



OBITUARY

Jeffrey Lane McDiffett

Jeffrey Lane McDiffett, 75, of Lawrence, Kansas, passed away at his home on Saturday, July 25, 2026. He was an amazing father, “Papa,” brother, friend, and neighbor. He will be deeply missed.



Jeff was born in Junction City, Kansas on May 29, 1951 to Kenneth and Virginia McDiffett of Alta Vista. He graduated from Alta Vista High School in 1969 where he was a letterman on the men’s basketball team. Following graduation, Jeff joined the National Guard and attended Kansas State University where he earned a degree in education while working in construction.

After graduation he became a beloved teacher in Auburn-Washburn, USD 437 and put his love of basketball into action, coaching girls’ basketball for many years.

Jeff was a dedicated father and known to his grandchildren as “Papa.” He adored his grandkids

and never missed an opportunity to spend time with them. He was always quick with a smart one-liner that made everyone laugh; making sure to pass down the smart McDiffett sense of humor. He was incredibly generous in giving his time, endless energy, and expertise in all things carpentry, drywall, roofing, and fencing related and he did so with joy and humor that made hours of hard work enjoyable.

Jeff moved to a quiet cul-de-sac in Lawrence in 2012, where he regularly lent a hand, mowed a yard or shoveled snow for those less able. “Mr. Jeff” as he was known to the kids in the neighborhood, loved sitting on his front porch enjoying a cup of coffee, listening to the birds sing, and spending time “squirrel whispering” in his backyard.

He is preceded in death by his parents and sisters, Cindy McDiffett and Shelley Lee. He is survived by his brothers Tim McDiffett, Kelly McDiffett, his daughters Jessica Hull, and Erica McDiffett, and grandchildren Jordan Brown, Lilius Hull, Jasper Mumford, Alice Hull, and Ruby Hull.

Services will be held in Council Grove, KS on Tuesday, August 4th, 2026 at the Council Grove First Congregational United Church of Christ. Visitation will begin at 10 a.m., the funeral will begin at 11 a.m. and a lunch reception will follow.

Memorial donations may be made to KU Endowment in memory of Jeff McDiffett to support the Comprehensive MS Center (Fund #10283) or the MS Achievement Center (Fund #10125) at P.O. Box 928, Lawrence, KS 66044 or online at www.kuendowment.org.

LETTER to EDITOR

I fully support Mayor Ryan McDonald and oppose this recall. After reading the claims, following the discussions, and checking the facts myself, it’s clear this effort is driven less by actual misconduct and more by frustration with a mayor who is willing to bring new ideas and challenge the way things have always been done in Council Grove.

Elected officials should be held accountable. They should answer questions, explain their decisions, and be transparent. But that standard has to go both ways. We can’t demand transparency from our leaders and then turn around and attack them the moment they give answers we don’t like.

Recall supporters keep calling for more transparency from Mayor McDonald. They keep pointing to two city ordinances they say he violated. I’ve read both, and I’m not seeing the violations. What I do see is a mayor who stepped up and publicly corrected misinformation that was spreading online. That sounds pretty transparent to me. If the real complaint is that he publicly discussed a personnel matter, then quote the actual ordinance that prohibits it. Don’t keep waving around ordinances about the city administrator’s duties that don’t say what you claim.

It’s also fair to ask where this sudden passion for transparency was when the previous administration held multiple executive sessions on the city lake annexation. An attorney raised concerns about many possible KOMA violations, yet we saw no recall effort from the same people now demanding one. That silence makes this look like a political stunt.

Disagreeing with a mayor is normal. Making decisions some people don’t like is part of governing. But those aren’t grounds for removing someone from office. A recall should require serious wrongdoing, not just irritation with a different leadership style.

I urge the citizens of Council Grove to examine the facts for themselves, ignore the selective outrage, and refuse to treat personal frustration as grounds for removing an elected official. When you do that, it’ll be much easier to see that Mayor McDonald is working to move this community forward.

Sincerely,
Colton Elsen

our students are physically, mentally, and socially prepared to represent Morris County with pride when the fall season opens.

It Takes a Village

It is easy to focus on the first and last days of school, but the magic that happens in between is only possible because of the hard work happening right now in June and July. From the grounds crew braving the summer heat to the custodians polishing floors, the technicians configuring laptops, the educators building curriculum, and the office team managing the books—our staff’s dedication to USD 417 kids is second to none.

When our doors open in August, know that hundreds of hours of care and effort went into making that day possible.

As always, my door is open.

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*This project is funded in part
by the KDOT Public Transit Program*

VOTE For Experience
VOTE For Wayne Kohler

District 1 County Commissioner

(Paid for by Wayne Kohler)

Happy 85th Birthday, Larry Wilson!

They say age is just a number...
but **85** is a pretty impressive one!

Through 85 years of wisdom, laughter, stories (some of them even true!), and unconditional love, he has been a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, friend, and neighbor.

We’re grateful for every memory,
every lesson, and every laugh.

Enjoy your special day Dad
— we love you! —Your Family



Commissioners

(Continued from Page 1)

Received notification that our Household Hazardous Waste Contract with Big Lakes Region may be increasing, Geary County has given notice that they intend to drop out.

A reminder to patrons that the tipping floor is open from 9:00 a.m.–4:45 p.m., Monday thru Saturday; if the gate is closed during this time the attendant is switching out the trucks. For the safety of patrons and the attendant please do not enter the area until the attendant is back and has opened the gate.

Recycle:

A load of cardboard went out on Thursday

Noxious Weed:

Caleb has finished spraying for Johnson Grass and is moving on to Sericea Lespedeza

We appreciate the phone calls from patrons letting us know of noxious weeds that are spotted, as it is hard to cover the entire county

Concerns from CB Smith regarding noxious weeds on the KAW Nation grounds were addressed

Discussion was held regarding rock that was placed on a portion of minimum maintenance road R Ave. and 400 Rd. The contractor that was

hired by the landowners to haul the rock, removed it and put it into the landowner’s pen area. No landowner, resident, or contractor can do any work or maintenance on a county road without prior written authorization from the county.

Commissioner Barber discussed the minimum maintenance road H Ave. from 2200-2300; the low water crossing has steel pipe that is caving in and needs fixed.

Commissioner Barber discussed the area of 1700 Rd. from J-K, North of Parkerville; a load of rock is needed.

The commissioners reviewed the 2027 Budget. The proposed changes from last week’s meeting were made, however the county is still waiting for the annual renewal from Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Commissioner Fox (Kohler) moved to schedule the county’s 2027 Budget and RNR Hearing for September 8th, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. The county is currently proposing to exceed Revenue Neutral by \$161,625.00. If the Blue Cross Blue Shield premium renewal should be less than budgeted, the county can re-evaluate the budget proposal at that time. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

NOTICE OF BUDGET HEARING

The governing body of
Four Mile Cemetery District
Morris County

will meet on August 12th, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. at Hokett Residence, 2042 S 850 Rd., Council Grove for the purpose of hearing and answering objections of taxpayers relating to the proposed use of all funds and the amount of tax to be levied. Detailed budget information is available at Morris County Clerk’s Office and will be available at this hearing.

BUDGET SUMMARY

Proposed Budget 2027 Expenditures and Amount of 2026 Ad Valorem Tax establish the maximum limits of the 2027 budget. Estimated Tax Rate is subject to change depending on the final assessed valuation.

FUND	Prior Year Actual 2025		Current Year Estimate for 2026		Proposed Budget Year for 2027		
	Expenditures	Actual Tax Rate*	Expenditures	Actual Tax Rate*	Budget Authority for Expenditures	Amount of 2026 Ad Valorem Tax	Proposed Estimated Tax Rate*
General	6,045	1.570	5,800	1.508	26,492	4,895	1.417
Debt Service							
Totals	6,045	1.570	5,800	1.508	26,492	4,895	1.417
					Revenue Neutral Rate**		
					1.417		
Less: Transfers	0		0		0		
Net Expenditures	6,045		5,800		26,492		
Total Tax Levied	4,890		4,894		xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx		
Assessed Valuation	3,115,357		3,244,405		3,453,942		

Outstanding Indebtedness,

	2024	2025	2026
Jan 1,			
G.O. Bonds	0	0	0
Revenue Bonds	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Lease Pur. Princ.	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0

*Tax rates are expressed in mills.

**Revenue Neutral Rate as defined by KSA 79-2988

Suzanne Hokett

District Spotlight

(Continued from Page 1)

Central Office staff. Mr. Bryce Johnson, Mrs. Rachel Tompkins, and Ms. Amber Weeks have spent the past several weeks closing out the fiscal year, setting up the financial systems for the new budget year, and managing the purchasing pipeline so every supply order arrives on time. Simultaneously, they are drafting enrollment materials, parent handbooks, and community communications to ensure a smooth kickoff for families next month.

Building Leadership: Preparing to Welcome Our Families

In each of our school buildings, our principals and staff have been working tirelessly through the summer months to lay the groundwork for an exceptional school year. From finalizing schedules and refining building procedures to organizing welcoming environments for returning students, our administrators are focused on setting a positive, supportive tone. They are continuously seeking ways to elevate the school culture and provide the very best learning and social experiences for every child who walks through our doors.

Athletics & Activities: Summer Sweat and Student Growth

Learning and growth at USD 417 extend well beyond the traditional classroom, and summer is a critical training period for our student-athletes and activity participants. Throughout June and July, our dedicated coaches and sponsors have been working alongside our students early in the morning and late into the evening.

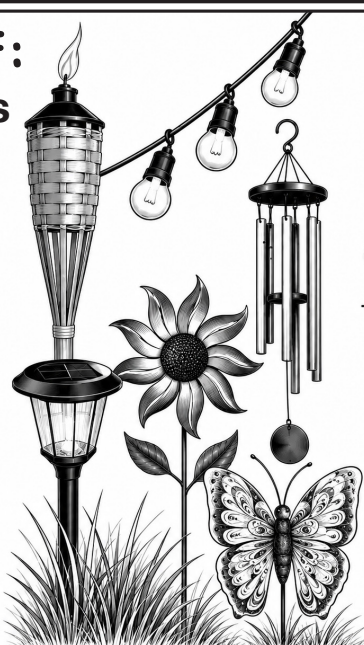
From summer weights, conditioning programs, and skill camps to fine arts preparation and club leadership activities, these leaders have invested hundreds of hours building teamwork, discipline, and pride. Their mentorship over the summer ensures

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