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What I learned from serving on the Kansas Supreme Court nominating commission

By FRANCES GRAVES

When I accepted an appointment to the Kansas Supreme Court Nominating Commission seven years ago, I expected to learn about judges. Instead, I learned about institutions.

The most effective institutions aren't built around the people who happen to serve in them. They're built to endure long after those people are gone.

As Kansans prepare to vote

on whether to change our constitution and the way Supreme Court justices are selected, I'd like to share why serving on the commission gave me confidence in a system designed to evolve over time so that no single governor, administration or group permanently shapes its work.

When I joined the commission, I was the only non-attorney member appointed by the current governor. The other three citizen commissioners had been appointed by then-Gov. Sam Brownback. Over the years, those members completed their service, new commissioners joined, and attorney members rotated as they were elected by their peers across Kansas.

The faces around the table changed. The purpose never did.

Regardless of who appointed us or how we came to serve, politics simply wasn't part of our work together. Kansas law prohibits commissioners from considering a nominee's race, religion, sex, political affiliation or a disability. More importantly, every commissioner I served with genuinely respected that principle. Our discussions focused on experience, integrity, judicial temperament, legal ability and leadership. The question was always the same: Who is best prepared to serve the people of Kansas?

That consistency wasn't accidental. It was built into the commission's design. Attorneys elect one commissioner from each congressional district and a statewide chair. The governor appoints four non-attorney commissioners, one from each congressional district. Staggered four-year terms, limited to two terms, ensure that no single administration can quickly reshape the commission.

The checks and balances extend beyond the panel itself. We recommend three finalists, the governor appoints one, and that justice later stands before Kansas voters in a retention election. Responsibility is intentionally shared at every step.

When I first applied to serve, I was a rural mother active in my community who believed the best public decisions are made when people with different perspectives come together around the same table. What I came to appreciate was that good public service also depends on expertise. The commission intentionally combines both.

I've served on many hiring committees, and like any committee hiring for a highly specialized position, the commission brings together subject-matter experts and people who represent those the organization serves. In the case of this body, attorneys evaluate legal reasoning, judicial opinions and professional reputation. Non-attorneys contribute the perspective of the Kansans our courts ultimately serve. Together, those perspectives produce stronger decisions than either could alone.

The work is demanding. Commissioners spend hundreds of volunteer hours reviewing extensive application materials, legal writing samples, references, background

information and public comments before conducting hours of public interviews. By the time candidates appear before the commission, they are almost always exceptionally accomplished attorneys or judges, making the selection of just three finalists a difficult task.

This is why the claim that the commission is driven by politics does not reflect my experience. I never heard commissioners discuss partisan politics, and I never interviewed an applicant who suggested political connections played any role in the process.

When I first joined the commission, I wrote a newspaper column to provide transparency about how Kansas selects Supreme Court justices. Seven years later, I still have confidence in the integrity of that process, but I've also learned something bigger.

Good institutions aren't built because we trust people. They're built because we know people change.

The staggered terms, elected attorney commissioners, gubernatorial appointments and voter retention elections all reflect a system intentionally designed to outlast politics. For me, that became the commission's greatest strength. It was never about any individual commissioner or elected official. It was about an institution built to ensure that no one person or political moment could define it.

Serving on the Kansas Supreme Court Nominating Commission has been one of the greatest privileges of my civic life. I am grateful for the opportunity to have represented everyday Kansans in this important constitutional responsibility, but I know I am just one of many public servants entrusted with this work over the years. My hope is that the commission endures as it was designed — bringing together citizens and attorneys in service to an independent and impartial judiciary for the people of Kansas.

Frances Graves lives in Bartlett and works as the Kansas Agriculture and Rural Leadership program manager and facilitator and as a Kansas State University Research and Extension Community Vitality state specialist.

LEGAL NOTICE

(First published in the Wilson County Citizen on Thursday, July 16, 2026)
IN THE THIRTY FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT
DISTRICT COURT, WILSON COUNTY, KANSAS
CIVIL DEPARTMENT
FIRST NATIONAL BANK
IN FREDONIA,)
FREDONIA, KANSAS)
Plaintiff,)
v.) Case No. WL- 2026-CV-000015
Billy L. Jahnke, Johnney L. Jahnke, and)
The Unknown Heirs of Billy L. Jahnke,)
Defendants,)
)
)
)
)
)

NOTICE OF SALE
Under and by virtue of an Order of Sale issued to me by the Clerk of the District Court of Wilson County, Kansas, the undersigned Sheriff of Wilson County, Kansas, will offer for sale at public auction and sell to the highest bidder for cash in hand, at the Front Steps of the Wilson County Courthouse of the Courthouse at Fredonia Wilson County, Kansas, on August 5, 2026, at 10:00 AM, the following real estate:
The East Fifty-six (56) feet of the West One Hundred Ten (110) feet of Lots Eleven (11) and
Twelve (12), Block Seventeen (17) City of Fredonia, Wilson County, Kansas.
Commonly known as 307 Madison St, Fredonia, Kansas 66736 (the "Property"), to satisfy the judgment in the above-entitled case. The sale is to be made without appraisal and subject to the redemption period as provided by law, and further subject to the approval of the Court.

Harold "Pete" Kuhn,
Sheriff Wilson County, Kansas
Prepared By:
Jacob Green, KS #30120
Green Law Office LLC
620 Madison St.
Fredonia, KS 66736
620-378-4444
info@greenlaw.LLC

LEGAL NOTICE

(First published in the Wilson County Citizen on Thursday, July 23, 2026)

IN THE 31st JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
OF WILSON COUNTY, KANSAS

IN THE MATTER OF THE ADOPTION OF
NOVA LEE-ANN MORRIS, A MINOR

CASE WL-2026-AD-000004

NOTICE OF HEARING

The court will hold a Hearing on the Petition in this matter on **September 17, 2026 at 11:00am** at the Wilson County District Courthouse, Fredonia, Kansas.

Prepared & Submitted,

/s/ Cherilyn G. Hearn
Cherilyn G. Hearn, #29694
Cherilyn Hearn, Attorney, LLC
PO Box 521
Fredonia, KS 67736
620.652.1029
myKSattorney@gmail.com
Attorney for Petitioners

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE AND MAILING

I Cherilyn G. Hearn, certify that on or about the day of electronic filing, I served this Notice upon the Wilson County District Court via Kansas Electronic Filing System and made every effort to effect notice on all interested parties thereafter.

/s/ _____ Cherilyn G. Hearn _____
Cherilyn G. Hearn, #29694

(Published in the Wilson County Citizen on Thursday, July 30, 2026)

2027

NOTICE OF BUDGET HEARING

The governing body of
Pleasant Valley Township
Wilson County
will meet on August 14, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. at 22094 1800 Rd, Chanute KS for the purpose of hearing and answering objections of taxpayers relating to the proposed use of all funds and the amount of ad valorem tax. Detailed budget information is available at Evelyn Grady's residence and will be available at this hearing.

BUDGET SUMMARY

Proposed Budget 2027 Expenditures and Amount of 2026 Ad Valorem Tax establish the maximum limits of the 2027 budget. Estimated Tax Rate is subject to change depending on the final assessed valuation.

Fund	Prior Year Actual 2025		Current Year Estimate 2026		Proposed Budget 2027		
	Expenditures	Actual Tax Rate*	Expenditures	Actual Tax Rate*	Budget Authority for Expenditures	Amount of 2026 Ad Valorem Tax	Proposed Estimated Tax Rate*
General	1,275	0.117	4,085	0.108	8,075	1,277	0.103
Special Machinery							
Totals	1,275	0.117	4,085	0.108	8,075	1,277	0.103
					Revenue Neutral Rate**		0.103
Less: Transfers	0		0		0		
Net Expenditure	1,275		4,085		8,075		
Total Tax Levied	1,268		1,274		xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx		
Assessed Valuation:							
Township	10,891,810		11,839,781		12,449,494		
Outstanding Indebtedness, Jan 1,	2024		2025		2026		
G.O. Bonds	0		0		0		
Other	0		0		0		
Lease Purchase Principal	0		0		0		
Total	0		0		0		
*Tax rates are expressed in mills.							
**Revenue Neutral Rate as defined by KSA 79-2988							
Evelyn Grady							
Township Officer							
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(Published in the Wilson County Citizen on Thursday, July 30, 2026)

State of Kansas
Special District
2027

NOTICE OF BUDGET HEARING

The governing body of
Star Cemetary District #38
Wilson County
will meet on August 17, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. at Chris Beckwith's residence for the purpose of hearing and answering objections of taxpayers relating to the proposed use of all funds and the amount of tax to levied. Detailed budget information is available at Joe Newland's residence and will be available at this hearing.

BUDGET SUMMARY

Proposed Budget 2027 Expenditures and Amount of 2026 Ad Valorem Tax establish the maximum limits of the 2027 budget. Estimated Tax Rate is subject to change depending on the final assessed valuation.

FUND	Prior Year Actual 2025		Current Year Estimate for 2026		Proposed Budget Year for 2027		
	Expenditures	Actual Tax Rate*	Expenditures	Actual Tax Rate*	Budget Authority for Expenditures	Amount of 2026 Ad Valorem Tax	Proposed Estimated Tax Rate*
General	2,865	0.588	7,675	0.550	16,260	3,117	0.529
Debt Service							
Totals	2,865	0.588	7,675	0.550	16,260	3,117	0.529
					Revenue Neutral Rate**		0.529
Less: Transfers	0		0		0		
Net Expenditures	2,865		7,675		16,260		
Total Tax Levied	3,096		3,115		xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx		
Assessed Valuation	5,273,015		5,672,266		5,897,637		
Outstanding Indebtedness, Jan 1,	2024		2025		2026		
G.O. Bonds	0		0		0		
Revenue Bonds	0		0		0		
Other	0		0		0		
Lease Pur. Princ.	0		0		0		
Total	0		0		0		
*Tax rates are expressed in mills.							
**Revenue Neutral Rate as defined by KSA 79-2988							
Joe Newland							
Officer							
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The Wilson County Citizen

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