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Council Grove Republican

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Briefly...

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

Reservoir Lake Level

Normal elevation 1274.00
Current elevation 1274.17

THREE-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

Corps of Engineers Readings, Council Grove Reservoir

High and low temperatures for the 24-hour period ending this morning were 81 and 56, with the 8:00 am reading 56°.

Friday: A 70% chance for rain, high near 75. South wind 5-10 mph. Cloudy, low around 54.
Saturday: A 20% chance for rain, high near 69. Southeast wind around 5 mph. Mostly cloudy, low around 52.
Sunday: Partly sunny, high near 72. Calm wind becoming southeast around 5 mph. A 60% chance for rainm low around 57.



Daylight Saving Time Ends
November 1, 2026

FRIDAY FORECAST
High 75
Low 54

Community Arts Council:
Nearly 50 years of enriching Council Grove through the arts

by Jan Sciacca

For nearly 50 years, the Community Arts Council of Council Grove has brought music, theater, visual arts and cultural experiences to the community. From traveling ballet performances and dinner theaters to outdoor musicals, public murals and today's Sethfest celebration, the organization has provided generations of residents with opportunities to experience and participate in the arts.

The nonprofit organization traces its beginnings to approximately 1976, when community leaders recognized a need for more regular arts programming. That mission continues today under the leadership of president Mary Yoder and volunteers committed to making the arts accessible to all ages.

Donna Frese, who served on the Arts Council with her husband, Dan, for nearly two decades, recently revisited the organization's early history with her mother, Connie Essington, who chaired Council Grove's PRIDE program during the 1970s.

According to Frese, the PRIDE Committee identified the establishment of a community arts council as one of its goals. Essington recalled that she and fellow volunteer Maxine Haug learned that Marion, Kansas, was developing an arts council and traveled there to attend one of its early organizational meetings.

Much of that meeting focused on raising money to purchase a piano. As the two women drove home, they laughed about the experience, remarking, "Well, we've got pianos."

Council Grove already had several locations equipped for musical performances, giving local organizers a starting point for developing their own organization.



Although Essington and Haug were not among the original Arts Council board members, their involvement in the PRIDE effort helped encourage its establishment. Frese's father, Don Essington, subsequently served on the Arts Council during its early years.

Among the organization's early undertakings was bringing a traveling production of The Nutcracker ballet to Council Grove, with performances and demonstrations for students and the public. Frese recalled her mother's amusement when high school boys, initially showing little interest in ballet, became impressed by demonstrations of the dancers' remarkable physical strength.

Other activities included historical pageants associated with Washunga Days and appearances by visiting artists. Among them was watercolor artist Jim Hamil, whose Kansas landscapes and Council Grove paintings were featured during a book signing for Return to Kansas in the 1980s.

When Donna and Dan Frese moved to Council Grove in 1988, Arts Council member Debi Wiard encouraged them to become involved. They joined the board around 1989, beginning years of volunteer work that helped bring memorable productions to the community.

One of their first undertakings was a dinner theater featuring local singers and a prime rib dinner prepared with the help of board member Cheerie Baker. The event attracted a capacity audience.

In 1989, the Arts Council presented Dracula at the Council Grove High School auditorium, with a cast that included John Parks, Rod Hollis, Ken McClintock and Nanci Corley, among other local performers.

Two years later, the organization staged an even more ambitious production, the musical Oklahoma!, presented outdoors at Council Oak Park. The production ran four nights, with Christy Ziegenhirt in a leading role. Other local performers included Don Alderman, Graham Newcomer, Kala Stoddard and Joe Glotzbach. Ralph Mock directed the musical.

Frese remembered the bleachers filled with spectators and the satisfaction of watching local residents, some of whom had not performed since their school years, share their talents with the community.

Behind those productions was considerable volunteer labor. While performers rehearsed, others handled publicity, tickets, programs, props, lighting and sound. Frese worked on publicity and ticket sales, while her husband and Vance Hight assisted with microphones, spotlights and other technical arrangements. Baker and other volunteers handled countless details.

Financial support also helped make larger projects possible. Frese recalled Arts Council treasurer Connie Downes working with her husband to prepare a major grant application during the early days of personal computers. The successful application helped fund theatrical productions and, according to Frese, one of the pioneer sculptures installed in the Flint Hills north of Council Grove.

The Arts Council also cooperated with other developing artistic endeavors, including Gathering in the Grove, which placed a greater emphasis on visual and fine arts.

Over the decades, new volunteers introduced additional activities while maintaining the organization's original purpose.

Among its later leaders was the late Max Byram, who served as Arts Council president and was particularly passionate about bringing live music to Council Grove. He believed music could attract visitors, support Kansas performers and bring people together.

Byram was instrumental in developing Sethfest, a festival built around the belief that everyone should be able to enjoy live performances without paying admission.

His sister, Anneliese Troxell, was involved with the Arts Council before his passing, helping paint the mural on the side of the Kanvas building and hosting numerous Arts Council events at the facility. Their sister, Mary Yoder, joined the organization in 2021, became an officer and now serves as president. Both sisters have continued their commitment to the organization, working alongside other volunteers to expand its activities.

Sethfest, named in recognition of Council Grove pioneer Seth Hays, has grown beyond its original emphasis on music to include visual arts, history and other cultural experiences.

The 2026 festival, held October 10 in conjunction with the Grove Gardens Patio Party, attracted visitors throughout downtown Council Grove. Yoder said businesses reported strong activity, while candlelight tours of the Seth Hays Home experienced a steady flow of visitors.

Because the festival is free and activities take place at multiple locations, exact attendance figures are difficult to determine. However, Yoder said reports indicated an encouraging turnout.

Sethfest is now planned for even-numbered years, reducing demands on volunteers who also assist with other activities, including the Voices of the Wind pageant, traditionally presented in odd-numbered years. The next Sethfest is tentatively planned for October 2028.

Providing artistic opportunities for children remains another priority. The Arts Council's summer youth musicals offer elementary through high

(See Community Arts Council, Page 2)

MC Commission, Little Huskies Childcare awarded $1.5 million for new facility

The Morris County Commissioner meeting was called to order on Tuesday, October 20, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioner's Meeting Room. Commissioners Jim Barber, David Fox and Wayne Kohler were present. Bill Kassebaum, County Counselor, and Chelsey Schmidt, County Clerk, were present.

Others present: Billy Kryger- Pastor Berean Baptist Church

Jamie Johnson, Public Health Director, gave a report on the health department. The following services were provided in the month of September:

Immunizations Given: 70 Immunizations

Laboratory Testing (Strep): 2 Strep Tests

Total Encounters (Contact with People): 682 People Served/Assisted

In-Home Services: 153 Encounters with 15 Clients

The annual "Bucks for Buckles" event was held on September 16th. "Walk and Roll to School Day" will be held on October 7th. Health Department staff have attended the Governor's Conference on Aging, KDHE Regional Public Health Meeting and USD 417 CTE Health Pathways Meeting. Influenza vaccine clinics are being done throughout the county. There will be a Drive-Thru Flu Shot Clinic on October 29th from 4:00-5:30 p.m.

Chuck Scott, Greater Morris County Development Corporation Director, provided a quarterly report on GMDC projects

Sealed bids were to be opened at 10:00 a.m. for the Courthouse Winter Snow Removal; there were no bids received.

Commissioner Kohler (Fox) moved to seek bids for the "County Farm Lease". Sealed bids will be opened on Tuesday, November 10th at 10:30 a.m. Motion carried.

Commissioner Fox (Kohler) moved to seek bids for the "County Hay Lease". Sealed bids will be opened on Tuesday, November 10th at 11:00 a.m. Motion carried.

Gary Floyd, Morris County's Representative on the Silver Haired Legislature, gave a report on the association's legislative priorities. Special emphasis will be placed on supporting independent living and aging in place, rather than transitioning seniors into traditional nursing home care.

David Sanford, White City resident, visited with the commissioners regarding data centers.

Two sealed bids were opened at 11:00 a.m. for the Morris County Health Department roof replacement as follows:

Stanfield Roofing $55,527.52
Danker Roofing $42,140.00

Commissioner Kohler (Fox) moved to approve the bid from Danker Roofing for the Health Department roof replacement in the amount of $42,140.00. Funds are to be paid from the Capital Improvement Fund. Motion carried.

Commissioner Fox (Kohler) moved to approve the accounts payable vouchers as presented; in the total amount of $88,753.79. Motion carried. The breakdown by fund is as follows:

General: $33,017.51
Road & Bridge: $26,112.21
Reappraisal: $643.60
Noxious Weed: $7,825.00
Solid Waste: $19,276.69
Employee Benefits: $1,310.00
Morris County 911: $568.78

Commissioner Kohler (Fox) moved to approve payroll liabilities as presented; in the total amount of $47,087.81. Motion carried

Marc Bowen, Morris County resident, visited with the commissioners regarding last week's conversation about G Ave. from 400-500.

Shelly Lautt gave the following public works report for the week of October 12th - October 16th:

Road & Bridge:

Harshman Quarry road rock was hauled to the shop stockpile

Work on the culvert on H Ave. between 800-900 continues; concrete walls were formed and poured

Mowing was done on the Council Grove routes

Employees attended In-Service Day at the courthouse on October 12th

Recycle:

Current prices for recycling are:
Newspaper $0.03/pound
Magazines $0.02/pound
Printer Mix $0.04/pound
Office Mix $0.13/pound
Milk Jugs $0.13/pound
Steel/Tin $0.03/pound
Aluminum $0.50/pound

660 pounds of glass was sent off; we did not receive anything for it

We have started collecting glass

(See Commissioners, Page 3)

Don Coover calls for courage, bipartisanship during campaign stop

By Rhonda Nehring

ALMA — Congressional candidate Don Coover called for greater courage in Washington and cooperation across party lines during an Oct. 22 appearance at El Corral in Alma.

Mel Stout welcomed Coover at the event, which drew about 30 people.

Coover, a candidate for Kansas' 2nd Congressional District, described his roots in Neosho County, where he grew up on a small dairy, alfalfa and soybean farm. He graduated from West Point in 1973 and spent the next decade as a military intelligence pilot. After leaving the Army, he attended Kansas State University's veterinary school, graduating in 1986. He then worked for 38 years as a veterinarian along with running a cattle ranch in Galesburg, Kansas.

Coover explained that he is running for Congress because he is frustrated by decisions being made in Washington and the lack of courage among members of Congress. He criticized the war in Iran and the negative impact it has had on the country's reputation. Other major concerns he discussed included tariffs, agricultural costs, hospital closures, income inequality and the influence of money in politics following the Citizens United decision

(See Coover campaign stop, Page 3)

Braves travel to Norton for opening round of state playoffs

The Council Grove Braves will begin their Class 2A state football playoff run Friday, October 30, when they travel to Norton to face the Bluejays. Kickoff is scheduled for 6 p.m.

Council Grove enters postseason competition with a 7-1 record as the No. 9 seed, while Norton, at 4-4, holds the No. 8 seed. Both teams are looking to rebound from regular-season losses. The Braves fell to Riley County, 22-21, while Norton lost to Beloit, 40-22.

Despite last week's setback, the Braves have enjoyed an impressive season, averaging 42 points and 376.3 yards of total offense per game. Defensively, Council Grove has limited opponents to an average of 14.8 points and 205.9 yards per contest.

Senior quarterback Luke Stewart has directed the Braves' passing attack, throwing for 2,051 yards and 21 touchdowns while adding 168 rushing yards and three touchdowns. Senior Bradley Doornbos leads the rushing attack with 423 yards and 10 touchdowns, while junior Cooper Andres has added 236 yards and four scores.

Senior Mason Samuels leads the receivers with 695 yards and nine touchdowns, followed by senior Grady Kepley with 367 yards, junior Logan Stockwell with 330 and sophomore Easton Stohs with 296.

Defensively, senior David McDiffett leads the Braves with 92 tackles, followed by Doornbos with 61, sophomore Dillon McDiffett with 53 and senior Reid Buttrey with 50. Samuels has contributed 11 tackles for loss and four sacks.

Junior kicker Carter Bremer has added 42 points through extra points and field goals, while the offensive line has been instrumental in the Braves' success.

Head coach Derron Reddick's squad has demonstrated its abil-

(See Braves to Norton, Page 2)