Thursday, November 5, 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 Flint Hills Life Channel on channel 2 or online at flinthillslife.com/live will be providing a free broadcast of the Council Grove Braves regional championship game against the Chaparral Roadrunners. SCTelcom has provided TCT Kansas with a dedicated network for the broadcast. Stream begins at 6:30 p.m; Kickoff is at 7 p.m.

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The Council Grove Republican's annual turkey giveaway begins Monday. Look for details in Monday's Republican about the multiple chances to win.

Obituary... Page 2

Local Grain Prices

(Provided by Agri Trails Coop)

Corn $3.78
Milo.....$3.43
Soybeans $11.52
Wheat $5.65

Reservoir Lake Level

Normal elevation 1274.00
Current elevation 1274.60

THREE-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

Corps of Engineers Readings, Council Grove Reservoir

High and low temperatures for the 24-hour period ending this morning were 59 and 40, with the 8:00 am reading 46°.

Friday: Gradually becoming mostly sunny, high near 52. North wind around 5 mph becoming calm. Partly cloudy, low around 33.

Saturday: Mostly sunny, high near 57. Calm wind becoming south around 5 mph. Mostly clear, low around 37.

Sunday: Sunny, high near 65. Calm wind. Clear, low around 40.

National Senior Safety Week November 6-12

FRIDAY FORECAST

High 52
Low 33

SENIOR SALUTE

Elie Williams

by Jan Koepke

Elie Williams is someone you should know.



Elie Williams is a much loved, frequent attendee at the Council Grove Senior Center, along with her husband Dale. His quick wit, and her great laugh, are enjoyed by all.

Elie was born in Canton, Kansas, in 1946, the youngest of 5 children — 3 boys and 2 girls. The family moved from Canton to a few other Kansas towns during her childhood, including Clyde and Lucas, north of Salina. Elie told an unusual fact about Lucas. It is the home of the World's Largest Toilet, a community art project that features a building shaped like a gigantic toilet tank, with curved benches in the front resembling a toilet bowl seat. To complete the theme, there is a 14 ft. mosaic toilet lid around the entrance to the 'tank,' as well as a hubcap flushing handle, and a sidewalk leading up to this work of art. It is designed as an unrolling huge roll of toilet paper. The building serves as a fully functioning handicap accessible public restroom. This town is also known for its bizarre "Garden of Eden" with over 150 concrete and limestone sculptures of Biblical, political, and folk art figures constructed right after the civil war by local artist, S. P. Dinsmore.

Elie grew up in a family of exceptionally talented musicians. Her mother was a music teacher who also played piano for silent movies. Her dad had been both a high school and grade school principal in a couple of the towns the family had lived in. He also worked summers for a tourist outfit as a 'mule skinner' (driver) on wagon trail treks. Elie taught herself to play the 'squeeze box', a musical instrument similar to a small accordion, to play during campfires on the trail.

Elie and her siblings all played musical instruments. Elie was so accomplished on the piano that while still in grade school, she began playing piano during worship services at her church. She also played the trumpet in grade school, and was invited to join the local high school band on their performance trip to Canada. Elie also participated in community events plays and other events as a musician. During summers, Elie showed horses in a program by the Eastern Kansas Horse Association. Her local saddle club was known as the Santa Fe Trail Riders.

After obtaining her Bachelors Degree, she earned her Masters in Mathematics from Emporia State University. She began teaching math to students in Fort Hayes, Kansas, and even taught math at Emporia State during her 20 year career.

In a first marriage, Ellie gave birth to two girls, Kathy and Kristen who both live in Kansas. Later in life, she met and fell in love with Dale Williams, a dance partner she met at a singles dance in Emporia. Since they both loved square dancing, they enjoyed each others company so much that they formed a special friendship. Eventually they dated for 2 years before deciding to get married in June of 1986 at the Methodist Church in Council Grove. Together they raised Elie's two girls and even had a boy named Keith to round out the family. Keith and his family live in Salina. The Williams now have a total of 5 grandchildren.

Today, Dale takes patient care of Elie who is facing some uphill cognitive issues. He says Elie has always loved the connection between

(See Senior Salute, Page 3)



Braves to face unbeaten Chaparral in regional

The Council Grove Braves will face their toughest playoff challenge yet Friday, November 6, when they travel to Anthony, Kansas, to take on the undefeated Chaparral Roadrunners in the Kansas Class 2A regional football championship. Kickoff is scheduled for 7 p.m.

Council Grove enters the contest with an 8-1 record as the No. 9 seed in the West bracket, while Chaparral holds the No. 1 seed with a perfect 9-0 record.

Both teams advanced through the opening round of the playoffs on October 30. Council Grove defeated the Norton Bluejays, 48-40, in a high-scoring road contest, while Chaparral shut out Russell, 41-0.

Friday's matchup brings together two productive offenses. Council Grove has averaged 42.7 points and 383.8 yards per game this season, while Chaparral has averaged 44.4 points and 382.2 yards.

The Braves have relied heavily on

(See Braves to Chaparral, Page 3)

GMDC awarded $50,000 grant to develop downtown CG strategy

A $50,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture will bring professional planning expertise to Council Grove, with the goal of strengthening the community's historic downtown and identifying practical projects that can move forward in the near future.

The Greater Morris County Development Corporation (GMDC) has received the grant and will partner with Downtown Strategies, a division of Retail Strategies, to develop a strategic action plan focused on downtown revitalization, business development and opportunities for continued growth.

Unlike planning efforts that concentrate primarily on long-term objectives, Downtown Strategies emphasizes short-term, achievable projects that can generate momentum and produce measurable improvements. The organization works with communities to identify opportunities, develop priorities and translate ideas into action.

"Being awarded grant funding

(See GMDC awarded grant Page 3)

Facility alignment meeting draws pleas to keep Prairie Heights open

by Jan Sciacca

Twenty-one speakers addressed the USD 417 Board of Education Wednesday evening, November 4, during a public hearing concerning the proposed closure of Prairie Heights Elementary School in Alta Vista. Parents, teachers, community leaders and residents urged board members to explore alternatives before making a decision they believe could have lasting consequences for students and the northern portion of the district.

The hearing, held in the Council Grove Junior-Senior High School auditorium, drew 22 individuals who registered to speak, with 21 addressing the board. Speakers repeatedly requested greater financial transparency, community involvement and consideration of other options.

Board President TinaRae Scott presided over the hearing, with speakers allotted three minutes each. Board members listened but did not respond to comments. No vote on closing Prairie Heights was scheduled. BOE member Patty Talley was absent due to traveling for work.

Superintendent Tyson Eslinger opened the hearing with a presentation outlining the district's financial challenges, particularly declining enrollment and inadequate state funding for special education.

Eslinger explained that graduating classes generally number in the upper 50s to lower 60s, while incoming kindergarten classes have been considerably smaller, typically ranging from the upper 30s to lower 40s. Although individual class sizes remain relatively stable as students advance through the district, larger graduating classes and smaller incoming classes continue to reduce overall enrollment and associated funding.

Compounding the challenge is a special education funding shortfall requiring the district to transfer nearly $900,000 annually from its general operating budget to cover expenses not funded by the state.

Eslinger presented enrollment projections extending through 2039-2040, showing a decline from this year's 692 district students to 456. He discussed the need to align district facilities and staffing with available resources.

Following Eslinger's presentation, community members acknowledged the financial difficulties but questioned whether closing Prairie Heights would provide sufficient savings to justify the educational and economic consequences.

Desiree Thompson, representing the Alta Vista City Council, read a letter from Mayor Ryan Armbrust describing the community's investments in its school, infrastructure and housing opportunities.

Of particular concern was a recently secured project totaling nearly $900,000 for safe routes to school, including sidewalks and improvements to emergency access.

The City Council expressed concern that closing Prairie Heights could undermine those investments and negatively affect property values, population, employment and the community's tax base. It urged a more extensive financial analysis with community involvement before making a permanent decision.

Alta Vista resident Laura Armbrust described moving to the community in 2013 and choosing to remain partly because of Prairie Heights. She credited the school with providing individualized educational opportunities for her children and questioned whether closing the district's newer elementary building would be financially beneficial.

Alyssa Mayer, whose family resides outside USD 417 but chose Prairie Heights for its children, explained that closure would substantially increase the distance between home and school. She questioned whether other families would remain in the district when neighboring schools could provide more convenient options.

Alisha Gladbach, who lives across the street from Prairie Heights, expressed concern about potential population decline. She encouraged formation of a committee to investigate alternative uses, funding sources and specialized educational programs capable of attracting additional students.

Several speakers emphasized the advantages of smaller classes, particularly for children requiring additional services.

Stacy Markley, representing the

(See Meeting draws pleas, Page 2)

CG Senior Center welcomes Oltmanns

by Jan Koepke

Tracey Oltmanns began working at the Council Grove Senior Center under theguidance of Interim Site Manager, Marcheta Jacobson. Tracey is now fully at the helm of the Council Grove Senior Center.



Tracey Oltmanns

Tracey received her BA from Manhattan Christian College in Biblical Studies. She has extensive clerical experience across various disciplines, including the legal profession. She was the Competitive Speech and drama team coach at White City High School, where she also directed some school plays. Over the years Tracey volunteered at the White City Senior Center. She and husband Paul have raised eight children together, and now have 13 grandchildren.

(See Welcomes Oltmanns, Page 2)

MC Commission: Future Land Use and Zoning Survey to be sent to residents

The Morris County Commissioner meeting was called to order on Tuesday, October 27th, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioner's Meeting Room. Commissioners Jim Barber, Wayne Kohler and David Fox were present. Chelsey Schmidt, County Clerk, was present.

Others present: Jon Sawyer, Butch MacIntyre, and Billy Kryger- Pastor Berean Baptist Church

Discussion was held regarding data centers. The development agreement, road use agreement, decommissioning agreement, summary agreement and other contracts and documents from Barber County's data center were reviewed. The documents can be found online at https://barber.ks.gov/data-center.html. Discussion was held regarding including a survey about zoning and data centers with the 2026 tax statements. A future land use and zoning survey draft was reviewed.

Deputy Courtney Anderson visited with the commissioners.

Commissioner Kohler (Fox) moved to approve the letter of support for Morris County Hospital's Rural Health Transformation Program Grant Application. Motion carried.

Commissioner Kohler (Fox) moved to approve payroll as presented; in the total amount of $117,180.33. Motion carried

Commissioner Fox (Kohler) moved to approve the accounts payable vouchers as presented; in the total amount of $50,392.68. Motion carried. The breakdown by fund is as follows:

General: $10,543.52
Road & Bridge: $3,292.12
Reappraisal: $255.00
Ambulance: $526.07
Solid Waste: $10,775.97
Equipment Reserve: $25,000.00

Ryan Michaelis, County Appraiser, visited with the commissioners regarding the future land use and zoning survey that is to be sent out with the 2026 tax statements.

Scott Coover, County Sheriff, gave a report on the Sheriff's Office, Jail and Dispatch. Foley CAT conducted the annual maintenance for the courthouse generator. The county currently has 7 inmates in custody; 2 are being housed here in Morris County, 3 in Wabaunsee County, 1 in Chase County and 1 in Dickinson County.

Commissioner Kohler (Fox) moved to approve the Future Land Use and Zoning Survey to be sent out with the upcoming 2026 tax statements. Motion carried.

Commissioner Kohler (Fox) moved to approve minutes from the October 20th, 2026, Commission Meeting. Motion carried.

Shelly Lautt and Brett Wright gave

(See Commissioners, Page 3)

One car accident causes minor injuries to driver

On November 1, the Morris County Sheriff's Department responded to US Highway 56 and 1200 Road in reference to a one vehicle accident.

Upon arrival the officer observed a maroon passenger car on the south side of the road just east of 1200 Road. Jeffrey Crippen Jr., 25, Council Grove, said his 2006 Chevrolet HHR left the south side of the roadway and struck the southwest corner ditch.

He went airborne over 1200 Road, struck the front bumper and overturned, causing more than $1000 damage. Crippen was wearing a seatbelt. He stated he had minor injuries and was seen by Morris County EMS. He refused transport for further treatment.

The vehicle was towed from the scene by Bachura Automotive.