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Diane Zodrow ready to take the reins

By Destry Jackson

Diane Zodrow was recently appointed as the new Decatur County Clerk by the county Republican Party after Nora Urban resigned.

“I grew up in Elm Creek, Neb., on a family farm,” Zodrow said. “I moved to Germany and lived there for 28 years after having been an exchange student. I have two boys from my first marriage, Stefan and Lars. Stefan is a First Lieutenant in the German Air Force. Lars works with computer technology development in Cleveland, Ohio.”

“When I met Steve (Zodrow) and we got married in 2015, my job at Baldwin Filters allowed me to work remotely for a few years until the job was outsourced and my department was dissolved. Prior to the job at Baldwin Filters, I had worked in several jobs in Germany where I had learned about accuracy, financials, international shipping, contract negotiations, accounts payable and receivable, disputes, and working independently on my own judgement.”

“After my job at Baldwin Filters end-

ed, I worked for the Decatur County Treasurer’s Office for several years as a clerk,” Zodrow added. “I currently work as the office professional for the Decatur County Extension Office. I have worked from the ground up in every job I’ve had.”

When asked about the appointment as County Clerk, she replied, “I’m not afraid of new things, and I can accept the challenge.”

Zodrow’s appointment as the new County Clerk won’t be official until the official letter confirming her appointment from the Governor’s office arrives.



Photo By: Destry Jackson

Diane takes a moment from her current responsibilities to talk with Destry about her new job.

A change in command for Commissioners

By Destry Jackson

At the Jan. 13 meeting of the Decatur County Commissioners, the commissioners voted for new officers. Justin Scott will serve as the Commission Chair for 2026, and Ben Bryan will serve as the Vice Chair.

Appraiser Mindy Harting reported, “We’re looking into getting the software program Apex to draw houses properly. The current software program we have is outdated and doesn’t draw well at all. The Apex program is in my other offices, and it works well. The cost would be \$1,965.” The Commissioners approved the purchase of the program.

Dispatcher and Emergency Medical Technician Gracie Ketterl asked, “I was wondering if I can use my sick time to cover for a few days when my son was sick. I’ve been here full time for almost six months.” The Commissioners explained that she’d have to have worked over six months full time in order to use

her sick time.

Sheriff David Wachendorfer reported, “I have the final contract for the Digital Ticket program. County Attorney Steve Hirsch has approved it. The contract just needs signed. It will end up costing \$23,447 for the installation and first year, with an annual cost of \$3,224 each year after that. We will do training by Zoom for the program, which will save us money as compared to traveling for the training and more.”

“We also have some laptops needing replaced, as the current ones we have can’t be upgraded,” Wachendorfer said. “We’re going with refurbished laptops, as we can’t afford brand new ones. I can do with five, one for each marked patrol unit. Panasonic and Gtech are the best brands. Refurbished, they are much cheaper. I’d like to go with Panasonic. The cost would be approximately \$6,995 for just the five refurbished computers alone, with the mounts being extra. I’d like to take these out

of the budget. I had budgeted about \$5,000 for new laptops.”

Decatur Health Chief Financial Officer Chad Meyer reported, “About the electrical project, I wanted to see what questions or feedback you guys have. We have some processes to go through. We need to seek finance proposals to do a lease-purchase agreement on some things we need. I talked with our electrical engineer about several things. Time is of the essence to keep moving forward. The county would basically be a co-signer for the lease-purchase agreement. We hope to build the electrical system control building this summer.” The Commissioners said they would like to have Hirsch talk with Mitch Walter from Gilmore and Bell about the lease-purchase agreement options.

Noxious Weed Department Supervisor Barry Quanz reported, “I have an invoice for recycling pickup repair work for \$942.” The Commissioners approved the repair bill.

“I also have the annual agreement with the state for noxious weed cleanup along the highways,” Quanz said. “Chemical prices haven’t gone up much for the ones we’ve been using, and I made a purchase of some more chemicals not too long ago. I’ll probably get more chemical bids in March.” The Commissioners approved the agreement with the state.

Road and Bridge Department Supervisor Tracy Soderlund reported, “We’re working on the landfill, fences, equipment service and inspections and more. We’re preparing for the winter weather. We’ve got a crew doing some road work in Pleasant Valley Township. We’re also working on grader blades and keeping the crew busy.”

The County Commissioners meet on Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to noon. The meetings are held in the Commissioners’ room on the second floor of the courthouse.

New defibrillators arrive at hospital

By Destry Jackson

At the Jan. 19 meeting of the Decatur Health hospital board, the board decided to keep the same officers from last year.

Chief Nursing Officer Amie Peters reported, “The new ZOLL defibrillators have arrived. We will have some training days on those soon.” She handed out papers showing how many visitors the emergency room had for 2025. There were 643 emergency room visits, with 78 being transferred out. The hospital had 597 inpatient days, with 29 acute/swing/ob transfers. There were 84 acute patients, 50 swing patients, and 53 obstetrician visits. The specialty clinic had 1,137 visits for the year, with 4,053 outpatient procedures performed. There were 245 holistic pain management procedures performed, 72 Dr. E procedures, and 78 AVEL calls. There were six intubations performed for the year.

Taylor Fortin gave the Family Practice Clinic report. There were 424 visits for the month of December. Of those, 49 percent were same-day appointments. The board noticed that many of the visits were on Mondays, as if the patients had held on through the weekend to come visit on Monday.

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Craig Bartruff reported, “We have a physician assistant student visiting, and we’ll soon have a medical student visiting as well. The main illnesses going around right now are runny noses and coughs.”

Chief Financial Officer Chad Meyer reported, “I’ve got a map of the location for the new electrical system control building. The electrical engineer will be here tomorrow to look over things before sending out final requests for proposals. We will need the county to go with us on the loan like they did on the last lease-purchase agreement in 2017. A 20 year loan would have a smaller payment each year. Hopefully, we can get it paid off sooner than that. We hope for the Commissioners’ approval soon.”

“As for finances, we currently have 87 days of cash on hand,” Meyer said. “We made some good gains for the year’s end.”

Vice President of Human Resources Lindsey Osterhaus reported, “In the last 30 days, we’ve had some new hires, and we recently got a part-time patient care technician hired. For pending hires, we have a full-time procedure and holistic pain management nurse. We have a part-time nurse and a technician leaving us soon. We will soon interview applicants for a night-time patient care technician. We’re also still looking for a physical therapy assistant. We currently have two travelers. One is a night-shift nurse, and the other is a radiology technician. We have three employees on leave currently. We have 104 employees and an 18 percent turnover rate.”

The next hospital board meeting is scheduled for 5:30 p.m., Feb. 16, in the board room at the hospital.

Farm Credit Scholarship

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Colby, Kansas - The Board of Directors of Farm Credit of Western Kansas, ACA is pleased to announce the continuation of the Farm Credit of Western Kansas, ACA, Mark Winger Scholarship program. Farm Credit has \$8,000 available to high school seniors, a \$500 per semester scholarship, which is renewable for up to four years of post-secondary education per recipient. Eligible applicants are Northwest Kansas area high school seniors who are the children or grandchildren of current members of Farm Credit of Western Kansas, ACA and reside in Cheyenne, Decatur, Gove, Logan, Rawlins, Sheridan, Sherman, Thomas or Wallace counties.

Applications are available at www.fcwk.com; or from area school high school counselors; or at the Farm Credit Office located at 1190 S Range in Colby. The deadline for Applications is February 15, 2026, but will be accepted until February 17 due to the President’s Day holiday. For more information or questions, contact Relda Galli at the Farm Credit office in Colby (785) 462-6714.

Farm Credit of Western Kansas, ACA is located in Colby, Kansas and can be reached by calling (800) 657-6048. Farm Credit makes loans for the purchase or refinance of farm, ranch or agribusiness real estate and facilities as well as loans to finance farm operations, agribusiness, livestock and equipment. Farm Credit also has an extensive crop insurance program. The farmers and ranchers who borrow from Farm Credit own the ACA. Farm Credit of Western Kansas is part of the Farm Credit System, the nation’s leading agricultural lender.

Farmers from the area attend Cover Your Acres

By Destry Jackson

The 2026 Cover Your Acres winter conference was held at The Gateway on Jan. 20 and 21. There were 11 presenters giving talks on multiple subjects. The presenters included Glenn Conover, an Extension Agricultural Economist; Jeanne Falk Jones- the K-State Northwest Area Agronomist; Lucas Haag, an Associate Professor of Agronomy and agronomist-in-charge of the Tribune Experiment Station; Sarah Lancaster, an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist in the Kansas State University Agronomy Department; Jennifer Ifft, a Professor

and Extension Specialist in Agricultural Policy; Roger McEowen, a Professor of Agricultural Law and Taxation at Washburn University School of Law; Augustine Obour, an Associate Professor of Soil Science at Kansas State University Agricultural Research Center in Hays; Daniel O’Brien, an Extension Agricultural Economist; Chip Redmond, an Assistant Scientist and Weather Data Library/Kansas Mesonet Manager at Kansas State University; Dorivar Ruiz Diaz, who specializes in soil fertility and nutrient management; and Mark Wood, an Extension Agricultural Economist with the Farm Management Association

in Northwest Kansas.

Classes were held in The Morgan Theater, the two lower-level classrooms, and the Bremer Room/upstairs meeting room. Classes covered topics of Crop Prices and Equitable Lease Arrangements; Navigating the 2026 Crop Insurance Decision, with SCO and ECO; Meeting Crop Nutrient Needs in Lean Times; Top 5 Legal Issues Farmers Don’t Think Of, But Should; Considerations for Intensifying Crop Rotations; Incorporating Forages into Dryland Rotations; 2026 Grain Market Outlook and Strategies; Weather Resources and 2026 Outlook; Weed Control in Crop Rotations; Humics Role in Soil

Health; and Early Experiences with Targeted Herbicide Applications in Kansas.

Approximately 30 booths for different exhibits were set up in the Nex-Tech Communications Arena, along with three sprayers from John Deere, Case IH, and Apache, along with a Fendt Rogator 900 Series Applicator, equipped for both wet and dry applications, as well as a Case IH tractor. The brand new farm equipment costs several hundred thousand dollars for each piece of equipment.

Each day, Bryan and Wendy Rhein of Twisted Traditions catered lunch. Pam Scribner made cookies, cinnamon rolls, and cobblers.



Photos By: Destry Jackson

Around 30 vendors set up at Cover Your Acres. Approximately 400 visitors took the opportunity to attend Cover Your Acres over the two day event.



***Jan. 30, 5 p.m., Commodities will be distributed at United Methodist Church. Line up in west parking lot.**

***Feb. 14**

**5th Anniversary Gateway Banquet
Featuring Villains Dance
80s arena rock**