



**Board of Riley County
Commissioners
Regular Meeting
Minutes
July 16, 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	Absent	
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
Vanessa Gray	PIO	Present	8:30 AM
David Adams	Emergency Services Director	Present	8:30 AM
Anna Burson	Appraiser	Present	8:30 AM
Derick Schroller	IT Specialist	Present	8:30 AM
Michele Reid	Human Resources Manager	Present	8:30 AM
John Ellermann	Public Works Director/County Engineer	Present	8:30 AM
Arturo Mauricio	KMAN	Present	8:40 AM
Elizabeth Ward	Human Resources Director	Present	8:50 AM
Doug Russell	Deputy Fire Chief	Present	8:58 AM
Gary Olds		Present	9:40 AM
Erin Freidline	Deputy RCPD Director	Present	9:40 AM
Daniel Skucius	Extension Director	Present	10:00 AM
Sharon Bairow-Riffey	Receptionist & FCS Secretary	Present	10:00 AM
Michael Boller	Noxious Weed/HHW Director	Present	10:01 AM
Cory Meyer	IT/GIS Director	Present	10:01 AM

Amy Manges	Register of Deeds	Present	10:15 AM
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Pledge of Allegiance**Public Comment****Commission Comments**

Ford's Comments:

Monday post meeting I spoke with Riley County Planning Director Amanda Webb on some federal and possibly state grant opportunities for both the Health Department, area housing, infrastructure, and food related programming. We continue to brainstorm some ideas and look to possibly come back with something later.

Also Monday I attended the July County Officials Luncheon here in the board chambers to continue dialogs on the 2027 budget, county administrator position, as well as the county strategic plans moving forward.

Tuesday and Wednesday I finally got back to work for the first time in nearly six weeks, honestly it felt good to get back into some kind of formal routine to say the least and hopefully I can continue moving forward.

Wednesday afternoon I attended and chaired the July meeting of the Flint Hills Metropolitan Planning Organization Board of Directors at the Manhattan Library. Not a very long agenda this month but after some opening remarks, welcomes, and public comments; we got a financial update as of July 8th, a monthly statement balance, a revenue and major expense update, and a staff update from both the organization as well as KDOT. Actions items included approval of the June 17th meeting and approval of the 2026-2029 Transportation Improvement Plan.

Wednesday night I met with my usual citizens group for Chinese food and spent well over an hour discussing local property tax to start and followed up with local property rights in regard to Data Centers and large companies migrating to the area.

Wednesday evening, I attended the Odgen City Council Meeting. I have to be honest it has been a while since I had the chance to do so and I'm glad I was able to chat and catch up on some items, events, and updates going on with the city.

McKinley's Comments:

Monday after our meeting I met with Stephanie Pierce at Innovate24. They help startups with minor financing and business info.

Tuesday I received a call from a resident in University Park who is having problems with a short term rental. I talked with Amanda Webb and gave the resident some information on what they could do when the problem occurs. The rumor in the area is that the owner wants to create

an event center. I assured her that would require permitting that the site would not allow.

Tuesday evening was the fire advisory board. The meeting was held in the new fire building. They had a run report showing how many calls each one has responded to so far this year. There are 11 firefighters who have had 50 calls or more. Our volunteers in the fire department are very dedicated.

Wednesday was the ATA Bus board meeting. We approved the budget for the next year. They reviewed some of the numbers for the last year. Ridership was up 10% over last year. The system is run with no debt. Over the last two years they have had to return \$300,000 in grants because they did not receive enough local match.

Focke's Comments:

No comments.

Business Meeting

1. Highway Use Permit 2026-009

Move to approve the Highway Use Permit granting Cox Communication permission to pull 450' of .625 Coax cable through existing conduit on Lakewood Drive.

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

2. Keats Sewer Benefit District - Notice to Proceed

Move to approve the Notice to Proceed for the Keats Sanitary Sewer Benefit District Improvements.

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

3. University Park Improvement District Appointment

Move to accept Jim Jackson's resignation and appoint Richard Soash as the new board member for the University Park Improvement District.

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

4. Riley County Employee Action Form

Move to approve the Riley County Employee Action Forms.

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

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

- Diane Tochimani, a Volunteer Firefighter, in the Fire District#1 Department, for Separation from County Service, effective July 10, 2026.
- Jenni Ebert, an Opioid Education & Prevention Specialist, in the Health Department, for Separation from County Service, effective July 24, 2026.

5. Discuss Intergovernmental Luncheon at Rockin K's at 12:00 (noon) Monday, July 27th

Review Minutes

6. Board of Riley County Commissioners - Regular Meeting - Jul 13, 2026 8:30 AM

Move to approve the minutes of July 13, 2026 as presented.

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

Review Tentative Agenda

7. Tentative Agenda

Press Conference Topics

9:00 AM

Elizabeth Ward, Human Resources Director

8. Compensation for Temporary Assignments in Health Department

Ward presented the compensation for temporary assignments in the Health Department, which would be retroactive. She said the money is in the budget to pay for the costs.

Ford asked why 10% when the policy states 7%.

Ward said due to the amount of leadership and structure lost in the transition.

Ford stated the policy says not retroactive, so why retroactive?

Ward stated because they have been doing the job the entire time period.

Adams said to keep in mind they are having to learn the grants and other responsibilities.

Phillips discussed the supervisors' work on the administrative part of the grants, not the fiscal aspects.

McKinley discussed concern with the policy on retroactive when they are doing the job.

Hansen stated concern with the language change due to potential litigation.

Move to approve a 7% temporary compensation adjustment for David Adams, Tammy Feldkamp, Kayla Mathis, and Cathy Jones, effective on the date each employee assumed their interim assignment, and will terminate upon permanent hiring or as otherwise directed by the Board.

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

9:15 AM

Elizabeth Ward, Human Resources Director

9. Resolution to Establish The Department of Emergency Services

Ward presented the resolution to establish the Department of Emergency Services.

Move to approve "Resolution No. 071326-30, A Resolution establishing the Department of Emergency Services and the Divisions thereof; providing for the duties of the Director of Emergency Services; and rescinding certain resolutions."

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

9:25 AM

Jacob Hansen, County Counselor

10. Administrative Work Session

Hansen discussed the League of Women Voters vs. Secretary of State, Scott Schwab, which he and Vargo will be need to attend. He said they will have to be available all next week and potentially Monday-Wednesday the next week.

Hansen stated he and Ellermann will be walking a property for access to a public lagoon.

Hansen discussed the sale of Riley County property.

9:45 AM Brian Peete, RCPD Director

11. RCPD Update

Freidline presented the Riley County Police Department update.

10:00 AM Daniel Skucius, Extension Director

12. Staff Report

Skucius presented the Extension staff report and the Riley County Fair preparations.

Skucius announced Sharon Bairow-Riffey after 33 years in Extension, will be retiring.

10:15 AM Brittany Phillips, Budget and Finance Officer

13. 2027 Budget Work Session

Phillips presented the 2027 Budget Development Worksheets.

Phillips clarified the Board is okay with the \$5,150,000 being transferred this year.

The Board agreed by consensus to have the transfer of \$5,150,000 this year.

Ford stated he is not going to approve the Administrator Administrative Assistant. He said he does support implementing the increased motor vehicle fee increase.

Ford discussed increasing certain user fees.

The Board discussed the 2027 budget.

Adjournment

10:33 a.m. Move to adjourn.

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