

OPINION

Meals follow MCC's budget request

by Rick Nichols
Two weeks after the Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners tabled consideration of Midland Care Connection's budget request for 2026, Kerri Mosinski and Jessica Mays with the Topeka hospice were in front of County Commissioners David Christy, Richard Malm, and Doug Walbridge with both some statistics and some Meals on Wheels meals for them to digest, the former figuratively and the latter literally, at their convenience.

MCC, which is asking the county for \$10,000 to help fund its Meals on Wheels program next year, delivered 17,710 meals to Jefferson County residents at a total cost of \$134,773.10 during 2024, according to Mosinski, the hospice's chief administrative officer. That would put the cost per meal at \$7.61, but when the financial assistance provided under the Older Americans Act is taken into consideration, the cost per meal falls to \$3.11.

Of those 17,710 meals, 15,951 of them arrived at someone's home, the remaining

1,759 at a congregate site.

Mosinski told Christy, Malm, and Walbridge the afternoon of June 2 that there were 70 individuals on the current waiting list for meals and that she was hoping to see an increase in the level of state funding for the program beginning July 1. She also told the trio that MCC has seen a greater demand for its meals ever since it began producing meals at its kitchen in the southwest part of the capital city.

According to Mosinski, MCC attempts to buy the food needed for meals from local sources as much as possible, and the menu includes numerous new items (e.g., shrimp, crab and mushrooms).

A three-page handout Mosinski made available to the commissioners and the paper revealed that MCC delivers meals to 13 congregate sites, maintains 77 routes across Jefferson, Shawnee, and Douglas counties, and utilizes the services of 814 volunteers at this time. It also revealed that 86 individuals receive frozen meals and 149 get weekend and holiday meals.

After Mosinski had proverbially served up a few facts for the commissioners to consider as they continue to ponder MCC's budget request, Mays, the director of the Meals on Wheels program, proceeded to remove several meals from a cooler and distribute them to the commissioners and others in the room. These meals included stuffed peppers, carrots, and chocolate cake.

In other business during the board's weekly meeting at the courthouse in Oskaloosa, Christy, Malm, and Walbridge approved a proposed contract between the county and Jefferson County North USD 339

covering the provision of nursing services during the 2025-2026 school year.

The agreement calls for the school district to pay the county \$30,932 (\$38 an hour for 814 hours) for nursing services from July 1 through the end of next May.

The contract was brought forward by Health Department Administrator Crystal VanHoutan.

After the vote had been taken, VanHoutan told the commissioners that she anticipated having a proposed contract between the county and Keystone Learning Services for them to act on in the near future. KLS operates the John Dewey Learning Academy, which serves students with special needs from eight different school districts.

VanHoutan reported that since the start of the year 64 Kansans have contracted the measles. She said the "large majority" of the individuals comprising this group hadn't been vaccinated against the measles and that this group included 40 children 13 years old or younger.

According to VanHoutan, all of the measles cases are confined to 11 counties, none of which is close to Jefferson County.

VanHoutan announced that the Health Department would be holding a Drug Take Back Day from 9 to 11 a.m. on June 14 (i.e., this Saturday) at the Law Enforcement Center in Oskaloosa. She went on to report that Public Health nurse Stephanie Cox, R.N. would be on hand for the event and that the first 25 individuals who

show up with expired medications they want to dispose of will receive a goody bag.

Sheriff Jeff Herrig complemented the Health Department administrator's announcement by reporting that the Health Department also would be accepting illegal drugs from individuals.

VanHoutan informed the commissioners that one of her nurses had completed the Safe Kids car seat safety training and went on to say she would have more information to share with them later.

The Health Department administrator announced that a community baby shower would be held at Oskaloosa City Hall Saturday, Aug. 23 from 9 a.m. to noon. She also announced that the Health Department would be organizing some school immunization events during the summer.

The commissioners learned from the Health Department administrator that Beth Brown, R.N., who used to head up the Health Department, is now the Public Health Director for the county. She replaces Debbie McNary-Naumann, who retired earlier this year.

Voting 3-0, the board OK'd two travel requests that had been presented to it by VanHoutan. The move clears the way for the Health Department administrator to go to the mid-year meeting of the Kansas Association of Local Health Departments in Manhattan in late June and for her and Fiscal Officer Wanda Agnew to take in the 2025 National Alliance for Care at Home Financial Summit in Chicago, Ill., in late July.

Public Works Director Ben Domann informed the commissioners that the Road and Bridge Department had taken delivery on both of the road grooms the county purchased from Road Groom Manufacturing, Grundy Center, Iowa. One of the grooms is 8.5' wide and came at a cost of \$20,000, as previously reported in the paper.

The other groom is 11' wide and was upgraded by RGM for \$5,000, as previously reported in the paper.

Domann told the commissioners that Road and Bridge crews were patching paved roads with asphalt as needed in anticipation of chip-and-sealing these same roads later this summer. According to him, this year Road and Bridge will be chip-and-sealing the roads in the western third of the county.

The Public Works director updated the board on the McCall Drive bridge replacement project, telling the commissioners that two of the four drill shafts the new structure will require had been drilled and the concrete poured, and that one of the other two drill shafts had been drilled. He said he hoped the third shaft would be poured by the end of that week and that the fourth shaft would be drilled and poured, too.

According to him, each shaft is 40' deep and 3' round.

Domann reported that the replacement of the floor in the Auxiliary Services Office had been completed.

Domann made the board aware of a "plumbing issue" involving the building just east of Oskaloosa that houses his office. He told the commissioners that the septic tank needed to be pumped out and that one of the septic lines was "sagging."

Asked by Christy who would be doing the work that would be involved in order to correct the problem, the Public Works director said county employees would be doing part of it.

The board opened two sealed bids on 500 tons of deicing road salt and then turned them over to Domann so that he could review them prior to this week's meeting of the governing body.

The apparent low bid was submitted by Kansas Salt LLC, Louisburg, which priced its salt at \$69.50 a ton.

The other bid was supplied by Central Salt LLC, Lyons. It wanted \$70.15 a ton for its salt.

A third business, Compass Minerals of Overland Park, also was invited to turn in a bid but ultimately was unable to do so.

Domann informed the board that he and Walbridge would be

attending a meeting two days later in connection with the Regional Solid Waste Management Plan for Jefferson and Douglas counties.

County Appraiser Janet Allen, R.M.A. informed the board that she had certified the real estate and personal property valuations for 2025 to the County Clerk's Office and that her real estate staff was busy and had returned to the field to tackle assorted tasks, including parcel maintenance, building permits, and sales validations. She said the land analysis for 2026 would get underway in July.

According to Allen, there are now 15,505 parcels of land in Jefferson County. In 2024, she related, there were 99 fewer parcels.

The four-page report Allen shared with both the commissioners and the paper indicated that overall, appraised real estate valuations for 2025 were 6.6 percent higher than last year's valuations. Meanwhile, assessed real estate valuations increased by 5.5 percent overall.

More information about this year's appraised and assessed real estate and personal property valuations will be published in a future issue of the paper.

At the request of Emergency Manager Keith Jeffers, and on a 3-0 vote, the board passed Resolution 2025-019, which included a proclamation declaring that a State of Local Disaster Emergency exists in Jefferson County as a result of severe storms that were to have started later in the day and continued.

The action was taken after Jeffers had made the commissioners aware of the National Weather Service's forecast for northeast Kansas for that evening and the following day. According to him, the federal agency was predicting winds of around 60 miles per hour, hail up to an inch or larger in diameter, and anywhere from half an inch to two and a half inches of rain.

The resolution will be in effect for 14 days unless the board extends it or terminates it before two weeks have elapsed.

Resolution 2025-018 was approved by the board on a 3-0 vote. This resolution contains an order vacating all of the platted setbacks and the westernmost five feet of the eastern utility easement on Lot 2 of Roe Addition, which is located at 11091 46th Street, Perry.

The vacation of the setbacks and a portion of the easement had been requested by Daniel and Linda Foltz by way of a petition. Their petition was approved by the commissioners May 12 following a required

public hearing.

A corrected version of Resolution Z2025-05 was passed by the board on a 3-0 vote. This resolution basically confirms the action the commissioners took on May 19 when they approved a request from Don and Mary Hurd to rezone part of an existing tract at 2926 Linn Road, Perry, to facilitate the creation of a seven-lot subdivision covering 160.41 acres.

On a 3-0 vote, the board authorized Christy to sign seven Quit Claim deeds on behalf of the governing body. The deeds were for lots that had been controlled by the Jefferson County Land Bank and then sold to private citizens.

The commissioners signed the final plat of Porter Estates.

Voting 3-0, the board OK'd a travel request it has received from Register of Deeds Delia Heston, clearing the way for her to attend the Kansas Register of Deeds Association's Annual June Seminar in Wichita. The event began June 3 and ended this past Friday.

Finally, County Counselor-designate Jonathan Ehrlich introduced Thomas Fergus, a 2021 graduate of Perry-Leocompton High School, to the commissioners. A second-year student at the Washburn University School of Law, Fergus will be working as an intern in the County Attorney's Office in June and July.

Fergus graduated from Baker University in Baldwin City earlier this year with a degree in history.

Executive Sessions

At the request of VanHoutan, the commissioners met privately with her for nine minutes for the stated purpose of discussing personnel matters relating to non-elected personnel. "Recruitment and retention" was identified as being the subject that was to be discussed.

At the request of VanHoutan, the commissioners ultimately met privately with her for a total of 15 minutes for the stated purpose of discussing personnel matters relating to non-elected personnel. "Recruitment and retention" was identified as being the subject that was to be discussed.

At the request of Christy, the commissioners met privately with County Counselor Josh Ney for 10 minutes under the attorney-client privilege exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act. "Interagency issues" was identified as being the subject that was to be discussed.

When the meeting reopened to the public, Christy announced that no binding action had been taken behind closed doors.

The meeting adjourned at 2:21.

McLouth High School announces second semester honor roll

McLouth High School has announced its second semester honor roll list.

Principal's (4.0 G.P.A.) –

Seniors – Cresinda Bandel, Drennan Cantrell, Jerriek Chenhall, Makade Daniels, Gage Fields, Judd Holwick, Dani Lee, Lilly Mahon, Calleigh McColley, Uchenna Orji, Piper Sheeley, Henry Wahl, and Lucille Zachariah.

Juniors – Cheiton Bandel, Alexis Barnes, Gavin Cloyd, Charley Coffin, Mya Folsom, and Charlee Nehl.

Sophomores – Trevor Carleton, Eloise David, Kaelyn Finneran, Ace Gill, and Brooklyn Mahon.

Freshmen – Caleb Burnett, Evelyin Chowning, Makinley Daniels, Ned Forsberg, Beau Harsh, Jaxon Holloway, Emery Kramer, Reese McMeans, Macey Schempp, and Kinlee Wolfe.

Gold (3.5 to 3.99) –

Seniors – Ryan Anderson, Carter Coit, Zoey Delaet, Wyatt Enright, Leanna Larson, Abbygayle Patz, Noah Shanks, and Bailey Wiehe.

Juniors – Braden Blowers, Brooklynn Ellis, Alexander Null, and Alison Null.

Sophomores – Amora Cheek, Gage Coit, Brayden Durkes,

Taylor Edmonds, Gracie Gallagher, Colten Jansen, Drayton Kessler, Sophie Little, Gabriella Peerson-Quijas, and Jaxson Plake.

Freshmen – Austin Barden, Zachary Blitch, Aaliyah Dlugopolski, Courtney Gallet, Landon Hellman, Lily Leonard, Duncan Murphy, Madison Turner, and Dalton Wilson.

Purple (3.0 to 3.49) –

Seniors – Kamrin McCowan. Juniors – Gretchen Copeland and Trinity Dale.

Sophomores – Brayden Fraser, Jude Hollingsworth, Wyatt Karmann, Emma Lasher, Halley Luse, Justin Patz, Garrett Sheehan, Blake Sullivan, Bryce Williams, and Peyton Wyatt.

Freshmen – Kooper Buckley, Brooke Coffey, Sabrina Dlugopolski, Trinity Gallet, Nathan Kessler, Bertie Matile, Lillian Perkins, Bricen Ray, Riley Robinson, and Wyatt Sullivan.

Advertise!
It Pays!