

COUNCIL GROVE REPUBLICAN

A Daily Newspaper on the Santa Fe Trail in Council Grove, Kansas Since 1872



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Briefly...

The Council Grove USDA office, 116 Fox Street, will have a new phone number effective August 28. It is 620-254-2600.

Briefly...

Men's prayer breakfast will be 6:30 a.m., Tuesday at the senior center. Drew Montgomery will be the speaker. All area men are welcome.

Fishing Report

Council Grove Reservoir

Channel Catfish - Fair/Good;
Saugeye - Fair; White Bass -
Fair/Good; Crappie - Fair

Reservoir Lake Level

Normal elevation1274.00

Current elevation1274.07

THREE-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

Corps of Engineers Readings, Council Grove Reservoir

High and low
temperatures for the
24-hour period
ending this morning were
**96 and 78, with the
8:00 am reading 80°.**

Friday: Mostly sunny,
high near 97. South wind
gusts. Mostly clear, low
around 77.

Saturday: Mostly sunny,
high near 96. South wind
gusts. Mostly clear, low
around 75.

Sunday: Mostly sunny,
high near 92. West wind
around 5 mph becoming
north. A 40% chance of
rain after 1 a.m. Partly
cloudy, low around 70.



**FRIDAY
FORECAST
High 97
Low 77**



Argabright Selected for 2026 CSG Henry Toll Fellowship

Kansas Sen. Dr. Mike Argabright, whose 17th District includes Morris, Lyon and Geary counties, has been selected as one of 48 public servants nationwide for the 2026 class of the Council of State Governments Henry Toll Fellowship.



Mike Argabright

The fellowship is an intensive leadership program for state government officials from across the country. This year's class represents 32 states and U.S. territories and includes officials from all three branches of state government. Fellows will gather Aug. 21-25 in Lexington, Kentucky, for the program's 39th convening.

The Toll Fellowship is designed to strengthen communication, collaboration and decision-making skills while building nonpartisan relationships among state leaders. Participants are selected based on demonstrated promise and a commitment to collaborative leadership and public service.

"I am humbled by the colleagues who nominated me and deeply honored that the TOLL Fellowship selected me for this incredible opportunity," Argabright said. "It is an honor to serve Rural Kansas."

Argabright said working with people across political and other differences can lead to stronger results.

"Working and collaborating across party lines and differences creates better policies and stronger outcomes for the people we serve," he said.

He said he plans to "listen, learn, lead" while working with elected officials from throughout the country and representing the interests of Senate District 17 and Kansas.

"I am grateful for this opportunity and look forward to building relationships, sharing ideas, and finding common ground in service to others," Argabright said.

The fellowship is named for Council of State Governments founder Henry Toll, a former Colorado state senator who believed strong states depend on leaders working together across branches of government, political parties and state lines.

Selection for the program is competitive. Candidates go through a nomination and review process led by Henry Toll Fellowship alumni. Since the program was founded in 1986, more than 1,400 public servants have participated.

Past fellows have included governors, lieutenant governors, attorneys general, secretaries of state, state treasurers, legislative leaders, state supreme court justices and hundreds of state and territorial legislators.

Argabright and his wife, Carla, have three sons, Bradley and his wife Gwyn, Mitchell and his wife Katie, and Jacob. They also have a granddaughter, Scottie, and two grandsons, Michael and Beau. In his spare time, Argabright enjoys family, faith, youth activities, sporting events, farming and ranching, gardening, hunting, fishing, concerts and following the Kansas City Chiefs and Royals.

Judd House placed on Register of Historic Kansas Places

A Council Grove home associated with generations of local business, ranching, tourism, and historic preservation has been approved for inclusion in the Register of Historic Kansas Places and is now being considered for the National Register of Historic Places.

The T.W. Whiting House, located at 605 Columbia Street and owned by Kelley and Jill Judd, was approved by the Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review at its June 27 meeting. The board also recommended that the nomination be forwarded to the Keeper of the National Register in Washington, D.C.

The State Historic Preservation Office notified the Judds of the action in an Aug. 6 letter. The National Register nomination will now be reviewed by the Keeper's professional staff. If federal officials concur with the Kansas board's findings, the property will be added to the National Register of Historic Places within 45 days of receipt of the nomination.

The native-stone residence, built about 1911, bears the name of Thomas Wilbert "T.W." Whiting, a prominent Morris County rancher, businessman and developer.

Whiting came to Morris County in 1881 at age 19. According to a biography published in the 1912 Kansas:

A Cyclopaedia of State History, he initially took charge of an 1,800-acre ranch near Kelso, about 11 miles from Council Grove. His holdings eventually grew to approximately 2,400 acres and became known as Sylvan Park Stock Ranch.

Whiting became involved in several livestock enterprises. The 1912 account credits him with being the first to introduce Duroc hogs to Morris County. He also raised Percheron horses and Hereford and Shorthorn cattle.

By 1910, Whiting was investing increasingly in Council Grove business and residential property. He erected the Whiting Garage on Main Street and built and improved a number of residences. The 1912 biography specifically noted that he had completed a cut-stone residence for himself, describing it as an especially substantial Council Grove home.

Whiting later built the Stella Theater, constructed between 1916 and 1918 and named for his first wife, Stella, who died in childbirth, and his daughter Stella, born to his second wife, Alice, known as Allie or "Sweetheart."

(See Judd House, Page 2)

MC Commission: 161 bridge inspections to cost \$25,462

The Morris County Commissioner meeting was called to order on Tuesday, August 4th, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. Commissioners Jim Barber, David Fox and Wayne Kohler were present. Chelsey Schmidt, County Clerk, and Bill Kassebaum, County Counselor, were present.

Others present: Billy Kryger- Pastor Berean Baptist Church
Gary Floyd, county resident, joined the meeting.

Brett Samuels, Emergency Manager, gave a report on Emergency Management. Work continues for updating and finalizing the County's Emergency Operations Plan. Quotes for the UTV have been submitted to the Homeland Regional Council and are awaiting approval.

Gary Floyd, Morris County Representative on the Kansas Silver Haired Legislature, gave a report on the association's legislative priorities.

Jan Sciacca, with the Council Grove Republican, joined the meeting.

Kelsey Sharr, County Treasurer,

gave a report on the Treasurer's Office. The department is currently experiencing a staffing shortage. The quarterly financial reports were presented. Discussion was held regarding Senate Bill 325 and setting the vehicle registration fees. A list of the amounts other counties currently charge per transaction was presented and reviewed. The item was tabled.

Commissioner Fox (Kohler) moved to approve payroll as presented; in the total amount of \$108,972.67. Motion carried.

Commissioner Kohler (Fox) moved to approve the accounts payable vouchers as presented; in the total amount of \$101,586.04. Motion carried. The breakdown by fund is as follows:

General: \$9,904.31
Road & Bridge: \$50,763.97
Noxious Weed: \$32.96
Ambulance: \$676.69
Solid Waste: \$218.11
Capital Improvement: \$39,990.00
Commissioner Kohler (Fox) moved to approve minutes from the

Local SOS and CASA on Gov. Kelly's grant list

Gov. Laura Kelly announced Wednesday more than \$34.5 million in state grants for programs serving victims of domestic and sexual violence, abused and neglected children, and Court Appointed Special Advocate programs across Kansas.

Among the recipients are Emporia-based SOS and CASA of the Flint Hills, which also provide services to residents of Morris and Chase counties. Together, the Lyon County-based programs were awarded \$1,005,248 for 2027.

SOS received \$852,902 through the state's Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Grant program. The funding supports services including shelter, advocacy, safety planning, outreach and other assistance for victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

SOS also received \$90,817 through the Children's Advocacy Centers Grant program. Children's advocacy centers coordinate the work of law enforcement, child protection services, prosecutors, medical professionals and victim advocates in cases involving suspected child abuse. Funding may be used for child-sensitive forensic interviews, victim advocacy and coordination among the agencies involved.

SOS, CASA of the Flint Hills received an additional \$61,529 through the Court Appointed Special Advocate program. CASA programs recruit, train and supervise volunteers who advocate in court for children who have experienced abuse or neglect and help provide judges with information needed when making decisions concerning a child's best interests.

"Through these grants, we are providing crucial support to survivors of crime as they heal and move forward with their lives," Kelly said. "It is essential that these nonprofit organizations have the resources they need to make Kansas a stronger and safer state."

Statewide, the 2027 awards include \$26.48 million for domestic violence and sexual assault programs, \$6.83 million for children's advocacy centers and \$1.27 million for CASA programs, for a total of \$34,587,786.

CG Board of Zoning Appeals grants conditional appeal to McDonald

The first Board of Zoning Appeals hearing held in Council Grove in decades ended Wednesday night with the board granting an appeal involving the redevelopment of 410 E. Main St., subject to conditions addressing property boundaries, an easement and emergency egress.

The approximately 2½-hour hearing drew about 25 community members to the Council Grove City Hall council chambers. Appeals board members present were Chairman Andy Benning, Vice Chairman Taylor Adams, Jason Ziegler, Tim Tyner, Trent Siegle and Chris Myers.

City inspectors Darren Emery and James Masters attended, along with City Administrator and City Clerk Nick Jones. Ryan McDonald of Sage Homes appeared as the appellant and contractor for property owner Tim Walsh, who participated by Zoom. City Attorney Stuart Symmonds also joined by Zoom.

Benning stressed at the beginning that the hearing was not a request to



Katie Roe-Blythe, DDS, was a guest at the Council Grove Rotary Club on Wednesday. "Dr. Katie," who graduated in the top 5% of her class, will continue services offered by retiring dentist Don Alderman while adding services including tooth extractions and root canals. The practice will be known as Hometown Dental, the same name as her Herington location. The phone number remains 620-767-6244.

CG Zoning and Planning recommend new zoning map

The Council Grove Zoning and Planning Committee discussed updates to the city's zoning map, development regulations and City Lake plat during its regular meeting Wednesday evening, Aug. 12.

Committee members present were Chairman Andy Benning, Jason Ziegler, Taylor Adams, Tim Tyner, Trent Siegle and Chris Myers. City Administrator Nick Jones and city inspectors Darren Emery and James Masters also participated.

The committee first elected Benning as chairman of the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Jones then presented a \$3,900 proposal to update the city's zoning map. Emery said another company, which provides mapping services for Morris County, had submitted an initial estimate of approximately

(See CG Zoning , Page 5)

rezone the property, nor was it a request for a variance or exception. Instead, the board was considering an appeal from the city's determination concerning the proposed use of the Main Street property.

Emery, who presented the city's case, said the matter was BZA Case No. 2026-01. He said that, as far as he could determine, Council Grove had not conducted a Board of Zoning Appeals hearing in decades, requiring city staff to research state statutes, city ordinances and the proper appeal procedure.

Emery reviewed the history of the project. A building permit application was received Nov. 20, 2025, describing the project as an interior remodel into a private residence. An underground plumbing inspection occurred in December, when questions were raised about stamped plans and whether the proposed residential use was permitted in the business district.

City officials and McDonald continued discussing the plans and proposed use, and a stop-work order was issued March 13 after substantial work had been completed without a building permit having been issued. A code footprint prepared by Falk Architects was submitted April 20. The building department formally denied the permit May 8, and the formal appeal application was received June 23.

Emery said the city's decision was primarily a zoning determination rather than a building-code determination. The city's business-district regulations prohibit new single-family dwellings but contain language allowing mixed occupancy in a single structure if the structure is suitable for that use.

That language created two principal questions for the board: whether 410 E. Main should be considered one structure or two adjoining structures, and whether the proposed residential and commercial combination was a suitable mixed use within the business district.

Emery said his inspection of the property led him to view the site as two adjoining spaces of different

(See MC Commission, Page 2)

(See CG Board, Page 3)