

ECHS annual meeting on Monday

From staff reports

The Ellis County Historical Society has scheduled its annual meeting for 7 p.m. Monday at the ECHS museum, 100 W. Seventh.

The theme of this year's meeting is "We wear many hats at ECHS." There will be a display of antique hats from the ECHS collection.

The meeting will be held at the museum's newly-renovated upstairs gallery. There is handicap parking available on the south side of the building, and there

is an elevator which will provide access to the meeting.

At the meeting, there will be a look back at 2025's accomplishments and a look forward to 2026, most notably plans and projects for the sesquicentennial, the 150th anniversary of the Volga Germans' arrival in Ellis County and surrounding area.

The annual meeting is open to the public. However, only current, paid members of ECHS will be allowed to vote. Call 785-628-2624 for more information.

HAYS

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resources to investing in inclusive recreation, education, and public art, Hays shows how thoughtful planning and collaboration can create a place where people of all ages truly want to live, learn, work, and retire.

The Community Playmaker announcement that Hays is its 2025 Community of the Year states that the City demonstrates how Midwestern hospitality can be paired with modern innovation and environmental responsibility.

"Hays has carefully balanced infrastructure growth with a focus on sustainability, ensuring that progress never comes at the expense of its natural resources or quality of life. Its long-standing leadership in water conservation has yielded groundbreaking initiatives that protect limited water supplies while still supporting new development and community amenities," reads the January 22nd Community Playmaker Press Release.

Numerous initiatives and investments within the community were cited as how Hays distinguished itself from competing cities. Upgrading public services and infrastructure while maintaining a focus on environmental stewardship was

noted, particularly the City's pioneering water conservation strategies that safeguard resources where water is scarce. The new High School; the community's close collaboration with Fort Hays State University and local businesses; the ARC Park, and the new Bob and Pat Schmidt Community Center were all also mentioned. Specifically, Community Playmaker noted that the new Community Center is multi-generational and addresses a critical childcare shortage. A "robust" arts, culture and public art was observed in Hays as well as quality of life efforts through recreation and events.

"Hays shows what it looks like when a community invests in every stage of life—from early childhood to retirement—while still protecting the environment and celebrating its culture," added Whittaker. "Their story is a roadmap for communities that want to grow without losing their sense of place." Hays will be featured in upcoming Community Playmaker content highlighting its innovative strategies, partnerships, and long-term impact on residents.

Visit <https://communityplaymaker.com/spotlight/community-playmakers-2025-community-of-the-year-hays-kansas/> for more information.

Brooks, Park & Vajnar the 2026 USD489 School Board Negotiation Team

By Gaille Pike

Special to the Hays Daily News

USD489 School

Board Members Ken Brooks, Allen Park and Curt Vajnar (President) will represent the Board this year in Negotiations. All three were appointed/reappointed to the Negotiation Team on Monday night as part of the Board's Consent Agenda, which was unanimously

approved and included other Board Member appointment/reappointments to Standing Committees.

Although there was no discussion of any of the Committee appointments, Superintendent Ron Wilson explained as he presented the Consent Agenda, that adjustments had been made to the Standing Committee assignments due to Craig Pallister being re-elected to the School Board. BOE Member Pallister takes

the seat on the board formerly held by Meagan Zampieri-Lillpopp.

Zampieri-Lillpopp departure from the Board left a vacancy on the Negotiations Team which will now be filled by Brooks. Ruth Ruder was named in previous years Negotiations Team Alternate. However, no Alternate was named for the 2026-2027 Negotiations Team.

For 2026-2027, Craig Pallister will serve on the Early Childhood

Connections Committee. Allen Park was appointed to be the USD489 Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) Convention Representative. Ruth Ruder will serve on the Hays Recreation Commission Board and Jayme Goetz was appointed to the District's Committee. Derek Yarmer was not appointed to any 2026-2027 School Board Standing Committee.

Zampieri-Lillpopp

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Budget, Fireworks, Bond Projects & Roads on Jan 27th County Commission Work Session Agenda (but not the Tallgrass Solar Farm)

By Gaille Pike

Special to the Hays Daily News

At 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, January 27th the Ellis County Commission will hold the first of its 2026 Work Sessions. Commissioners agreed by consensus last

According to the January 27, 2026 Ellis County Commission Work Session Agenda, Commissioners will be discussing three "Upcoming Budget Considerations" including the 2030 Sales Tax Sunset, Consideration of Transient Guest Tax and 2027 Budget Items.

Spring to meet quarterly for discussion only of items. No actions are taken during Work Sessions, which are open to the public.

Commissioner Nathan Leiker.

Commissioners will receive bond project updates for the Law Enforcement Center, Ellis Emergency Services Building, Courthouse HVAC, and the Fan Coil Units for the Administration building.

Other Agenda items include discussion of Community Improvement Districts (CID's) Minimum Maintenance Standards, a Stonewood North

CID Petition, a Health Department Update and the topics for the 2026 Annual Commission Retreat.

No Public Forum or Public Comment is scheduled for the Work Session, nor is there any Agenda item related to the Tallgrass Solar Farm.

Visit <https://www.ellico.net/120/County-Commission> to view the full January 27, 2026 Ellis County Commission Work Session Agenda.

Safe food storage during power outage

By Jason Vance

CherryRoad Media Contributing writer

Bitter cold weather was experienced by several parts of the nation at different times this winter. In some cases, the power outages caused by these conditions served as a reminder in food safety. Knowing the general basics about food safety and power outages and some tips and things to do can be helpful in saving your food.

Meredith Carothers of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service provide some rules of thumb. Regarding how long food in a refrigerator or freezer remained safe after those appliances lose power.

First, remember that cold will be

or freezer after the power goes out. However, food needs to be below 40 degrees Fahrenheit in the refrigerator to be considered safe.

"So once that temperature starts creeping above 40 degrees Fahrenheit, you've reached the danger zone and it's only going to have a certain amount of time before it's unsafe," Carothers said. "As for the length of time where a refrigerator retains a safe temperature for food on average, a refrigerator that has no power is going to keep a safe temperature for about four hours."

Consideration needs to be made prior to the four hour deadline about transferring food from inside the fridge to a cooler with ice to keep it safe until the power returns. If a cooler or ice

are not available after those four hours refrigerated food needs to be discarded.

"Some of those things that would be unsafe would be your raw meats and poultry, your cooked leftovers, anything that's a leftover that has been cooked would need to be tossed," Carothers said. "Your dairy products, eggs. Any soft cheeses, any fruit and vegetables that are already cut, so whole fruits like a whole apple or a whole carrots or something like that, those are safe and fine. But if it's been cut or if it's been pre-washed, then it needs to be discarded."

Regarding safe storage of food inside a freezer that loses power, that's going to maintain that cold temperature and keep that food at a safe temperature for about 24 hours if it's half full and

48 hours if it's full.

The reason the 48 hours, if it's full, is because the more food that's in there that's frozen is kind of acting as a cold source for itself. As it's thawing, it's still emitting cold temperatures for that longer amount of time.

"Now, some folks faced in this situation during bitter winter conditions, while they try to be creative in keeping their food safe, try to store food outside, use the outside temperature as almost like nature's refrigerator," Carothers said. "While possible this can be done safely, we really try and encourage not to use outside as an option for storage of food due to unpredictability of storage conditions from varying temperatures to potential contamination by animals and bacteria."

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