

Olivia

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CPD Patrol Lt. Adam Sorell grew up in Concordia and graduated from Concordia Junior/Senior High School. He began his law enforcement career as a corrections officer for Republic County in 1999 and later moved up the law enforcement ladder with a passion, as he took on dispatching, then patrol, where he later became a deputy.

Later at the Wellsville Police Department, Sorell continued climbing with his career by becoming a detective, then a patrol sergeant, and later a canine handler. He then went to Rochester, New York, to become a peace officer from 2017 to 2024, until he returned to Concordia as a patrol officer and was then promoted to patrol lieutenant about 8 months ago.

If anyone was fit for the job of showing me a workday for a patrol officer, it was Sorell. Speaking of that workday, we split our patrol evenings into two, working about six hours during the evenings of Friday and Saturday.

On our first day of patrol, Sorell and I began the shift with limited fanfare, as a semi-truck had broken down on the viaduct near Sixth and Lincoln streets. Three other officers were working the scene to direct traffic since contractors were still finishing the concrete repair work on the pavement, meaning quite narrow lanes for a breakdown.

At the scene, I had the chance to jump out of the patrol vehicle and experience a bit of what officers see every day on the road. The semi was stalled out in the southbound lane, so CPD officers opened up the middle lane to allow traffic to pass the big rig.

Sorell and his fellow officers then mused about the idea of rerouting through town, but decided that opening the middle lane was effective and didn't damage any pavement repairs.

Humorously, as I approached the driver with my high-visibility media jacket draped over a bulletproof vest and a camera on my hip, he exclaimed, "Oh, of course the media is here!" and gave everyone at the scene quite the chuckle.

After Sorell had a few more discussions with the officers, we went back out on patrol through Concordia, where he showed me parts of town that were notorious for criminal activity. One of the people of interest that Sorell was keeping an eye on happened to frequent a house on the same block I once lived on, which I considered quite the grand neighborhood.

It dawned on me that crime can happen anywhere, but not always obvious or violent crime. While discussing this with Sorell, he mentioned something he thought was important about connecting with the larger community around him and specifically connecting with the youth to provide better protection for them and the community.

"I like to be very involved with the youth," Sorell said. "The connection with the youth is important because they have a lot of valuable information that could really help the police department. They know a lot more than we think they know, and if they don't trust us to come to for that, we don't get that information to help our cases, to help other people."

He continued, "There's a lot of negative things on the internet about police and law enforcement, and I want to try to reverse that role, especially in our high school, to let them know that that perception online is not true. What you see on the internet does not reflect the Concordia Police Department."

Once we cruised through a small part of Concordia, Sorell showed me the wealthier side of town that I didn't even know existed before the patrol. He grew up in town, though, so he knew all the best roads, from scoring the tastiest Halloween candy to criminal activity.

Sorell would wave his hand out the window to show me various houses, who lived there and which houses he dreamed of owning. That was an intriguing part of Sorell's method of patrolling, where he always had his driver's side window open so he could use two senses instead of just one: sight and sound.

"I like being able to listen around me; surprisingly, you can hear a lot," Sorell said. "At night, dogs barking can tell me where someone might be walking or running, while during the day, I can hear people yelling, and I can tell if it's people having a good time or something I need to look at."

While discussing this topic, Sorell's radio came to life with a 'chshhhh' sound, and Cloud County dispatch announced a call about a machete-wielding minor who caused a ruckus on the east side of town. Sorell decided to back up the officer on the call, and

we made our way to the address that dispatch called out over the radio.

I wouldn't like to share too many details, so after a few interviews with individuals on the scene, Officer Dade Douglas chatted with Sorell about the incident while walking back to their respective police cruisers.

According to Sorell, he likes to lead his junior officers to the answer rather than handing it over to them, and so Sorell asked Douglas things like, "What are you going to do?" and "What law are you working under?"

"I like to allow them to make a decision on their own, with the support from myself, and not micro-manage them while they're on the scene," Sorell said. "They have to be able to come up with what they want to do, and we're there to support them, but we are not there to run the scene for them."

Later in the evening, close to midnight, we backed up Sergeant RJ Robinson with a hospital assist, where officers are asked to sit with a patient who may be at risk of harming themselves or others around them. According to Sorell, it's a pretty simple part of the job but can take up significant personnel resources since officers sometimes sit with patients for multiple hours at a time.

Once we finished that call, we called it a night until the following evening. So, the next day, I donned my bulletproof vest and "MEDIA" jacket once more, and experienced a similar evening to the day before, with a few changes.

Sorell and I went out on patrol at about 6 p.m., and it again started with little fanfare. Sorell remarked that it would've made a "more interesting" story if flashier incidents happened that particular weekend, but then said evenings like the night before and this one are pretty common.

I responded then that these evenings would make a story that accurately represents most of his job. Sorell said that about 90% of his job is patrolling around Concordia looking for mishaps and clues while also backing up his officers on active scenes.

Even though it wasn't much fanfare, I did see Sorell work a traffic stop. After pausing at a stop sign on the west side of town, a truck was stopped for a peculiarly long time before continuing, even though the truck was at the intersection before Sorell and I arrived.

Sorell decided to stop the vehicle and ask the driver a few questions, as according to Sorell, the truck driver's actions can be a sign of impaired driving. After a few short inquiries for the driver and asking dispatch to check the driver's identity for warrants or other alerts, which the driver had none, Sorell returned to the vehicle and spoke with the driver about road safety.

Once he returned to the patrol car, Sorell showed me how he documents traffic stops on his body camera. After being on the scene, every officer must take a moment to catalog what kind of incident the officer just finished so the system can document the information correctly for the officer to review later and write a report.

Only a short time after documenting the traffic stop, dispatch called out a grass fire in town that needed the Concordia Fire Department's (CFD) attention. Sorell decided to go along and back up the firefighters, where we got to have a chance to chat with Officer Phil Sudduth and my boss, Russell Gagnon, who were also on patrol that same Saturday evening.

Look to next week's edition of the Concordia Blade-Empire to read about Russell's experience riding along with Sudduth.

At the scene of the fire, we saw only a small grass fire eating away at a resident's fence on the northern side of town. CFD firefighter Derek Champlin quickly extinguished the small flames and took a moment to thank the residents that called in the fire.

With a quieter evening and both of us feeling a little drowsy from the day before, Sorell and I called it a night around 11:30 p.m. Russell and Sudduth continued patrolling for a little while longer, so you'll have to check back next week to see what they experienced while I went home to bed.

Sorell noted that he thought what I was doing, the ride-along, was important as well, since local police often rely on media outlets to help disperse critical information to the surrounding community.

"I think it's good to have the media engage with us regularly," Sorell said. "We need to make sure that the public has open transparency with what we do, and that's through you guys."

The evenings I spent with Sorell taught me a significant amount about how police work actually operates on the day-to-day. Something that surprised me was just how much busywork goes into what officers do, since they are required to document each scene they investigate through their body camera, notes from the scene and follow-up calls to concerned residents.

One thing I noticed was just how much the officers speak with dispatch, and through a later edition of this series, I'll learn more about that critical third pillar of the police department. Throughout my evenings with Sorell, dispatchers handled traffic from all of Cloud County's first responders, and I'm excited to see the work that goes into managing a busy day of calls and emergencies.

City Commission approves MAAs

The condemnation of two properties and multiple Mutual Aid Agreements (MAAs) with neighboring first responders were part of the regular city commission meeting on Wednesday, March 18.

The meeting opened with a public hearing for the condemnation of the property at 715 E. 8th Street and the condemnation of the property at 203 W. 1st Street.

A resident spoke about the property at 715 E. 8th Street, stressing that it represented a danger to the neighborhood and should be condemned. Another resident spoke of the property at 203 W. 1st Street, saying that repair work would begin shortly.

After those comments, the public meeting was closed.

Commissioners then approved Resolutions 2026-2226 and 2026-2227 that condemned the above-noted properties.

The condemnation process allows the City to force action on blighted and dilapidated, damaged or un-secure, unsafe and dangerous property, as well as uninhabitable structures. The resolutions allow 30 days to start the process of removal or repair with a building permit or demo permit.

Next on the agenda, commissioners approved the low bid of \$1,416,520 from Diehl Enterprises of Salina for the reconstruction of East 7th Street from Matthew Street to Cloud Street, and the mill and overlay of West 11th Street and Highland Drive.

The bid includes an Additive #3 for off-street parking on the west side of Doster Street between 7th and 8th Streets.

The project will be paid for from multiple sources, including the Special Highway Fund and the Capital Improvement Plan.

Commissioners then unanimously approved multiple Mutual Aid Agreements with first responders in the north central Kansas area.

The planning process for the Concordia Fire Department (CFD) and its EMS to provide mutual aid with other area first responders has been in the works for months. The MAAs are in place in the event that an incident requires more than the available resources of a single entity. Concordia Fire Chief John Christensen had been keeping commissioners updated throughout the entire planning process with the various mutual aid organizations.

Christensen stated that with the boundaries changing because of the closure of Miltonvale EMS, new MAAs needed to be signed and old MAAs renewed to reflect altered coverage areas.

The CFD MAAs are with C&R Benefit Fire District #1, Glasco Rural Fire District #2, Miltonvale Rural Fire District #3, Cloud County Rural Fire District #4, Clyde Ambulance Service, Clyde Fire Department, Republic County EMS, Clay County EMS, Minneapolis EMS, and Mitchell County EMS.

Commissioners then met in executive session for 15 minutes to discuss confidential business data with City Manager Amy Lange, City Attorney Justin Ferrell, and CloudCorp Executive Director Tim Beims. No action was taken.

With no other items on the agenda, the meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Kansas

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According to the report, the 2025-2026 winter season set the record for the warmest throughout western Kansas, including the north, central and southern regions.

Northeast Kansas experienced the least of this tepid winter, averaging about 3.5 degrees warmer than normal, but remained dry alongside the rest of the state, averaging about an inch under normal precipitation totals for the period.

All parts of the state had below-average precipitation for the season, with the southeast representing the largest departure from normal at 2 inches below normal precipitation. According to another of Sittel's publications, his 2025 Annual Report, Republic and Jewell counties had the most above-normal temperatures for the entire year, averaging at 1.8 degrees above normal.

Each week, Sittel publishes a Weekly Drought Update where he details the week's high and low temperatures, alongside precipitation recordings and an update on drought conditions throughout the state. According to his most recent publication on Tuesday, March 17, the state experienced a 20-point Drought Severity Coverage Index (DSCI) increase, where Drought One conditions crawled across the central and western parts of the state.

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