



YOU WAITED...

AND NOW VALENTINE'S DAY IS SATURDAY. OUR ADVERTISERS ON PAGE 12 MAY SAVE YOU...

The Anderson County Review



Probitas, Veritas, Integritas In Summa



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City ponders impact of Victory pull-out on new sales tax projects

Taxes from local customer car purchases still return home



THE ANDERSON COUNTY REVIEW 2-12-2026 / DANE HICKS

The former Beckman Motors/Victory Motors dealership sits empty of vehicles this week, as Garnett officials try to ascertain effect of the company's pull-out on the new city sales tax plan.

GARNETT — Garnett city officials are working through the numbers to determine just how much impact the pullout of Victory Chevrolet from Garnett will have on the 1% sales tax referendum approved by voters last fall for a new swimming pool and other city improvements.

But the sting may not be as bad as it looks at first glance.

City manager Travis Wilson told the Review this week he was pulling sales tax reports from the Kansas Department of Revenue in an attempt to estimate the impact of Victory's loss. He said though voters approved the 1% sales tax increase, the actual bond issue hadn't yet been determined by city commissioners, who have yet to allocate how much money will be devoted to each of a laundry list of projects.

The former Beckman Motors location generated some 34 percent of Anderson County's sales tax collections in 2002, when county leaders took the first of several looks at funding a new jail with a sales tax increase. Ray Beckman said at the time the number came from a Kansas State University research analyst's report which the dealer-

ship commissioned in order to oppose the increase. Voters later passed a sales tax referendum for the jail's construction in 2007, which sunsetted in 2022.

Kallan LaForge with Victory Chevrolet said he couldn't produce the dealership's updated sales tax figures by the Review's publication deadline, but he said the dealership closed because of mandates from Ford Motor Company that would have forced a demolition and remodeling of the structures amounting to some \$6.5 million.

"They just really pulled the rug out from under us," LaForge told the Review. "It was the most devastating financial setback of my career." LaForge said Victory was in talks with a tenant to lease the property and should

have an announcement to make public in around 60 days.

The loss of Victory may be more nuanced than many residents might expect. Losing the high sales tax generating dealership doesn't automatically mean the loss of sales taxes tied to purchases by Garnett residents, though the city could see some decline in other taxable activity like parts, service and related local spending. The reason is Kansas destination-based sales tax laws mean tax paid when a Garnett customer buys a car in Ottawa or elsewhere eventually is redistributed to that resident's city/county of residence. Likewise, out-of-area customers buying from Victory in Garnett sent their sales tax back to their own jurisdictions.

SEE TAX ON PAGE 10



Crest and Central Heights High Schools celebrated winter homecoming last Friday. Crest selected Josie Walter and Levi Prasko, and Central Heights 2026 Queen and King of Courts were Macy Cubit and Kreig Garrett.



THE ANDERSON COUNTY REVIEW 2-12-2026 / Submitted

Increasingly, local governments pull rank on wind farm projects

As tax credit window closes for wind farms, counties show more resolve

BY DANE HICKS THE KANSAS INFORMER

OSAGE COUNTY — The proposed Auburn Harvest Wind Project in Osage County is now effectively over.

A public notice in the Osage County Chronicle reports that Danish-owned Steelhead Americas "made the difficult decision to terminate the Wind Energy Ground Lease(s)" after Osage County adopted a policy that blocks wind and solar development.

Local reporting when the pol-

icy was adopted in 2022 described the commission action in blunt terms: the Osage County Commission "unanimously accepted a recommendation to not allow wind farms or solar energy developments" inside county borders, including the Auburn Harvest proposal.

In the same February 2026 notice, the developer said ending the leases was "especially disappointing" because of the local benefits it says the project would have delivered, including "direct investment to local landowners," "hundreds of new jobs," and



PRESERVING FARMLAND with low-impact land use turbines.

A screen grab from the Auburn Harvest Facebook page promotes a farmer-friendly attitude.

"increased tax revenue."

The move to end the Osage

County project illustrates how local veto power had become a defining factor in where the controversial, federal tax credit-dependent wind projects can and can't be built. Kansas is among the nation's top wind states, but the state is also seeing a widening county-by-county split. A University of Kansas analysis of all 105 counties found that about 70% have wind regulations; among those, "about one-fourth to one-third have 'blocking' regulations" intended to restrict devel-

opment. Public radio reporting has

quantified that practical reality: "New wind installations aren't allowed in about one-fifth of Kansas counties," in part tied to local land and conservation priorities, according to a KCUR report.

Osage County's lease terminations fit that pattern. Even when some landowners want the revenue that comes with turbines, county siting rules can stop projects outright—and once a county draws a bright line, developers often redeploy money and staff elsewhere.

Even in wind-friendly areas, one of the biggest brakes on new projects is the power grid—espe-

SEE WIND ON PAGE 10

District court records: County felony prosecutions up over 80 percent last year

BY DANE HICKS THE ANDERSON COUNTY REVIEW

GARNETT — Case data from the Anderson County District Court shows more than an 80 percent increase in criminal case filings in 2025 compared to the same period in 2024, according to a report released Monday by Anderson County Attorney Steve Wilson.



Wilson

Wilson presented the figures to county commissioners Monday, two months after they noted a \$33,000 budget over-

run in the office budget as the county spending plan moved into its final month for 2025. Wilson maintained his predecessor Elizabeth Oliver compiled the budget he inherited when he defeated her for re-election in November 2024, and that the backlog of work plus the crush of new prosecutions had driven up overtime claims for his staff.

The figures drafted from district court filings appears to back that claim. While total civil cases filed notched 499, up from 455 or 9.67 percent in 2024, criminal filings hit 792, up from 431 in 2024 — a significant 83.76% increase.

Notable increases in specific criminal case types included:

SEE CASES ON PAGE 7

Money, survival drives SEKMHC, NMRMC talks

Agencies look for ways to afford, offer services in SEK financial landscape

BY DANE HICKS THE ANDERSON COUNTY REVIEW

CHANUTE — As Southeast Kansas Mental Health Center and Neosho Memorial Regional Medical Center explore options to preserve local healthcare access, federal and state reimbursement policy is emerging as a key factor shaping what is possible, and what may no longer be sustainable, for rural providers.

Not surprisingly it all comes down to money and how to get more of it to pay the skyrocketing costs of healthcare when a poor population struggles to pay those costs. That resolution will deter-

mine how and where patients in Southeast Kansas can access care.

Last week, Southeast Kansas Mental Health Center (SEKMHC) informed employees it would transition away from primary care and dental services to refocus on behavioral health. That decision set the stage for exploratory discussions with Neosho Memorial Regional Medical Center (NMRMC), a public hospital that has served southeast Kansas for 75 years. SEKMHC is made up of the counties of Allen, Anderson, Neosho, Woodson, Bourbon and Linn.

The announcement by the organizations comes as SEKMHC swirls in controversy over super-

sized salaries its board approved for key members of management the past few years, and the suspension of CEO Nathan Fawson by a board newly reconstituted with county commissioners from member counties only weeks ago.

While leaders from both organizations have emphasized that no immediate operational changes are planned, healthcare finance experts say reimbursement rules under Medicaid and Medicare often drive these kinds of restructuring conversations, especially in rural areas.

SEKMHC operates as a Certified Community Behavioral

SEE SURVIVAL ON PAGE 2