



**Board of Riley County
Commissioners
Regular Meeting
Minutes
March 5, 2026**

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

Cindy Kabriel
785-565-6200

Family Child and Resource Center RM #124

8:30 AM

[District 1 – John Ford, Vice-Chair](#)

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

[District 3 – Kathryn Focke, 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
Michael Hawthorne	Assistant County Counselor	Present	8:30 AM
Elizabeth Ward	Human Resources Director	Present	8:30 AM
Anna Burson	Appraiser	Present	8:30 AM
David Adams	Emergency Services Director	Present	8:30 AM
Steve Schurle	Commercial Real Estate Analyst	Present	8:49 AM
Jake Voegeli	Manhattan Brewing Company	Present	9:00 AM
Penni Zelinkoff	Residential Appraisal Supervisor	Present	9:00 AM
Michael Boller	Noxious Weed Director/HHW	Present	9:06 AM
Michele Reid	Human Resources Manager	Present	8:45 AM
John Ellermann	Public Works Director/County Engineer	Present	9:16 AM
Brandon Peoples	KMAN/Manhattan Mercury	Present	9:22 AM
Russel Stuke	Emergency Management Director/Fire Chief	Present	9:58 AM
Breva Spencer	Maternal and Child Health Supervisor	Present	9:59 AM
Cory Meyer	IT/GIS Director	Present	10:10 AM

Amy Manges	Register of Deeds	Present	10:12 AM
Shilo Heger	Treasurer	Present	10:13 AM
Daniel Skucius	Extension Director	Present	10:13 AM
Megan Lewis	Community Corrections Director	Present	10:18 AM
Katharine Hensler	Museum Director	Present	10:23 AM
Diane Creek	Health Department Director	Present	10:25 AM
Barry Wilkerson	County Attorney	Present	10:30 AM

Pledge of Allegiance**Public Comment****Commission Comments**

Ford's Comments:

Tuesday I spent most of the day in Topeka for the Kansas Association of Counties 5th Annual Kansas County Day at the Capitol. Always great to have an opportunity to reach out and talk to our Kansas legislators on the issues and challenges we face as well as other county officials from around the state of Kansas. This is an event that seems to be each and every year now.

Wednesday I attended the Annual Township Officials meeting out at Pottorf Hall. Always provided some good dialog but also gives us an opportunity to see what is happening and what the challenges are for our county townships. Had several really good presentations and had a lot more vendors present than I remember in recent years. Very well attended considering it was a Wednesday morning, so I appreciate all who were in attendance for this vital meeting.

Also Wednesday I met with a handful of department heads here at the BOCC Chambers to discuss some questions and concerns involving the ongoing dialog on reorganization efforts. Thought the conversation went well and it is something we will continue to discuss and plan for.

McKinley's Comments:

Tuesday and Wednesday I spoke with department heads and others answering questions and gathering more information about the reorganization plan.

Wednesday was the Annual Township Officials meeting. Several speakers and Pat Collins after speaking with townships that it doesn't appear there is much support for changing the township road system.

Focke's Comments:

Monday afternoon I met with a group of department heads to discuss county reorganization issues. It was basically an information gathering meeting.

Tuesday I attended a committee meeting at my church and then had an appointment downtown.

Wednesday I attended the Annual Township Officials meeting at Pottorf Hall. The agenda included presentations by Michael Boller on noxious weeds, Michael Hagemann of KDOT with an update on projects in the county, and Jacob Gaylon on GIS updates. After a break that included vendor roundtables, Katharine Hensler did a presentation on the Historical Museum, Larry Wilson with an LTAP presentation, followed by the township business meeting. Lunch was provided by Farmhouse Catering to end the day.

Later that afternoon I had a follow up eye appointment and an evening Lenten service at my church.

Business Meeting

1. Tax Roll Correction

Move to approve the Tax Roll Correction.

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

2. Approve payroll/accounts payables (when completed)

Move to approve the payroll vouchers in the amount of \$791,821.24 and the following warrant vouchers for March 6, 2026:

2025 Budget

County General	\$ 3,653.23
County Auction	438.96
Solid Waste	3,336.94
2023 R&B Project Sales Tx	3,503.23
TOTAL.	\$ 10,932.36

2026 Budget

County General	\$ 874,682.10
Health Department	93,989.58
County Auction	124.50

Motor Vehicle Operations	181.72
Capital Improvements Fund	24,286.42
Economic Development	57,750.00
Emergency 911	2,005.78
Solid Waste	18,928.89
County Building	8,305.90
RCPD Levy/Op	2,322.95
Riley Co Fire Dist #1	24,946.90
2023 R&B Project Sales Tx	23,434.27
University Park W&S	5,125.88
Hunters Island Water Dist	4,320.33
Carson Sewer Benefit Dist	84.72
H.I Water Capital Replace	2,500.14
Deep Creek Sewer	322.19
Moehlman Bottoms	1,629.83
Valleywood Operations	110.96
Terra Heights Sewer	772.81
Konza Water Operations	5,228.96
Lakeside Heights Sewer	36.27
University Park Lagoon	4,000.00
KDOC Adult Services	6,236.12
KDOC Juvenile Services	4,958.00
KDOC Juv Reinvestment	1,165.72
BJA Grant	1,185.99
Caroline Peine Grant	180.00

TOTAL \$1,168,816.93

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

Review Minutes

3. Board of Riley County Commissioners - Regular Meeting - Mar 2, 2026 8:30 AM

Move to approve the minutes of March 2, 2026 as presented.

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

Review Tentative Agenda

4. Tentative Agenda

Press Conference Topics

9:00 AM Elizabeth Ward, Human Resources Director

5. Human Resources update

Ward presented the Human Resources update.

Schurle and Zelinkoff discussed the Highly Effective Manager Program and how they are implementing practices in their office.

9:15 AM Jake Voegeli, Manhattan Brewing Company and Jake Nixon, Aggieville Brewing Company

6. Community Art & Craft Festival at CiCo Park

Voegeli discussed the request to hold a Community Art & Craft Festival at CiCo Park.

Hansen discussed current resolutions which restrict alcohol use in CiCo Park. He said there could be an exception to hold the event.

The Board discussed limitations so people could not just wander through the entire park with alcohol.

Move to approve the request.

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

9:30 AM Anna Burson, Appraiser

7. Appraiser's Office March Staff Update

Burson presented the Appraiser's Office staff report.

9:45 AM Brittany Phillips, Budget and Finance Officer

8. 2027 Budget Calendar

Philips presented the proposed 2027 Budget Calendar.

The Board discussed the budget calendar and budget baseline.

The Board does want presentations on new staff positions needed.

The Board agreed by consensus to the following:

1. May 11th, Budget & Finance Officer presentations only, nothing after County Officials Luncheon
2. Department Heads will do budget requests during their staff update
3. May 14th dedicated to outside agencies

9:50 AM Jacob Hansen, County Counselor

9. Administrative Work Session

Hansen discussed SB 254 regarding aliens unlawfully present receiving state and local benefits.

Hansen discussed HB 2437 regarding cleaning up voter rolls.

Hansen said HB 2745 is the 3% cap on valuations and protest petition process.

10:10 AM Russel Stuke, Emergency Management Director

10. Staff Update

Stuke presented the Emergency Management/Fire District #1 staff report.

10:25 AM Jacob Hansen, County Counselor

11. Work Session: Reorganization

Focke opened the discussion asking to hear from department heads on the upcoming reorganization. She referenced the report from David Cooper on the proposed reorganization. She encouraged department heads to be open in the discussion.

Adams discussed the meetings the group of eight department heads had with the separate commissioners.

Adams asked if the Board is going to appoint an administrator.

Who will the department heads answer/report to?

What is the timeline?

Will the Board do the process through Human Resources or hire an outside firm to conduct the process?

McKinley said it will be a Department of Administrative Services, like an advisor to the department heads.

Adams said in meeting with the Board members it is clear there is not a consensus.

Adams stated John Ellermann, Cory Meyer, Shilo Heger, and himself would like to be included in the process.

Focke's concern with an administrator is the department heads would not have direct access to the commission.

Ford said he sees it as more of a department head roll for the administrator.

McKinley said he sees it more as a coordination roll with the other department heads.

Hansen discussed the administrator's statutory list, which includes hiring and firing which could be struck out and would remain with the commission.

Adams asked for more clarification on what authority the administrator position would have.

McKinley said the first thing is to write a job description by working with department heads.

The Board agreed by consensus on the recommendation of Shilo Heger, David Adams, Cory Meyer, and John Ellermann to assist the Board in the process.

Hansen stated there may be other department heads who want to participate.

Meyer asked what positions they see under the Department of Administrative Services to include. Meyer asked if it is Finance, Human Resources, PIO, and Counselor.

The Board agreed with the presented structure.

Meyer asked if the Board wanted to structure the development and search for the administrator position internally with HR or externally.

The Board said internally.

Meyer asked about in the beginning how it will be structured with or without an interim.

Boller reiterated the department heads are supportive of the new administrative position and everyone in the room wants it to be successful. He said he hopes the department heads have a voice in hiring this individual.

Wilkerson said he has worked with and without administrators and does not have any comment.

Ellermann said he is supportive. He said his big question is where are we putting these positions. He thanked the Board for involving the department heads.

Phillips asked if the Board wants to work this in the 2027 budget process.

Ward stated she does have experience setting up entire departments and asked if they

would like one commissioner to work with the group of department heads to present a recommendation to the Board to consider.

Heger said she supports the Board in working on this. She said Ward and Phillips have done a great job on the budget and would ask the Board when funding the creation of new positions to not impact current wages and benefits.

Ford said they have done some of that already with EMS/Ambulance and the Health Department.

Adjournment

11:11 a.m. Move to adjourn.

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