



**Board of Riley County
Commissioners
Regular Meeting
Minutes
May 11, 2026**

115 N 4th Street
Manhattan, KS 66502
www.rileycountyks.gov

Cindy Kabriel
785-565-6200

Commission Chambers

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
Kathryn Focke	County Commissioner	Present	8:30 AM
John Ford	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
John Ellermann	Public Works Director/County Engineer	Present	8:30 AM
Brittany Phillips	Budget and Finance Officer	Present	8:30 AM
Gary Bennington		Present	8:32 AM
Elizabeth Ward	Human Resources Director	Present	8:55 AM
Susan Boller	Elections Supervisor/Deputy Clerk	Present	8:55 AM
Rob Voelker		Present	9:00 AM
Michael Hawthorne	Assistant County Counselor	Present	9:37 AM
Katharine Hensler	Museum Director	Present	9:45 AM
Lori Muir	Administrative Services Manager	Present	9:55 AM
Evan McMillan	Assistant County Engineer	Present	9:55 AM

Pledge of Allegiance

Public Comment

Ellermann asked if he could have 5 minutes of time on the Board agenda to request a generator for the LEC on Thursday.

Bennington spoke against the county administrator position that the commissioners are considering due to a cost increase and the position remaining in place long-term.

Commission Comments

Ford's Comments:

Thursday afternoon I had my monthly visit with the doctor. Nothing has really changed status wise, but nothing is moving forward currently either. Really do have a lot to work on moving forward. Thursday's Flint Hills Mental Health Task Force meeting was canceled, but there will be a lot to discuss come June for sure.

Friday morning I met with Mary Martel and Tracy Duran from Stormont Vail Health to discuss some items they have on their agenda and how it may pertain to Riley County moving forward. Had a very solid dialog and I appreciated the fact they reached out. Also on Friday I spent some time here in the downtown office reorganizing and getting caught up on things as we move into the budget cycle officially.

The weekend was rather quiet as I spent some time at home trying to recuperate from last week and not feeling well throughout it.

McKinley's Comments:

Friday was the pre-Law Board meeting. We reviewed what is on the agenda for next week's meeting. Friday afternoon my wife and I went to the Picasso exhibit at the Museum of Art and Light. The Picasso light exhibit was good, it showed the variety of his work. The third floor has an interesting exhibit of motion art.

Focke's Comments:

Friday morning I attended the pre-Law Board meeting at the Riley County Police Department offices. The agenda for the May 18th meeting was discussed. The packets will be available on May 15th online or printed (by request). That afternoon USDA had a presentation in Keats that was requested by Senator Moran to announce the funding we have received for the Keats wastewater program. The Senator discussed monies that are available for other rural communities. Several of our staff, myself, Amanda Webb, Brian Foster from BG Consultants, and several others, including a community member present were asked to speak. Thanks to all in attendance.

Over the weekend, I spent time going over today's agenda and lengthy budget documents. Other than that, it was a pretty quiet weekend, and celebrated Mother's Day by going to lunch with a friend on Sunday.

Business Meeting

1. National Public Works Week Proclamation

Move to approve the National Public Works Week Proclamation.

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

2. Riley County Employee Action Form

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

- Jackie Castle, an Intern, in the Health Department, for Separation from County Service, effective April 30, 2026.
- Stella Mosier, an Intern, in the Health Department, for Separation from County Service, effective May 5, 2026.
- KayLeigh Amaro, for a status change, as an Election Assistant, in the Election Department, effective June 1, 2026.
- Election Workers - Melinda Bowen, Chanta-Leiana Davis, Michael Graham, James Hood, Karla Johnson, Elana Sedlacek, Rosalie Smith, Leslie Alford, Samuel Creager, Colleen Hampton, Sylvia Hotrum, Pamela Phinney, Adam Simpson, Rodney Stanfield, in the Clerk/Election Department, for Separation from County Service, effective May 5, 2026.
- Cheryl Baker, a new hire, as an Election Day Worker, in the Clerk/Election Department, at a Range TASND.

Move to approve the Riley County Employee Action Forms as requested.

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

Review Minutes

3. Board of Riley County Commissioners - Regular Meeting - May 7, 2026 8:30 AM

Move to approve the minutes of May 7, 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 Rich Vargo, County Clerk**

5. 2027 Clerk/Election Budget

Vargo presented the Clerk & Elections 2027 budget requests.

9:10 AM Jacob Hansen, County Counselor

6. Administrative Work Session

7. Staff update

Hansen discussed litigation with the old RCPD Firing Range.

Hansen said there are multiple contracts he is working on, employee investigation, and nuisance abatement.

9:30 AM Press Conference

8. Presentation of the National Public Works Week Proclamation - Kathryn Focke and John Ellermann (3 minutes)

Focke presented the Public Works Week Proclamation to John Ellermann.

Ellermann thanked all his crew and staff for all the hard work they do.

9:35 AM Brittany Phillips, Budget and Finance Officer

9. 2027 Budget Requests

Phillips presented the 2027 budget requests.

9:55 AM Katharine Hensler, Museum Director

10. America250 Time Capsule

Hensler presented the request to use the County Museum property for the America250 Time Capsule.

Hansen discussed potential concerns with how it is handled in the future.

The Board agreed by consensus for Hensler to work with Hansen to be sure any legal

concerns are addressed.

10:00 AM Katharine Hensler, Museum Director

11. 2027 Museum Budget

Hensler presented the Museum's 2027 budget request.

10:10 AM John Ellermann, Public Works Director/County Engineer

12. 2027 Budget Requests

Ellermann presented the Public Works 2027 budget request.

10:25 AM Evan McMillan, Assistant County Engineer

13. 2027 Solid Waste and Benefit District Budget Requests

McMillan presented the Solid Waste 2027 budget request.

Muir presented the Benefit Districts 2027 budget request.

Adjournment

Move to adjourn after the County Officials Luncheon.

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

12:00 PM County Officials Luncheon

14. Agenda

The Board attended the County Officials Luncheon.

Announcements

The Riley County Planning Board/Board of Zoning Appeals meeting will be held tonight at 7:00 p.m. in the Commission Chambers, Courthouse Plaza East Building, 115 N. 4th Street.