

Pitt State presents track funding request, museum distributions approved, and legislative updates

CRAWFORD COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING – APRIL 14, 2026

BY PHILIP STEVENS
HOMETOWN GIRARD

► The Crawford County Commission met Tuesday, April 14, at the courthouse in Girard, where commissioners heard a funding request tied to a new outdoor track facility at Pittsburg State University, approved revised museum funding distributions, and received a detailed legislative update as the Kansas session concluded.

The primary presentation came from representatives of the university and Explore Crawford County, who requested continued use of transient guest tax funding redirected toward the construction of the outdoor track. Renato Pinto, representing the Explore Crawford County advisory board, said the board voted in February to recommend allocating one-sixth of the transient guest tax to the university for up to 10 years, capped at \$1 million.

Jim Johnson, Executive Vice President for Engagement and Executive Affairs, explained the request builds on a partnership that began in 2013, when a portion of the guest tax was first directed to support operations at the Robert W. Plaster Center. Under the current proposal, that same revenue stream would instead be used to help fund the capital cost of the outdoor track.

Johnson pointed to the measurable impact of the indoor facility, noting that in its first 10 seasons it hosted 87 track meets and brought an estimated 120,000 visitors to Pittsburg and Crawford County. He said the outdoor facility is expected to extend that economic activity into months that have historically been slower for tourism. “We feel like we’ll just replicate that now in May, June, July, maybe even into August,” Johnson said, adding that demand for youth and amateur track events continues to grow. “Finding quality track facilities is

really, really hard. And finding a community with a volunteer base to pull off a track meet is really, really difficult.”

Johnson and university officials described the facility as intentionally designed for large-scale events, with multiple field event areas and a layout that allows competitions to occur simultaneously without interfering with running events. He said that design makes it possible to host significantly larger meets than traditional tracks. Commissioners also asked about public access and long-term use. Johnson said the university intends to make the facility available to local groups and the broader community, similar to the Plaster Center, while noting that certain limitations may apply due to the natural grass infield required for specific events.

Commissioners expressed interest in the potential economic impact, particularly the ability to generate overnight stays and increased activity for local businesses. Discussion concluded with general agreement to move forward toward a formal agreement, which will be brought back to the commission for approval.

Later in the meeting, commissioners reviewed the March clerk’s report, with discussion centered on how insurance costs are allocated across departments. Commissioners noted the overall expense but acknowledged the structure has been in place for several years. The report was approved following discussion.

County Counselor Jim Emerson then presented a revised approach to museum funding distributions, aimed at eliminating confusion caused by uneven allocations in past years. He explained that while total funding had been equal across museums, the split between county and visitors bureau contributions made it

appear otherwise in financial records. The new structure standardizes contributions so that each museum receives the same amount from both the county and Explore Crawford County. Under the plan, Crawford County Historical Museum, Miners Hall Museum, and Friends of Historic Girard will each receive \$12,500 from the county, while the Frontenac museum will receive \$7,500 from the historical fund and an additional \$5,000 from the county’s operating reserve this year to bring it in line with the others. Emerson said the goal is to have all distributions fully equalized within the same funding structure beginning next year. Commissioners approved the revised distribution method as presented.

Emerson also provided a legislative update following the close of the Kansas session, focusing on a bill that would modify property tax procedures if signed into law. He explained that the proposal maintains the current revenue neutral rate requirements but introduces an additional protest mechanism that could be triggered if tax increases exceed a separate threshold. Under the proposal, local governments would still be required to follow existing notice and hearing procedures when exceeding the revenue neutral rate, but additional steps could be required if the increase reaches the protest level. Emerson said the changes would add complexity and increase administrative workload, particularly for the county clerk’s office, which would need to incorporate new procedures into tax notices and timelines.

Commissioners also discussed the potential loss of state reimbursement for required tax notices, which has previously offset a significant annual cost to the county. Emerson noted that if reimbursement is no longer provided, the county will need to

determine whether to absorb the cost or allocate it among taxing entities.

In additional business, the commission approved a new county travel policy that formalizes the use of per diem reimbursement rates and establishes updated approval procedures for both in-state and out-of-state travel. Emerson said the policy is intended to improve consistency and accountability while reducing issues related to receipt tracking, though he acknowledged it may require adjustments as departments adapt to the new process.

Commissioners also received updates on ongoing county operations, including early progress on cleanup efforts along Highway 160, where crews had removed multiple truckloads of debris within the first few hours of work. Additional discussion focused on road maintenance planning and delays related to asphalt plant availability, as well as upcoming budget preparation timelines.

The commission approved several motions during the meeting, including approval of the March clerk’s report, adoption of the revised museum funding distributions, approval of the updated travel policy through Resolution 2026-014, and a 15-minute executive session at the close of the meeting to discuss budget matters under attorney-client privilege.

Looking ahead, commissioners noted several upcoming meetings and public hearings, including April 17 hearings on proposed street improvements in Prairie View Estates and the vacation of a platted street in Ringo. The meeting adjourned following completion of all scheduled business

* * *

Events through April 24



Building Strong Readers Ages 0-5 - Join us for Building Strong Readers - our story time program - at Girard Public Library on **Wednesday, April 22nd at 10:00 am or Thursday, April 23rd at 10:00 am!** Have some spring fun with stories and a craft!

Children’s Movie Afternoon - Enjoy a movie and popcorn at Girard Public Library on **Wednesday, April 22nd at 2:30 pm!** “Bad Guys 2” and “Smurfs” will be the movie choices this month. Those that attend will vote for the movie they would like to watch.

Teen Time Grades 6th-12th - Enjoy an evening at Girard Public Library for Teen Time on **Monday, April 20th at 5:30 pm** with Courtney! This program is for those is Grades 6th-12th.

Science for Kids - Join Crawford County Conservation District for an activity at Girard Public Library on **Tuesday, April 7th at 3:30 pm!** Mindy Goble, with the Crawford County Conservation District, will be present to lead the activity. Learn about rain and make a rain gauge!

Book Club - Join us for a discussion of “The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell” by Robert Dugoni. Copies are available if you would like to attend. New members welcome to this member led group.

Science for Kids - Join Crawford County Conservation District for a science program for kids at Girard Public Library on **Tuesday, April 21st at 3:30 pm!** Mindy Goble, with the Crawford County Conservation District will be here to lead the activity. Learn about wetlands and conduct a Wetlands STEM Experiment.

Ag Day 2026 will be held on Thursday, April 30th from 9:30 am - 3:30 pm! We will have a variety of Ag stations for attendees to enjoy! Information will be updated as we get confirmation from our presenters who generously donate their time to make this event possible!

- ~Judd Bailey - Draft Horses & Farming
- ~Jan Mikrut - Rope Making
- ~Will Morris & Adaven Rohling - K-State Research & Extension-
- ~Wendie Powell - K-State Research & Extension - Livestock Feed
- ~ Southeast Kansas Old Time Gas Engine & Tractor Club
- ~ Girard FFA - Petting Zoo
- ~Girard FFA - Presentation
- ~Ann Lero - Chickens
- ~Neosho County Conservation District- Stream Trailer
- ~ 4 State Farm & Ranch -
- ~Heartland Rural Electric - Safety Trailer (9:30-Noon)
- ~Crawford County Farm Bureau ~ Corn Germination

Our first Ag Day at the Library event was held in 2013! We started out small with just a few presenters and it quickly grew. We have hosted this event annually with the exception of 2020 & 2021. We look forward to being able to offer this program for many more years. It would not be possible without the wonderful presenters that donate their time to make this day a success! Thank you presenters!

If you know a company, club/group or individuals that would like to join us, please have them contact the library! Event is open to the public. All surrounding schools, clubs, groups and individuals are welcome to attend!

Library Hours

- Monday: 9:30 am - 7:00 pm
- Tuesday - Thursday: 9:30 am - 6:00 pm
- Friday: 9:30 am - 5:00 pm
- Saturday: 9:00 am - 2:30 pm
- Sunday: Closed

New Items at Girard Public Library

The following items are just part of the new items that have been added to our shelves recently. Stop by the library to find out what else we have added.

Adult Fiction

- *The Beach Trap* by Ali Brady
- *Love Held Captive* by Shelley Gray (Lone Star Hero’s Love Story #3)
- *Into the Whirlwind* by Kat Martin (BOSS, Inc. #2)
- *Revenge Prey* by John Sandford (Lucas Davenport #36)

Adult Mystery Fiction

- *On the Right Track* by Shane Gayle (*Mysteries of Cobble Hill Farm* #8)

Adult Western Fiction

- *Murphy’s Law* by William Johnstone (Murphy’s Law #1)
- *The White Bird* by Lauren Paine
- *One Man’s Justice* by F. M. Parker

Children’s Picture Books

- *Fabulous Creatures* by Cornelia Funke
- *Mario Takes Off* by Benjamin Harper
- *Pokemon: Here Come the Explorers* by Sophie Dryburgh

Magazines

- *Backwoods Home April/May/June 2026*
- *Kansas Wildlife and Parks Photo Issue 2026*
- *Taste of Home*

* RUSTIC PROMOTIONS PRESENTS *

Spring in the Country CRAFT MARKET

SATURDAY, APRIL 18TH
9 AM - 3 PM
FEATURING 50+ VENDORS

CRAWFORD COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS, GIRARD, KS
* PREVIOUSLY HARRIGANS SPRING MARKET *

CRAWFORD COUNTY DEMOCRAT HEADQUARTERS

— Open most Weekdays and by appointment —

Join us for our next Monthly Business Meeting and Guest Speaker Erik Murray, U.S. Senate Candidate

April 19 at 1 pm

Meet & Greet
Sandy Spidel Neumann
April 27 • 5:30 pm

217A North Broadway, Pittsburg, Ks 66762 **620-670-6867**

HOMETOWN GIRARD
(ISSN 25743996)
is published weekly by Philip Stevens, 141 N 160th Street, Girard, KS 66743. Periodicals Postage Paid at Girard, KS and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to: Hometown Girard, P.O. Box 298, Girard, KS 66743.

Office located at:
141 N 160th St, Girard, KS 66743, Phone: 620-704-5882

Additional Office located at:
104 S Ozark St, Girard, KS 66743, Phone: 620-724-7217

PUBLISHER / OWNER / EDITOR
Philip Stevens - publisher@hometowngirard.com

REPORTERS / WRITERS
Josie Gronau - (General reporting)
Preston Frazier - (Sports/General reporting)
Abigail Stansbury - (Girard sports)
Lainey Prince - (General reporting)
Ava Dent - (St. Paul area)
Maya Burke - (St. Paul area)
Ron Gates - (Features/Photographer)

LAYOUT & DESIGN / ADVERTISING
Corey Estep - graphics@hometowngirard.com

CONTACT US
Please direct your questions, corrections, submissions and all news items to:
Hometown Girard, PO Box 298, Girard, KS 66743
Email: publisher@hometowngirard.com
Phone: (620) 704-5882

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Mail form to Hometown Girard, P.O. Box 298, Girard, KS 66743, or Subscribe Online at: **hometowngirard.com**

Send this as a gift. (check the box if you want to gift this subscription below)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Birthdays (optional) : _____

Anniversary (optional) : _____

SUBSCRIPTION RATES	1 YEAR	2 YEARS	6 MONTHS
In County (print + eEdition) :	\$90	\$170	\$45
Out of County (print + eEdition) :	\$100	\$190	\$50
eEdition (online only) :	\$80		