

THE WORD AND THE WORLD

(A Turning Point)

Article No. 7

BY JIM FRECH

Pastor, Countryside Christian Church

►► A Prayer for the New Year:

O Jesus! meek and humble of heart, Hear me.

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being loved by others...
 From the desire of being extolled ...
 From the desire of being honored ...
 From the desire of being praised ...
 From the desire of being preferred over someone else...
 From the desire of being consulted for my opinions ...
 From the desire of gaining the approval of others ...

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being humiliated in front of people I want to impress...
 From the fear of being despised ...
 From the fear of being corrected ...
 From the barriers that I put up when I get defensive ...

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being forgotten ...
 From the fear of being ridiculed ...
 From the fear of being wronged ...
 From the fear of loving others and not having that love returned the way I think I need it ...

Jesus, I pray

...that others may be loved and lifted up more than I,

Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be thanked, applauded, or rewarded more than I ...

That, in the opinion of the world, others may increase and I may decrease ...
 That others may be chosen and I set aside ...
 That others may be praised and I unnoticed ...
 That others may be preferred ...
 That others may follow Jesus alongside me, providing a community of humility and Christlikeness ...

Jim Frech is the Pastor at Countryside Christian Church, located at 1901 East 4th Street, Pittsburg, Kansas 66762. He can be reached by email at jim.cccpitt@gmail.com or by phone at 620.232.9210. The church holds services on Sunday at 9 am - Traditional Service, 10 am - Sunday School, and 11 am - Contemporary Service.

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Rising IT costs, looming hardware upgrades outlined at year-end meeting

CRAWFORD COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING - DECEMBER 30, 2025

BY PHILIP STEVENS

HOMETOWN GIRARD

►► Crawford County officials closed out 2025 on Dec. 30 with a detailed discussion of the county's information technology infrastructure, highlighting sharp increases in software costs, the need to maintain system support in the short term, and the likelihood of significant hardware replacement expenses by 2027.

IT Director Brandon Spaar told the board that a required renewal of the county's VMware maintenance agreement has risen to \$13,680 for 2026 following the software's acquisition by Broadcom, a change that eliminated pricing flexibility and imposed minimum licensing thresholds. While the renewal is necessary to maintain system stability and access to technical support, Spaar said the county plans to move away from VMware to a Microsoft-based hypervisor system, which he described as a more sustainable option under current licensing models.

Spaar cautioned that regardless of the software platform selected, the county's existing servers will not be compatible with future versions of virtualization software beyond 2027. As a result, replacement of core hardware will be required within the next two years, at an estimated cost of roughly \$40,000. He also noted that technology planning will increasingly require coordination with department heads as vendors continue pushing cloud-based services, some of which are already affecting county software systems.

The discussion placed IT spending alongside

other year-end budget pressures facing the county, as officials weighed rising operational costs against limited flexibility in existing funds.

All three commissioners were present for the meeting, held at the Crawford County Courthouse in Girard, along with County Clerk Lisa Lusker and County Counselor Jim Emerson.

Early in the meeting, the board approved the consent agenda and signed actions from prior meetings, including approval of minutes from Dec. 19 and Dec. 23, 2025. Additional routine actions included approval of a contract between Crawford County and the Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce, payment of 2026 dues to the Kansas Association of Counties, and acceptance of a worker's compensation bid.

Under new business, Lusker presented three 2026 cereal malt beverage licenses. One license was issued to Joe's One Stop LLC, located at 401 N. U.S. 69 Highway in Arma, for off-premises consumption only. Two licenses were approved for Pichler's Chicken Annie's, located at 1271 S. 220th St. in Pittsburg, one for on-premises consumption and one for the sale of unopened containers not for consumption on site. Lusker reported that all required notifications had been completed and no objections were received.

Lusker also addressed the county's annual reorganization, noting that because there would be no change in board membership, reorganization could be scheduled during a regular meeting. The board agreed to conduct reorganization on Tuesday, Jan. 6, at 10 a.m., which will include

designation of official banks, publications, and related appointments.

Emerson then presented a proposed transfer of funds to address a year-end deficit in the ambulance account. He reported that after December payroll and bills were processed, the account showed a negative balance of \$79,476.04. To balance the account and close the books for 2025, Emerson proposed a \$100,000 transfer split evenly between the county general fund and the operating reserve fund.

During discussion, Emerson explained that EMS will receive its first distribution of ad valorem tax revenue in mid-January, providing a significant influx of cash, but acknowledged that some 2026 cash would likely be used to cover late 2025 obligations.

Commissioners emphasized the importance of monitoring cash flow closely in early 2026 as year-end deposits and expenditures are finalized.

The board approved the transfer as presented.

The board also approved the appointment of Judge John G. Mazurek as the judiciary representative to the Juvenile Corrections Advisory Board, following changes in judicial assignments within the 11th Judicial District.

Another major action involved the county's transition to a new worker's compensation structure. The board adopted Resolution 2025-037, approving Crawford County's participation in the Kansas Workers Risk Cooperative for Counties, a group-funded self-insurance pool for worker's compensation coverage, effective Jan. 1, 2026. Emerson explained that claims incurred prior to Jan. 1 will

remain with the county's previous carrier, while new claims beginning in 2026 will be handled through the cooperative.

Emerson also provided an updated overview of American Rescue Plan Act funding. He reported that approximately \$1 million remains unspent, with allocations across public health response, infrastructure projects in Arcadia and Cherokee, administrative costs including the county's comprehensive plan, and childcare initiatives. All remaining ARPA funds must be expended by Dec. 31, 2026.

In additional action, the board approved a separation agreement and release of all claims between Crawford County and David J. Looby (Director of Explore Crawford), authorizing the chair to sign the agreement.

The meeting included multiple executive sessions throughout the morning and early afternoon to discuss legal advice, IT security matters, and non-elected personnel issues. No binding action was reported following those closed sessions.

The board announced upcoming agenda items, including a rescheduled presentation by Emergency Manager Quinton Parsons on burn bans and a Jan. 6 presentation by Chief Judge Kurtis Loy and 11th Judicial District Court Administrator Mac Young regarding Recovery Court operations.

The meeting adjourned after completion of all scheduled business.

New year opens with need for clarity on comprehensive plan timeline

CRAWFORD COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING - JANUARY 2, 2026

BY PHILIP STEVENS

HOMETOWN GIRARD

►► The Crawford County Commission opened the new year on Friday, Jan. 2, with a quick, 15-minute meeting in which commissioners raised renewed concerns about the pace and cost of the county's ongoing comprehensive plan process.

All three commissioners were present for the meeting at the Crawford County Courthouse, along with County Clerk Lisa Lusker and County Counselor Jim Emerson.

Under new business, Lusker presented a 2026 cereal malt beverage license application for Countryside Golf Course in Pittsburg, operated by Kim Brewer, for on-premises consumption.

Lusker reported that the sheriff, county attorney, zoning administrator, and township clerk had been notified and raised no objections. The commission approved the license and authorized the chair to sign.

Discussion later in the meeting turned to the county's comprehensive plan, with Commissioner Bruce Blair asking for an update on scheduling and progress.

Blair said he had not yet seen a clear timeline outlining which subject areas had been completed and expressed concern about the amount of money already spent relative to visible progress.

Emerson told commissioners that while the plan is still in the work-group phase with the Planning and Zoning Commission, land-use and zoning issues have proven more time-consuming than anticipated.

He said he believed several sections

had been addressed but acknowledged the need for a clearer schedule.

Commissioners noted that the county originally budgeted \$150,000 for the project and estimated that more than half of that amount has already been spent. Emerson agreed to contact the consultant to obtain a more detailed timeline and progress update for the commission's review before the plan advances to a public hearing stage.

In old business, Emerson requested a Jan. 13 work session at 9 a.m. to discuss "Explore Crawford County," which commissioners agreed to schedule.

During future business and announcements, officials reviewed a busy early-January calendar, including a Jan. 6 work session to sign December bills and payroll vouchers, the commission's

annual reorganization meeting, and upcoming presentations from Emergency Manager Quinton Parsons on burn bans, judicial officials on Recovery Court operations, and insurance representatives regarding property and casualty coverage.

Commissioners also asked Emerson to follow up with the county's insurance provider ahead of the Jan. 9 meeting to confirm whether previously discussed premium increase estimates remain accurate, noting that delayed or revised figures could require last-minute budget adjustments.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

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