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Jeanie Hart shares a fun casserole recipe. See page 4.



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Some former Chiefs players made a special stop in Fort Scott. See page 4.



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Carolyn Tucker is living in the midst of a squirrel dynasty and there's a lesson to be learned. See page 6.

Business owners asked to consider Main Street program

BY JASON E. SILVERS
The Fort Scott Tribune

City of Fort Scott officials and business owners met Tuesday for an informational meeting on the potential for the city to join



Jason E. Silvers/Tribune photo

Lisa Dillon, housing/community development coordinator for the city of Fort Scott, speaks during a meeting on the Main Street Program Tuesday evening at City Hall. About 10-12 local business owners attended the meeting.

the Kansas Main Street Program.

About 10-12 local business owners attended the meeting, which was led by Lisa Dillon, housing/community development coordinator for the city, and Rachel Carpenter, employee relations and special projects coordinator for the city. Officials said the goal is to collaborate to determine if the program is feasible.

Questions that guided the discussion included whether the city has the volunteer base or organizational support needed to support the program; who would champion the initiative; the ideal leadership structure; the most realistic funding options (grants, city budget, business donations, fundraisers) and concerns related to cost and time commitment.

Other questions included how to ensure community representation and input, and which communication methods work best to inform and engage the public. Attendees also viewed a sample operating budget.

Some attendees said they wanted more information on comparable entities and cities that use the program, as well as their progress and outcomes. Other attendees asked for a list of services, comparisons to other structures, and entities for possible collaboration.

Dillon said the statewide program is part of the national Main Street America program. The approach involves transforming communities through the main principles of economic



Jason E. Silvers/Tribune photo

Downtown business owner Trent Freeman poses a question during a discussion on the Main Street Program Tuesday evening at City Hall.

vitality, design, community transformation, organization and promotion.

"Using the four points as the sole building blocks for downtown's foundation is not enough. Downtown development must be strategic, incremental, measurable and, above all else, community driven," according to the presentation.

Dillon said benefits include technical support and training provided at no cost. The program can provide business owners and economic development leaders with various tools and resources, according to submitted information.

"If you're part of the program, it's one extra step up," Dillon said.

She said the program "creates a plan for downtown" with the goal that "when your downtown flourishes, everything else flourishes."

The following are the main principles as outlined in the presentation:

- "Economic vitality focuses on capital, incentives and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, spark property development and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies."
- "Design supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart."
- "Promotion positions the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics."

SEE MAIN STREET PROGRAM ON PAGE 2

Commissioners moving towards new juvenile detention center option

BY JASON E. SILVERS
The Fort Scott Tribune

Bourbon County Commissioners are discussing the financial impact after recently moving forward with termination of the county's agreement with the Southeast Kansas Regional



Jason E. Silvers/Tribune photo

County officials discuss an agreement for juvenile detention services during Monday's meeting of the Bourbon County Commission. From left are Commissioner Mika Milburn-Kee, County Clerk Susan Walker, Commission Chairman David Beerbower and Kaety Bowers, parliamentarian for the commission.

Juvenile Detention Center in Girard.

On July 21, commissioners voted to terminate the agreement for the 2027 budget year as the July 1 deadline had passed. It was also agreed County Counselor Bob Johnson would prepare a letter to be sent to the Girard facility.

On Monday, Commissioner Mika Milburn-Kee said the letter provides notice to the center, but she noted wording in an agreement with Johnson County for juvenile detention services "needs to be rectified" before commissioners make any further decisions.

Milburn-Kee said the agreement states Johnson County "agrees to accept and house county juveniles at the daily reimbursement rate of not less than \$150 per day," which she said is "not really good news."

She said she would prefer the language be changed to read "not more than" rather than "not less than."

Beerbower said he was "not looking" to sign a new agreement as the county is still committed to its current agreement for two years.

"But as we terminate one, we need to make sure we have somewhere to go," Milburn-Kee said.

"Things could change in two years in Johnson County," Beerbower said. "I would caution that we wait."

On Thursday, Commission Chairman David Beerbower told the Tribune commissioners were told by legal counsel the contract with the Girard facility could not be cancelled this year. He said the previous commission "locked in" that contract until 2025.

"We thought we were talking we had until July 1, 2025. We didn't meet that deadline," he said, adding that was an issue of "timing and miscommunication."

Beerbower said commissioners decided to find an alternative means for housing inmates that would be cheaper for the county.

"It's finances," he said, adding Bourbon County is part of a cooperative involving several Southeast Kansas counties "and when one pulls out, everybody else takes over the loss of that money."

He said the advantage of a contract with Johnson County would be the county would pay on a case-by-case basis.

"And we're not paying for the operational expenses required by Girard," he said.

During the meeting, Milburn-Kee said commissioners could "sit on" the letter drafted by Johnson and the matter could be placed on the list of future business to be addressed before July 1, 2026.

"If they don't get things worked out at Girard to give us a better rate and Johnson County corrects their contract, we can go ahead and mail that letter," she said.

Sheriff Bill Martin asked what the county is being charged for use of the Girard facility. Beerbower said the annual cost was \$134,000 in the 2025 budget.

Beerbower told the Tribune that is an annual expense regardless of the number of juveniles housed. He said the number of juveniles housed in Bourbon County "varies from year to year," but commissioners have been told it is less than 10 per year. He said Johnson County would be "tremendously cheaper."

"It's a higher cost per day, but it's a short-term facility," he said.

During the meeting, Milburn-Kee said she wanted to clarify the reason for the rate increase for the Girard center.

"Linn County bailed and since we're a collective, it went up for everybody else," she said. "So if we bailed, everybody else is getting a higher rate, too."

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WEATHER

Patchy smoke before 10 a.m. Sunny, with a high near 81. East wind 5 to 7 mph.

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