



BEARS DOWN DRAGONS
See Sports Page 8

The Bulletin

“THE OLD HOME PAPER” • ESTABLISHED 1876



Sterling, Kansas • Thursday, October 8, 2026 • Volume 150, Issue 40

www.sterlingbulletin.com • Published weekly • \$1.00

—BRIEFS—

SHS homecoming Friday

Sterling High School will celebrate homecoming Friday, Oct. 9.

The community is invited to a pep rally that will be held in Ora Shields Activity Center Friday at 10 a.m.

Crowning of the king and queen will take place at Smisor Stadium at 6:40 p.m. prior to kickoff of the homecoming football game against Ellinwood. The game will kick off at 7 p.m.

Final day of voter registration Oct. 13

The final day to register to vote in the 2026 general election is Tuesday, Oct. 13.

Advanced voting will begin Saturday, Oct. 24, 2026 at the Rice County Courthouse from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday, Oct. 26–30 at the Rice County Clerk’s Office from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and will end Nov. 2 at noon.

For a complete listing of candidates see the public notice on Page 2.

Commodities distribution Oct. 20

Sterling/Alden commodities next distribution will be Tuesday, Oct. 20 at Encounter Church at 407 N 6th St. Sterling 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Those interested must be signed up with Seneca (620-204-1746) to receive food at the Sterling location.

To sign up or for more information call or text Seneca.



U.S. SENATOR ROGER MARSHALL shakes hands prior to speaking Tuesday with the Sterling Constitutionalists.

Marshall meets with Sterling Constitutionalists

By Rene Wilson

Senator Roger Marshall met with a small group of voters Tuesday, meeting in the community room at Jefferson Plaza at the invitation of the Sterling Constitutionalists.

Marshall gave an opening statement and then answered a variety of questions.

Having had stops in Pratt, Great Bend, Ellinwood and McPherson for the day, Marshall said Kansans are telling him they want safety, a strong military, lower taxes, the ability to provide for their families and for the federal government to leave them alone.

Addressing concerns over the balance of powers in the Constitution not being upheld, Marshall noted that he has taken four oaths in his life, one to his wife of over 40 years, one when he joined the military, one as a doctor and one as a legislator to uphold the Constitution and he does not take these oaths lightly.

One concern raised at the meeting was Congresses “power of the purse,” which President Trump has sidestepped with imposition of tariffs. Marshall said that while he agrees with the goal of the tariffs, the Supreme Court has deemed the President’s declaration of tariffs unconstitutional and he sees this as an example of the balance of powers at work, but he said that the overreach of the executive branch has been a trend that did not start with the current administration.

When asked if he supports the war in Iran, Marshall said that as a veteran, the son of a veteran and the father of a soldier, he wants it to be clear that he hates war.

“I want this war to be over, but I do not want Iran to have nuclear weapons,” Marshall said.

When asked about Artificial Intelligence (AI) Marshall noted he is a physician, not an expert on

See Marshall, Page 2

Wagerle honored for 43 years of service

By Dwight Nichols

Retired power plant superintendent John Wagerle was honored Monday by city commissioners at their regular meeting.

Wagerle spent more than 43 years working for the city of Sterling in a variety of positions. He officially ended his career on Oct. 1 while overseeing the power plant and electrical operations. Commissioners all spoke in support of his service to the community, while recognizing the loss of institutional knowledge that comes with Wagerle’s retirement.

Bond sale.

Commissioners unanimously approved a variety of actions to complete the purchase of the new 3-megawatt generator to be installed at the power plant.

First, was the approval of the winning bid for general obligation (GO) bonds in the amount of \$2,960,000. Robert W. Baird & CO was the winning bidder coming in with an interest rate of 4.98 percent.

Original estimates put

the interest rate around 5.125 percent. The lower rate is expected to save the city approximately \$100,000 in interest payments over the life of the bond, which is expected to be 15 years.

In addition, commissioners approved an ordinance authorizing the issuance of the bonds and a resolution authorizing the delivery of the bonds.

Annual payments on the bonds will take place in October while interest payments will be made each April.

In other business, commissioners heard from:

•Public Library Board President Stephanie Burford and Library Director Debbie Gibson regarding the ongoing issue in getting financing to replace the library’s elevator.

The library was hoping to complete the necessary steps this fall to apply for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). However, the lack of a completed

See City, Page 2



JOHN WAGERLE (left) is recognized by City Manager Ian Hutcheson for his 43 years of service to the City of Sterling.

Laudermilk NRP reinstatement granted

By Rene Wilson

Sterling residents Wes and Erin Laudermilk approached commissioners Monday morning seeking reinstatement into the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) after missing a \$40 personal property tax payment on a golf cart.

Wes Laudermilk explained that he thought the new law exempting golf carts had gone into effect.

Kansas lawmakers approved changes to state law that will exempt several categories of personal property from taxation beginning Jan. 1, 2026. Those items include: watercraft and marine equipment; off-road vehicles, including all-terrain, motorcycles, golf carts and snowmobiles; motorized bicycles, scooters and mopeds; and trailers with a gross weight of 15,000 pounds or less that are used exclusively for personal purposes.

However, Laudermilk’s tax bill was for 2025 and was paid as soon as he was made aware of the error. He also noted that he has been a resident of Rice County since 2009 and has never failed to pay his property taxes.

Others have been reinstated due to mailing issues, but Treasurer Kristi Smith noted some have not been reinstated because the paperwork states all taxes must be paid by the due date.

Commissioner Derek McCloud suggested a reinstatement fee should be established, for future requests due to the time and documentation involved.

Commissioners approved reinstating the Laudermilk’s into the program for the remaining five years of their 10-year NRP.

In other business commissioners:

•Heard a quarterly report from Rice County Economic Development Director Taryn Daniels. She noted two new loans for downtown businesses from the Revolving Loan Fund and shared information about a variety of grants she has been working on, including the grant that was used to place a billboard on I-70 encouraging tourists to visit the “World’s Largest Salt Shaker” in Lyons.

The question of whether the NRP program should be renewed for the

county or allowed to sunset was discussed. Commissioners expressed interest in exploring other options. Daniels noted she would need some time to get approval from all 42 taxing districts in the county if the NRP program is to continue.

•Approved purchase of firearms and holster from GT Distributors not to exceed \$4,717 with \$3,700 paid from golf tournament fundraiser held by the Sheriff’s Department and the rest out of the Sheriff’s 2026 budget;

•Heard a request from Sheriff Nick Sowers to award extra duty pay for the extra work that has been put in covering for the Lyons Police Department as they had to re-staff.

The City of Lyons has paid \$55,027.50 to date for the assistance provided by the Sheriff’s office, which they were statutorily required to do.

Sowers noted that taking on the extra duties has resulted in a greater number of arrests, prosecutor referrals and reports creating a significant workload increase.

Sowers proposed an extra \$500 in extra duty pay for detention and an extra \$1,500 for administrators and patrol officers, totaling \$16,500, wanting to recognize them for the extra work they have done.

Commissioner McCloud was not in favor of the extra pay because of the overtime currently paid in the department is “off the chart.”

Commissioner Terry David made a motion to approve the \$16,500 recognizing the significant workload increase.

Chairman Clay Thomas struggled with the decision.

“No matter what I do, people are going to hate me for this,” he said, noting concerns over a potential budget shortfall for 2026.

He also expressed concern that there is a snowball effect to everything the commissioners do. Giving the example of snow removal by the public works department – the workers receive overtime pay, but nothing “extra,” despite the extra workload.

“People elected you to keep them

See County Page 2

—FIRE PREVENTION WEEK—



ABOVE: Students enter the “smoke house” to learn fire safety and practice crawling to safety through the smoke.

BELOW: Second graders learn about the tools carried on a firetruck from Sterling Firefighter Jim Goracke and Assistant City Chief Richard Tommer.



ASK US ABOUT OUR

50 YEAR WARRANTY!

STERLING ROOFING

CALL 620-904-2013 FOR A FREE ESTIMATE TODAY!

FREE GRILL!

— While supplies last —
WITH THE PURCHASE OF A NEW ROOF