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The Southeast Kansas Multi-County Health Department held a baby shower for young mothers. See page 6.

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Arcadia alumni gathered for their annual reunion. See page 4.

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Read about the injuries six people received when the car they were in crashed. See Items from the Past on page 4.

Employees present courthouse repair bid package to commissioners

BY JASON E. SILVERS
The Fort Scott Tribune

The Bourbon County Courthouse is in need of various repairs that have not been addressed in several years, according to information presented by county employees during Monday’s county commission meeting.

Bourbon County Chief Operations Officer Shane Walker and Maintenance Supervisor David Neville talked to commissioners about the need for repairs to the aging building which include washing, tuck pointing, waterproofing, sealing of windows and repairs to the elevator.

The main building of the courthouse was built in 1930 while the portion that formerly housed the Bourbon County jail was built in the 1970s.

Commissioners and Walker discussed the bid document presented during the meeting, which was prepared by Jason Dickman of Earles Engineering, a firm that provides engineering services for the city of Fort Scott. The document outlines the work needed to be completed, as well as the

county’s expectations. Dickman plans to discuss the document with commissioners June 23. Commissioners also plan to do their own research and talk to County Counselor Bob Johnson. They are also waiting until a third commissioner is appointed after the resignation of Brandon Whisenhunt Monday.

Commissioner David Beerbower said he has seen the overall plan for projects. Commissioner Mika Milburn-Kee asked about the state of the courthouse. Commissioners discussed some figures from past bids but do not yet have current numbers to work with.

Walker said there have been attempts to get repairs made the last several years with no progress.

“We’ve tried for 18 years to get it done,” he said. “It’s deferred maintenance.”

Walker gave some examples of areas where the building has fallen into disrepair. He said a large piece of the building fell on the front porch a couple of years ago and “had it hit somebody it would have been a terrible problem.”

Freezing temperatures, water and ice have affected the building’s condition, Walker said.



Jason E. Silvers/Tribune photo

Pictured is a wall on the northeast corner of the Bourbon County Courthouse which shows damage from moisture near the window of an office.

“If you go upstairs and get on the elevator shaft and look, you can put your hand inside the joints of those 10,000 pound blocks,” he said.

Milburn-Kee said she read the bid document and talked to both contractors independently, and she thinks the bid packet “for that kind of work is a little excessive.”

Walker said the courthouse building is a contributing building to the National Historic District and must meet certain standards.

“So we may have to do little chunks,” he said.

Walker said a new bid document was prepared, but projects have been let for

bid several times over the years.

“Every time it’s just kicked down the road,” he said.

County Clerk Susan Walker said past practices have shown the same bid document has been used for bids for the county due to statutory obligations. According to statute, the document must include items such as bonds, insurance and worker’s compensation.

“The roof is a good example of why the documents exists,” Shane Walker said.

“We’ve done it this way because it protects the county for any kind of liability,”



Jason E. Silvers/Tribune photo

Age and weather have led to deterioration on the facade of the Bourbon County Courthouse.

Susan Walker said.

Milburn-Kee said a package should be put together that allows for more local contractors to bid on work, and Beerbower agreed, adding he feels there is a need for “fresh bids” and get total cost amounts.

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SEE COURTHOUSE REPAIRS ON PAGE 4

Certified Local Government question rises again, this time with acceptance

BY JASON E. SILVERS
The Fort Scott Tribune

The Fort Scott City Commission is in the early stages of a process that would establish a Certified Local Government concerning historic preservation.

After a discussion Tuesday, commissioners unanimously approved a motion by Commissioner Matthew

Wells to move forward with drafting an ordinance to establish a certified local government using an ordinance for the city of Independence as a template. Wells said if commissioners wish to add to the ordinance, they can notify City Manager Brad Matkin or City Attorney Bob Farmer.

After Commissioner Dyllon Olson seconded the motion, Matkin asked for clarification on the motion.

It was confirmed an ordinance would be drawn up and commissioners will vote again once the document is drafted. Commissioners discussed what the language of a potential ordinance would look like, as well as enforcement of regulations and protecting the historic district.

A benefit of the CLG is that it would streamline the approval process for modifications within the historic

district and reduce the need to wait for approval by the State Historic Preservation Office, which can take several months, according to Wells.

“It streamlines the process and it puts the authority and the power back in the hands of the citizens and the city of Fort Scott,” he said.

Wells said business owners can present information, obtain a building permit and order materials for the

project without going to the Design Review Board or SHPO.

Mayor Tim VanHoecke said he was not ready to vote on the matter Tuesday, but he did not object to asking Matkin to bring Independence’s ordinance to the commission for review.

“This is the one (ordinance) our city likes the best of the ones presented,” Wells said.

VanHoecke said the last time the topic of adopting a CLG came up, it was “voted down,” and citizens attended an open meeting to voice concerns and objections. He said some of his concerns are more regulation and more potential for fines and requirements.

SEE PROTECTING THE HISTORIC DISTRICT ON PAGE 4

Republican party accepting letters of interest to fill county commission vacancy

BY JASON E. SILVERS
The Fort Scott Tribune

The Bourbon County Republican Party will conduct a convention to appoint a new First District county commissioner following the recent resignation of Brandon Whisenhunt.

According to Kaety Bowers, chairwoman of the Bourbon County Republican Party, the convention is scheduled for 6 p.m. Thursday, June 12, in the conference room of Bailey Hall on the Fort Scott Community College campus, 2108 S. Horton St.

Whisenhunt, who was appointed as commissioner in April 2024, announced his resignation shortly after Monday’s commission meeting was called to order.

The appointee will fill the remainder of Whisenhunt’s term and run for election in the fall of 2026.

Letters of interest are being accepted from interested Republican residents of the “old” First District – the area designated as District 1 prior to the geographical redistricting done in December to increase the total of commission districts from three to five. Letters of interest must contain qualifications,

rationale and reasons why an individual should be selected. Send letters to: Kaety Bowers, Chairwoman, by email to bourbon.county.republicans@gmail.com.

Bowers said the deadline to submit letters is 5 p.m. Tuesday, June 10.

The precinct men and women from the old District 1 will be voting delegates during the convention.

Bourbon County Clerk Susan Walker said the Bourbon County Republican Party has 21 days from the date of Whisenhunt’s resignation letter to conduct a caucus, take applicants and appoint a replacement.

The Good Ol’ Day are here



Tammy Helm/Tribune photo

Children of Community Christian Church helped kick off the 44th Good Ol’ Days Parade Friday evening. The theme this year is “44 Years of Crafting Memories.” Good Ol’ Days activities continue through today with music, vendors, melodrama and more.

WEATHER

Showers and thunderstorms Cloudy, then gradually becoming mostly sunny, with a high near 80. Chance of precipitation is 60%.

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