

What’s the Word?

SECURITY

BY DAVID WOODS

►► As you look around you, it becomes evident that the world is obsessed with security. Are you secure in your job, your marriage, or even in who you are? Are the kids secure at school? Are you secure at work? How about your home when you’re not there? Can you even be secure in church?

There are security cameras, security codes, security officers, data security, identity security, security clearances, and don’t forget about social security.

I think you get the point. People want to feel secure. This reminds me of the man who had half of his metal pipe stolen from his farm. In response, he

put out a security camera. The next morning, the remainder of the pipe was gone, and you guessed it, so was the security camera.

The bottom line is: nothing in this world is ever completely secure. However, the Bible talks about something we can have that is not just secure in this world, but for all eternity. That something is: eternal life for all who put their faith in Jesus Christ.

John 10:28-29 says that we are secure in our salvation and that no one can snatch us out of the hands of Jesus or the Father. In Romans 8:38-39, Paul says that nothing in the universe can separate the believer from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Are you secure today?

Mulberry island-annex request discussed, 30-day clock set

CRAWFORD COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING – OCTOBER 21, 2025

BY PHILIP STEVENS
HOMETOWN GIRARD

►► All three Crawford County commissioners (Chairman Tom Moody, Carl Wood, and Bruce Blair) heard more than an hour of public input Tuesday on the City of Mulberry’s request to “island annex” roughly 1,700 acres that do not touch Mulberry’s current boundaries. By day’s end, County Counselor Jim Emerson confirmed the county received the city clerk’s certified resolution on Monday, Oct. 20, starting a 30-day window for the Board to make findings under Kansas statute. Emerson said the decision deadline falls around Tuesday, Nov. 19, and that a dedicated public hearing will be scheduled before then so residents may speak for or against the annexation.

The request appeared on the official agenda as “Mr. Pat Walden, City of Mulberry, discussing land annexation,” with “Mr. Rick Elnicki” listed in public comment on the same topic. The Crawford County Coalition Against Wind and Solar also asked to discuss a moratorium extension.

Kansas law allows a city to annex non-adjointing (“island”) land when three conditions are met: (1) the land is in the same county; (2) the landowners petition or consent; and (3) the county commission, by a two-thirds vote, finds the annexation “will not hinder or prevent the proper growth and development of the area or that of any other incorporated city in the county.” The city clerk must file a certified copy of the city’s resolution with the county commission; within 30 days of receiving it, the commission must make findings and notify the city of its decision.

Emerson said the county received the certified paperwork on Oct. 20 and will target about Nov. 19 for a decision. He added the county will circulate the materials to nearby cities, including Arma and Frontenac, to obtain comments relevant to the statutory “growth and development” finding. He also stated there will be a public hearing before the vote, even though the island-annexation statute itself sets a 30-day decision clock and does not mandate a hearing.

Mulberry Mayor Pat Walden opened by talking at length about his roots in the community – 53 years of marriage, half a century in the same Mulberry home, and a lifetime of volunteer service – and framed the annexation as “the last opportunity Mulberry will get to survive.”

“I have never accepted one penny from Mulberry. I do it for nothing,” Walden said, underscoring his personal commitment.

Stripped to its policy rationale, Walden’s argument for annexation hinged on three points he stated.

Access to funding/eligibility: He said annexation would “allow Mulberry access to programs through the Department of Commerce,”

improve city finances, and help meet matching requirements for public-works grants the city currently struggles to afford. He did not explain the balance of property tax revenue versus maintenance, or which would be greater.

Infrastructure needs: He listed aging water and sewer systems, streets, and a lack of storm shelters, arguing added revenue would help address those costs. He did not explain the source of added revenue.

Population decline and city viability: Walden noted Mulberry’s population loss over the last decade, saying annexation could “bring growth to northeast Crawford County.” He did not elaborate on how acquiring land – by all accounts, is specifically for a commercial solar project – could be used for housing development.

While much of Walden’s remarks centered on his personal history and passion for the town, his policy case was that annexation could expand Mulberry’s fiscal capacity to maintain services and pursue development tools otherwise out of reach.

An alternate view wonders how Mulberry will be able to fulfill its statutory duties to maintain roads and utilities in the proposed annexation when it can’t do so now without help from the county.

Lisa Rhodes, a local consultant on Shasta’s payroll, spoke in support of Mulberry’s request and addressed criticism about outside influence. “No one’s been bought off by Shasta,” she said, adding that any zoning specifics “will be up to Mulberry” if annexation occurs, including buffers, setbacks, or screening. She also contrasted limited survey participation countywide with vocal opposition, saying the county should reflect on engagement with constituents.

Rhodes repeatedly pressed the commissioners on whether there would be a “public hearing,” appearing to conflate a statutory annexation-hearing framework used in other annexation routes with Emerson’s plan to hold a county-hosted hearing strictly for input on the island-annexation request now before the Board. Emerson responded clearly: “There will be a public hearing, and they’ll get to speak, they’ll get to say whatever they’d like for or against the annexation.” The key legal point is that Mulberry’s request is proceeding under K.S.A. 12-520c (island annexation by consent), which requires the commission to make specific findings within 30 days of receiving the city’s certified resolution; the statute itself does not prescribe a formal hearing, though the Board may hold one and intends to do so.

Multiple residents near the proposed territory objected. One nearby homeowner raised questions about battery storage, inverter locations, noise, and abatement

Annexation timeline at a glance:

- Oct. 20, 2025: County received Mulberry’s certified resolution (per counselor’s report in open meeting).
- By ~Nov. 19, 2025: County Commission must make and record findings and notify Mulberry of its decision (30 days from receipt).
- Before decision: County will hold a public hearing to take input for or against the annexation and will solicit comments from nearby cities that could be affected by growth-and-development considerations.

measures, urging the county not to proceed without clear answers.

A woman who identified herself as a Mulberry resident, Phyllis Pawlack, said she owns property both inside Mulberry city limits and in Crawford County and is opposed to the annexation’s scale and implications for emergency services. In full, she told commissioners: “Mulberry covers one half of a square mile, roughly 320 acres. What they’re wanting to annex is five times that property. I agree it sounds great, the extra revenue... But will it be there? Will it really come forth? I don’t want this in my backyard, and I don’t wish it for the backyard for these other people. Mulberry right now, today, we have a volunteer fire department. We don’t have enough personnel to man that volunteer fire department today. Are we going to have enough personnel to man the fire department to fight fires because of this...? I don’t think so.”

Other speakers questioned Shasta’s track record, raised concerns about property values, decommissioning, glare, and what power Mulberry would have over land use affecting neighborhoods just outside the annexed area.

Landowner Rick Elnicki, whose property is included in the proposal, offered brief but clear support. “I’m Rick Elnicki, one of the landowners involved in the annexation. I’d just like to voice my support for this annexation. I also would really like to help, however I can, the city of Mulberry, because they need the help.”

Under K.S.A. 12-520c, the Commission must determine, by a two-thirds vote, whether the annexation “will not hinder or prevent the proper growth and development of the area or that of any other incorporated city” in Crawford County. Emerson said notices will go to nearby cities to solicit comments that bear on that finding. The Board must record its findings and notify Mulberry within 30 days of the certified filing date (Oct. 20).

Separately, commissioners and Emerson reiterated that annexation proceedings are legally distinct from any particular project that might occur later. In past case law interpreting 12-520c, courts have noted the reason for island annexation can be relevant because the intended use may affect growth-and-development considerations, but today’s action is still a county finding on annexation criteria, not a zoning approval. (This is a legal inference drawn from the statute

and case annotations. See ksrevisor.gov.)

During public comment, Becky Willard, representing the Crawford County Coalition Against Wind and Solar, asked commissioners to extend the county’s moratorium for another year to give Planning & Zoning time to complete its work and to add data centers, Bitcoin and crypto operations to the pause. “We’d like another year... and we would like to add three more things to the moratorium. And that would be data centers, Bitcoin and crypto,” she said, describing noise and siting concerns observed in other counties. Emerson said he would draft updated resolution language if and when the commission is ready to consider the move.

In other business

Sheriff Billy Tomasi briefed commissioners on an Oct. 9 saturation operation to check registered offenders. Of roughly 200 offenders, 104 were compliant; 22 were non-compliant, six of whom were taken into custody. Twelve non-compliant offenders were not immediately located and will face charges, with four cases under further investigation. Tomasi reported 1,104 calls for service in the last month, 396 traffic stops, 35 arrests and 115 reports taken, and said patrols will increase around the holidays.

Maintenance Supervisor Aaron Crozier presented follow-up on bids to upgrade the Pittsburg Judicial Center boiler plant. He recommended accepting Design Mechanical’s proposal (the high bid) based on the firm’s detailed design, experience, responsiveness, and ability to start quickly amid current boiler lockout issues that left Courtroom A near 60°F on recent mornings. Commissioners discussed finances, including EMS revenue risks in a federal shutdown, and asked Emerson to review funding options. A motion to accept the higher bid died for lack of a second; commissioners will revisit the item Friday after Emerson’s funding check, with Crozier contacting the firm to hold a tentative spot.

Commissioners confirmed an Oct. 24, 8:30 a.m. work session with Ryan Insurance and the Sheriff’s Office (insurance). They also set an Oct. 31, 9:00 a.m. work session with the Southeast Kansas Recycling Center to discuss its future.

Emerson reminded the public that comments submitted through the county website’s “report a concern” email (admin@ crawfordcountykansas.org) are being forwarded to the commission.

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Chad Erickson.....Oct 23

Randy BennettOct 23

George StonerockOct 24

Lloyd StolteOct 24

Phyllis Bitner.....Oct 24

Steve Wutke.....Oct 24

Brenda Newberry.....Oct 25

Dorothy GeierOct 25

Judy Hudson.....Oct 25

Zack Debusk.....Oct 25

Bill Geier.....Oct 26

Ginger FielderOct 26

Bob HallacyOct 26

Reid MurphyOct 26

Jack Battitori.....Oct 27

Roger Horton Sr.Oct 27

Nancy SchifferdeckerOct 27

James ShetlarOct 27

Teresa SimonsOct 27

Vesta WhisenhuntOct 27

Joanne WisemanOct 28

Nick MeckOct 28

ANNIVERSARIES

Ryan & Jamie Curran.....Oct 26

John & Lora RiceOct 26

Vern & Kathy FoxOct 26

Ron & Rosie BroganOct 28

Dan & Linda Stevens.....Oct 29

Jeff & Donna BuckleOct 29



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Meal program for ages 60+ served at 10:30 am in the Girard Senior Center.

Located at Girard Senior Center – 221 S Ozark St, Girard KS

Mon. Oct 27- Biscuits & Gravy, Sausage Patties, Hard Boiled Egg, Baby Carrots Sticks

Tues. Oct 28- Chicken Alfredo/Egg Noodles, Broccoli & Cauliflower, Breadstick

Wed. Oct 29- Hot Sliced Pork on W.W. Bun, Oven Roasted Sweet Potatoes, Buttered Peas

Thur. Oct 30- Tuna Macaroni Casserole, Roasted Brussel Sprouts, Dinner Roll

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