

NEWS

BOCC . . .

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\$47,000 in its Opioid Fund.

In other business during the board's weekly meeting, Christy, Malm, and Walbridge agreed to sign an official notice stating that the county intends to exceed its revenue neutral rate for 2026 in coming up with a budget for next year and then scheduled the required public hearing on the proposed adoption of a mill levy above the RNR.

The county's RNR for next year, which was calculated by the Office of the County Clerk, is 64.551 mills. But to fund the budget currently being proposed by the commissioners, the property tax rate will have to be set .998 of a mill higher at 65.549 mills.

The county's auditor, Sean Gordon with Gordon CPA LLC, Lawrence, was on hand for the relatively brief discussion that preceded the board's decision to go with a mill levy that surpasses the RNR. So were Community Development Director Stephan Metzger and County Counselor Josh Ney.

The board set the RNR hearing for Monday, Sept. 8, at 1 p.m. The hearing will be held at Oskaloosa City Hall, 212 W. Washington, to accommodate a possible turnout well beyond the capacity of the room where the commissioners usually meet.

More information about the proposed budget for next year will appear in a future issue of the paper.

After declaring himself to be "very much pro-farmer," Public Works Director Ben Domann told the commissioners that "very many" farmers in the county have been planting crops within the county's right of way for roads. He proceeded to relate that he fully understood why farmers, faced with higher input costs these days, would want to put seeds in as much ground as possible, but he said some of the plants that are now coming up are interfering with the visibility of stop signs, curve signs, and other important markers. He then remarked that because of safety reasons, he has no choice but to mow down these plants.

"Please obey the right of way with crops," Domann indirectly pleaded with farmers in using the paper, through this story, to send a message to them he hopes they will take to heart.

Subject to Domann's approval of the proposed project on site the next day, the board voted unanimously to issue a right-of-way permit to Jefferson County Rural Water District No. 2, clearing the way for the water district to make a cut across Nemaha Road 30 feet in length to install a water line. If OK'd by the Public Works director, the road will be dug up as needed at 3422 Nemaha Road.

Bryan Blance of Lawrence, who recently purchased five lots at Westshore Estates from the Jefferson County Land Bank, appeared before the board to report that he had looked into the cost of having



With the start of the 2025 Jefferson County 4-H Fair only two weeks away, County Commissioners David Christy, left on the back row, Richard Malm, and Doug Walbridge were on the receiving end of a box of homemade cookies during last week's meeting of the Board of County Commissioners. The trio is pictured here with Jefferson County 4-H club members, Mazie Peak, Bristol Farmer, Ian Hoffman, Joe Kabus, Hadley Houk, Aurora Hoffman, and Sierra Tucker.

Photo by Rick Nichols

these lots replatted as a single lot (this was one of two conditions attached to the sale) and had learned that the expense would amount to an estimated \$4,000. He also said the surveyors he had contacted expressed little interest in tackling the project.

Blanck told the commissioners that he couldn't afford \$4,000 for replatting and didn't want to spend the time and money the move would require on his part. He then wondered if perhaps the board could place a restriction on the deed for the lots requiring that they be sold together.

Ney told the commissioners that the same basic issue had emerged during a county tax sale and went on to remark, "I wouldn't want to try to add complexity to it (the existing situation)."

Metzger told the commissioners that putting restrictions on a deed wasn't as strong as a replatting in terms of being able to guarantee that a piece of property will be transferred from one party to another in the intended configuration.

He then warned the trio, saying "If we can't sell them (the lots) here, we might not be able to sell them ever."

Blanck said that if indeed he is stuck with the lots, he is planning to do something with them within the next couple of months.

Metzger indicated to the board that he was prepared to furnish it with a resolution designed to clarify the situation involving the lots. He then promised to produce that resolution the following week.

"Let us (county officials) look at it (the problem) and come up with a solution," Walbridge told Blanck.

On a 3-0 vote, the board approved the proposed transfer of 15 lots from the county to the Land Bank. Those lots were Lot 72, Lot 73, Lot 74, Lot 76,

Lot 77, Lot 86, Lot 87, Lot 88, Lot 89, and Lot 90 in Block S of Lake Shore Estates, Lot 271 in Unit I of Lakewood Hills, Lot 176 and Lot 177 in the Parkwoods section of Lakeside Village, Lot 31 in Block W of Lake Ridge Estates, and Lot 1 in Block C of the Indian Ridge subdivision.

On a separate 3-0 vote, the board authorized Christy to sign three Quit Claim deeds on behalf of the governing body. The deeds covered the conveyance of Lots 72-74, Lots 76 and 77, and Lots 86-90 in Block S of Lake Shore Estates, Lot 271 in Unit I of Lakewood Hills, Lots 176 and 177 in the Parkwoods section of Lakeside Village, Lot 31 in Block W of Lake Ridge Estates, and Lot 1 in Block C of the Indian Ridge subdivision. The board voted unanimously to allow Christy to sign on behalf of the governing body a Quit Claim deed transferring a tract of land near the entrance to Lakeside Village from the Land Bank to Asa Collier of Lawrence.

Voting 3-0, the board OK'd the proposed issuance of new county credit cards to four employees of the Sheriff's Office, Emily Hamm, Viola "Dee" McHardie, Jordan Pantle, and Philip Steinlage.

Voting 3-0 again, the board authorized Christy to sign the second part of the paperwork for a Shared Leave request that had been approved a week earlier.

Finally, Mazie Peak, a member of the Billtown Go-Getters 4-H Club, joined six members of Oskaloosa's Jolly Juniors 4-H Club, Joe Kabus, Aurora Hoffman, Hadley Houk, Sierra Tucker, Ian Hoffman, and Bristol Farmer, for the presentation of a box of homemade cookies to the commissioners in recognition of their continuing support of the Jefferson County 4-H program.

The gesture took place just

two weeks ahead of the first day of this year's county 4-H Fair.

The boys and girls were accompanied to the meeting by Crystal Hoffman, who is a co-leader for the Jolly Juniors. In response to a request for information, she told the paper July 15 in an email that the distribution of cookies to the commissioners and local businesses that have been supportive of the 4-H program was a club project. She said the cookies represented a "small token of appreciation" for the backing 4-H'ers receive from the county and the private sector. She also said the businesses were invited to attend the fair.

"This is our opportunity to give back to those who support us," she related. "It's not all about ribbons and premiums, but for the greater good of our society."

Joe is the president of the Jolly Juniors.

Aurora is the club's vice president, a member of the 4-H Council, and a 4-H Ambassador.

Hadley is the club's secretary and a member of the 4-H Council.

Sierra is the club's junior president.

Ian is the club's junior vice president.

Mazie is the parliamentar-

ian for the Billtown Go-Getters.

A short discussion about the possibility of constructing an event venue at the county fairgrounds in Valley Falls followed the presentation of the cookies.

Executive Sessions

At the request of Health Department Administrator Crystal VanHoutan, the commissioners ultimately met privately with her and Ney for a total of 20 minutes under the attorney-client privilege exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act. "Pending litigation" was identified as being the subject that was to be discussed. Metzger was invited to remain in the room for the closed-door conversation as part of the client group and did. When the meeting reopened to the public, Christy announced that no binding action had been taken behind closed doors.

At the request of Christy, the commissioners met privately with Chief Information Officer Chris Schmeissner for five minutes for the stated purpose of discussing personnel matters relating to non-elected personnel. Ney was invited to remain in the room for the closed-door conversation and did. Afterward, Christy announced that no binding action was taken.

At the request of Christy, the commissioners met privately with Technology Administrator Scott Ribordy for five 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. Ney was invited to remain in the room for the closed-door conversation and did. Afterward, Christy announced that no binding action was taken.

At the request of Christy, the commissioners met privately with Geographic Information Systems coordinator Kirk Webb for five 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. Ney was invited to remain in the room for the closed-door conversation and did. Afterward, Christy announced that no binding action was taken.

The meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

OBITUARIES

JACK DECKER

Jack Lee Decker, 78, of Westcliffe, CO, passed away Monday, July 14, 2025, surrounded by members of his loving family,



after a courageous battle with glioblastoma brain cancer. Jack was kindhearted and thoughtful, cared deeply for his family and friends, and cherished each day God pro-

vided him.

Jack was born May 10, 1947, in Holton, KS, the son of W.L. "Bill" and Anna Belle (Littleton) Decker. One of three boys, he grew up working on the farm, playing sports of all kinds and participating in musicals and band in school. Jack graduated from Denison High School in 1965. He then graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from Kansas State University, earned a Master's degree in Industrial Engineering from Lehigh University, and completed his doctorate coursework in Applied Mathematics at the Colorado School of Mines.

On August 30, 1966, Jack married the love of his life, Juanita Kay Porter, in Denison, KS. Together they had one son and three grandchildren. Jack's devotion to Juanita was complete and enduring. Family and friends were the priority of Jack's life. He was ever present at the activities of his son, grandchildren and nieces/nephews. Jack truly invested in relationships, making many lifelong friends and could always be counted on to lend a helping hand. He was also the family historian tracing the family tree back for many generations.

In 2010, Jack retired after 26 years of teaching math and computer science at Washburn University in Topeka, KS. He began his work career in 1969 with Western Electric (AT&T) in Omaha, NE, and spent over 10 years working for Bell System companies in Nebraska, New Jersey, Missouri and Colorado. Jack treasured the many lifelong friendships that were developed during his time at Washburn and AT&T. Jack served faithfully as member, elder, and/or trustee for many churches during his lifetime, most recently as member of Community United Methodist Church in Westcliffe, CO.

Jack and Juanita loved to travel, especially with or to meet family and friends. They fell in love with the Rocky Mountains and made Colorado their home in retirement. Jack was kind, thoughtful, adventurous, hard-working, and fun-loving. He did not acknowledge the concept of idle time, making the most of each day. Jack enjoyed music festivals, flying (regaining his private pilot's license in his 70s), genealogy, golf and building or rebuilding just about anything (cars, tractors, planes).

Survivors include his wife, Juanita, of the home; son, Brian Decker (Lisa) of Keller, TX; brother, Dick Decker (Susan) of Oskaloosa, KS; sister-in-law, Leann Decker of Holton, KS; and three grandchildren, Annabelle Decker; Jacob Decker (Alana) and Olivia Decker. He was preceded in death by his parents and older brother, Jim Decker.

A Celebration of Life service will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, September 13, 2025, at Mercer Funeral Home in Holton. Burial will follow at the Denison Cemetery. Family will greet friends one hour prior to the service.

If you would like to make a memorial in Jack's name it can be given directly to the American Cancer Society or sent to P.O. Box 270, Holton, KS 66436. To leave a special message for the family, please visit [www.mercerfuneralhomes.com](http://www.mercerfuneralhomes.com).

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- Gateway Real Estate – Atchison, Cindy Baker, 602-509-0900
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- Holland Eye Clinic, PA – Oskaloosa, 785-863-2000, [hollandeyeclinic.com](http://hollandeyeclinic.com)
- Jayhawk Area Council, BSA Sunflower District – 785-354-8541, [jayhawkcouncil.org](http://jayhawkcouncil.org)
- JCN – Winchester, USD 339 – 913-774-2000, [usd339.net](http://usd339.net)
- Jefferson County Health Department – Oskaloosa, 785-403-0025, [jfcountrys/889/health-department](http://jfcountrys/889/health-department)
- Jefferson County Historical Society – Oskaloosa, 785-945-6600, [jchsk.com](http://jchsk.com)
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- Nortonville Public Library – 913-886-2060, [www.nortonvillelibrary.org](http://www.nortonvillelibrary.org)
- Oskaloosa Animal Clinic – 785-863-3275
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