



**Board of Riley County
Commissioners
Regular Meeting
Minutes
August 20, 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
Vanessa Gray	PIO	Present	8:30 AM
Brittany Phillips	Budget and Finance Officer	Present	8:30 AM
Elizabeth Ward	Human Resources Director	Present	8:30 AM
Jacob Hansen	County Counselor	Present	8:30 AM
Michael Hawthorne	Assistant County Counselor	Present	8:30 AM
Rob Voelker		Present	8:30 AM
Arturo Mauricio	KMAN	Present	8:30 AM
Amy Manges	Register of Deeds	Present	8:55 AM
John Ellermann	Public Works Director/County Engineer	Present	9:30 AM
Daniel Skucius	Extension Director	Present	9:51 AM
Brian Peete	RCPD Director	Present	10:02 AM
Shilo Heger	Treasurer	Present	11:00 AM
David Adams	Emergency Services Director	Present	11:00 AM
Amanda Webb	Planning/Special Projects Director	Present	11:00 AM

Pledge of Allegiance

Public Comment**Commission Comments**

Ford's Comments:

Monday morning, I met with Vanessa Gray our new Public Information Officer. First time I had a chance to sit down and chat with her. Had a few thoughts and ideas to bounce around and we will see how those may progress moving forward. Sounds and looks like she has hit the ground running for sure.

Monday afternoon I met with Jeff Wick, President/CEO of WTC to discuss a few items relevant to county board appointments, economic development interests here in the Flint Hills region, and several other items of relevant interest as well. Had a great dialog as usual as he's always a wealth of good information.

Tuesday and Wednesday worked my normal slate of hours at work. As per usual this time of year we continue to stay busy which is good.

Tuesday morning, I took part in a policy workshop titled "Governance and Taxation" over at the Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce. Although rather smaller than I would have thought we did have a good dialog from the people in the room including Chamber staff, the Business Advocacy Committee, state officials, and myself. We will be following up that dialog with a second workshop in September.

Tuesday afternoon I attended the Board of Directors meeting of the Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce. First order of business was the passage of the consent agenda which included the minutes of the June 16th meeting, financials through July 31st and membership accounts. Next we got a comprehensive update on the K-State Edge 3.0 District from Greg Willems and Trent Armbrust from the Foundation, approval on the Nominating Committee appointments, discussion on federal priorities for 2026-2027 for the trip in September to Washington, D.C., discussion on support for the Manhattan City Sales Tax for roads, and lastly consideration of changes to the membership dues. Next meeting will be at the board retreat in Kansas City in October.

Wednesday I attended the open house for the new Commerce Bank space in what I believe is the new Hartford building replacing the old Commerce Bank building here downtown. Really good turnout and they did a fabulous job in creating a space in which to do business at. It has been a several year process and Hutton Construction and others did an outstanding job getting this done.

Also, on Wednesday I met with my Wednesday night citizens group for Chinese food to discuss some pertinent real time issues. Flock cameras, area road construction, and maintenance, as well as the fairground and its possible move dominated the conversation there.

McKinley's Comments:

Monday was the Law Board meeting. Mostly just standard stuff discussed. RCPD is working

with Aggieville for procedures on Friday and Saturday nights. We did have a couple of longer executive sessions at the end of the meeting.

Wednesday was the Juvenile Detention Center Board meeting. Over the last 5 years Riley County has averaged 401 days per year. Through July we have used 977 days this year. The facility has signed up with Smoky Hill Education Service to furnish schooling. Junction City stopped furnishing education a year ago and the facility had to pay a much higher price for another system for schooling. A Geary County Commissioner had said that the facility had stopped accepting new kids. This was also picked up by the paper. The Interim Executive Director went to their meeting with the facts. They are sometimes full and have had to outsource some kids but have not turned down anyone.

Focke's Comments:

Monday afternoon I attended the Law Board Meeting. All members were present and we went through the agenda, with some additions.

Tuesday morning, I started pulling some weeds in the backyard but was interrupted by a wind and rain storm. That afternoon, I started reviewing the documents for the Riley County Administrator position. I think it will take some time to digest all the information.

Wednesday, I reviewed the agenda and documents for today's meeting and had some time in a friend's pool doing some water aerobics. Later I continued to review the Riley County Administrator's proposed documents from Elizabeth Ward and looked over today's meeting packet again.

Business Meeting

1. Approve payroll/accounts payables (when completed)

Move to approve the payroll vouchers in the amount of \$784,235.02 and the following warrant vouchers for August 21, 2026:

2026 Budget

County General	\$ 693,076.00
Disaster Fund	120,804.13
Health Department	80,976.83
LEPP Grant	14,946.06
Treasurer Tech Fund	11,114.22
County Auction	384.46
Motor Vehicle Operations	1,978.09
Capital Improvements Fund	133,403.40
Economic Development	6,320.36
Emergency 911	4,657.17
Solid Waste	336,382.75
County Building	12,415.74

RCPD Levy/Op	52,133.24
Landfill Closure	1,475.09
Riley Co Fire Dist #1	38,199.68
2023 R&B Project Sales Tx	17,671.00
University Park W&S	8,566.53
Hunters Island Water Dist	196.21
Carson Sewer Benefit Dist	790.38
Deep Creek Sewer	276.53
Moehlman Bottoms	349.94
Valleywood Operations	121.56
Terra Heights Sewer	2,670.21
Konza Water Operations	997.68
University Park Lagoon	141,885.66
Peterson Ranch-Ben Dist	134.18
KDOC Adult Services	15,753.56
KDOC Juvenile Services	5,389.21
KDOC Juv Reinvestment	735.55
City Alcohol Funds	996.60
RL County Alcohol Funds	3,135.84
RL Salary Appropriations	1,121.10
Caroline Peine Grant	150.00
GMCF Grant	59.95
Adult Services Carry-Over	83.74
Juvenile Svcs Carry-Over	83.75

TOTAL. \$ 1,709,436.40

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

Review Minutes

2. Board of Riley County Commissioners - Regular Meeting - Aug 17, 2026 8:30 AM

Move to approve the minutes of August 17, 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

3. Tentative Agenda

Press Conference Topics**9:00 AM****Jacob Hansen, County Counselor**

4. Administrative Work Session
5. Executive session for attorney-client consultation

9:00 a.m. Move that the County Commissioners, including Chairwoman Focke, Vice Chairman Ford, and Commissioner McKinley, with Jacob Hansen, County Counselor, and Michael Hawthorne, Assistant County Counselor, attorneys for the commission, with Elizabeth Ward, Human Resources Director, recess into executive session pursuant to the attorney-client consultation an exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act, regarding confidential legal advice on employment contracts, 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**Amy Manges, Register of Deeds**

6. 2026 Year-To-Date Revenue

Manges presented the Register of Deeds year to date revenue.

9:30 AM**Elizabeth Ward, Human Resources Director**

7. County Administrator Benefits Package

Ward presented the proposed County Administrator Benefits Package.

The Board discussed the benefits package.

Ward said she would bring more specific benefits package for the Board to consider on Monday.

9:50 AM Brittany Phillips, Budget and Finance Officer

8. Request to Publish Notice of Hearing

Phillips presented the request to publish the notice of hearing.

Move to approve publishing the 2027 Notice of Budget Hearing in the Manhattan Mercury.

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

10:00 AM Daniel Skucius, Extension Director

9. August Staff Update

Skucius presented the Extension update.

10:15 AM Brian Peete, RCPD Director

10. RCPD Update

Peete presented the RCPD update.

10:30 AM Jacob Hansen, County Counselor

11. Executive session for attorney-client consultation

10:22 a.m. Move that the County Commissioners, including Chairwoman Focke, Vice Chairman Ford, and Commissioner McKinley, with Jacob Hansen, County Counselor, and Michael Hawthorne, Assistant County Counselor, attorneys for the commission, with 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 attorney-client consultation an exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act, regarding confidential legal advice on contract obligations, the open meeting to resume in the County Commission Chambers at 10:50 a.m.

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

10:43 a.m. Move the Board of County Commissioners come out of executive session.

RESULT:	Passed
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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 Elizabeth Ward, Human Resources Director

12. County Administrator First-Year Goals and Evaluation Framework

Ward discussed the County Administrator First-Year Goals and Evaluation Framework.

The Board discussed the goals and evaluation framework.

Ward stated she would work on goals and asked the Board to work on goals as well to discuss further.

11:20 AM Michael Hawthorne, Assistant County Counselor

13. 2005 Personal Property Tax Judgments

Hawthorne presented the 2005 Personal Property Tax Abatement.

Move to approve "Resolution No. 082026-40, A Resolution determining that certain uncollected personal property tax judgments may not be reasonably collected and permitting such judgments to become dormant."

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

11:30 AM Elizabeth Ward, Human Resources Director

14. County Administrator Marketing First Look

Ward and Gray presented the internal marketing materials to recruit a County Administrator.

The Board agreed by consensus to continue to work on creating internal marketing materials to recruit a County Administrator.

The Board agreed for staff to ask Craig Cox to speak during the commission breakout

session at the Northeast Kansas County Officials Meeting in September.

Adjournment

11:43 a.m. Move to adjourn.

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