

Herald-Chronicle

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Thursday, March 19, 2026 Vol. 164, No. 11

12 Pages + Inserts

Osage City Lady Indians finish runner-up in 3A



The Osage City Lady Indians defeated Girard and defending state champion Halstead before losing to Silver Lake in the KSHSAA Class 3A State Basketball Championship. See Page 12 for coverage.

Santa Fe Trail USD 434 Board discussion centers on district reconfiguration

Gary Rush | Reporter

All board members were available for the regularly scheduled Santa Fe Trail USD 434 Board of Education meeting. The meeting started earlier than past meetings, with a 5 p.m. fall of the gavel, issued by Tanner Black, board president.

Administrator reports were offered by district leadership from the four attendance centers within the district. These reports have been commonplace in past meetings and relay to the board the current environment of their respective facilities. During these reports, it was noted that there will be a new assistant principal/activities director at the Carbondale Attendance Center. Brian Murakami, a current teacher instructing in Tonganoxie, will begin his employment July 1.

"Tonight, I would like to ask the board to think of the scope of work necessary to move forward with the reconfiguration," said Superintendent Faith Flory. "We need to finalize a few things, such as the retention of two or three attendance centers, acquiring paperwork to move

forward with getting our needs on an election ballot, and deciding which election date we use to put our bond needs on the ballot." She added, "The longer we wait, the more expensive things may become considering the current economic trends."

"I think we should focus on the right thing to do now," President Black said. "We need to allow ourselves the time to educate the public of our district's goals and needs." He continued by asking if there were any concerns from those in the audience.

"First off, I would like to thank the superintendent for maintaining a dialogue with the community," said Overbrook Mayor John Brady. "I am hoping that everyone is considering the economic impact the reconfiguration will have upon the communities of our school district. Schools are a vital part of our communities. Also, I must contemplate the outcome of the impact these changes will have on our students. I fear enrollment and teacher retention will take a hit with the current changes we have in motion."

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Kansas Tourism fuels visitor experiences with grants

Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of Commerce David Toland announced March 11 that \$1 million in Attraction Development Grant funding was awarded to support the development and enhancement of tourism projects across Kansas. Among those awards was Osage City's Nathan Willis and the Star Block project, which was awarded a \$75,000 grant.



Sheila Holle, Herald-Chronicle

Kansas Tourism Director Bridgette Jobe presented Rod Willis, accepting on behalf of Nathan Willis, with a \$75,000 Attraction Development Grant check Friday, for the Star Block project.

"Investments in tourism and our state attractions have been a powerful driver in economic growth for our communities of all sizes and for all of Kansas," Toland said. "By pairing state support with local commitment, we're expanding tourism opportunities that create positive economic returns by bringing more out-of-state visitors and out-of-state dollars to Kansas."

This round of Attraction Development Grant funding will support 22 projects, including new attractions and enhancements to existing tourism assets. Collectively, recipients will invest more than

\$12 million in matching funds to bring the projects to life.

"Travelers in Kansas are looking for experiences that feel authentic, creative, and rooted in place," Kansas Tourism Director Bridgette Jobe said. "The grants are designed

to help turn unique and inspiring ideas into tangible projects that will go to support and encourage visitation and elevate local economies."

See page 10 for additional grants awarded to cities in the county.

Osage County Commission

Commission approves one-year moratorium on data center development

LYNDON — The Osage County Commission approved a temporary moratorium on applications for data center development during its March 10 meeting, pausing potential projects while county officials study possible regulations and infrastructure impacts.

Present for the meeting were Commissioner Brandon Smith, Commissioner Heather Kuder, Osage County Clerk Michelle Mor-

ris, and Osage County Counselor Joshua Ney. Commissioner Les Holman participated intermittently by phone.

During the meeting, commissioners considered concerns raised by residents about the potential impact of large-scale data center facilities. The facilities, which house large numbers of computer servers used for data storage and processing, can require signifi-

cant electrical infrastructure and cooling systems to maintain safe operating temperatures.

Residents attending the meeting discussed issues such as the possible demand on electrical systems, potential water use associated with cooling equipment, and other infrastructure considerations that can accompany large

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Submitted

The Marais des Cygnes River bridge is undergoing a deck replacement.

Bridge deck being replaced

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) began a bridge deck replacement project on U.S. Highway 75 in Osage County Wednesday. Work will take place on the Marais des Cygnes River bridge, just north of the K-31 interchange.

The bridge will be restricted to one lane, and traffic will be controlled by temporary traffic signals for the duration of the project. Motorists should plan for delays of up to 15 minutes.

A 12-foot width restriction will also be in place through the work zone.

Work will occur during daylight hours Monday through Friday, and Saturdays if needed.

A.M. Cohron & Son, Inc., of Atlantic, Iowa, is the prime contractor on the \$4.4 million project. This bridge is expected to be complete by early December. In addition, a second bridge deck replacement on U.S. 75 in Osage County is scheduled in 2027 as part of this project.

All project work is conditions permitting and subject to change.

KDOT urges motorists to stay alert and follow posted signs in all work zones. For current road conditions, visit Kan-Drive.gov or call 511. For updates on highway projects in northeast Kansas, visit KSDOT.gov/NortheastNews.

Burlingame USD 454

Board accepts staff resignations

BURLINGAME — The Burlingame USD 454 Board of Education met March 11 for its regularly scheduled monthly meeting.

During the public open forum portion, Holly Savage reviewed the gym mural drawings; Navy Vandruff, Liam Bayless, Natalie Whitmore and Elise Prim presented information from the Washburn Leadership Challenge Experience the students attended; Krista Rowley, Erin O'Keefe, Katie Carlson, Erica Wyatt and Shelby Succi expressed thanks to the staff and administration for their work; Michelle Motsinger presented information regarding reduction in

force; and Cora Moulden, Juell Hitt and Erica Wyatt spoke regarding the band program.

Three executive sessions were held to discuss individual employee performance pursuant to non-elected personnel exception under KOMA with Marcy Cassidy, Shelley Banzhaf and Taylor Montgomery. No action was taken upon return to open session.

The board approved the consent agenda, consisting of the Feb. 11 regular board meeting minutes; the activity fund reports; and the resignations of Katelyn Whitaker as teacher and Dr. Marcy Cassidy as superintendent.

State assessment scheduling was presented to the board, and the start time of the school day for the 2026-2027 school year discussed.

The board approved the employment of Tyler Buche as driver's education teacher for the 2025-2026 school year contingent upon state approval of the driver's education curriculum.

Board members also approved, 5-1 (Wes Colson) Resolution 2026-12 Intent to Nonrenew a Teacher's Contract for Lindsey Wendleton for the 2026-2027 school year, and Resolution 2026-13 Intent to

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