



**Board of Riley County
Commissioners
Regular Meeting
Minutes
July 27, 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	Remote	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
Kirk Crabtree	Rural Economic Development Advisory Board Chair	Present	8:30 AM
Anna Burson	Appraiser	Present	8:30 AM
Elizabeth Ward	Human Resources Director	Present	8:30 AM
Rob Voelker		Present	8:30 AM
Arturo Mauricio	KMAN	Present	8:41 AM
Amanda Webb	Planning/Special Projects Director	Present	8:54 AM
Liz Holle	Big Lakes Developmental Center Director	Present	9:00 AM
Molly Mathis	Administrative Assistant	Present	9:00 AM
Daryn Soldan	Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce	Present	9:30 AM
Sara Larson		Present	9:30 AM
Andy Larson		Present	9:30 AM
Michael Hawthorne	Assistant County Counselor	Present	10:02 AM
Lynn Bleacha		Present	10:12 AM
Evan McMillan	Assistant County Engineer	Present	10:20 AM
David Adams	Emergency Services Director	Present	10:20 AM
Megan Lewis	Community Corrections Director	Present	10:25 AM

Michael Boller	Noxious Weed/HHW Director	Present	10:30 AM
Shilo Heger	Treasurer	Present	10:40 AM
Michele Reid	Human Resources Manager	Present	10:42 AM

Pledge of Allegiance**Public Comment**

Phillips asked the Board to remove the Budget Work Session from today's agenda at 10:55 a.m.

Commission Comments

Ford's Comments:

Thursday post BOCC meeting I met with Riley County Treasurer Shilo Heger. We discussed some ongoing efforts in her department, some ideas for future budgets, and the new motor vehicle fee structure just to name a few. Appreciated the dialog and the conversation surely sparked some thoughts and ideas.

Friday morning, I was at Stormont Vail for an echocardiogram. The process took about an hour and the results were pretty good for the most part. I will need to follow up with the cardiologist to go through it in a little more depth at some point.

Friday late morning I met with Elizabeth Ward, Riley County Human Resources Director to go through some things, some thoughts and ideas and various other items in regard to personnel as well as the personnel budget, and the budget moving forward. Lots of moving pieces but the dialog went well.

Friday afternoon I traveled over to Alma and had lunch with Wabaunsee County Sheriff, Eric Kirsch. Had a great conversation and dialog on the nuisances of being a public official, and several over things including law enforcement in general, the press and media and some longer-term plans. Really enjoyed the conversation and lunch from El Corral there in Alma was amazing.

Spent much of the weekend at home, not really wanting to deal with the excessive heat and not a whole lot going on.

Sunday afternoon I did make it over to the Riley County Fair to once again judge in the Baking Competition. This year's competition was apple pie in honor of the America 250 Celebration. I along with Tiffany Oppelt from TheraPie did the judging and we had nine entries to choose from. Every single entry was delicious, but several did stand out from the others in terms of taste as well as presentation. Thanks to all who came out for the event and for those who also entered the competition.

McKinley's Comments:

No comments.

Focke's Comments:

Thursday after our BOCC meeting, Amanda Webb, John Ellerman, Vanessa Gray, and Brian Foster (BG Consultants) met to discuss a ribbon cutting for the Keats wastewater project. It will be on August 13th at 6:00 p.m. in the lagoon area west of the Keats Park. We discussed the best location for the ribbon cutting. Also discussed was the contractor's request for a staging area in the park, which we didn't approve, as it would take too much space from the usable park area for residents. The contractor will be advised to find a location in the area and work it out with a property owner. Vanessa Gray will work on a flyer to hand out to residents and at the community meal on July 29th.

Friday I came down to the office to do some work, go to vote and then have a quick meeting with Vanessa Gray on the Keats flyer. I also had a physical therapy appointment and stopped by the fair briefly.

The weekend was fairly quiet, as I had a lot of catching up to do from my trip to Virginia.

Business Meeting

1. CIP Amendment

McKinley stated he thought the intent was to only eliminate this year's allocation not the total amount.

Phillips said she understood the Board wanted to cancel the entire amount for the equipment. She stated we need clarification.

The Board asked to reschedule when John Ellermann is available.

2. Riley County Employee Action Form

Move to approve the Riley County Employee Action Forms.

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

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

- Catherine Jones, for a status change from non-exempt to exempt, as an Interim WIC Coordinator, in the Health Department, at a Range 15, effective July 18, 2026.
- Josh Gering, for a status change, a title change, as a Division Chief EMS, in the EMS/Ambulance Department, at a Range DD, effective August 1, 2026.
- Alex Protzman, for a status change, a position change, as a Deputy Chief

EMS, in the EMS/Ambulance Department, at a Range CC, effective August 1, 2026.

Review Minutes

3. Board of Riley County Commissioners - Regular Meeting - Jul 23, 2026 8:30 AM

Move to approve the minutes of July 23, 2026 as presented.

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

Review Tentative Agenda

4. Tentative Agenda

Press Conference Topics**9:00 AM****Amanda Webb, Planning/Special Projects Director**

5. Home in the Heartland Grant Application Round 2

Webb presented the Home in the Heartland Grant Application Round 2.

The Board discussed the program.

The Board asked for additional information.

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**

7. Presentation of Ruralpreneur Recognition Award - Ron Wilson (5 minutes)

Crabtree presented the Ruralpreneur Recognition to Sara and Andy Larson of 1880 Beef and Wild & Blooming Floral Shop.

Sara and Andy Larson spoke about their businesses, 1880 Beef and Wild & Blooming Floral Shop.

8. Primary Election update - Rich Vargo (1-2 minutes)

Vargo reported as of Friday 1,341 residents have participated in advance voting. He said advance voting will be open through Monday, August 3, 2026 at 12:00 (noon).

Vargo said due to continued legal actions State Law currently requires advance ballots by mail to be in the Clerk's Office by the close of polls on election day. He said the Secretary of State recommends voters return their ballots early and before the close of polls on election day on Tuesday, August 4, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

9:40 AM**Bob Isaac, Planner**

9. Sutton Estates Addition

Isaac presented the Sutton Estates Addition plat request.

Move to approve "Resolution No. 072726-33, A Resolution approving the Sutton Estates Addition plat and accepting the street rights of way, easements and licenses as shown to be dedicated on said plat" the requirements of the Riley County Land Development Regulations and Sanitary Code have been met.

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

9:50 AM**Bob Isaac, Planner**

10. J&M Addition Unit 1

Isaac presented the J&M Addition Unit 1 plat request.

Move to approve "Resolution No. 072726-34, A Resolution approving the J & M Addition plat and accepting the street rights of way, easements and licenses as shown to be dedicated on the said plat", the minimum requirements of the Riley County Land Development Regulations and Riley County Sanitary Code have been met.

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

10:00 AM**Bob Isaac, Planner**

11. University Park Unit 16

Isaac presented the University Park Unit 16 plat request.

Move to approve "Resolution No. 072726-35, A Resolution approving the University Park Unit 16 plat and accepting the street rights of way, easements and licenses as shown to be dedicated on the said plat," the requirements of the Riley County Land Development Regulations and Sanitary Code have been met.

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

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

10:10 AM Jacob Hansen, County Counselor

12. Administrative Work Session

Hansen discussed the Prairie Paws Agreement.

Hansen discussed the purpose and function of a Public Building Commission.

13. Staff Update

10:20 AM Michael Hawthorne, Assistant County Counselor

14. Public Hearing for Peterson Ranch

Hawthorne presented the resolution on levying special assessments for the Peterson Ranch Road Benefit District Project.

Focke opened the Public Hearing for the Peterson Ranch Road Benefit District.

Blecha, developer of Peterson Ranch, stated he is in favor of passing the resolution. He expressed frustration as the process has been less than smooth. He suggested changes in the Riley County policy regarding the formation of benefit districts.

Focke closed the Public Hearing.

Hawthorne said the prepayment deadline is Friday, August 28, 2026 at noon.

Move to approve Resolution No. 072726-36 for levying special assessments for the Peterson Ranch Road Benefit District project.

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

10:30 AM Megan Lewis, Community Corrections Director

15. Staff Update

Lewis presented the Community Corrections staff update.

16. KDOC FY26 Juvenile Services Year End Report

Lewis presented the FY26 KDOC Juvenile Services Year End Report.

Move to approve the FY26 KDOC Adult Services Year End Report.

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

17. KDOC FY26 Adult Services Year End Report

Lewis presented the Adult Services Year End Report.

Move to approve the FY26 KDOC Adult Services Year End Report.

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

18. City of Manhattan - Opioid Settlement Funds - Grant Agreement

Lewis presented the City of Manhattan, Opioid Settlement Funds Grant Agreement.

Move to approve the 2027 Grant Agreement with the City of Manhattan.

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

10:45 AM Shilo Heger, Treasurer

19. Request to Fill

Heger presented the request to fill the Customer Service Representative I position.

Move to approve staff begin the recruitment process to fill both vacant Customer Service Representative positions as soon as possible.

RESULT:	Passed
MOVER:	Commissioner Greg McKinley
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 Customer Service Representative I, in the Treasurer's Department, at a Range 4.

10:50 AM David Adams, Emergency Services Director

20. Position Descriptions for Fire Division Chief and Deputy Chief

Adams presented the Deputy Fire Chief and Division Fire Chief position descriptions.

Move to approve the updated position descriptions as presented.

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

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

- a Deputy Fire Chief, in the Riley County Fire District #1 Department, at a Range 15.
- a Division Fire Chief, in the Riley County Fire District #1 Department, at a Range 17.

10:55 AM Brittany Phillips, Budget and Finance Officer

21. 2027 Budget Work Session

Amended and cancelled per Board.

Adjournment

10:56 a.m. Move to adjourn after the Intergovernmental Luncheon.

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

12:00 PM Intergovernmental Luncheon

22. Intergovernmental Luncheon Agenda