



GOVERNMENT

Commissioner Minutes

On April 14, 2025, the Ottawa County Board of County Commissioners met with all three commissioners present: Carla Grund (First District), Scott Mortimer (Second District), and Duane Morris (Third District). The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by Commissioner Mortimer. Commissioner Morris led the group in prayer, and Commissioner Mortimer led the flag salute.

Senator Jerry Moran made a brief visit to meet with the commissioners while traveling through Ottawa County. Following his visit, Julie Yarmer and Darrin Booth of FCMI presented the quarterly health insurance review. They reported that the traditional plan is running 2.9% below projected rates for 2025, while the HSA plan is performing 9.03% below projections. Commissioner Grund raised concerns about the rising costs of Blue Cross and Blue Shield premiums in recent years. Yarmer explained that claim volume is a significant driver of the increases and that reserve funds can be used to offset costs. She

also reviewed dental insurance costs up through February 2025, noting that medical cost trends currently range from 12% to 18%.

Sheriff Russell Thornton introduced a new five-year contract with Axon for body cameras, noting a cost increase from \$4,700.00 to \$8,000.00 per year. The higher cost is primarily due to the upgrade from limited to unlimited storage. He mentioned that the Sheriff's Office has used Axon cameras for a decade and affirmed their effectiveness. Additionally, the department received a \$500.00 donation from Rock the Park for the K-9 program.

The minutes from the April 7, 2025, meeting were approved unanimously on a motion by Commissioner Grund, seconded by Commissioner Morris. County Clerk Tammi Cox informed the board that the Kansas Natural Resource Coalition is hosting a dinner in Manhattan on April 21, which Commissioner Grund plans to attend. Cox also reminded the commissioners about the departmental bud-

get meeting scheduled for that afternoon from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Commissioner Grund reported attending a Bennington Fire Department and EMS meeting, including a tour of the facility. She and Commissioner Morris also discussed topics from a recent regional commission meeting, including the county coroner, tax sales, EMS, housing development, and employee benefits. Commissioner Morris noted his interest in the county museum and plans to attend its next meeting. Commissioner Grund also mentioned involvement in the employee benefits committee and solid waste matters. All three commissioners plan to attend the upcoming Solid Waste Meeting, and Grund and Morris will join the afternoon budget meeting with Scot Loyd.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. on a motion by Commissioner Mortimer, seconded by Commissioner Morris, passing 3-0. The minutes were adopted on April 21, 2025, and attested by County Clerk Tammi Cox.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

City of Garnett, Kansas, Comprehensive Plan

The City of Garnett requests proposals from qualified consultants or firms to review city comprehensive plan and develop comprehensive plan for the City. The new, updated plan will provide vision, goals, objectives, and policies to guide the City's development and redevelopment for the next 20 to 25 years. The plan will guide the City Commission, Planning and Zoning Commission, staff, developers, property owners, and residents on the appropriate growth and redevelopment for the City. The updated plan will integrate all aspects of urban development, including demographics, land use, public facilities and infrastructure, transportation, environmental, and economic growth recommendations. A critical component of the plan will be setting a vision for the City's development and redevelopment, including areas in the City and possible annexation land. The vision component will need to analyze existing and future infrastructure needs and how technology will play a role in community outreach and City operations.

The qualified consultant will need to take a creative and innovative approach to reviewing the needs of the community, while obtaining public input about the plan. The planning process shall develop a comprehensive vision for the City, business opportunities, amenities and programs, as well as complement the recently-completed parks plan.

SUBMITTAL DEADLINE
One (1) electronic copy in PDF format, in accordance with this RFP, will be accepted **no later than 3:00 PM CST on May 30, 2025** and shall be submitted via the following email address: dwilson@garnettks.net

Full document and information are available at www.simplygarnett.com.



Senate Scene



By Senator Elaine Bowers

2025 LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

During the 2025 legislative session, approximately 775 bills and resolutions were introduced during the 90-day session. Over one hundred of these passed both chambers and reached the Governor's desk, with many signed into law and a few becoming law without the Governor's signature. The Kansas Legislature officially adjourned sine die on April 11, 2025, following a brief two-day veto session held April 10-11. "Sine die" (Latin for "without day") marks the formal end of the session, with no further meetings scheduled.

During the summer and fall, standing and special joint committees will meet to study key policy issues and develop recommendations. When the legislature reconvenes on January 12, 2026, lawmakers may resume work on bills from the 2025 session that were not passed or removed from consideration. Measures that advanced partway through the legislative process do not need to start over.

SENATE FLOOR ACTION

During the two-day veto session, the Kansas Senate voted to override 46 vetoes issued by the Governor, following two earlier overrides from previous weeks. These actions addressed a wide range of legislative priorities. Of the 46 overrides, 13 were individual bills—12 of which were also overridden by the House and have now become law. The remaining 33 were line-item vetoes within larger bills, and the House concurred on 15 of those.

BILLS SIGNED INTO LAW

Below are several noteworthy bills that were signed into law:

SB 125 – Annual Budget. While the governor line-itemed many items, the annual budget was signed into law.

SB 35 removes the state from the business of directly assessing property taxes by eliminating the statewide mill levies of 1.0 mills for state educational buildings and 0.5 mills for state institution buildings.

HB 2022 requires all special elections (often to pass a bond or a sales tax hike) to be held in March on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in March or on the same day as a primary or general election.

SB 9 creates the Kansas Land and Military Installation Protection Act, which prevents foreign adversaries from owning land within 100 miles of a military installation in Kansas. The legislation was designed to cover most of Kansas. It also prohibits government agencies from purchasing or acquiring drones whose critical components were produced in a country of concern, or whose critical components were produced or owned by a foreign principal.

SB 250 is the Right to Try bill. The bill authorizes a manufacturer operating in an eligible facility to make available individualized investigative treatments and allow individuals with life-threatening or severely debilitating illnesses to request an individualized investigational drug, biologic product, or device from such manufacturers.

HB 2228 requires any political subdivision to hold an open meeting before approving a contingent fee contract for legal services and require such contract to be approved by the Attorney General before becoming effective.

SB 114 authorizes non-public school students and virtual school students participating in a school activity governed by the Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) to also participate in certain ancillary school district ac-

tivities. Current law allows for non-public school and virtual students who meet the requirements of law to participate in activities that are regulated, supervised, promoted, and developed by the KSHSAA.

HB 2054 modernizes our campaign finance statutes by increasing contribution limits to candidates and political parties.

Vetoed bill – SB 24 would expand the postsecondary educational institutions eligible to participate in the Kansas Promise Scholarship Program and raise the maximum annual appropriation limit.

CONFIRMATION

By a vote of 40-0, the Senate confirmed Rebecca Dickinson to the Kansas Crime Victims Compensation Board.

A full description of each bill (and additional bills) can be found at www.kslegislature.org as well as the Final Action vote on each measure.

—SESSION END—

OFF-SESSION CONTACT INFORMATION

The 2026 Kansas Legislative Session will begin on January 12 at 2:00 PM, when we return to our offices at the Capitol in Topeka. During the summer and fall months, I can be reached at my legislative email, elaine.bowers@senate.ks.gov, or at my work email, elaine@concordiaautomart.com. My office is located at 212 E. 6th St., Concordia, KS 66901, and if you're in the area, feel free to stop by. You can also reach me during the day at 785-243-3325, ext. 2.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with questions, concerns, or ideas for legislation for the upcoming session. For more information during the interim, I encourage you to visit www.kslegislature.org, which offers helpful resources on legislators, committees, current and past bills, internships, and more.

It is truly an honor to serve you in the 36th Kansas Senate District, and I welcome the opportunity to hear from you anytime.

Commissioner's Desk



By Duane Morris
Ottawa County Commissioner District #3

Please remember this is NOT an official documentation of the minutes, it is meant to be an informative synopsis of County Commissioner activities from my perspective. If you want more information on a subject I mention here, I encourage you to read the full minutes of the meetings elsewhere in the newspaper or online at www.ottawacounty.org

I should have included this important announcement in last week's column. May 5th through the 10th is FREE DUMP DAYS!! Normal rules and guidelines will still apply, but please take this opportunity to beautify your corner of Ottawa County! The opportunity to get rid of tires for free will be this fall in October.

May is National Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month. I think it's a good refresher for all motorists to consider safety around motorcycles. For instance, give them a full lane when passing, and don't follow so closely. 3-4 seconds is a recommendation, but 5 seconds or more is better. Motorcycle riders should take time during this great spring weather to be sure their bikes are in tip top mechanical condition.

Mike Smith, Minneapolis

Fire Chief, was first on our agenda for Monday, April 28th. The fire department has outgrown the present fire station on Rock Street. The department would like to build another building behind the current station. It seems over the years, fire trucks are bigger as well as better. The commissioners encouraged the Minneapolis Fire Department to check grant availability before getting too far into the project.

May is Mental Health Month. Gretchan Boyum and Taylor Haws from the Central Kansas Mental Health Center presented a proclamation to the commissioners to sign.

Marie Ballou, Emergency Management, and Shelby Walker, Register of Deeds, presented their quarterly reports to the commission. Good news is coming from both offices with training and activity updates.

Solid waste fees were set for 2026. Residential cost will be \$140, \$240 for commercial, and \$64/ ton for construction and demolition. Chris Smith, Public Works Director, also relayed good news from Caterpillar. They are going to "loan" us a new model of motor grader to try out free of charge. We still have to pay for fuel, but you can't really argue much when someone wants to give you a motor grader! It will only be for a few hundred hours to try it out.

We all continue to work on the budget for 2026. I have been looking at the commissioner's budget and believe there is some room to trim it down.

On May 7, I will attend a webinar to get more information from the US Department of Transportation on grant opportunities.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you!

Strange, but True...

Medieval knights were given letters of protection that essentially provided them with a license to kill, as they granted the possessor full immunity from legal proceedings resulting from battles or necessary fatalities.



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COMMERCIAL

***104 N. Nelson St., Bennington, KS.** Commercial Building. **Call Ty!** 785.366.0261

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