-17 and their parents and caregivers with resources and information about substance use, mental health, and the connection between the two. The drug overdose crisis is constantly evolving and remains an important public health issue. In 2024, more than 80,000 Americans died from a drug overdose. From 2020 to 2024, 75 percent of overdose deaths among youth ages 10–19 involved illegally made

fentanyl. In addition, the number of teens reporting poor mental health has increased in the past decade. In 2023, 40 percent of high school students stopped regular activities because of persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness and one in five students seriously considered attempting suicide."

Other health leaders are praising the work.

"Teens may use alcohol and other substances to help them cope with stress, anxiety, and depression," Dr. Allison Arwady, Director of the CDC National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, noted in the

CDC release. "Talking openly about mental health and substance use, and knowing when to get professional help, is critical to helping teens stay healthy. That's why this campaign supports youth, parents, and caregivers in having those conversations early, before an issue arises."

The CDC spoke directly with youth about their knowledge and perceptions regarding substance use to develop messages, branding, and tactical strategies for Free

♦ See CDC/Page 2



KDOT announces chip seal projects to begin on US 56 and K-25 in Stevens and Morton counties

Kansas Department of Transportation

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) is scheduled to start multiple chip seal projects this week along U.S. Highway 56 and Kansas Highway 25.

The approximate locations of the projects are on U.S. 56 from the city limits of Rolla east to the west city limits of Hugoton and along K-25 from the Oklahoma-Kansas state line north to the US 56/K-25 junction in Stevens and Morton counties.

The chip seal project will seal minor cracks, delay further deterioration of the existing surface and provide a new skid-resistant wearing surface.

US 56 and K-25 will be reduced to one lane in sections while work is underway on the 27.17-mile project area. Motorists should expect delays of up to 15 minutes as flaggers and a pilot car direct traffic through the work zone. The work zone will be marked by signs and cones.

The contractor may work Monday through Saturday during daylight hours. Conditions and the contractor's work schedule will determine whether Saturday work occurs. The highways will be open to normal traffic when construction is not taking place.

Heft and Sons LLC of Greensburg is the contractor on this \$1.1 million project. Conditions permitting, it is expected to be completed by the end of September.

For current road conditions, visit kandrive.gov or call 511. For updates on this construction project, contact Joel (Simon) Valdez, construction manager, at 620-417-7706.















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