



GOVERNMENT

Commissioner’s Desk



By Duane Morris
Ottawa County Commissioner
District #3

Please remember this is NOT an official documentation of the minutes, it is meant to be an informative synopsis of County Commissioner activities from my perspective. If you want more information on a subject I mention here I encourage you to read the full minutes of the meetings or watch the video of the meetings online at the Ottawa County Website <https://ks1497.cichost->

ing.com/main/

Our Monday August 10th meeting was with Commissioner Mortimer absent. We also had no internet at the courthouse so we couldn't video tape the meeting. I will try to be extra careful on getting the details included this week. Shelby Walker, Register of Deeds and IT "guru supreme", was working the internet problem Monday morning and I received an email shortly after noon that the internet was up and running once again. Atta girl, Shelby!

John Carson from Bennington was first on the agenda to present his letter of resignation from the Ottawa County Museum Board. I jokingly told him we would not accept his letter of resignation because we need him on the museum board. People such as he have witnessed much of what we call "history". Mr. Carson served us for 26 years and still has many historical

stories to tell about early life in our area. He will be missed, but we truly appreciate his dedication and service!

The department head meeting went well with reports of "business as usual" and "we're still working on road damage from our excessive rains earlier this summer."

County attorney, Jeff Ebel, discussed a change in the law effective July 1st. The law has stricter guidelines for posting bail and it could cause our inmate population to go up.

Tammi Cox, clerk and election officer, gave a report of 1,445 votes cast and 74 kid ballots cast in our primary election. It's great to see the future voters in our county take an interest in the process! It was a 37.4% voter turn out. Next election grab your family, friends, and neighbors and go vote...take part in the process of running our government.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you!

Desire to Explain County Taxes



By Carla Grund
Ottawa County Commissioner
District #1

All the real estate property owners in Ottawa County should have received their estimated tax notices last week. I believe it is important:

1. To acknowledge that Ottawa County taxes levied in 2027 will be equal to 2026 dollars.
2. To explain why your residential taxes may have increased with the flat county taxes.
3. To present some options the State could implement to reduce property taxes
4. To present options the County Commission has to reduce property taxes.

1. Flat taxes. The Commission and the department heads together were successful in keeping the Ottawa County ad valorem dollars the same as 2026. Many of the department heads presented their individual budgets flat. The Commission reduced appropriations to outside parties and trimmed cash carryover balances. Together, the mission to keep taxes flat was accomplished.

Just so you have a comparison related to our efforts, for the last 28 years, the ad valorem dollars increased every year except for two years. The average increase in ad valorem dollars levied for this 28-year period was \$242,000 per year.

The two exceptions. Taxes levied for the 2024 budget year stayed flat due to the Revenue Neutral Rate hearing being held at a time different than the published time. Therefore, the ad valorem taxes remained equal to the 2023 levied amount. In 2016, there was no hospital debt payment levied.

2. Residential ad valorem taxes. Your residential property taxes are based on three factors – the fair market value of the residential property, the taxes levied and the percentage of taxes allocated to

residential properties. Each of these factors are computed independent of each other. An increase of one of these factors may be offset by the other factors or may be multiplied by increases in the other factors. For 2027, the County taxes levied remained flat but the percentage of the estimated taxes allocated to residential properties increased. Therefore, even if the fair market value of your home remained unchanged from 2025 to 2026 (which is used for the 2027 budget year), your estimated taxes increased due to the percentage allocation to residential properties.

As I researched other states, they all levy taxes based on fair market value for residential homes with various assessment rates. Is fair market value subjective? No and yes. The fair market value is based on the square footage of your home as well as the composition of rooms within that square footage. This is not subjective. The fair market value is also determined based on the condition of the property and this is subjective. The better maintained property will pay higher taxes.

Are you taxed on unrealized gains with property taxes? Yes. Taxes are based on fair market value, not the price you paid for the home or the costs to build it. So, if you stay in your house for 40 years, you will pay property taxes on unrealized gains for 40 years (assuming the market value increases) and then when you sell your home, you receive the one-time realized gain.

3. My Suggestions for the State to implement to reduce property taxes.

-Lower taxes for owner occupied residential homes. The legislature could raise the \$75,000 home exemption related to the 20 mills to the schools to \$150,000. I do not desire to reduce the funding to the classrooms or to the local schools. To make up this difference, I would like to see administrative costs reduced at the State level.

-Remove or lower the income requirement for the Kansas Property Tax Relief for Seniors and Veterans program. The state could make an exemption for all senior citizens and veterans, or increase the income requirement greater than the current \$58,041.

-3% cap on fair market values. I agree with that if it is for homes that have not sold throughout the year. For those

that have sold, I believe their purchase price should be the starting point of the 3% cap going forward.

The State currently requires each county to provide 18 critical services. As the State gradually transferred the responsibilities for these services from the State to the counties, the State reduced funding to the counties to provide these services, resulting in higher county property taxes.

- The State could fund all election costs.

-The State could pay for all court, legal fees and jail costs related to District Court.

-The State could limit Kansas Open Record requests. I believe transparency is important but maybe limit the number of requests per year and maximum number of pages per request.

-The State could reimburse a percentage of the cost of these 18 required services.

4. Options for the County to reduce property taxes

-Reduce expenses. With the cost of everything increasing, like in your household, it is difficult to find ways to cut back. For the 2028 budget, we will again need the help of the department heads to find ways to make this happen. Larger counties may have layers of staffing they can reduce but that is not true in Ottawa County. Many of our employees are responsible for multiple responsibilities to provide those 18 required critical services. The Commission will again, look at every line item to look for efficiencies and reductions.

-Increased valuations. As you see new houses being built throughout the county, be thankful for the broader tax base these create for property taxes. We also need new commercial and industrial economic development to broaden our tax base. Again, grateful for the businesses we have and hopeful for new businesses to choose Ottawa County.

-New Revenue source. The County is discussing proposing a 1% sales tax for healthcare to be on the November ballot. You, the constituents, would vote on this proposal. Currently, we distribute 6 mills to the County Hospital and 6 mills to EMS which is split between the two county EMS services. Six mills equaled \$658,134 in 2026. Also, in 2026, the County will pay \$331,000 of principal and interest on the hospital debt.

(First published in The Minneapolis Messenger on August 13, 2026)
IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF OTTAWA COUNTY, KANSAS.

In the Matter of the Estate of
Kenedy D. Constable, Deceased.

Case No. OT-2026-PR-000026

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

The State of Kansas to All Persons Concerned:

You are hereby notified that on August 3, 2026, a Petition For Issuance Of Letters Of Administration was filed in this Court by Elizabeth C. Hardacre, natural mother of and Conservator for Kohen D. Constable, the sole heir-at-law of Kenedy D. Constable, deceased, and on August 5, 2026, Elizabeth C. Hardacre was appointed Administrator of the Estate of Kenedy D. Constable, deceased.

All creditors of the decedent are notified to exhibit their demands against the estate within four (4) months from the date of first publication of this notice under K.S.A. 69-2236 and amendments thereto, or if the identity of the creditor is known or reasonably ascertainable, 30 days after actual notice was given as provided by law, and if their demands are not thus exhibited, they shall be forever barred.

Elizabeth C. Constable, Administrator

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Attorney for Petitioner

(First published in The Minneapolis Messenger on August 20, 2026)

NOTICE OF HEARING TO EXCEED REVENUE NEUTRAL RATE

The governing body of
Salina County Rural Fire District #5
will meet on Sept. 1, 2026, at 9:00 AM at 300 West Ash, Room 107, Salina for the purpose of hearing and answering objections of taxpayers relating to revenue neutral rate and proposed tax rate, as required by KSA 79-2988.

Revenue Neutral Rate*	5.374	Proposed Tax Rate	5.603
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Tax Rates are expressed in mills
* Revenue Neutral Rate as defined by KSA 79-2988

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**CKMHC**
CENTRAL KANSAS MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

Salina
809 Elmhurst Blvd
(Main Office)

Abilene **Ellsworth** **Lincoln** **Minneapolis**
420 NE 10th St 1602 Aylward Ave 114 W Court St 817 A Argyle Ave

CKMHC Crisis Services Available 24/7
785-823-6322 or 800-794-8281

Help whenever you need it.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline If you or someone you know needs support now Call or text 988 Chat: 988lifeline.org	Crisis Text Line Serves anyone, in any type of crisis. Text "HOME" to 741741 Chat: crisistextline.org or connect on WhatsApp
Farm Aid Hotline (English or Español) If you or a loved one in the farming/ag community is struggling please reach out Call: 1-800-327-6243 or call/text 988	The Trevor Project Crisis Support Services for LGBTQ youth in need. Text "START" to 678678
Veterans Crisis Line A free, confidential resource for all service members.  Call 988 and press 1	National Domestic Violence Hotline Text "START" to 887888 Chat: thehotline.org Call: 1-800-799-7233 (SAFE)

These are all funded with ad valorem dollars. We are currently discussing the 1% sales tax for healthcare to be used exclusively for the hospital and EMS. I asked several people at the County fair and at Westside Ventures in Bennington about this proposed tax. I received some absolute "no more taxes" but the majority of people were equally divided between yes OR yes but only if it reduces property taxes. I personally desire the ballot question to state that 25% of the taxes collected must be used to proportionately fund the 6 mills to the

hospital, therefore reducing property taxes. The amount distributed to the hospital will not change but it will be funded by sales tax dollars plus ad valorem dollars. This is still being discussed by the Commission. I highly encourage you to reach out to your commissioner and share your thoughts. The Commission must decide in August whether to present this proposal on the November ballot.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. It is an honor and privilege to serve as a commissioner for Ottawa County.