

# News

## 4 escape injury in DUI accident

Karl Scholz, 25, Valley Falls, swerved to miss a deer, lost control of the pickup he was driving, and partially overturned in the ditch. He and three passengers escaped injury, but Scholz was arrested for driving under the influence.

The accident happened about 11:10 p.m. June 6 while traveling south on Nemaha Road.

The passengers were Taylor Veeder, 22, Lawrence, Emmett Jobbins, 22, Winchester, and Trenton Filbert, 22, Oskaloosa.

According to the Jefferson County Sheriff's report, air bags were deployed and all were wearing seat belts.

Scholz was driving a 2017 Chevy Silverado.

## Lecompton man reports hit and run

Cody Blake, 35, Lecompton, told Jefferson County authorities that he was involved in a hit and run accident about 10:50 p.m. July 5.

Blake was traveling west on K-92 Highway and stated that an eastbound vehicle struck his vehicle on the driver's side with a "frontal oblique impact" and continued on without stopping.

Blake, driving a 2003 Ford pickup, pulled off on Westlake Road and stopped.

# Obituaries

### ERIC HARPER

Eric J. Harper, 65, of rural Topeka and Meriden, died Sunday, July 27, 2025, at Oakley Place in Topeka.

A memorial celebration of life will be announced soon. Cremation care is planned. Barnett Family Funeral Home, Oskaloosa, is assisting the family with arrangements.

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### WILLIAM MCDANIEL

William E. "Gus" McDaniel, 82, of Meriden and Topeka, died Monday, July 28, 2025, at Heritage Gardens in Oskaloosa.

Services are pending at this time and will be announced soon. Barnett Family Funeral Home, Oskaloosa, is assisting the family with cremation care.

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## Judge sets competency hearing in West case

Just a day after he was returned to Jefferson County from Larned State Hospital, murder defendant Michael Thompson West was in Jefferson County District Court in Oskaloosa last Thursday morning for a competency review before District Judge Christopher T. Etzel.

After acknowledging that a week earlier he had received a report covering LSH's evaluation of West's mental and emotional state, Etzel told County Attorney Josh Ney and Lawrence attorney Matthew Cohen, West's court-appointed attorney, that he was obligated by Kansas law to schedule a competency hearing for the defendant. He said the hearing could be either a formal hearing or an informal hearing.

Asked by Etzel if he had had a chance to look over the report, Cohen replied that he had but that he hadn't had an opportunity to do so with West. He subsequently requested that he be given some time to meet with his client as needed, a request to which Ney didn't have any objections.

The judge then scheduled a formal competency hearing for Thursday, Aug. 14 at 9:30 a.m.

West left the Law Enforcement Center in Oskaloosa on Jan. 27 to be treated and evaluated at LSH.

As previously reported in the paper, West is charged with one count of premeditated murder in the first degree in the Sept. 11, 2023, death of his father, 59-year-old Michael J. West.

The case is JF-2023-CR-125.

## 2 injured when pickup, motorcycle collide

Serious injuries to two people were the result of a US-24 Highway accident when a motorcycle and a pickup collided head-on about 11 a.m. July 20.

According to the Kansas Highway Patrol report, Dwight Mewes, 56, Ogden, riding a 2017 Harley Davidson motorcycle, was westbound and braked for a vehicle in front of him. He lost control and slid into an eastbound 2006 Nissan Frontier driven by Jerry Steinbach, 75, Topeka.

The motorcyclist and a passenger in the pickup, Sandra Brokemann, Topeka, were transported to Stormont Vail Hospital in Topeka with suspected serious injuries. Steinbach was not injured.

The accident happened about 540 feet west of the US-59 intersection.

Mewes was wearing a helmet and the Nissan driver and passenger were wearing seat belts.

# County. . .

(Continued from page 3)

Bank.

The board first approved CU2025-02 and then CU-2025-01 on separate 3-0 votes, thus giving Diamond Communications, Springfield, N.J., and STC Towers LLC, Overland Park, respectively, the proverbial green light to erect communications towers on the strength of Conditional Use permits issued by the Community Development Office.

The actions were taken on the heels of a five-minute executive session that had been requested by Ney so that he and Deputy County Attorney Jonathan Ehrlich could give legal advice to the commissioners.

When the meeting reopened to the public, Christy announced that no binding action had been taken behind closed doors.

Diamond Communications will be putting up a free-standing communications tower 280' tall on a 73.89-acre tract of land along the south side of Hickory Point Road between Rawlins Road and Saline Road, according to a Memorandum Metzger shared with the commissioners and the paper.

The ground is owned by Melinda Swoyer.

When the Planning Commission met June 23 to look at the case, it voted 2-0 with one abstention to recommend to the board that Diamond Communications receive a CU permit, and 2-1 to recommend to the board that the company's Development Plan be approved.

According to a Memorandum Metzger furnished the commissioners and the paper with, STC Towers will be placing a communications tower 254' tall with guy wires on approximately 23 acres of land located on the west side of Osage Road between 82nd Street and 94th Street.

The ground belongs to Tim and Marla Bailey.

When the PC evaluated the case last month, it voted 2-1 to recommend to the board that STC Towers get a CU permit, and 2-1 to recommend to the board that the company's Development Plan be OK'd.

Prior to the executive session Metzger told the commissioners that the PC member who had cast the three dissenting votes was of the feeling that the county wasn't doing enough to limit the number of communications towers in the county.

After the closed-door conversation had concluded and before the commissioners considered CU2025-01, he told the trio that a unanimous vote would be required in order to award a CU permit to STC Towers because a valid protest petition had been filed with his office.

### Planning and zoning

On separate 3-0 votes, the board OK'd PR2025-07, Z2025-07, and Z2025-08.

PR2025-07 encompassed a request from Harry Van Nest,

3767 Republic Road, Oskaloosa, to consider the final plat for Animal Acres, a proposed one-lot subdivision covering 38.4 acres to be located on the east side of Republic Road roughly a quarter of a mile north of 37th Street.

When the PC took up the case last month, it voted 3-0 to recommend to the board that Van Nest's request be approved. PR stands for plat review.

Z2025-07 encompassed a request from Jerry and Janet Kessler, 1702 Robb Lane, Perry, and Rodney and Dynelle Kessler, 1757 Robb Lane, Perry, to rezone three tracts of land covering 35.35 acres at 1702 and 1757 Robb Lane in anticipation of the future adjustment of a boundary line that would reduce the number of tracts from three to two.

According to a Memorandum Metzger made available to both the commissioners and the paper, the rezoning involves the Rural Residential classification and the Suburban Residential classification.

When the PC dealt with the case last month, it voted 3-0 to recommend to the board that the Kesslers and the Kesslers' request be approved.

Z2025-08 encompassed a request from Jade Lassiter, 12762 K-4 Highway, Valley Falls, to rezone a 50.6-acre tract of land at 8832 150th Street, Valley Falls, shifting it from the Rural Residential classification to the Agricultural classification.

The property is owned by Jacob and Chelsy Wessel, 8832 150th Street, according to a Memorandum Metzger shared with both the commissioners and the paper.

When the PC handled the case last month, it voted 3-0 to recommend to the board that Lassiter's request be approved.

Metzger provided the commissioners and the paper with copies of three reports, "2025 Building Permit Report - 1st Quarter," "2025 Building Permit Report - 2nd Quarter," and "Quarterly Report of Dwellings from 1998-2025."

The Community Development director said the third report indicated that through the first six months of the year, his office had handed out 44 permits for dwellings and that the estimated cost of construction for these dwellings was more than \$13 million. He also pointed out that the first-half-of-the-year total for 2025 was just 10 below the total for all of 2024.

More information about the reports will appear in a future issue of the paper.

Metzger also informed the commissioners that he was working on a draft resolution pertaining to rural sewer district policies and the fees they charge, including the fee for tapping into a sewer system to gain access to it.

Walbridge responded to the report by saying he wanted to check with the cities in the county to see what their tap fees are.

On separate 3-0 votes, the board decided to schedule a hearing on a request to vacate a platted right of way and decided to set a hearing on a request to vacate a platted utility easement.

The request to vacate the ROW came from Lakewood Hills resident Robert Earl Jordan, 9484 Lakeshore Drive, Ozawkie. Metzger told the board that Jordan, who owns two lots on either side of the ROW, wants the 15-foot wide strip of ground vacated so that he can have four contiguous properties.

In response to a request for additional information, Metzger told the paper July 22 in an email that Jordan's house is located on two of the lots, his garage on the other two, and his driveway within the ROW.

The lots are Lot 491, Lot 492, Lot 493, and Lot 494 in Unit III.

The required public hearing on Jordan's request is to be held Monday, Sept. 15 at 1:30 p.m. or shortly thereafter.

The request to vacate the utility easement came from Nicole Pickens, 1609 Linn Street, Valley Falls. Metzger told the commissioners that because of the easement, his office can't issue Pickens a building permit to construct a house on portions of Lot 67, Lot 68, Lot 94, and Lot 95 in Block S of Lake Shore Estates.

The required public hearing on Pickens' request will take place Sept. 15 at 1:30 p.m. or shortly thereafter.

### Resolution 2025-023

The board voted unanimously to pass Resolution 2025-023. This resolution establishes a schedule for the appointing of individuals to fill the seven positions on the Planning Commission and identifies the reasons that can be used in removing someone from this advisory body.

According to the resolution, the occupants of Position 1 (Steve Phillips) and Position 2 (currently vacant) will serve three-year terms slated to expire next March, the occupants of Position 3 (Karin Hosler) and Position 4 (Tiffany Asher) will serve three-year terms slated to end in March of 2027, and the occupants of Position 5 (Greg Hazen), Position 6 (Matt Scherer III) and Position 7 (currently vacant) will serve three-year terms slated to wrap up in March of 2028.

The document also states that a member of the body can be removed if he or she misses five or more meetings in a calendar year, abuses the office, has a "serious conflict of interest," or engages in "abusive conduct."

The resolution was presented to the commissioners for their consideration by Metzger.

### Employee requests

Voting 3-0, the board OK'd a travel request it got from County Appraiser Janet Allen, clearing the way for her and Deputy County Appraiser Dotti Harrison to attend the Orion User's Group Conference in Wichita in early September, and for Personal Property Supervisor Julie Sargent and cartographer Carissa Allen to take in the Computer Information Concepts Kansas User's Symposium in the state's largest city in mid-August.

Voting 3-0 again, the board approved a second alteration to a Shared Leave request from an employee of the Sheriff's Office. The first alteration was OK'd a week earlier and the original request on July 7.

Both County Clerk Julie Dunkle and Deputy County Clerk Katlyn Ferrell were on hand for the meeting.

# Obituary

### RICK GARREN

Rick Dean Garren, 72, of Oskaloosa, Kansas, passed away on July 25, 2025, at Lawrence Memorial Hospital with his devoted wife by his side.

Rick was born on April 10, 1953, in Topeka, Kansas, to Thomas Laverne and Verrell (Weinberg) Garren. He graduated from Oskaloosa High School in 1971, where he proudly played

football for the Bears. After graduation, he began his working life at his family's business, Garren's Grocery. Over the years, he worked for Goodyear, became a part owner of Oskie Auto Center, worked for Curtis 1000, and retired from Allen Press in 2019.

He was a member of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Nortonville and also served his community as a volunteer firefighter.

On August 14, 1976, Rick married his high school sweetheart, Cathy Johnson, at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Nortonville, Kansas. Together they built a life filled with love, family, and shared memories.

Rick had a deep appreciation for the outdoors and enjoyed cutting firewood, hunting, and spending time in nature. He especially loved playing with his grandchildren and never passed up a good Western movie.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his sister, Cheryl Forbes; his brother, Marty Garren; and his father-in-law, Art Johnson.

Rick is survived by his beloved wife, Cathy; his four children, their spouses, and eight grandchildren: Brady and Megan Garren and their children, Jack and Jordi (Olathe); Ryan and Amanda Garren and their children, Keira and Carter (Overland Park); Katie and David Himpel and their children, Paisley and Nolan (Basehor); and Kristy and Bill Kabus and their children, Billy and Abby (Oskaloosa). He is also survived by his brother and sister-in-law, Monte and Rhonda Garren; his sister and brother-in-law, Tanya and Steve Newell; his brother-in-law, Rex Forbes; his sister-in-law, Julie Garren; his mother-in-law, Betty Johnson; his brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Kirk and Cheryl Johnson; and many nieces and nephews.

Funeral services with Pastor Richard Lally presiding will be at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, July 30, 2025, at Barnett Family Funeral Home, Oskaloosa, KS. Burial will be at Pleasant View Cemetery, Oskaloosa, KS. Memorials are suggested to St. Matthew Lutheran Church Endowment Fund, 312 Elm Street, Nortonville, KS 66060.

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