

CITY

Continued from A1

project, which is underway.

House said the city's main service line from the water treatment plant runs along the north side of 311th Street along Wea Creek. Erosion of the streambank has put the service line at an increased risk of breakage, and the city is rerouting the line across 311th Street along the south side of the road and away from the creek.

As for economic development, House said the city was able to rehabilitate and modernize the building at 115 W. Wea St. and then sell it to get it on the tax rolls and bring a new business to downtown.

House also said the City Council chose to support a Community Development Block Grant for the redevelopment of the old First Presbyterian Church building at 110 E. Peoria St., turning it into a small event space.

House said the Paola Crossings development continues to progress with the addition of a new auto services facility. The Paola Planning Commission and City Council have approved the site plan for the business.

One of the biggest economic development projects mentioned is the Kodion Energy project in Paola's Industrial Park.

"The city has formally approved their site plans and development agreement, and we watch with anticipation as their dreams come to fruition," House said.

Looking ahead for the remainder of 2026, House said the city's downtown master plan is a top priority.

The city published a request for proposals (RFP) seeking a consultant team to help guide the process. Proposals are due Thursday, March 12.

"The intent of this plan is to create a shared community vision and provide strategic guidance for land use, redevelopment, infrastructure, and placemaking improvements within the downtown district," House said. "We are largely depending on citizen engagement for this project so please frequent our city website, local newspaper, or Facebook page for opportunities to be engaged."

Miami County

Pretz said some of the county's highlights from 2025 include the mill and overlay of 18 miles of roads in the northeast quadrant, and the opening of a new EMS station in Hillsdale.

Pretz said the county is in its first year of self-funded insurance, and he said the Miami County Sheriff's Office recently received a grant to improve



Brian McCauley / Miami County Republic

April Damron, executive director of the Paola Chamber of Commerce, welcomes attendees to the State of the City Breakfast at Town Square Events in Paola.



Brian McCauley / Miami County Republic

Miami County Commission Chairman George Pretz speaks during the State of the City Breakfast on March 3 at Town Square Events.

its technology.

One project the county has been pursuing for several years is extending the runway at the Miami County Airport. Pretz said that vision should now become a reality after the county received a \$1.8 million federal grant to extend the runway to 4,000 feet. He also said an \$850,000 KDOT grant will help replace the taxiways.

Krull said the current runway is 3,400 feet long, but most jets with turbine engines need at least 4,000 feet.

Krull said the runway expansion should benefit the businesses at the airport, including Deason Aircraft Services and Aircraft Refinishing Company.

Pretz said the county is working to gather more information about the issues at the Miami County Courthouse, which is something voters said they were lacking in 2023 when they chose not to support a proposed quarter-cent sales tax to renovate and expand the historic courthouse.

Pretz said repairs to the roof and HVAC system could cost an estimated \$3 million.

Pretz said the Bucyrus sewer project could boost economic development opportunities in northeast Miami County.

"You can't have economic development without sewer," Pretz said, adding that a large portion of the project was covered by grant funding.

Pretz said the project involved the construction of 4.5 miles of sewer line connecting the Bucyrus sewer plant with the Spring Hill sewer plant near 223rd Street and Woodland Road.

Krull is planning to retire next January, and Pretz said the commission is working to develop a recruitment strategy to bring the right replacement on board by the end of the year.

Krull has been with the county for 22 years. **Paola USD 368**

Gerken said students in the Paola school district are getting new opportunities, as a coding elective class is being added at Paola Middle School, and a health careers pathway is being added at Paola High School.

Gerken said the district's graduation rate exceeded 95 percent for the fourth straight year, and 100 percent of the most recent class graduated on time with no dropouts.

The continuing trend of declining enrollment is something the school district is dealing with. Gerken said the kindergarten class is at 105 students but could soon drop below 100 for the first time in three decades.

Meek said statistics show that couples are waiting longer to marry and have children, and they are having fewer children.

Gerken said the school district no longer has a bond and interest fund



Brian McCauley / Miami County Republic

Paola USD 368 Board of Education President Amanda Gerken (left) speaks during the State of the City Breakfast March 3. Seated next to her are Miami County Commission Chairman George Pretz and Miami County Administrator Shane Krull.

after paying off its bonds last fall.

She also congratulated students on recent achievements, including Brock Johnson and Bryson Rockers winning state wrestling titles, and Paola High School seniors Hailey Long, Lillyth Huston and Kenton Powless receiving full-ride scholarships from the Rudd Foundation.

Gerken also pointed out that the Paola girls soccer team is starting its inaugural season this spring.

SPECIAL DINNER!

Friday, March 13 • 4-7:30 P.M.



Special: \$19.99
Includes: Boiled shrimp garlic butter or cocktail sauce, cheesy potatoes, house salad, garlic cheddar-biscuit.

Buffet: \$17.99
Includes: Fried chicken, glazed ham and roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, salad, dinner rolls. Dessert also included.



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Call 785-448-5711
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NO RESERVATIONS

Special hours for Friday, March 13: 6 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.



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Community members enjoyed breakfast and got to listen to local elected officials during the State of the City Breakfast.

JOIN US AT TOWN SQUARE EVENTS FOR THE 10TH ANNUAL

TONY BARTON

Music for Youth Fundraiser Concert

HELP US RAISE FUNDS FOR LOCAL STUDENTS PURSUING FURTHER EDUCATION IN MUSIC AND THE ARTS. COME ENJOY FOOD, FRIENDS AND LIVE ENTERTAINMENT WITH RAFFLES AND SILENT AUCTIONS THROUGHOUT THE EVENING. A GREAT TIME FOR A GOOD CAUSE.

Live Music @8pm Featuring



April 4th 2026

TOWN SQUARE EVENTS
15 W WEA ST, PAOLA, KS

\$1/\$2
DRINK
TICKETS

LIVE MUSIC BY FRIENDS OF FRIENDS @6:30

AWARD WINNING LOCAL BARBEQUE BY LEAD PITMASTER OF ROYAL SMOKE

RAFFLE AND AUCTIONS 5PM-10PM

4PM
DOORS
OPEN

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