Monday, October 12, 2026

COUNCIL GROVE REPUBLICAN

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

COUNCIL GROVE 154 Years SANTA FE TRAIL REPUBLICAN

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Briefly...

The City of Council Grove will be conducting a test of the Christmas lights on the downtown Main Street buildings tonight at 8 p.m. If you'd like to check the condition of your building's Christmas lights before Candlelight Charm on November 14, this will be a good opportunity to see what's working and what might need a little attention.

Local Grain Prices

(Provided by Agri Trails Coop)

Corn $4.12
Milo.....$3.85
Soybeans $12.33
Wheat $6.48
Oats $3.25

Reservoir Lake Level

Normal elevation 1274.00
Current elevation 1273.60

THREE-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

Corps of Engineers Readings, Council Grove Reservoir

High and low temperatures for the weekend period were unavailable from the Corps of Engineers this morning due to the holiday

Tuesday: A 30% chance for rain. Mostly sunny, high near 91. South wind 5-10 mph. Tuesday night, a 90% chance for rain, low around 65.
Wednesday: An 80% chance for rain, high near 72. Northeast wind around 5 mph. Showers likely, low around 60.
Thursday: A 70% chance for rain, high near 72. South wind 10 to 15 mph. Mostly cloudy, low around 48.

Columbus Day

TUESDAY FORECAST
High 91
Low 65

8 10499 02579 4

USD 417 BOE to consider public hearing on possible PHES closure

The USD 417 Board of Education will meet Monday, October 12, at 6 p.m., but not at its usual location in the board room at the District Office. Instead, the meeting will be held in the Council Grove Junior Senior High School auditorium, 129 Hockaday St., Council Grove. The change in venue may reflect an expectation of increased public attendance, as one of the agenda items involves consideration of a public notice of hearing concerning the possible closure of a district school building.

"Although the agenda does not identify the school, the item appears to be related to discussions at the board's September 14 meeting concerning the future of Prairie Heights Elementary School in Alta Vista."

During that meeting, Superintendent Tyson Eslinger presented information about enrollment, building capacity and operating costs throughout the district. Prairie Heights currently serves approximately 72 students and operates at about 52% of its capacity.

Financial figures presented to the board indicated an annual expenditure of approximately $13,489 per student at Prairie Heights, compared with $8,822 at Council Grove Elementary School and $8,323 at Council Grove Junior Senior High School.

Eslinger also indicated that Council Grove Elementary could accommodate Prairie Heights students, although doing so would bring the Council Grove building to approximately 95% of its capacity.

The September discussion did not result in a decision to close Prairie Heights. Board members acknowledged the significance of the issue and the need to consider both financial and community implications before proceeding.

Monday's agenda item, listed as "Public Notice of Hearing for Closing School Building," would represent another step in that process. The board is expected to consider providing formal public notice of a hearing, rather than making a final decision on closing the school. A public hearing would provide an opportunity for community members to address the proposed closure before a final determination is made.

Other discussion items on Monday include a review of district governance and operating procedures, screen time in schools and a proposed Safe Routes to School partnership with the City of Alta Vista.

Director of Teaching and Learning Valerie Gehrer will provide information concerning student success, including fall benchmark assessments and an update on a testing pilot program.

Board members will also review policies concerning superintendent expense reimbursement, credit cards, professional development opportunities, evaluations and contract termination or nonrenewal.

Action items include the monthly review of policies addressing superintendent qualifications, duties, recruitment, compensation and benefits.

The consent agenda includes approval of minutes from the September 14 regular meeting and October 6 special meeting, financial reports and payment of bills totaling $1,115,826.71, acceptance of donations and gifts, disposal of district equipment and adoption of student organization and Title I program policies.

Personnel matters include consideration of the employment of Mackenzie Wingo as a cook at Council Grove Elementary School and the retirement of Prairie Heights music teacher Kathy Lamberson at the conclusion of her 2026-2027 contract.

The meeting will also include reports from district directors, building administrators and Superintendent Eslinger, along with an open forum for public comments.

The board's next regular meeting is scheduled for November 9.

CG Fire Dept. responds to Strong City fire

A three-story home in Strong City was destroyed by fire Sunday, Oct. 11, prompting a large response from area fire departments and a request for residents to conserve water.

The fire was reported shortly after noon at 519 Cottonwood Street. According to Chase County Fire Chief Steve Fillmore, the blaze appears to have been accidental, possibly resulting from a debris pile that rekindled overnight. However, the Kansas State Fire Marshal's Office is investigating to determine the official cause.

No injuries were reported.

Firefighters from Strong City, Cottonwood Falls, Cedar Point, Matfield Green, Dunlap and Council Grove responded, along with crews from two Lyon County fire stations. Emergency medical personnel remained on standby, while the Chase County Sheriff's Office assisted with traffic control.

Due to the extensive firefighting effort, the City of Strong City has asked residents of Strong City and Cottonwood Falls, along with customers of Rural Water District No. 1, to conserve water until further notice.

Penny True wins Pigskin Pick 'Em

Penny True of Council Grove emerged from a three-way tie Sunday night to win Week 5 of the Council Grove Republican's Pigskin Pick 'Em contest, correctly predicting 14 of 17 games. The Baltimore Ravens' 30-23 victory over the Atlanta Falcons in Sunday night's NFL matchup settled the competition.

The week produced a surprise that caught every contestant off guard. Not a single entrant picked the Tampa Bay Buccaneers to defeat the Dallas Cowboys, but Tampa Bay claimed a 24-16 victory.

Another unusual outcome came when the New York Giants and Washington Commanders finished in a 27-27 tie after overtime. With neither team winning, the game was excluded from the contest scoring.

Elsewhere in NFL action, the Cincinnati Bengals defeated the Miami Dolphins, 31-24, while the New York Jets edged the Cleveland Browns, 17-12. The Denver Broncos

(See Penny True wins, Page 3)

Data Center search moves toward MC; developers expected at meeting

The search for a potential hyperscale data center site near Herington has expanded into Morris County, and the individuals pursuing the development are expected to attend the Morris County Commission meeting Tuesday, Oct. 13.

Gordon Schultz and Colby Monnington returned to the Herington City Commission on Tuesday, Oct. 6, to report on their efforts since initially presenting the proposal Sept. 1.

Monnington explained that the search has narrowed toward the Herington Regional Airport and adjoining areas of Morris County, where electrical transmission lines and fiber-optic infrastructure could offer advantages for a large-scale development.

The developers are considering sites ranging from approximately 300 to 640 acres. Monnington said one landowner with approximately 640 acres has expressed interest in selling property for the project, although no site has been selected.

He emphasized that locating suitable property involves more than finding available acreage. Electrical capacity, water and wastewater requirements, road access, environmental conditions and the potential economic benefits to Herington must also be evaluated.

"We're not looking for a place to put a data center near Herington. We're looking for a site that can become part of Herington's economic future," Monnington said.

One challenge is determining how Herington would benefit financially if a data center were constructed outside its city limits, particularly in Morris County. Monnington suggested that annexation, utility agreements, infrastructure partnerships or other development arrangements might be considered, although their feasibility would require legal and financial review.

During the next 30 days, the developers intend to narrow the search to two to four potential locations while continuing discussions with landowners. No owner or operator has been secured for the proposed facility.

Schultz, a Herington native, spoke about the community's economic history and declining railroad employment, describing the proposed development as an opportunity to bring new investment and economic activity to the area.

Herington Mayor Eric Gares questioned the developers about the project and the possibility of a public informational meeting. Both men expressed willingness to meet with residents but acknowledged that many questions cannot be answered until a potential site has been identified and its feasibility evaluated.

The developers also discussed concerns about electricity demands,

(See Data Center search, Page 2)

Comm. Barber responds to Herington Data Center meeting

by Jan Sciacca

Morris County Commissioner Jim Barber says he attended the Oct. 6 Herington City Commission meeting to learn more about a proposed data center development and that his comments during the meeting reflected his own position, not that of the entire Morris County Commission.

In a telephone interview Sunday with the Council Grove Republican, Barber responded to concerns raised last week by fellow commissioners Dave Fox and Wayne Kohler, who said they had no prior knowledge of his plans to attend the Herington meeting.

Barber explained that he was unaware of the Herington meeting when the Morris County Commission met earlier that Tuesday. It was not until he returned home that his wife, Jane, told him about the scheduled discussion.

Because portions of Herington are located within Morris County, including territory in his commission district, Barber decided to attend. He put his commissioner's shirt back on and drove to Herington to learn more about the proposal.

Although he had heard rumors of a possible data center development in August, Barber said he knew little about the project. At that time, Dickinson County Commissioner Ron Roller had contacted him about individuals exploring possible locations, including property in Morris County. Barber said he mentioned that conversation to his fellow commissioners at a subsequent meeting, but there was little additional information available.

Barber also addressed questions about his seating arrangement at the Herington meeting, where he was photographed sitting beside individuals involved in exploring the proposed development.

He explained that he sat in the front row because he has difficulty hearing and wanted to follow the presentation. He said the two men sat beside him by chance and that he had never met them before that evening.

Barber acknowledged speaking during the public comment portion of the meeting and identifying himself as a Morris County commissioner. However, he emphasized that he was expressing his individual position rather than speaking for the

(See Barber responds, Page 2)

Wilsey Christian Church to host Faith & Freedom Show Oct. 18

Wilsey Christian Church will host its annual Faith & Freedom Variety Show on Sunday, October 18, beginning at 6 p.m.

Formerly known as the Ice Cream Social, the event will feature music and entertainment provided by local church talent, along with an assortment of sweet and savory treats.

Guests can enjoy homemade and store-bought goodies while gathering for an evening of entertainment and fellowship.

Wilsey Christian Church invites the community to attend, enjoy the performances and treat themselves to an evening of food and fellowship. There is no cost to attend the event but good will donations will be welcome.

Senator Marshall visits CG during Flint Hills tour

U.S. Senator Roger Marshall traveled north along Highway 177 on Thursday, Oct. 8, making brief stops in Cottonwood Falls and Strong City before arriving in Council Grove, where he met with supporters at the Hays House. He then continued to Manhattan for a veterans event.

Marshall spent approximately 20 minutes in Council Grove, where he visited with local residents and was photographed with Hays House co-owner Randy Dickson.

During the informal gathering, Marshall answered questions about his political positions, federal spending, agriculture and rural health care.

When asked what he believed was most misunderstood about his positions, Marshall said political accusations have created misconceptions about him. He said supporters want to hear the truth rather than become distracted by political rhetoric.

Marshall said that despite political disagreements, most Kansans share similar priorities, including good jobs, affordable housing, opportunities to save for retirement and college, and safe communities in which to raise their families. He also emphasized the desire for less federal government interference in everyday life.

Agriculture became a topic when a resident raised concerns about farmers and the continued delay in passing a new farm bill. Traditionally addressed every five years, the legislation has been delayed as lawmakers disagree over agricultural and nutrition assistance provisions.

Marshall blamed Democratic opposition for the delay, arguing that Democrats have placed greater em-

(See Sen. Marshall visits, Page 3)



Hays House co-owner Randy Dickson (left) took time away from the kitchen to greet Senator Roger Marshall who stopped in town on Thursday, October 8, on his way to Manhattan, after campaign stops in Chase County.