

# What’s the Word?

## MEDIATOR

BY DAVID WOODS

►► A mediator is one who attempts to help people who are involved in a conflict come to an agreement or reconciliation. A mediator becomes very important or essential when the possibility of a solution seems bleak if not impossible.

We often think of a mediator as a person who is a neutral, impartial third-party who doesn’t actively take actions to provide a solution.

To the contrary, the Bible describes a mediator who is quite the opposite. In the beginning, God and man had an uninhibited relationship, free from conflict. However, once man disobeyed and fell (Genesis 3), sin became an irreconcilable barrier in that relationship. The result was physical

and spiritual death, which we experience even today. Because of our sinful condition, we need a mediator without sin to negotiate our reconciliation to God.

Jesus fulfilled this unique and exclusive role, which only He is qualified to satisfy. Only Jesus walked the earth being fully human and fully God (John 1:1-14), making Him the perfect mediator between the two parties.

Only Jesus provided in Himself the perfect, sinless sacrifice for sin and the solution for the conflict that man’s sin created.

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,” says 1 Timothy 2:5. Jesus also said in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me.”

*Want to have a word?*  
*David Woods is the lay pastor at First Baptist Church in Girard, KS. You can reach him at 620-238-0797.*

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# Solar developer urges Commission to end moratorium

## CRAWFORD COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING – MAY 9

BY PHILIP STEVENS  
HOMETOWN GIRARD

►► The Crawford County Commission met Friday May 9 to conduct routine business and hear public input related to solar development, zoning, and the county’s ongoing comprehensive planning process.

The meeting began with the presentation of Resolution 2025-019 by Zoning Administrator May Smith. The resolution pertains to a nuisance property that has been subject to repeated violations. Smith explained that the county had “been round and round” with the owners, who have alternated between cleanup and relapse, with conditions continuing to deteriorate.

“This just begins the countdown,” Smith said, referring to the official timeline during which property owners can request a hearing before the county moves forward with abatement. She noted that, while trash abatements have clearer deadlines, the inclusion of vehicles on this property complicates the timeline slightly. “I might send them a letter due to the fact we are going to be dealing with some vehicles, which I’ve never done,” she said. Commissioners voted unanimously to adopt the resolution.

During the public comment period, John Kopiak of Shasta Power urged the commission to end the county’s solar moratorium. Kopiak detailed his company’s interest in working with Pittsburg State University’s material science program and investing in the region. “We would be employing about 200 workers for a period of about two years,” he said. “Our development is funded, and we just urge that the moratorium be lifted so we can begin this large investment in the county.”

Commissioners questioned Kopiak about how the project would impact local school districts. Kopiak explained that while solar panels receive a 10-year state tax abatement, components such as batteries, fencing, and roads are fully taxable. “The battery component is about half of the cost,” he said. “And that is immediately taxed.”

Melisia Rhodes, who has been advocating for the project and is admittedly on the payroll for the solar project, provided additional details, citing discussions with school officials and budget data. “USD 246 is getting a \$977,000 check from the state because their property values are so low,” she said. “It’s estimated that the first year, USD 246

will get approximately \$1.7 million,” following the development of the solar project, due largely to the increase in assessed valuation tied to battery storage.

Rhodes also asked the commission for permission to display the county survey QR code in her booth at the Four State Farm Show to encourage more residents to participate in the county’s ongoing comprehensive planning survey. Commissioners expressed no objection to the idea.

Several other citizens, including Michael Oplotnik and Rick Elnicki, addressed the commission with concerns and support regarding the survey process and zoning and ending the moratorium. The conversation included questions about the history of zoning in Crawford County, which dates back to the 1960s, and current limitations of the county’s moratorium over municipalities like Girard, Arma, and Pittsburg.

Later in the meeting, County Clerk Lisa Lusk discussed preparations for the upcoming budget season. Department heads have received budget request forms, and meetings with commissioners are expected to begin May 30. Commissioners agreed to allot approximately 30 minutes per department.

Commissioner Bruce Blair also received approval to submit a rezoning application to the City of Girard. The application concerns a parcel of county-owned land east of the county barn, which is being considered as a potential site for a building. “This application is nothing more than doing that paperwork beforehand to see if they’ll get approval before we even talk about planning the other stuff,” Blair said.

Commissioners then recessed into a 20-minute executive session to discuss non-elected personnel. Upon returning, they reviewed upcoming items, including work sessions scheduled for May 13 with Mental Health Executive Director Heather McCully and Comprehensive Plan consultant Josh Albin. A work session with Ryan Insurance is also scheduled for May 16.

In other announcements, Lusk relayed an invitation for commissioners to tour the CLASS LTD facility in early June and attend the groundbreaking ceremony for the Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas’s new Mount Carmel House hospice facility at noon on Thursday, May 15, at 201 S. Rouse in Pittsburg.

The meeting adjourned shortly thereafter.

# Albin shares on progress of comprehensive plan survey

## CRAWFORD COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING – MAY 13

BY PHILIP STEVENS  
HOMETOWN GIRARD

►► At Tuesday’s Crawford County Commission meeting, attorney Josh Albin gave a detailed progress report on the countywide survey supporting the development of a comprehensive plan. His update, which was followed by a lengthy question-and-answer session with commissioners and audience members, revealed the survey is underway, with over 1,000 responses already collected online.

“We contracted with Pradmar to get out our mailers,” Albin said, noting that postcards would be sent to approximately 12,000 registered addresses throughout the county no later than next week. Physical drop-off locations will be available at city halls in Girard, Frontenac, and Pittsburg, as well as the Pittsburg and Frontenac public libraries.

As of Tuesday morning, Albin said 1,014 responses had already been submitted through digital platforms, with an average completion time of just over 12 minutes. He emphasized that 83 percent of participants had completed the full survey. “The goal to keep it under 15 minutes seems to have been fairly well managed,” he noted.

Albin described the survey’s technical

safeguards, including IP tracking to detect duplicates, and said the margin of responses requiring additional scrutiny was only five to ten percent, well within expected norms. “That gives us an idea that we’re going to have a fairly good survey when it comes to integrity standards,” he said.

He told commissioners the data so far is being used to generate word maps and thematic summaries to help identify key issues and opportunities for the county. He reiterated that the goal is to reach 10,000 total responses by July 1.

The Commission tentatively plans to review the results after the first meeting following July 1, at which point they will consider closing the survey and moving into the planning phase. Albin explained that survey results would help shape specific priorities such as rural housing, infrastructure improvements, or adjustments to planning and zoning policies.

Albin also addressed ongoing concerns about wind and solar energy development in unzoned portions of the county. He said he will provide commissioners with zoning framework options, one allowing wind and solar development and one excluding it, to help guide policy discussions

moving forward. He also mentioned a May 22 work session with the Planning and Zoning Board to review these possibilities, though that meeting will not include public comment.

While several audience members raised concerns or opinions, some echoing points made at prior meetings, one comment stood out. “This is a legacy issue,” said Jeff Murphy. “What kind of legacy is it? What kind of effects does it have on the environment... property values... and future development?”

In response to calls for better public education about zoning, Albin committed to drafting a fact sheet that outlines the general purpose of zoning and its perceived pros and cons. “I can give a general [sheet], based upon different examples we have here in Kansas,” he said.

In regular business, the commissioners unanimously approved a letter of support for the Southeast Kansas Recycling Center’s grant application to the Community Health Endowment (CHE) for lighting improvements totaling \$5,379.94.

County Counselor Jim Emerson presented a letter appointing Sgt. Dallas Pulliam of the Crawford County Sheriff’s Office as the law enforcement representative to the Juvenile Corrections Advisory Board. The

commission approved the appointment.

Emerson also shared information about KDOT’s upcoming public open houses on the U.S. Highway 69 corridor project, scheduled for June 4 through June 6 in Pittsburg, Frontenac, and Arma, along with a virtual session.

Commissioner Bruce Blair acknowledged local frustrations with current highway construction delays but encouraged the public to be patient. “It is nice to see KDOT spend as much money as they’re spending in this area,” he said.

The commission entered executive session twice—once at the beginning of the meeting at the request of County Attorney Reina Probert to discuss non-elected personnel, and again at the end to consult with counsel regarding the Explorer Crawford County contract with Pittsburg State University and juvenile attorney contracts.

The next scheduled commission work session will be held May 16 at 9 a.m. with Ryan Insurance. Commissioners are also expected to attend the Mount Carmel House groundbreaking at 201 S. Rouse in Pittsburg and a Pittsburg Chamber Coffee on May 15.

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