

News

BOCC approves purchase of special device

by Rick Nichols
Meeting at the Jefferson County Courthouse in Oskaloosa the afternoon of July 14, the Board of County Commissioners gave Sheriff Jeff Herrig the go-ahead to buy for use by the Sheriff's Office a Detectachem Apex-Narc Raman Spectrometer complete with a "Drug, Narcotic and Precursor Library," quoting here from information County Treasurer Douglas Bond supplied the paper with July 15 in response to a request for additional information.

The decision enjoyed the support of all three county commissioners, David Christy, Richard Malm, and Doug Walbridge.

According to Bond's information, the Spectrometer can be used to detect opioids and other drugs and can identify 24,000 other chemicals as well. The device works by pointing it at the substance law enforcement officers are curious about, which represents a "safety component" for them since they no longer have to worry about being contaminated by open packages of opioids and other drugs.

The information also noted that the Spectrometer delivers an "instant reading" county attorneys and district attorneys can employ in making charging decisions or lining up help for the users of opioids or other drugs "in a timely manner" in providing "evidence-informed treatment."

"Accurate substance identification helps direct individuals to appropriate treatment and recovery programs funded by the opioid settlement," the information stated. It wasn't immediately clear if that reference to the opioid settlement was a reference to the settlement Kansas Attorney General Kris Kobach had announced the previous day or a reference to an earlier settlement. The state of Kansas reportedly will get about \$5.7 million from drug manufacturers as a result of the settlement Kobach announced on July 14.

The information further pointed out that the Spectrometer assists law enforcement agencies in their efforts to fight the trafficking of opioids and other drugs.

Before the vote was taken Herrig told the commissioners that the acquisition of the Spectrometer would enable his department to have one device in the Evidence Room and another device available for use by officers and deputies working in the field.

According to Bond's information, the last time the Sheriff's Office bought a Spectrometer, it shelled out \$31,040 for the device.

According to the sheriff, his department now has about \$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



Photo by Rick Nichols

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 Joe Kabus, second from the right on the back row, and Mazie Peak, Bristol Farmer, Ian Hoffman, Hadley Houk, Aurora Hoffman, and Sierra Tucker, left to right on the front row.

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 Blanck 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 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

See County Page 8

Put the Phone Down law takes effect

A new Kansas law regarding cell phones took effect July 1.

Under K.S.A. 8 15, 111, enhanced by House Bill 2499:

- Drivers under 18 years old are now completely prohibited from holding or using a mobile phone while driving—including at red lights or stop signs—in school zones during reduced speed hours and in road construction zones with workers present.

- Violation = \$60 fine—but it doubles to \$120 in school and construction zones.

- Exceptions remain in place for: hands free use, safely stopped vehicles, and reporting emergencies, dispatch operations, or threats to property.

What remains unchanged under K.S.A 8 15, 111:

- All drivers are still banned from reading, writing, or sending text messages or emails while the vehicle is in motion—even stopped in traffic.

- The penalty for texting while driving remains \$60.

McLouth man injured trying to avoid deer

Richard Smith, 62, McLouth, was injured when he lost control of his car after swerving to miss a deer and landed in the ditch.

According to the Jefferson County Sheriff's report, the accident happened at 10:55 p.m. June 29 when Smith was northbound on the Wellman Road near 70th Street.

Calling to report the accident the next morning, Smith told the sheriff's department that he had a broken left arm and other possible injuries.

After swerving to miss the deer, Smith's 2004 Dodge Durango ran off the right side, then came back onto the road and went into the left ditch and rolled on its side.

Jefferson County EMS arrived on the scene, but Smith refused transportation.

KDOT employee marks service anniversary

Eric Lentz, Oskaloosa, an equipment operator with the Kansas Department of Transportation, has been recognized for his 20th year with the department.

In announcing a number of employee milestones, KDOT stated it was proud to acknowledge them for the long-term dedication they have provided to the state of Kansas.

K-State students earn spring semester honors

Nearly 4,600 Kansas State University students earned semester honors for their academic performance in the spring semester.

Students earning a grade point average for the semester of 3.75 or above on at least 12 graded credit hours receive semester honors along with commendations from their deans.

The following students from Jefferson County earned semester honors:

Grantville—Chloe Daniels and Caidon Quinlan.

McLouth—Noah Beach and Kennedy Coffin.

Meriden—Kristin Biltoft, Keegan Colbern, Kamryn Fleischer, Joshua Murphree, Mellany Roenne, and Neva Roenne.

Nortonville—Blake Fowler, Grant Fuhrman, Braden Huss, Clara Johnson, Ethan Noll, and Aubrey Weishaar.

Oskaloosa—Paige Antholz and Margot Dangermond.

Ozawkie—Delaney Diehl, Taylor Rowe, and Avery Schwin.

Perry—Gunnar Ball, Kyndol Gray, and Eryn Vaughan.

Valley Falls—Gage Burdick, Peyton Lockhart, and Adie Manville.

Winchester—Korrie Bertels, Ryan Feldkamp, Garrett Kellner, and Layne McAfee.

KU announces students named to spring honor roll

Nearly 8,700 undergraduate students at the University of Kansas earned honor roll distinction for the spring semester.

The honor roll comprises undergraduates who meet requirements in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and in the schools of Architecture and Design, Business, Education and Human Sciences, Engineering, Health Professions, Journalism and Mass Communications, Music, Nursing, Pharmacy, Professional Studies, and Social Welfare.

Following is a list from Jefferson County:

McLouth—Caleb Baze, Alexander Bennett, Hope Coates, Christine Funk, Laci Gallagher, Jonathan Johnston, Tristyn Lilly, Sumner Ping, and Anne Posch.

Meriden—Joshua Broxterman, Maddie Midgley, and Kierstyn Sutton.

Nortonville—Kate Hoskam, Connor Keirns, and Trenton Kraxner.

Oskaloosa—Cali Sharp and Marek Skeeba.

Perry—Laikyn Coursen, Riley Ellis, TJ Evans, Shamus Sawyer, Jillian Schuler, and Kenneth Woodward.

Valley Falls—Emma Gibbens, RheaAnn Parker, and Serena Toll.

Winchester—Tyler Theno.

MATCH DAY 2025 FUND CONTACT MEETING
Valley Falls
Community Foundation
AUGUST 5 7 P.M.
Delaware Township Hall Basement
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PUBLIC NOTICE

(Published in The Valley Falls Vindicator July 24, 2025)1t

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-6
AN ORDINANCE PURSUANT TO CHAPTER XV, ARTICLE 2, SECTION 15-214 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF OZAWKIE, KANSAS ESTABLISHING WATER RATES WITHIN THE CITY OF OZAWKIE, KANSAS AND REPEALING ALL OTHER ORDINANCES OR PORTIONS OF ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT THEREWITH.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF OZAWKIE, KANSAS:

SECTION 1. Pursuant to Section 15-214 of the Code of the City of Ozawkie, water rates are hereby established as follows:

WATER RATES. (a) The rates per month for the use of city water shall be as follows:

RESIDENTIAL: INSIDE CITY	
0-1,000 gallons	\$20.00 per first 1,000 gallons
1,001-5,000 gallons	\$ 5.00 per 1,000 gallons
5,001-10,000 gallons	\$ 6.00 per 1,000 gallons
All above 10,000	\$ 8.00 per 1,000 gallons
RESIDENTIAL: OUTSIDE CITY	
0-1,000 gallons	\$20.00 per first 1,000 gallons
1,001-5,000 gallons	\$ 5.00 per 1,000 gallons
5,001-10,000 gallons	\$ 6.00 per 1,000 gallons
All above 10,000	\$ 8.00 per 1,000 gallons
BUSINESS, COMMERCIAL AND SCHOOLS	
0-1,000 gallons	\$27.00 per first 1,000 gallons
1,001-5,000 gallons	\$ 7.00 per 1,000 gallons
5,001-10,000 gallons	\$ 8.00 per 1,000 gallons
All above 10,000	\$11.00 per 1,000 gallons

SECTION 2. REPEAL OF CONFLICTING ORDINANCES. All ordinances or parts or sections of ordinances in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

SECTION 3. EFFECTIVE DATE. This ordinance shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the official city newspaper.

PASSED by council and approved by the Mayor on this 14th day of July, 2025.

/s/Loren Lutes, Mayor
Mayor, Loren Lutes

ATTEST:
/s/ Mazi Barnes
City Clerk, Mazi Barnes