

COLUMBUS CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

Attendance
The City Council of Columbus, Kansas met July 7, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. presided over by Mayor Grant Spieth. Council members present: Tom Pryor, Misty Spear, Laura Epler, Steve Dunlap and Kathy Doherty (via Zoom). Council members absent: None.

Tom Pryor provided the Invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Forum
Elizabeth Kutz, Robin Carson and Dr. Mindy Mayfield from SEK Animal Advocates approached the council requesting that the city consider a donation of \$25-\$50 per animal whenever they are rescued from the city dog pound by the SEK Animal Advocates. Kutz said the donation would help defray some of the expenses of feeding and transporting the animals by the volunteers. Dunlap asked City Administrator, Jake Letner to gather data regarding the number of animals housed at the pound in the past year for further discussion.

Consent Agenda
Doherty moved to approve the consent agenda consisting of Appropriation Ordinance #25-657 — July 7, 2025, City Council Meeting Minutes — June 16, 2025, and Municipal Court Docket Summary — June 23, 2025. The motion was seconded by Spear. Voting aye: Pryor, Spear, Epler, Dunlap, Doherty. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

Mayor
Mayor Grant Spieth reported that the League of Kansas Municipalities Annual Conference will be held on October 9 - 11 at Overland Park, Kansas. Mayor Spieth urged council members to attend if possible.

Staff Reports
City Administrator — City Administrator Jake Letner reported he would be presenting the 2026 proposed budget later in the meeting.

City Clerk — City Clerk Ruth Hutley reported the city pool is averaging 98 patrons per day with a good turnout for the pool’s annual 4th of July party.

-Hutley announced the city employee pool party will be on Thursday, July 31 from 5:30 — 9 p.m.

City Treasurer — No Report.

Code Enforcement — Code Enforcement Officer Gary Holt reported that he has been working to compile data regarding property violations.

Public Works — City Superintendent Randy Coble reported that city crews have been busy mowing. -Coble reported the newly purchased harley rake attachment is working very well. He said it has been recently used in all the wards and the cemetery with great results.

-Coble said the mulch for the city parks is in and crews are waiting for drier weather conditions to spread it.

-Coble said the city spoils pile is getting full and he asked for council’s ideas on disposing of large pieces of asphalt from the pile. A suggestion was made to call KDOT to see if they had any use for it. Dunlap thanked cemetery employees for their work on improving the cemetery roads.

Police Department — Police Chief Kyle Clark reported that the police de-

partment recently assisted with the Freedom Fest and will be helping with the upcoming county fair.

-Chief Clark reported that Officer Seth Brooks has accepted an offer of employment with the department. Officer Brooks was previously employed by the City of Galena Police Department and has approximately two years’ experience in law enforcement.

Fire Department — Fire Chief Steven Burton reported the department has responded to 323 emergency calls to date.

-Chief Burton reported he has applied for a \$10,000 water rescue grant and will keep the council posted as to whether the department receives the grant.

New Business
2026 Proposed Budget Presentation.
City Administrator Jake Letner provided a proposed 2026 budget for all funds that have a mill levy, including the General Fund, Employee Benefits Fund, Library Fund, and Recreation Commission Fund. Letner suggested that the 2026 budget be considered at the September 2 City Council meeting.

Consider Issuing a Notification to the Cherokee County Clerk of Intent to Exceed Revenue Neutral Rate for the 2026 Budget.

City Administrator Letner’s budget proposal included a request for a mill levy of 60.0 mills, which exceeds the Revenue Neutral Rate. Spear made a motion to issue a notification to the Cherokee County Clerk of the city’s intent to exceed the Revenue Neutral Rate for the 2026 budget, levying a total of 60.0 mills. The motion was seconded by Epler. Voting aye: Pryor, Spear, Epler, Dunlap, Doherty. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

Consider Ordinance 1524 — Adopting Uniform Public Offense Code, 2025.

Pryor made a motion to approve Ordinance 1524 adopting the 2025 Uniform Public Offense Code and repealing Ordinance 1516. Epler seconded the motion. Voting aye: Pryor, Spear, Epler, Dunlap, Doherty. Voting nay: None. Motion carried 5-0.

Consider Ordinance 1525 — Adopting Standard Traffic Ordinance, 2025.

The approval of Ordinance 1525 adopting the 2025 Standard Traffic Ordinance was tabled until the next council meeting.

Consider Ordinance 1526 — Authorizing the Creation of a Vacant Property Registry. Code Enforcement Specialist Gary Holt opened the discussion regarding the creation of a vacant property registry. Holt stated the purpose of the proposed vacant property registration is to create a centralized, comprehensive database of unoccupied properties within the City of Columbus. Holt added that the registry will strengthen the City’s ability to monitor vacant properties, enforce code compliance, and ensure proper upkeep. After discussion, Epler made a motion to approve Ordinance 1526, authorizing the creation of a vacant property registry with changes as noted. Spear seconded the motion. Voting aye: Pryor, Spear, Epler, Dunlap, Doherty.

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OBITUARIES

Linda Jorgenson, 80, Welch, Okla.

Linda Sue Jorgenson, 80, a longtime resident of rural Welch, Oklahoma, died Thursday, July the 24th, 2025, surrounded by her family.

Born September 25, 1944, in Dayton, Ohio, Linda was the daughter of Ishmael Cornelius Turner and Olvesta Fern (Campbell) Turner. She was a graduate of Columbus High School in Columbus. She was a cheerleader for several years.

Linda and Verlin Joe Jorgenson were united in marriage September 19, 1964, in a ceremony in Chetopa.

They made their home northeast of Welch, Oklahoma, where they raised their two children. She worked several years at the Welch State Bank. She and Joe then started the family business by owning and operating Jorgenson Equipment. They sold Vermeer hay balers and later added a complete line of lawn equipment. They made many friends during their years in business. After retirement, she and Joe began ranching at a larger level and took pride in the cattle they raised.

Linda was member of the Welch Christian Church. She loved to fish, going to Rhonda’s Beauty Shop on hair day, cooking, gardening, and organizing numerous events and fundraisers for area families in need of assistance.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Joe; her son, Rusty Jorgenson; an infant son, Verlin Joe Jorgenson, Jr.; and a sister, Delores Licon.

Survivors include daughter, Kristi Bullard and husband Doug, of Cherryvale; grandchildren, Lexi Baker, Gannon Jorgenson, Josh Baker, Jaeli Volmer and husband Mason, and Kasey Bailey; great grandchildren, Kimber Blaine, Jackson Baker, and Slade Volmer; god-children, Tonya Wilson and husband Darren, Jerica Wilson, Deja Appleton, Moxyn Smith, and Crue Appleton; a brother Bill Turner of West Mineral; a daughter in law, Jennifer Jorgenson; and two sisters-in-law, Gloria Vance and Carol (Jerg) Frogley.

Graveside services will be held at 10 a.m. Tuesday, July 29, at the Welch Cemetery. Pastor Greg Highsmith will officiate. The family requests in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Welch Public Schools Enrichment Foundation, in which Linda was extremely passionate, c/o Welch State Bank P.O. Box 129 Welch, OK 74369.



Sarah Lindsey, 49, Galena

Sarah J. (Cotten) Lindsey, 49, Galena, died at 9:59 a.m. Monday, July 21, 2025 at Mercy Hospital in Joplin, Missouri following a sudden illness.

Born July 28, 1975 in Tuscumbia, Missouri, Sarah was the daughter of Norman L. Cotten and Della Jean (Williams) Cotten. She graduated from Chetopa High School with the Class of 1993.

She married the love of her life, Eric Lindsey, November 28, 1998 in Miami, Oklahoma. He survives.

She was preceded in death by her father, Norman and her son Kolby.

Additional survivors include five daughters, Kennady Lindsey (fiancé, Matthew) of Galena, Jessica Brewster (husband, Skyler) of Fort Stewart, Ga., Cori Richards (husband, Isaac) and Ashlyn Lindsey, all of Joplin and Nikki Rocheleau (husband, Austin) of Orlando, Fla.; her mother, Della J. Cotten; her in-laws John and Kay Lindsey; one sister-in-law, Kelli Lindsey (wife, Melissa); ten grandchildren, Zoey, Karah, Kamryn, Bentley, Everlee, Roman, Maverick, Maddox, Kelsee, and Lennox; and her many “adopted” children that she loved as her own.

Sarah welcomed everyone she met with open arms and an open heart. She opened her home to anyone who needed it, and she loved to help any way she could.

Some of her favorite things in life included music, reading, cooking, sewing, and watching food network, HGTV, and most importantly - Game Show Network. Her fondest memories were from her life in the desert, time spent at the softball fields as a coach and a parent, and soaking in time with her grandkids. Sarah cherished any and all time spent with her family who were always her number one priority.

Sarah has been entrusted to Derfelt Funeral Home of Galena for cremation. The family will host a memorial service later.



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Legal Notice

(First Published in the Columbus News Report Tuesday, July 29, 2025)

NOTICE OF HEARING TO EXCEED REVENUE NEUTRAL RATE AND BUDGET HEARING State of Kansas
Special District

The governing body of
Southeast Kansas Library System
Allen County

will meet on September 5, 2025 at 1:00 p.m. at SEK Impact Conference Center, 1500 W 7th, Chanute, KS for the purpose of hearing and answering objections of taxpayers relating to the proposed use of all funds, the amount of tax to be levied and the revenue neutral rate. Detailed budget information is available at Southeast Kansas Library System Headquarters, 218 E. Madison, Iola, KS and will be available at this hearing.

SUPPORTING COUNTIES
Allen County (home county) Anderson, Bourbon, Chautauqua, Cherokee, Crawford
Elk, Greenwood, Labette, Linn, Montgomery, Neosho
Wilson, Woodson

BUDGET SUMMARY
Proposed Budget 2026 Expenditures and Amount of Current Year Estimate for 2025 Ad Valorem Tax establish the maximum limits of the 2026 budget. Estimated Tax Rate is subject to change depending on the final assessed valuation.

FUND	Prior Year Actual for 2024		Current Year Estimate for 2025		Proposed Budget Year for 2026		
	Expenditures	Actual Tax Rate*	Expenditures	Actual Tax Rate*	Budget Authority for Expenditures	Amount of 2025 Ad Valorem Tax	Proposed Estimated Tax Rate*
General	1,974,303	1.404	2,048,604	1.354	2,281,133	1,780,084	1.301
Debt Service							
Employee Benefits	126,666	0.084	141,780	0.092	149,280	127,611	0.093
Capital Improvements			38,791		30,000		
Non-Budgeted Funds	84,879						
Totals	2,185,848	1.488	2,229,175	1.446	2,460,413	1,907,695	1.394
						Revenue Neutral Rate **	1.373

	2023	2024	2025
Outstanding Indebtedness, Jan 1,			
G.O. Bonds	0	0	0
Revenue Bonds	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Lease Pur. Princ.	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0

*Tax rates are expressed in mills.
**Revenue Neutral Rate as defined by KSA 79-2988

Sharon Moreland
Director

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