Thursday, November 19, 2026

Council Grove Republican

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Briefly...

Morris County Courthouse and all departments will be closed Thursday, Nov. 26 and Friday, Nov. 27 for Thanksgiving. There will be no Public Transportation available.

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CG HOPE reminds patrons that Monday, November 23 and Monday, November 30, are wreath installation days at the Riverwalk. Place your 30" or larger wreath by the pole you wish to adopt and the city crews will do the rest. Make sure you add a weatherproof card with your name or organization near the bottom so passersby will know who decorated the lamppost.

Obituaries... Page 2

Reservoir Lake Level

Normal elevation 1274.00
Current elevation 1274.18

THREE-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

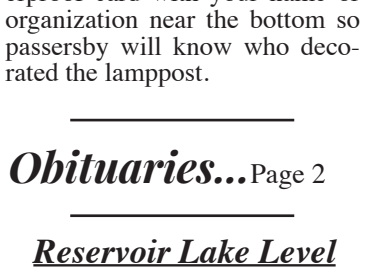
Corps of Engineers Readings, Council Grove Reservoir

High and low temperatures for the 24-hour period ending this morning were 65 and 38, with the 8:00 am reading 41°.

Friday: Sunny, high near 68. South wind could gust to 35 mph. Partly cloudy, low around 54.

Saturday: A 30% chance for rain. Partly sunny, high 66. Wind gusts to 25 mph. An 80% chance for rain, low 36.

Sunday: A 20% chance of rain before noon. Mostly sunny, high 50. North wind 5-10 mph. Mostly clear, low 26.



November 21

FRIDAY FORECAST

High 68
Low 54

USD 417 Board of Education adopts semesters, delays bond election plans

Prairie Heights future remains unresolved amid declining enrollment and financial concerns.

The USD 417 Board of Education voted Tuesday evening, November 17, to return Council Grove Junior-Senior High School to a semester schedule beginning with the 2027-28 school year, following presentations from teachers and administrators with differing opinions on the current trimester system.

During the meeting, which continued until approximately 10:37 p.m., board members also discussed the possible closure of Prairie Heights Elementary School in Alta Vista, declining enrollment, district finances and another potential school bond election.

Board Approves Semester Schedule

The district's scheduling committee had divided evenly, with four members supporting a modified trimester schedule and four favoring semesters.

Teacher representatives proposed retaining trimesters while adding a 10-minute homeroom, reducing the current 35-minute Braves Time to 24 minutes and scheduling consecutive trimesters for certain English, mathematics and Spanish courses.

They argued that the current five-class schedule, with approximately 70-minute periods, provides more time for laboratories, vocational training, art and other hands-on activities. They also expressed concern that the proposed hybrid semester schedule could reduce instructional time, complicate electives and interventions, and affect special education services. Their calculations indicated approximately eight fewer instructional hours per course.

Two students supported retaining trimesters during the public forum. Colton Elsen, junior class president, said four classmates who transferred from semester schools preferred trimesters because they could concentrate on fewer subjects at once. Sophomore Casten Honer cited longer class periods, less homework pressure and greater academic flexibility.

Kent Gant, a longtime educator who said he has taught for 50 years, including 12 in Council Grove, also favored trimesters.

Superintendent Tyson Eslinger recommended returning to semesters, suggesting a hybrid schedule combining shorter daily periods with longer instructional blocks. He cited more consistent teacher-student contact, fewer gaps between related courses and better alignment with state assessments, curriculum materials and postsecondary institutions. He acknowledged that neither system guarantees improved academic achievement.

During the final discussion, board members Patty Talley and Kelsey Hartman supported semesters, citing instructional continuity, college preparation and concerns about lengthy gaps between core subjects.

The board approved returning to semesters, with administrators responsible for developing the daily schedule. Eslinger also suggested considering a school day ending at 3:30 p.m. and reviewing teacher contract days during future negotiations. Neither proposal was approved.

Prairie Heights Future Remains Unresolved

Following a recent public hearing concerning the possible closure of Prairie Heights Elementary School, several board members favored allowing additional time to explore alternatives.

Hartman supported postponing a decision to pursue community ideas, while Talley, who lives in the Prairie Heights community, favored allowing more time but acknowledged the district's financial challenges.

Board member Jessica Rohloff emphasized that any extension should include firm deadlines, measurable goals and consequences if those goals are not met. Board member James Blue expressed concern about the school's operating costs and warned against postponing financial decisions.

Board President TinaRae Scott discussed a possible commitment of up to three years, with conditions tied to enrollment growth and financial sustainability. No formal timeline was established.

Suggestions included developing a STEM or STEAM magnet school, reorganizing grade levels among district buildings or finding another educational use for the facility.

Eslinger emphasized that moving existing students and staff between buildings would not resolve the district's financial problems. Increased enrollment would be necessary to generate additional revenue.

He reported preliminary discussions with Manhattan Tech about establishing a career and technical education outreach facility at Prairie Heights, with a meeting scheduled after Thanksgiving. No agreement has been reached.

Other considerations included open enrollment, transportation, staffing and community housing development to attract families. Eslinger also noted that a music teacher's retirement and elimination of the school's principal position have created staffing questions.

Board members requested additional information about alternative programs, their costs and measurable enrollment goals. No decision was made regarding the school's closure or continued operation for a specified period.

Declining Enrollment Creates Financial Challenges

Eslinger reported that USD 417 received funding based on 700 students this year, while its finalized enrollment audit reflected 667 students.

The 33-student reduction, calculated at approximately $9,597 per student, represents an anticipated $316,701 funding loss next year. Combined with rising expenses, Eslinger estimated a potential budget shortfall of $400,000 to $500,000.

With personnel accounting for more than 80% of district expenses, possible reductions discussed included eliminating positions,

(See School Board, Page 2)

Thanksgiving turkey giveaway winners announced

Vicki Brickell, Ramona Peralez and Penny True are the winners of the Council Grove Republican's Thanksgiving Turkey Giveaway. Each will receive a turkey for their Thanksgiving celebration.

The giveaway was made possible through the support of local businesses, including Alkegen, Council Grove Realty, Flint Hills Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Hartman Masonry, LLC, Lakeside Properties, Nex-Tech Wireless, Pizza Hut, Ray's Apple Market and The Tire Shop.

The Council Grove Republican thanks the participating businesses and everyone who entered the giveaway. Congratulations to the winners, and Happy Thanksgiving!

Flowers by Lindsey to close storefront after Thanksgiving

Flowers by Lindsey in Council Grove will permanently close its storefront after Thanksgiving 2026 as owner Lindsey Patnode prepares to return to her nursing career.

"Five years ago, I took a chance on myself and built something in my hometown," Patnode shared in announcing her decision. "Over the years, I've learned more than I ever imagined, grown in ways I didn't expect, and had the privilege of serving people during some of the most meaningful moments of their lives."

The business has provided floral arrangements for weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, funerals and other special occasions throughout Council Grove and surrounding communities.

Lindsey said the decision was difficult but was made with her family and future in mind. She looks forward to returning to nursing while continuing to work in the community she calls home.

Flowers by Lindsey will accept new orders through Thanksgiving. Lindsey may also continue providing floral services for select weddings and special events, as well as in-home Christmas decorating projects.

The building, along with the shop's contents and inventory, will be available for purchase. Interested parties may contact Flowers by Lindsey for additional information.

Patnode thanked her customers and the community for their support, saying she is proud of what she built and the experiences gained along the way.

Jarvis shares global learning experience with CG Rotary Club

Council Grove High School English teacher Lisa Jarvis shared her experiences participating in the Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms Program during the Council Grove Rotary Club's meeting Wednesday, Nov. 18.

Jarvis was selected for the U.S. Department of State-funded program, which helps educators incorporate global perspectives and cultural understanding into their classrooms. Her participation included professional development with educators from across the United States and a three-week educational visit to Uruguay.



Lisa Jarvis

During her visit, Jarvis observed urban and rural schools, noting their emphasis on project-based learning, use of local resources and differences in teaching methods and school schedules.

One concern she identified was the limited availability of library books. Jarvis is now working with fellow educators to arrange delivery of donated books to Uruguay, including those made available through the local elementary school.

As part of the Fulbright program, Jarvis developed an online educational resource guide featuring classroom materials, reflections from her travels and community resources, including the Council Grove Rotary Club.

Jarvis has also incorporated international connections into her classroom. Her ninth-grade English students are exchanging handwritten letters and multimedia presentations with students in Germany, sharing information about Council Grove, the Santa Fe Trail and their daily lives.

A previous collaboration connected her students with a Chicago classroom to explore different perspectives through shared reading assignments.

MC Commission:
Darrell Litke, Joshua Hollerich bids approved

The Morris County Commissioner meeting was called to order on Tuesday, November 10th, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioner's Meeting Room. Commissioners Wayne Kohler and David Fox were present. Chelsey Schmidt, County Clerk, and Bill Kassebaum, County Counselor, were present.

Brett Samuels, Emergency Manager, provided an update on Emergency Management. The board discussed advertising and hiring his replacement ahead of his planned departure in May 2027.

Colleen Anderson and Clifford Carroll with the Senior Citizens Inc. Board gave a report on the Senior Centers. The White City Center will be looking for a new board member to replace the position currently held by Steve Ash. The White City Center recently had a breakfast fundraiser. The Council Grove Softball Club held a fundraiser tournament for the senior centers. Both fundraising events were very successful. The centers are in need of part-time volunteer drivers to help deliver meals. The Council Grove Center is now serving breakfast every Monday morning from 6:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.; the cost is free will donation.

David Owen, Morris County EMS Director, gave a report on Morris County EMS and presented the following statistics for the month of October:

Ambulance calls: 65
Transfers from MCH to other hospitals: 15
Total number of runs: 80
North County (Station 2):16
South County (Station 1): 64
Year to date total runs: 758

Discussion was held regarding potential staffing concerns for the EMS Department. They are currently advertising for EMT, AEMT and Paramedic positions.

Darrell Litke, county resident, joined the meeting.

Two sealed bids were received for a three-year lease of the County Farm Property located at 626 US Hwy 56 (approximately 150 acres) as follows:

Bidder	Amount
Darrell Litke	$8,500.00
Joshua Hollerich	$6,225.00

Commissioner Kohler (Fox) moved to approve the bid from Darrell Litke for the lease of the County Farm Property, in the amount of $8,500.00 annually. The term of the lease will be for the period of January 1, 2027, through December 31, 2029. Motion carried.

One sealed bid was received for a three-year lease of the County Hay Property located at 1700 S 2400 Road, (approximately 5 acres) as follows:

Bidder	Amount
Joshua Hollerich	$100.00 per year

Commissioner Kohler (Fox) moved to accept the bid from Joshua Hollerich for the County Hay Lease, in the amount of $100.00 annually. The term of the lease will be for the period of March 1, 2027, through February 28, 2030. Motion carried.

Commissioner Fox (Kohler) moved to approve the accounts payable vouchers as presented; in the total amount of $109,691.48. Motion carried. The breakdown by fund is as follows:

General: $23,121.80
Road & Bridge: $70,540.47
Reappraisal: $335.46
Noxious Weed: $911.40
Ambulance: $658.30
Solid Waste: $13,111.24
Morris County 911: $1,012.81

Commissioner Fox (Kohler) moved to approve payroll as presented; in the total amount of $110,921.28. Motion carried

Commissioner Fox (Kohler) moved to approve minutes from the November 3rd, 2026, Commission Meeting. Motion carried.

Commissioner Fox (Kohler) moved to appoint Chelsey Schmidt as Morris County's Voting Delegate, and Commissioner Kohler as Morris County's Alternate Voting Delegate, for the KWORCC Annual Meeting on December 8th, 2026. Motion carried.

Commissioner Kohler (Fox) moved to appoint Commissioner Fox as Morris County's Voting Delegate, and Commissioner Kohler as Morris County's Alternate Voting Delegate, for the KAC Annual Meeting on December 9th, 2026. Motion carried.

The commissioners reviewed the budget report for the month of October: (see page 2)

Funds that had less than 17% budget remaining were discussed. Budgets remaining that are marked by an * reflect including reimbursements.

Commissioner Barber joined the meeting at 1:10 p.m.

Shelly Lautt gave the following public works report for the week of November 2nd – 6th:

Road & Bridge:

Bayer Construction road rock was placed on J Ave. from 2400-2700, 2800 Rd. from M-P, P Ave. from 2800-2900, 2800 Rd. from M-P, J Ave. from 2825-3100, 2800 Rd. from CC-DD, AA Ave. from 3100-3200, AA Ave. & 2700 Rd. intersection, 1800 Rd. from Y-Z, Q Ave. from 1900-2200, Z Ave. from 1400-1500 and Parkerville Rd. from 1300-1400

Harshman road rock was hauled to 150 Rd. from Y-AA, AA Ave. from 100-150 and to the shop stockpile

A concrete culvert bannister was removed on G Ave. between 2300-2400 that was damaged in a wreck

A tree stump was removed in the shop parking lot

The floor at the Council Grove

(See Commissioners, Page 3)