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The timeless humor of Will Rogers

"We will never have true civilization until we have learned to recognize the rights of others."

- Nov. 18, 1923



Countywide zoning proposal clears first step

County commission agrees to seek professional planner to assist in forming a countywide zoning manual

BY ANDY TAYLOR
chronicle@taylornews.org

INDEPENDENCE — A vision to create countywide zoning throughout the rural areas of Montgomery County cleared an initial hurdle on Monday.

Montgomery County commissioners agreed in unison to seek a professional planning firm to assist the commission in crafting and adopting a countywide zoning manual.

Montgomery County currently has no zoning laws for rural areas, except for a three-mile zone around the Independence city limits. That three-mile zone is under the authority of the Montgomery County Planning Commission.

Monday's decision marked the first time that county commissioners had put their feelings to a vote regarding prospects of countywide zoning. They emphasized that their decision merely triggers the start of seeking requests for proposals, or RFPs, from planning firms to assist the commission in developing a long-

term zoning strategy.

When a planning firm is under contract to begin the creation of a countywide zoning plan, it will begin its work on Jan. 1, 2027.

What has caused the issue of countywide zoning to come to the county commission's forefront?

County administrator Jonathan Booe said concerns have been raised about the onslaught of big industries, such as wind turbine farms, solar ray farms, data centers, telecommunication infrastructure and high voltage power lines, and battery storage facil-

ities. Without having some element of zoning laws on the books, any private industry can sign a lease agreement with a rural landowner and establish any of the above-named industries — without county commission approval, he said.

Additionally, Montgomery County landowners have told commissioners that they want to preserve the agricultural landscape of the county, as more and more acres are sold for private devel-

opment each year.

"This is about preserving what we have today in our farms and ranches," he said. "It's also about regulating what is able to come into Montgomery County without it being a detriment to our ag land and way of life."

In almost all cases he has researched, new-evolving industries such as data centers require

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

To view the parameters of the Montgomery County Commission's vision for countywide zoning, see chart on page A8

• see ZONING, page A8

INDEPENDENCE STUDENT TO PERFORM WITH DRUM AND BUGLE CORPS



Sean Graham, a three-year member of the Independence High School band program, has been chosen to perform with the Zephyrus Drum and Bugle Corps during the 2026 summer season. ANDY TAYLOR / MONTGOMERY COUNTY CHRONICLE

Downtown C'ville property is targeted for condemnation

BY ANDY TAYLOR
chronicle@taylornews.org

COFFEYVILLE — The former Brown Furniture Company property in downtown Coffeyville is getting closer to the wrecking ball.

At their meeting on March 24, Coffeyville city commissioners held a public hearing for the owner of the property at 129 W. 9th to give a plan of repairs or rehabilitation of the four-story building that is an architectural anchor to the West 9th Street business district.

The owner of the property is Jay Mitchell of Manhattan Beach, Calif. He was not present for the public hearing.

City manager Ben Brubaker said he had been in contact with Mitchell over the past several weeks to discuss his plans for repairing the property. Brubaker said Mitchell had a "handyman" on the premises to begin boarding up broken windows in the upper levels.

However, only a few windows were addressed.

And, as of this week, more windows appear to have been broken, Brubaker said. Tiles also have flown off the top of the building, which has

Marching to a new beat

INDEPENDENCE — Sean Graham is preparing to march to a different beat.

A junior at Independence High School and a leader in the IHS band's percussion section, Graham is elevating his music and marching skills as a member of a drum corps this summer.

ANDY TAYLOR



HERE'S THE STORY

Here's the story . . . Graham has been chosen as a member of the Zephyrus Drum and Bugle Corps, which is based in Tulsa. The Zephyrus competes against fellow drum and bugle corps in a nationwide program operating as Drum Corps International, or DCI.

To be chosen for a professional drum and bugle corps is the apex for any high school- or college-aged band student, Graham said. Professional drum and bugle corps are committed to perfection in all elements of their performances, he said.

"Every single detail is not missed," said Graham. "Even the way we place our water bottles and lay down our drums during rehearsal breaks has to be done in a certain way to guarantee uniformity."

Placement of water bottles? That's a strategy of near perfection.

Drum and bugle teams are scattered across the nation and compete during the summer months before performing in national championships.

Graham said he participated in various weekend band camps sponsored by the Zephyrus Drum and Bugle Corps. Those experiences gave him a taste of what he will expect when he participates on a full schedule during the summer.

"The practices are extremely structured, starting with calisthenics, a one-lap run around a track, followed by constant marching drills," he said.

The Zephyrus will have no more than 165 team members, with Graham playing a middle-sized bass drum, known as Drum 3.

Beating the bass drum is not a matter of keeping a beat to any song's musical signature.

Bass drums are multiple rhythm generators, built on "splits" where up to six drummers can carry their unique and specific beat on drums heads of various sizes.

A drum and bugle corps' field performance lasts no more than 10 minutes. Within that segment are up to four songs that are performed continually and amid a complicated marching technique in constant motion, Graham said.

• see DRUM CORPS, page A9

Juvenile inmates to be shipped to Johnson, Reno counties

After being a founding partner of the SEK Regional Juvenile Detention Center, Montgomery County will save money with different jail provider

BY ANDY TAYLOR
chronicle@taylornews.org

INDEPENDENCE — Multiple months of debating and questioning the merits of remaining with the Southeast Kansas Regional Juvenile Detention Center in Girard came to a conclusion on Monday with county commissioners agreeing to ship youth inmates to a facility in Johnson County at a lesser cost.

Commissioners agreed to sign a contract with the Johnson County Juvenile Services Center at a daily rate of no more than \$150 per juvenile

inmate from Montgomery County.

Based on current inmate volume, Montgomery County will likely spend about \$78,000 in one 12-month period at the Johnson County facility as compared to an estimated \$296,000 at the regional juvenile facility in Girard.

The Johnson County facility is located in Olathe, Kan., and serves primarily juvenile inmates from Johnson County and its adjacent counties.

However, it has enough space to accommodate oth-

er counties like Montgomery County.

As a back-up plan, Montgomery County commissioners on Monday also signed a contract with the Reno County Youth Services in Hutchinson, Kan., at a daily rate of \$165 per juvenile inmate.

County administrator Jonathan Booe emphasized that the cost to house local juveniles in either Johnson County or Reno County would be far less than continuing Montgomery County's contract with the regional juvenile jail in Girard.

Why does the Girard facility have a higher cost than other juvenile incarceration locations?

In 1990, Montgomery County was one of 12 counties within southeast Kansas to

found the Southeast Kansas Regional Juvenile Center. The cost to build the facility and retire the indebtedness was based on a formula whereby larger counties in terms of

population and tax valuation would pay more. The Girard facility does not assess a daily rate per inmate for the 12

• see JAIL, page A9

Umbrellas to be needed for remainder of week

Much needed spring season rains are expected to fall on southeast Kansas for the Easter weekend.

The National Weather Service in Wichita is forecasting cloudy skills today (Thursday) through Saturday with rain chances higher on Friday afternoon.

Daytime highs will remain in the mid-70s; morning lows will be in the high 40s and low 50s.

The rain chances will leave the region at the start of the new week. Sunday's forecast calls for sunny skies with a high in the mid-60s.