



**Board of Riley County
Commissioners
Regular Meeting
Minutes
August 28, 2025**

2101 Claflin Road
Manhattan, KS 66502
www.rileycountyks.gov

Cindy Kabriel
785-565-6200

Family & Child Resource Center, Room #124

8:30 AM

[District 1 – John Ford, Member](#)

[District 2 – Greg McKinley, Chair](#)

[District 3 – Kathryn Focke, Vice-Chair](#)

8:30 AM

Call to Order

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
John Ford	County Commissioner	Present	8:30 AM
Kathryn Focke	County Commissioner	Present	8:30 AM
Greg McKinley	County Commissioner	Present	8:30 AM
Rich Vargo	County Clerk	Present	8:30 AM
Jacob Hansen	County Counselor	Present	8:30 AM
Vivienne Leyva	PIO	Present	8:30 AM
Anna Burson	Appraiser	Present	8:30 AM
Elizabeth Ward	Human Resources Director	Present	8:30 AM
Rob Voelker		Present	8:43 AM
John Ellermann	Public Works Director/County Engineer	Present	8:46 AM
Russel Stukey	Emergency Management Director/Fire Chief	Present	9:07 AM
Cory Meyer	IT/GIS Director	Present	9:32 AM
Michele Reid	Human Resources Manager	Present	9:37 AM
David Adams	EMS/Ambulance Director	Present	9:50 AM
Joshua Gering	Assistant EMS/Ambulance Director	Present	9:50 AM
Shilo Heger	Treasurer	Present	9:59 AM
Megan Lewis	Community Corrections Director	Present	9:59 AM
Lori Muir	Administrative Services Manager	Present	9:50 AM

Pledge of Allegiance

Public Comment

Hansen asked the Board to add an executive session during his scheduled time.

Move to add an executive session to the Counselor's time today.

RESULT:	Adopted Passed
MOVER:	Commissioner Kathryn Focke
SECONDER:	Commissioner John Ford
AYES:	Greg McKinley, Kathryn Focke, John Ford
NAYS:	None

Commission Comments

Ford's Comments:

On Monday afternoon, I attended the August Intergovernmental Luncheon at Rockin K's. Guest speakers included Riley County Emergency Management Director/Fire Chief Russel Stuke and Jason Hartman from the Kansas Forest Service. They discussed the importance of controlled burns here in the State of Kansas and in Riley County as well as the pitfalls of not doing so. Wasn't able to stick around for updates. On Monday afternoon, I had a Teams call with NACo's Veterans and Military Services Committee. This was a follow-up to our first executive/leadership meeting to get prepared for the 2025-2026 term. Started with an introduction by Seamus Dowdall, our new Legislative Director of NACo for this term. Sid Conklin, Presiding Commissioner, Randolph County, Missouri laid out what will be our legislative and policy agenda to work through here in 2025-2026 including Veteran Suicide Prevention, Homelessness and Housing Stability, Dental Coverage reform and increased coverage overall for veterans, continued support and focus on the HUD-VASH, BRAVO and SSVF Programs, as well as continued work on expanded state CVSO and CVO programs. Additional recommendations included maintaining the integrity of current veteran services and working with the VA/SAMSA team to review the Veterans Mortality Teams work. We will meet again as a full committee on September 11th.

Tuesday I was home from work due to a parts issue that is holding us up, so I listened to all four of the sessions of the Mental Health Summit out in Hays at Fort Hays State University via Zoom. Session one had some introductions including Chief State Supreme Justice, Marla Luckert. Several members of the public and private healthcare sector discussed ending the criminalization of mental illness. Session two started with a lived-experience speaker and I did not catch her name, but she discussed her lifetime battles with anxiety, depression, and mental health and how she has worked to overcome them. The last speaker of the session was the Keynote Speaker for the day, Dr. Benjamin Gilmer, who discussed his lifetime's work and his book "The Other Dr. Gilmer." Session three was a presentation from Amy Schmierbach for the Fort Hays Community Engaged Art program that works with kids with autism (she has one of her own) and first responders so they can interact and breakdown social stigma's in the process of using the creation of art. The last discussion of the session was Assisted Outpatient Treatment, which covered everything that goes into it and everything it involves. Lastly, session four started with a presentation on Stepping Up Kansas, an initiative for the state's juvenile justice system which includes the first Technical Assistance Center which is built into the program, and I believe Riley County is partnering with that program. Next was a panel discussion with professionals from a handful of Kansas counties discussing Multi-Branch Communities of Practice and last we had Emmy Award winner & video producer John

McCann, who discussed his work and his struggles with mental health along the way, as well as his connection with Philadelphia Phillies star Trea Turner and his new Netflix Documentary discussing it.

On Wednesday, I spent the day working and getting caught up before the three-day Labor Day weekend.

Focke's Comments:

Monday afternoon after the BOCC meeting, I attended the Intergovernmental Luncheon at Rockin K's event space. The main presentation was by the Kansas Forest Service with Russel Stukey adding comments on Riley County's wildfire prevention efforts.

Tuesday evening, I attended the Keats Community meeting to update the property owners on the progress of the lagoon project. In attendance were Jacob Hansen, Shannon Sterling, Brian from BG Consultants, and Amanda Webb. The meeting was held to go over easements required to continue progress on finalizing the financing and to go out for bids this fall. Jacob and Shannon were available to get the easement documents signed and notarized. It was a great turnout of community members. Brian updated the group on the status of the project and had maps available showing where the sewer lines, lift stations, grinder pumps, and other infrastructure would be placed. Many of the owners asked questions, checked out the maps and asked questions of Brian about their particular properties.

Wednesday, I reviewed today's agenda and documents for today's meeting, and had a meeting with some concerned citizens on county information and future endeavors. Later that evening, I attended a large gathering sponsored by the Kansas House Democrats at the Prairiewood Event Center. Governor Kelly was scheduled to speak, but was unable to attend.

McKinley's Comments:

Monday after our meeting, I attended the Intergovernmental Luncheon. Russel Stukey spoke about the burn permit process. Then Jason Hartman, the state forester, gave an update on what the Kansas Forest Service does.

Wednesday was the Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency meeting. Because of funding, there are two governing groups, FHATA Board and FHATA Inc. The main point of business was approval of the 2026 budget. Inc had a quorum there and voted to approve it. I am on the Board and for the third time in the last four meetings, we did not have a quorum. The meetings are available online, but we still come up short. They will try to schedule a meeting next week.

Business Meeting

1. Tax Roll Corrections

Move to approve the Tax Roll Corrections.

RESULT:	Adopted Passed
MOVER:	Commissioner John Ford
SECONDER:	Commissioner Kathryn Focke
AYES:	Greg McKinley, Kathryn Focke, John Ford

NAYS:	None
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2. Riley County Employee Action Form

The Board of County Commissioners signed Riley County Employee Action Forms for the following:

- Jordan Kramer, a rehire, as an Election Assistant, in the Clerk/Election Department, at a Range TASND, at \$15.00 per hour.
- Caleb Holler, a Utility Technician, in the Public Works Department, for Separation from County Service, effective September 9, 2025.
- Beaunca Keys, a new hire, as a Custodial Worker 1, in the Public Works Department, at a Range 1, at \$18.37 per hour.

Review Minutes

3. Board of Riley County Commissioners - Regular Meeting - Aug 25, 2025 8:30 AM

Move to approve the minutes.

RESULT:	Adopted Passed
MOVER:	Commissioner John Ford
SECONDER:	Commissioner Kathryn Focke
AYES:	Greg McKinley, Kathryn Focke, John Ford
NAYS:	None

Review Tentative Agenda

4. Tentative Agenda

Press Conference Topics

9:00 AM

John Ellermann, Public Works Director/County Engineer

5. KDOT Federal Fund Exchange

Ellermann presented the request to Exchange Federal Funds with the State of Kansas.

Move to approve the Request to Exchange Federal Funds with the State of Kansas and to deposit the funds in CIP for use on a future transportation-related project.

RESULT:	Adopted Passed
MOVER:	Commissioner John Ford
SECONDER:	Commissioner Kathryn Focke
AYES:	Greg McKinley, Kathryn Focke, John Ford
NAYS:	None

6. Request to Fill Utility Technician Position

Ellermann presented the request to fill the Utility Technician position.

Move to approve filling the Utility Technician position.

RESULT:	Adopted Passed
MOVER:	Commissioner Kathryn Focke
SECONDER:	Commissioner John Ford
AYES:	Greg McKinley, Kathryn Focke, John Ford
NAYS:	None

The Board of County Commissioners signed a Riley County Position Action Form for a Utility Technician, in the Public Works Department, at a Range 10.

9:15 AM

Jacob Hansen, County Counselor

7. Administrative Work Session

9:15 Move that the County Commissioners, including Chairman McKinley, Vice Chairwoman Focke, and Commissioner Ford, along with Jacob Hansen, County Counselor, attorney for the commission, recess into executive session pursuant to the attorney-client consultation exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act, regarding confidential legal advice and the open meeting to resume in the County Commission Chambers at 9:25 a.m.

RESULT:	Adopted Passed
MOVER:	Commissioner John Ford
SECONDER:	Commissioner Kathryn Focke
AYES:	Greg McKinley, Kathryn Focke, John Ford
NAYS:	None

9:25 Move the Board of County Commissioners come out of executive session.

RESULT:	Adopted Passed
MOVER:	Commissioner John Ford
SECONDER:	Commissioner Kathryn Focke
AYES:	Greg McKinley, Kathryn Focke, John Ford
NAYS:	None

Move the record reflect action shall be taken consistent with the consensus reached in executive session.

RESULT:	Adopted Passed
MOVER:	Commissioner John Ford
SECONDER:	Commissioner Kathryn Focke
AYES:	Greg McKinley, Kathryn Focke, John Ford
NAYS:	None

Hansen reviewed the KAC Legislative Policy discussion Wednesday in Topeka.

9:35 AM

Cory Meyer, IT/GIS Director

8. Staff Update

Meyer presented the IT/GIS staff update.

9:50 AM

Vivienne Leyva, PIO

9. Communications Staff Update

Leyva presented the PIO Communications update.

Leyva asked the Board about developing a Communications Policy Manual and the color scheme.

The Board agreed by consensus to keep the existing color scheme.

Leyva discussed the purpose of the Communications Policy Manual.

Ford suggested discussing it with the department heads at the County Officials Luncheon.

The Board asked Leyva to bring the subject back at a future meeting to discuss in detail.

10:05 AM

Michele Reid, Human Resources Manager

10. Onboarding Program

Reid presented the implementation of Phase II of the Onboarding Program.

Heger and Meyer discussed the benefits of implementing Phase II of the Onboarding Program.

Move to approve the implementation of Phase II of the Onboarding Program.

RESULT:	Adopted Passed
MOVER:	Commissioner John Ford
SECONDER:	Commissioner Kathryn Focke
AYES:	Greg McKinley, Kathryn Focke, John Ford
NAYS:	None

10:20 AM

Cory Meyer, IT/GIS Director

11. Request to fill - IT Specialist

Meyer presented the request to fill the IT Specialist position.

Move to approve the rehire of the IT Specialist position.

RESULT:	Adopted Passed
MOVER:	Commissioner John Ford
SECONDER:	Commissioner Kathryn Focke
AYES:	Greg McKinley, Kathryn Focke, John Ford
NAYS:	None

The Board of County Commissioners signed a Riley County Position Action Form for an Information Technology Specialist, in the IT/GIS Department, at a Range 12.

10:25 AM Elizabeth Ward, Human Resources Director**12. Highly Effective Managers Program 2025-2026 cohort**

Ward requested sending participants to the Highly Effective Managers Program.

Ward reviewed the program.

Muir said she went through the training and appreciated it. She stated a book she has purchased for her team and uses from what she learned in going through the program.

Move to approve continued participation in the Highly Effective Managers program.

RESULT:	Adopted Passed
MOVER:	Commissioner John Ford
SECONDER:	Commissioner Kathryn Focke
AYES:	Greg McKinley, Kathryn Focke, John Ford
NAYS:	None

Adjournment

Move to adjourn.

RESULT:	Adopted Passed
MOVER:	Commissioner John Ford
SECONDER:	Commissioner Kathryn Focke
AYES:	Greg McKinley, Kathryn Focke, John Ford
NAYS:	None

Announcements

Riley County Offices will be closed Monday, September 1st due to the observance of the Labor Day holiday.

The Board of County Commissioners will not be in session on Monday, September 1st.