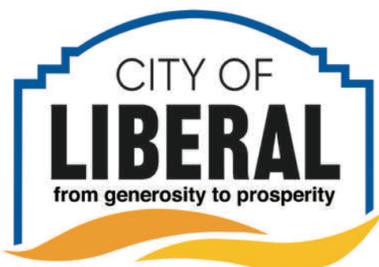


City to discuss options for downtown revitalization concepts

ELLY GRIMM
• Leader & Times



The Liberal City Commission will have a small but varied list of projects up for approval at its next meeting this evening starting at 5:30. This evening's meeting will be in the commission chambers at the Liberal Recreation Center at 950 S. Grant Ave.

After hearing a proposal for the comprehensive insurance renewal from Iron Insurance Partners, the commission will then be discussing the Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan.

"Activation and redevelopment of Downtown Liberal through investments in public spaces and infrastructure was identified as a key goal in the Launch Liberal 2035 Comprehensive Plan," the agenda information noted. "Working with experts in city planning, engineering, and design to create a redevelopment plan which considers a holistic approach to both the form and function of built public spaces will help provide us with a cost-effective, phased approach to creating a thriving Downtown district. A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was issued in December to identify firms interested in conducting research and public engagement activities to draft a Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan which assesses current economic and market data; identifies market opportunities for additional retail, office, civic, and residential uses; and provides visual descriptions for transportation systems, infrastructure, streetscape, and public spaces to

support connectivity and place-making goals. During a special meeting Feb. 20, the commission reviewed submitted profiles and recommended Confluence and RICK Engineering as finalists for the project. Staff were directed to obtain service quotes. The service quote maximums received were from Confluence for \$94,750 and RICK Engineering for \$93,810. After reviewing proposals in detail and contacting professional references, staff are recommending Confluence due to their more robust public engagement plan, 3D modeling/visualization production, and the high quality plan examples provided in their portfolio. Staff recommends approval to negotiate a contract agreement with Confluence for the purpose of creating a Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan in an amount not to exceed \$95,000 to be funded through the Economic Development portion of the 1-cent Sales Tax."

Also seeking approval will be the Liberal Mid-America Regional Airport for the purchase of security cameras.

"The Liberal Mid-America

Regional Airport respectfully requests authorization to install a comprehensive security camera system. This system will cover the terminal building, parking areas, and all entry points, directly addressing the critical need to significantly enhance the safety and security of all airport users," the agenda information noted. "The airport has already allocated \$30,000 from its capital equipment budget for this essential project. We have received a detailed and comprehensive quote from INAAalert for the security camera system installation, totaling \$46,506.51. To ensure the successful implementation of this vital security enhancement, we propose covering the remaining balance of \$16,506.51 through the strategic utilization of funds from other currently under-budget line items throughout the fiscal year. This approach allows us to proceed with the installation without compromising the financial stability of other important airport operations. Staff recommends the commission authorize the Liberal Mid-America Regional Airport to move forward with the security

camera installation, contracted with INAAalert. Specifically, the staff proposes that the initial \$30,000 expenditure be allocated from the airport's capital equipment budget, while the remaining balance of \$16,506.51 be sourced from currently under-budgeted line items within the existing fiscal year's allocation."

Concluding the meeting's new business will be discussion of an ATLAS server hardware project.

"At the March 10 special meeting, the Liberal City Commission, by consensus, authorized movement forward for the procurement of the necessary hardware for the implementation of ATLAS, a centralized Analytics, Telemetry & Learning for Administration & Services platform," the agenda information noted. "This system will incorporate cutting-edge technologies to help all departments better serve the community. Some of the new tools will be Financial Analytics, budget planning and modeling, along with several new tools and modules for all departmental benefit. In addition to the new modules, analytics and budget planning, several departments will now have better inventory monitoring, along with specialized service request tracking. The quote requests were submitted to two vendors: CDWG and SHI. We have consistently utilized these two vendors throughout the years. The pricing of this project was very competitive as reflected in the quote difference. City staff request consideration to approve the quote from SHI for the ATLAS Server Hardware

Project, with funding being split as follows: \$50,000 from General Fund Contingency, \$50,000 from 1% Sales Tax Crime Prevention, \$50,000 from Water, and \$97,233.18 from the 1-cent sales tax Streets, Drainage & Capital Improvements."

SHARP
SHARP MX 3640N Color Copier
Engineered to Deliver Performance & Productivity
SOUTHERN
Office Supply
(620) 626-4300 • (800) 941-4300
Fax (620) 626-4332
417 N. Kansas • Liberal, KS 67901
www.sosonline.com

Horning
FAMILY FUNERAL HOME
620-624-5647
Email: brenneman.fh@sbcglobal.net
Website: www.brennemanfuneralhome.com
1212 W. 2nd Street • Liberal, KS 67901

FARMERS
INSURANCE
• Auto • Home • Life • Business
"Helping you protect your most valuable assets."
Candi Prater Agency
620-626-5664
303 N. Kansas Ave., Ste. 104
Liberal, KS 67901
cprater@farmersagency.com • farmersagency.com/cprater

Bill passes to ban phones in classrooms

ELLY GRIMM
• Leader & Times

After much work and deliberation, a bill banning the use of cell phones and similar personal electronic devices has been signed.

Thursday, Gov. Laura Kelly announced she had signed Senate Substitute for Substitute for House Bill 2299 (Sub for HB 2299), banning the use of cell phones and personal electronic devices during the school day.

"In our rapidly changing world, technology dominates our lives, and that's why it's essential that we reduce distractions in the classroom," Gov. Kelly noted in a release from the State of Kansas. "We must have one uniform standard across the state to tackle this issue and set our students up for success. By banning cell phone use during the school day, we're taking a commonsense approach to address the impact smartphones and social media have on Kansas children's academic performance, learning environments, and mental health."

The bill requires Kansas public schools and accredited private schools to prohibit the use of personal electronic devices during the school day on school premises. These devices include, but are not limited to: cell phones, tablets, computers, watches, wireless headphones or earbuds, text messaging devices, and personal digital assistants. Students' personal devices must be turned off and securely stored during the school day. The bill includes exceptions if a device is needed for the implementation of a student's individualized education program or 504 plan, or if approved by a physician as a medical necessity. Students may still contact a parent or guardian via school phone. The bill does not apply to technology that is issued to students by school districts.

125th District Representative Shannon Francis said such a proposal had been in the

works for a while in a Jan. 25 L&T story. 125th District Representative Shannon Francis said the proposal has been in the works for a while.

"A couple years ago, the Kansas State Board of Education began a task force that delved into the problem of phones in the public schools, and then that task force made some recommendations to school districts throughout the state as far as what they thought the best practices would be," Francis said. "After that, it was then left to the state's school boards to decide how to proceed. Since that time – and even before this, actually – multiple states had something in place that restricted cell phone use in public schools, and we continue to see better outcomes and fewer disciplinary issues for the schools that have implemented those types of restrictions. That task force also cited a study from 2024 that showed how 72 percent of high school teachers believed students distracted by their cell phones is a major issue. The evidence definitely leaned in favor of these types of restrictions."

The ultimate goal of the bill, Francis said in January, is to help students, and the bill should ultimately prove very beneficial.

"I think we'll see better test scores, fewer disciplinary issues in schools and fewer mental health issues in schools. I feel like cell phone access and access to social media apps and things like that directly contributes to anxiety and ADHD and other similar conditions," Francis said. "Since the smartphone was developed, there have been more cases of anxiety and ADHD and other mental health conditions seen, especially in young people, and I think having something like this in place will help. I think it's important for us to think about what good policy will be for our schoolchildren. There are fewer things more important than making sure our children are happy and healthy and whole so they can receive

a great education." Other Kansas leaders also praised the bill's passing.

"As a father of four young boys, I see firsthand how today's technology can affect kids' ability to learn and grow," Senate Majority Leader Chase Blasi, District 26, noted in the State of Kansas release. "I'm proud the legislature came together to pass a bill that puts Kansas kids first."

"We will look back on this moment and know we took a step in the right direction to protect Kansas kids. Research has shown us that our students' mental health, test scores, and concentration levels are negatively impacted by overuse of social media and cell phones," Senate Democratic Leader Dinah Sykes, District 21, noted in the State of Kansas release. "I am proud of the bipartisan work put into this bill, and the many discussions we have had with stakeholders, local officials, lawmakers, and the governor's office. It is time that we got cell phones out of Kansas classrooms. Our kids deserve policies that prioritize their health and strengthen their future, and that is what HB 2299 does."

The bill also prohibits employees of school districts from using social media to communicate with students for official school purposes, or from requiring the use of social media for any assignment or extracurricular activity, the State of Kansas release continued.

"This is about creating a school environment where kids can focus on learning, protect their mental health, and simply be kids again," Representative Angela Martinez, District 103, noted in the State of Kansas release.

"Senate Substitute for Substitute for HB 2299 is about setting a clear, student-centered standard and then working hand-in-hand with our districts to implement it in a way that works for their communities," Representative Jason Goetz, District 119, noted in the State of Kansas release. "Because passing a bill is not the finish line. It's the starting point. Our commitment moving forward is to partner with schools, to listen, to adjust where needed, and to make sure this policy works not just on paper, but in real classrooms, with real students."



RINE EXTERMINATING INC.
rafk99@gmail.com
rineexterminating.com
DAVID RINE
OWNER-PCO
620-626-PEST CELL 620-621-2831

Heritage
real estate group inc.
Residential • Farm • Commercial
2 S. Kansas - 620-626-6100
Outside Liberal - 866-626-6100
People you know & trust ... Professionals you can depend on

Parallel Ag
PARALLELAG.COM | 800.659.1639
Parallel Ag is proud to serve the Liberal Kansas Community. Come check out our full selection of Ford, Massey Ferguson and Manitou equipment, as well as our extensive inventory of all of the parts you may need!
451 S COUNTRY ESTATES RD

HEIFERSOURCE
SUSTAINABILITY STARTS HERE®

PBS COMPUTER
807 South Kansas Ave Liberal, Kansas
Free Help Line (620) 626-HELP (4357)
• Network Design • Printers
• Professional Service • Scanners
• Software Installation • Copiers
• Virus & Spyware Cleanup
sales@pbscomputer.com
tech@pbscomputer.com
www.pbscomputer.com

EXTENDED TUNNEL HOURS ON WESTERN! OPEN TIL 7 P.M!
602 South Kansas Ave.
15 E. Tucker Rd.
Tunnel Wash
1305 N. Western Ave.
Squeaky Clean Car Wash
8am-6pm Mon - Sat
Tunnel Wash Closed on Sunday

We do BBQ right!
BRICK HOUSE
BARBECUE & BEW
Hours:
Monday - Thursday
11:00 am - 10:00 pm
Friday - Saturday
11:00 am - 11:00 pm
Sunday
11:00 am - 10:00 pm
24 E 2nd St
Liberal, KS 67901
(620) 604 9846
DINE IN
TAKE OUT
ONLINE ORDERING

Right in the Heart of Good Times
MIDTOWN PIZZERIA & PUB
222 N Kansas Ave
Liberal, KS 67901
(620) 309 4449
Hours:
Sunday - Thursday
11:00 am - 9:45 pm
Friday - Saturday
11:00 am - 10:45 pm
PIZZA, APPS, PASTA, SALAD BAR,
FULL BAR WITH BEER ON TAP