

## Commissioners tackle budget planning

LYNDON — Osage County Commissioners spent several hours Tuesday evening, July 1, reviewing preliminary 2026 budget data, discussing long-term capital planning, and approving several law enforcement-related measures, including a major change to the retirement system for the county's deputies.

Commissioner Brandon Smith was present for the meeting in person. Commissioner Les Holman joined by phone at the start of the meeting, then later joined in person. Commissioner Heather Kuder

was not present.

Scott Lloyd, CPA and consultant with Swindoll, Janzen, Hawk & Loyd, led the Board through an in-depth overview of Osage County's preliminary 2026 budget, presenting multi-year comparisons of revenues, expenditures, and fund balances. His analysis showed that while Osage County's total assessed valuation has risen to more than \$211 million – up \$10.7 million from 2024 and more than \$70 million since 2018 – the county has remained below the state's average per-capita tax burden.

For example, Osage County's 2024 per capita property tax burden was about \$580, one of the lowest among a dozen comparable counties.

Commissioners reviewed the current cash reserve levels across all major funds. The general fund has about four months of reserves, short of the six-month benchmark Lloyd recommends. The road and bridge fund is near six months, while employee benefits stands at about eight and a half months.

Lloyd emphasized that inflation is driving higher costs

across nearly every department, and cautioned that maintaining a flat mill levy over several years has eroded available cash in some funds. He said several other counties are now struggling, due to previous efforts to stay revenue-neutral, despite rising service demands.

Preliminary figures show that keeping the county's mill levy unchanged for 2026 would generate approximately \$490,000 more in revenue, due to the higher valuation. However, that figure still leaves the county roughly \$2.3 million

above the state's revenue-neutral rate threshold, meaning a public hearing will be required if the commission does not opt to lower the levy.

Commissioners also discussed the possibility of adjusting levies in certain funds, such as debt service and ambulance, to reduce the general fund's deficit and increase flexibility. Specific suggestions included reducing cash carry-over in the ambulance fund by \$100,000, and using the savings to strengthen the general

See **Budget** | 8

## Osage City Carnival July 9-12



Chris Faimon/Herald-Chronicle

Great Plains Amusements finished setting up the carnival rides and games Tuesday morning. They will be open Wednesday through Saturday.

## Scranton City Council

# Public hearing requirement fulfilled

Gary Rush | Reporter

SCRANTON — With Mayor Micheal Meenen unavailable to attend the meeting, Councilman Tim Scheidegger assumed the role of acting mayor. Councilwoman Amber Rendell and City Attorney Todd Luckman were equally unable to attend. Three council seats were occupied to achieve a quorum.

Brett Waggoner, the grant writer for the Scranton CDBG, was available for the meeting to hold a public meeting and describe the available usage of the grant. He

also supplied a total of the grants (Jones Fund included) that the city would receive, and he provided an estimate of the cost of the new community center, as per the contracted architect. Waggoner informed the Council that the available money for the new construction of the community building would not include the cost of removal of the current center.

"The actual design of the building can be determined later," Waggoner said. "No matter what additions or subtractions to the building plans might be, the match-

ing contribution from the city will not change." This statement was made to assuage questions from the Council concerning possible addendums to the current plans for the new building.

"Do we have the money to get the site prepped for new construction?" Councilman Gary Kentch asked. "After we tear down the current building, the ground will need to be filled and packed numerous times to get the area to grade. Do we have the money for that?"

See **Scranton** | 6

# Melvern Sunflower Days fair results

MELVERN — Melvern Sunflower Days was held June 20-21. Among the activities were a baby show, food stand, bingo, karaoke, inflatables, races, a parade, and live music by Lorena Prater.

Friday evening kicked off with the baby contest. In the newborn to 6 months division, Emma Schimmel, daughter of Tristen and Gannon Schimmel, took first place, with Cohen Prunty, daughter of Akaylee Prunty, being named runner up. Taylynn Linsey, daughter of Kylie and Alex Linsey, was the winner in the 7 to 12 months division.

Saturday morning started with children's races. This year's bicycle winners were Kora Murray, Moriah Nafziger, Keira Lowery and Waylon L'Ecuyer. A spray-and-play, provided by the Melvern Fire Department, offered a fun way to stay cool on a hot afternoon.

Saturday's parade included the grand marshals, Larry and Marie Burnett. Larry is a lifelong resident of Melvern, and Marie moved into the area the day the train derailed in 1970. They've been married for 52 years, and have three children and five grandchildren. Larry worked at Rylie Equipment for 42 years before retiring. He also



Submitted

Marie and Larry Burnett served as grand marshals in the parade June 21.

served on the fire department for 30 years and serves on the board currently. He served in Vietnam, and is a member of the American Legion. Marie has worked in food service most of her life. First at Beto, then at French's Cafe. She then spent 24 years at the school kitchen in Melvern before retiring. Now she drives students to Washburn Tech in Topeka. Together, Larry and Marie have each

served terms on the city council, and they started Boy Scouts. The troop has four Eagle Scouts to their credit, and all have made successful achievements. Larry and Marie are both cancer survivors, and give all glory to God for their healing.

First place for floats went to Lyndon Stake Bank/Lap the Lake, second place went to Burnett Farm and Oil, and the Osage County Historical Society took third place.

## Carbondale City Council

# CDBG approved

Gary Rush | Reporter

CARBONDALE — Council members Cheryl Lister, Chad Moore and Ronald Moeller were in attendance for the regularly scheduled July 7 meeting of the Carbondale City Council. Kevin Seals and Kaitlyn Ball were absent. Mayor Anthony DaPrato presided over the evening events. Also present were City Clerk Emily Besette, City Attorney Tom Barnes III, Public Works Supervisor Dustin Bretsnyder, and Police Officer Mariah Shultz.

Grant writer Brett Waggoner of Western Consultants was on hand for the meeting to present the completed CDBG paperwork for the Council's final approval. After a brief review by all members of the council, and a spackling of questions of clarification addressed to Waggoner, the Council decided to allow Mayor DaPrato the opportunity to sign the grant as prepared through eight separate motions by Lister and unanimous approval for each. These motions were offered to accept

various stipulations, rights, commitments and requirements necessary for the city to adopt to receive the grant.

"In light of full disclosure, the city will be charging Cox Communications a 5% franchise tax, which will eventually be billed to the individuals in the community using the service," Barnes said. "I believe the community should be made aware of this. There is the possibility you (the Council) might decide, by ordinance, not to charge a franchise tax to Cox, but that could be messy when considering other franchises operating in the area." Barnes made this statement to highlight key points on one of the three ordinances slated for approval during the evening's proceedings. The other two ordinances pertained to fireworks sales and late fees charged for utility payments under neglect.

After considerable deliberation, the Council decided unanimously to pass the three separate

See **Ordinances** | 8

## Osage City's county fair 4-H events are July 16-19

OSAGE CITY — The 4-H portion of this year's Osage City, Osage County Fair will be Wednesday, July 16, through Saturday, July 19. Fairground will open to the public at 7 a.m. Wednesday, July 16. All exhibits need to be registered between 8 and 11 a.m. At 8 a.m., donuts and juice will be provided by Frontier Farm Credit. A mandatory livestock exhibitor meeting will be 11 a.m. at the Fredrickson Arena. An exhibitor luncheon, sponsored by the Osage County Fair Association, will begin 11:30 a.m., and exhibit judging starts at 1 p.m.

Wednesday will also feature the 4-H and open class poultry show at 4 p.m. in the pavilion, the 4-H swim party from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Osage City pool, and the 4-H Clothing Style Review at 7 p.m. in the community building.

On Thursday, July 17, three 4-H and open class shows will take place. At 9 a.m., the swine show

will take place, followed by the rabbit show at 1 p.m., and the sheep and goat show at 7 p.m. Also on Thursday, the Eagles food stand will open at 11 a.m., and the Blue Ribbon Pie Baking Contest will be at 6:30 p.m., with registration taking place from 5 to 6:15 p.m.

Friday, July 18, will feature four more 4-H and open class shows. The dog show will kick off at 9 a.m., the pet show at 1 p.m., the bucket calf and dairy show at 6:30 p.m., and the beef show at 7 p.m. Also on Friday, the 4-H Ambassadors will have pancakes and games beginning at 9 a.m., the Eagles food stand will open at 11 a.m., and from 7 to 9 p.m., there will be bingo in the community building.

Beginning at 8 a.m. Saturday, July 19, the Eagles food stand will be open. Donuts and juice will be provided, courtesy of RE/MAX EK Real Estate,

See **Events** | 8



INSIDE

BUSINESS DIRECTORY .....	7
OSAGE CITY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE .....	4
CHURCH DIRECTORY/REMEMBER WHEN .....	5

CLASSIFIEDS .....	6
COMMUNITY .....	3
COURTHOUSE NEWS .....	2

DEATHS .....	2
PUBLIC NOTICES .....	6
SCHOOL .....	7

INSERTS

MENARDS