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Grant project for repairs to Memorial Hall. See below.

INSIDE:

Hedgehog Books celebrates new ownership with ribbon cutting. See page 3.

Sports:

FSHS takes on Heritage Christian Academy with split games. See page 6.

UHS Homecoming court



Colter Powell and Bailey Cox were crowned Homecoming king and queen during a coronation ceremony following the Uniontown High School boys' basketball game versus Waverly Friday night. The crown bearer was Finnian Shaw and the flower girl was Josie Miller. The full court, pictured from left, includes Seth Shadden, Maria Cibrian-Vazquez, Newton Reed, Klara Stock, Powell, Cox, Timothy Amex, Jiyah Middleton, Dylon Deibert, Jaci Marlow.

Submitted photo

Grant project for Memorial Hall repairs slated to be complete by end of 2026

Jason E. Silvers
Special to the Tribune

A project to make repairs to the 100-year-old Memorial Hall building is on track for completion by the end of this year.

In 2025, the city of Fort Scott was awarded a \$582,000 Community Development Block Grant for needed upgrades to the aging building. The local match is \$184,484 for a total project cost of \$766,484. The scope of the project includes replacement of windows, exterior miscellaneous tuck-pointing and replacement of a small section of the building's roof.

Fort Scott Planning, Housing and Business Development Director Mary Wyatt explained the timeline, status of the project and process for the grant.

"CDBG notified us that this project could take between 15-18 months to complete start to finish, with the receipt of the award letter in July of 2025 starting that 15-18-month clock," Fort Scott Planning, Housing and Business Development Director Mary Wyatt said. "We are currently wrapping up the Environmental Review portion of the project which took a significant amount of time to complete due to the historic nature of the building, which added an additional review step from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). We are expecting clearance from SHPO any day now, which will complete the Environmental Review itself, but we then have administrative steps to complete both internally as well as with the Kansas Department of Commerce prior to being allowed to go out for bid for the construction-portion of the project. Barring any delays or extensions, we anticipate wrapping this project up in its entirety by the end of 2026."

The city has applied for several grants in past years to fund work on the building, which officials have said would be costly. This is the first time grant funds have been awarded.

"The City of Fort Scott has applied for numerous grants over the years even since before my time employed here with this particular project scope for Memorial Hall due to moisture damage to the exterior and interior of the building as a result of decades of wear and tear and aged leaking windows," Wyatt said. "We unfortunately

were denied for those previous grants, but in 2025 we applied for the Kansas Department of Commerce CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) in the 'Large Facilities' category once again and obtained nearly a dozen letters of support from the community to add to the application, and this time we were fortunate enough to get the win."

The city applied for grant funds in the total cost of the project, and received \$582,000. The grant award was announced during the city's 100th year celebration of Memorial Hall in September. Besides replacing the windows and repairing a section of the roof, the tuck-pointing will create a seal and prevent additional moisture from causing more damage such as mold, which has been an issue in the basement area.

"We received the award letter from CDBG in July of 2025, but we were not allowed to announce it publicly for a period of time as a requirement of CDBG that they be first to announce all winners across Kansas before we announced locally," Wyatt said.

The city formed a Historic Preservation and Resource Commission in 2025 as part of a process to become a Certified Local Government. That commission would eventually replace the Design Review Board.

"Our city's CLG-status has not been approved by SHPO at this time, and the Design Review Board defers to SHPO's ruling/decision so since there is a SHPO-review step of the Environmental Review there won't be a need to go to Design Review Board," Wyatt said.

The venue has hosted numerous community events and housed city offices and other organizations throughout the years.

Also in September, City Manager Brad Matkin said he planned to put together a scope of work on a potential bond project to fund additional work on Memorial Hall, which would be presented to the city commission for review. Matkin said a possible future plan involves the city's public safety facility.

In May, commissioners approved an effort to pursue a CDBG grant for repairs to Memorial Hall. The Southeast Kansas Regional Planning Commission helped the city with the grant application. It was the same grant the city applied for in 2024 but did not receive.

County commission seeks proposals for comprehensive plan

Jason E. Silvers
Special to the Tribune

The Bourbon County Commission has approved the next step in the process to implement zoning in the county.

On Monday, commissioners unanimously approved a motion to begin the process for publishing requests for proposals for firms that would help the county build a comprehensive plan.

After a discussion, Commission Chair Samuel Tran began to make a motion, then deferred to Commissioner Mika Milburn-Kee, who made a motion to allow Brian Ashworth II, member of the planning commission, to work with County Clerk Susan Walker "to publish this request for proposals and all necessary publications and send to the distribution list provided, named the Bourbon County Planning Commission comprehensive plan distribution list."

Tran seconded the motion and all commissioners ultimately voted in favor.

In September, commissioners appointed the members of the seven-person planning commission which is designed to take recommendations on zoning and planning issues, conduct public hearings on zoning and give reports to the county commission. The planning commission included two members who reside in each commission district (prior to an expansion to five districts) and an at-large position.

On Tuesday, Commissioner David Beerbower told the Tribune there are about seven firms on the list. The planning commission will decide on three firms, then make a presentation to the county commission.

"The companies will build a comprehensive plan for the county," he said, adding this is the first component, according to state statute, needed to adopt zoning.

Beerbower said the comprehensive plan "outlines the county's vision, like a 10-year plan," and includes areas such as economic growth, transportation and housing development.

During the meeting, Ashworth said the planning commission has been meeting since it formed in late 2025 "trying to get zoning in place as was directed by the county commission."

"The first step to do that, by Kansas law, is a comprehensive plan," he said.

Ashworth said the planning commission has met several times with Mel Hoss, a consultant who has helped walk commissioners through the process.

"To get that going, we



Brian Ashworth II, left, talks with Bourbon County Commissioners about the process for a county comprehensive plan Monday evening. Pictured at right is County Commissioner Gregg Motley.

Jason E. Silvers | Fort Scott Tribune

need to solicit some proposals," Ashworth said, adding the document presented to commissioners "is our pass at a request for proposals for various planning firms."

Ashworth said the document also includes an introduction and reasons for the proposal, background of the county, and a focus and scope.

"We gave them deliverables with the final scope," he said, adding county commissioners can amend those if they choose.

The document also includes procedure and timelines, as well as the process for inquiries, which Ashworth said currently runs through the county clerk. He said the dates provided are based on dates the planning commission has researched in other counties and can be adjusted.

Ashworth said proposals would be due five weeks after the RFP is published. The planning commission would review those proposals at their next meeting.

"However many we get, we would then make a recommendation to the commission to proceed with interviews, if we get enough, for three firms," he said, adding the interviews would be conducted in person. "We'd love to have the commissioners there and you can make a decision based on that."

Milburn-Kee asked Ashworth if the objective is for the commission to approve publication of the RFP. Ashworth said the document can be published if the commission accepts how it is written. He said the list includes contacts received from the consultant, and the planning commission has added other firms that have gone through a similar process.

"We went through the list he gave us plus some other connections for consultants and added to that list of 14," he said.

In response to a question from Commissioner Gregg Motley, Ashworth said he wrote the RFP "based on

input from the whole team," and using an RFP from Cherokee County as a base for the document.

"Any idea what the winning bid will be?" Motley said.

Ashworth said he has heard a "huge range" concerning price, but based on numbers provided during planning commission meetings, the cost in Cherokee County was about \$100,000.

"I heard from other people who had gone through a similar process it varied from the tens of thousands to as high as \$250,000 to go through the process," Ashworth said. "It's not a cheap thing to do. It's a lot of effort."

Regarding a timeline, Ashworth said according to timelines in other counties, it takes about six months to complete the entire comprehensive planning process. The process also included community engagement, creation of websites and production of maps of the county.

"The idea is you get a good idea of demographics in the county and the direction all stakeholders and county want to go and provide a plan for that," Ashworth said.

Milburn-Kee commended the planning commission for "putting in the time and effort" to research zoning.

"If we don't move forward with the RFP, then continuing their meetings would be non-productive," she said.

Ashworth said the comprehensive plan is required to enact zoning, according to state law.

"So this is the next step we have to go through to be able to zone the county," he said.

"You guys put a lot of work into this," Tran said.

"We spent quite a bit of time trying to get it going in the right direction," Ashworth said.

Tran said the process "hasn't been easy," and he commended the planning commission for their teamwork with "varying personalities" and points of view.

"The fact you guys pulled

together as a team and were able to come up with this document, that's a very good step," Tran said.

Ashworth said the planning commission brought "differing opinions" which was a benefit and led to "good discussions."

Tran said he wanted to clarify the comprehensive plan is for the unincorporated areas of the county.

"They may have to poll Fort Scott, Uniontown, maybe even Mapleton and Bronson," he said.

Ashworth said in order to "have a good understanding of the direction of the county ... you need to include everything in the county. Cities are a big part of that county. It's not for the city itself, but because the city exists in the county, you need that information to make decisions."

Later, Motley asked where the money would come from to pay for a proposal. Milburn-Kee said the commission's attorney for solar litigation, Jacob Bielenberg, "negotiated two upfront \$100,000 payments from solar panels."

"That's money that was not put into our budget system that is outside and unencumbered," she said.

Motley asked if the money has been collected and Tran said it has not.

"Right now, no money is being expended because it's RFP," Tran said, adding the next stage of the process, which is a Notice to Proceed, would require approval of funds.

"You have to book that expense the moment you sign for it," County Clerk Susan Walker said.

Milburn-Kee said commissioners do not yet know what the expense will be, and Walker said if the commission moves forward, the expense must be booked according to cash basis law.

Tran confirmed that nothing needed to be booked during the RFP process, but it would need to be done prior to the Notice to Proceed.

WEATHER

Partly cloudy. High near 60F. Winds N at 10 to 20 mph. A few clouds. Low 34F. Winds light and variable.

