



**Board of Riley County
Commissioners
Regular Meeting
Minutes
March 23, 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
Derick Schroller	IT Specialist	Present	8:30 AM
Michael Hawthorne	Assistant County Counselor	Present	8:30 AM
Elizabeth Ward	Human Resources Director	Present	8:30 AM
Brittany Phillips	Budget and Finance Officer	Present	8:30 AM
Anna Burson	Appraiser	Present	8:30 AM
Amanda Webb	Planning/Special Projects Director	Present	8:30 AM
Doug Russell	Deputy Fire Chief	Present	8:30 AM
Russel Stukey	Emergency Management Director/Fire Chief	Present	8:30 AM
Cory Meyer	IT/GIS Director	Present	8:30 AM
Michelle Horstmeier	Emergency Response Coordinator	Present	10:00 AM
Melanie Highsmith	Curator of Education and Design	Present	10:00 AM
Brandon Peoples	KMAN/Manhattan Mercury	Present	10:00 AM
Mark French	RCPD	Present	11:00 AM
Tande Lentz	Assistant Vehicle Supervisor	Present	11:00 AM
Donna Borgerding	Vehicle Supervisor/Deputy Treasurer	Present	11:00 AM

David Adams	Emergency Services Director	Present	11:00 AM
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Pledge of Allegiance**Public Comment**

Stukey discussed the fire activities over the weekend. He said a disaster declaration was issued due to the conditions and high volume.

Russell discussed the fires over the weekend. He discussed calling in outside resources due to the volume of fires out of control.

Commission Comments**Ford's Comments:**

Friday I had a meeting and dialog with a group of constituents. Nothing major just wanted an update on things we are working on including the dialog on reorganization, the 2027 budget, taxes in general, and an overview of both our new comprehensive and strategic planning. Had a good dialog and was able to discuss in full everything we are working on. May have a follow up dialog somewhere down the road.

I spent the weekend in Kansas City with some friends I haven't seen in a very long time. We watched a lot of the second round of the men's NCAA Tournament. Went down to the Power and Light District Saturday night for dinner and hung out down at the Plaza. Sunday had lunch at Jack Stack BBQ. Came home Sunday afternoon and got caught up on some chores and got ready for the upcoming week.

K-State didn't fare so well over the weekend as the women's team lost to Cal in the WBIT second round, and the K-State baseball team dropped two of three to Arizona State also at home to fill out the weekend.

McKinley's Comments:

Thursday afternoon we had a meeting for the new EM Building about the foundation for the tower. There are still some questions over the details to be worked out with engineers.

Later Thursday was the Joint City/County/County meeting. We heard from the Food and Farm Council which we saw recently and a presentation of the Manhattan East Gateway project.

Sunday afternoon we attended a quilt of valor presentation for a friend. These are special quilts made for veterans.

Focke's Comments:

Thursday after our meeting, I met with Russel Stukey about some concerns he has going

forward. We also talked about the remodeling and the fire season that is ongoing. Later that afternoon, I attended the Joint City/County/County meeting at Manhattan City Hall. Vickie James gave a presentation on the Food and Farm Council and reported on their ten year plan that has included food recovered, the Blessing Boxes, Kitchen Restore, Common Table, and other activities. After that the City Manager gave a report on the Gateway proposal into Pottawatomie County. I asked about fire services – they would build a city fire station; and about RCPD services in another county. She said that the city currently gives 30 mills to RCPD (I didn't get a clarification on that).

Friday, I had an appointment with my physical therapy person to go over some concerns and strengthening exercises that I can do. We had a long discussion on the neurosurgeon's suggestions. We will have some sessions going forward and I have some additional exercises to work into the existing ones.

Friday afternoon, I had a call from Russel Stukey saying that we needed to do a "Disaster Declaration" for the five out-of-control fires in the county. I was able to get in touch with Michael Hawthorne and he went to his office to get one ready to sign. I was downtown at the time and was able to get the declaration signed and sent to the state for assistance.

Saturday I got a lot of work done in the backyard garden and other outside areas.

Sunday I went to church, spent time working in my office, and reviewed the agenda and documents for today's meeting.

Business Meeting

1. Flint Hills Regional Council Regional Tabletop Exercise - Memorandum of Agreement

Move to approve the Memorandum of Agreement with the Flint Hills Regional Council for Regional Tabletop Exercise.

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

2. Tax Roll Corrections

Move to approve the Tax Roll Corrections.

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 19, 2026 8:30 AM

Move to approve the minutes from March 19, 2026 as amended.

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

Jacob Hansen, County Counselor

5. Executive session to discuss security measures

9:00 a.m. Move that the County Commissioners, including Chairwoman Focke, Vice Chairman Ford, and Commissioner McKinley with Jacob Hansen, County Counselor, attorney for the Commission; Elizabeth Ward, Human Resources Director, and Cory Meyer, IT/GIS Director, recess into executive session pursuant to the protection of security measures regarding the information system of a public body, an exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act, in order to discuss the efficacy of the security measures, the open meeting to resume in the County Commission Chambers at 9:15 a.m.

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

9:15 a.m. Move the Board of County Commissioners come out of executive session.

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

Move the record reflect no binding action was taken during the executive session.

RESULT:	Passed
MOVER:	Commissioner John Ford
SECONDER:	Commissioner Greg McKinley

AYES:	Greg McKinley, Kathryn Focke, John Ford
NAYS:	None

9:15 AM Liz Holle, Big Lakes Developmental Center Director

6. Big Lakes Developmental Center update

Holle presented the Big Lakes Developmental Center update.

9:30 AM Press Conference**9:35 AM Megan Lewis, Community Corrections Director**

7. Staff Update

Lewis presented the Community Corrections staff update.

8. Caroline Peine Charitable Foundation Letter of Intent

Lewis asked the Board to allow Community Corrections to submit a Caroline Peine Charitable Foundation Letter of Intent.

Move to allow Community Corrections to submit the Caroline Peine Charitable Foundation Letter of Intent.

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

9. BJA FY25 Strengthening Community Supervision Agency Operations Program Grant

Lewis presented the BJA FY25 Strengthening Community Supervision Agency Operations Program Grant.

Move to approve the request to submit the application for the BJA FY25 Strengthening Community Supervision Agency Operations Program.

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

10:00 AM Michelle Horstmeier, Emergency Response Coordinator and Melanie Highsmith, Curator of Education and Design

10. Flint Hills Regional Leadership Program

Horstmeier and Highsmith discussed the Flint Hills Regional Leadership Program.

10:10 AM Elizabeth Ward, Human Resources Director

11. Request for direction with PIO position and duties

Ward asked the Board how they would like to proceed with the PIO position and duties.

The Board agreed by consensus for the County Clerk to proceed with filling the PIO position.

The Board agreed by consensus for IT to be the Point of Contact for digital accounts and livestream broadcast of commission meetings. County Counselor Department - response to KORA request involving social media and Emergency Management Department - emergency response communication and EOC communications.

10:20 AM Jacob Hansen, County Counselor

12. Administrative Work Session

13. Staff Update

Hansen discussed the legislature's intent to have the budget done this week, but has heard they do not have an agreement at this point.

Hansen stated there are many pieces of legislation he is watching.

Hansen reported there were not any RFP's submitted for the First Christian Church property. He is waiting to hear if the matter is going to be taken to the Kansas Supreme Court.

10:30 AM Jacob Hansen, County Counselor

14. Executive session for preliminary discussions relating to the acquisition of real property

10:30 a.m. Move that the County Commissioners, including Chairwoman Focke, Vice Chairman Ford, and Commissioner McKinley, along with Jacob Hansen, County Counselor, attorney for the commission; Rich Vargo, County Clerk; Brittany Phillips, Budget and Finance Officer; and John Ellermann, Public Works Director/County Engineer, recess into executive session pursuant to the preliminary discussion relating to the acquisition of real property an exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act, in order to evaluate certain real property, the open meeting to resume in the County Commission Chambers at 11:00 a.m.

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

11:00 a.m. Move the Board of County Commissioners come out of executive session.

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

11:00 AM Brittany Phillips, Budget and Finance Officer

15. CIP Work Session

Phillips presented the CIP work session.

McKinley questioned the cost of the chairs for replacement in the Riley County Treasurer's Office.

Ford asked about the Pottorf Hall repair.

Ellermann said it is more to just put it on the commissioners' radar to be addressed in the next 2-3 years.

McKinley asked if there is a fund to place CiCo Park playground equipment in.

Ellermann said yes to build up money to replace the current equipment. He said there is one piece to replace now due to safety.

The Board agreed by consensus to purchase the one piece of equipment to replace and approve the \$75,000 for the CiCo Park playground equipment.

French discussed the LEC CIP requests.

Ellermann discussed the CiCo dog park request for shelter.

Phillips said she will bring the CIP request back to the Board next week.

McKinley discussed the Joint City/County/County Meeting usefulness. He said Pottawatomie County's attendance is infrequent.

The Board asked to draft a letter to the City and Pottawatomie County regarding continuing the meetings.

Hansen discussed the County Administrator/Manager position and how to establish the position.

Adjournment

Move to adjourn after the Intergovernmental Luncheon.

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

11:39 a.m. Adjourned.

12:00 PM

Intergovernmental Luncheon

16. Intergovernmental Luncheon Agenda