

ADJOURNED MEETING OF THE GEARY COUNTY COMMISSION MINUTES
February 2nd, 2026

Commissioners Present: Keith Ascher, Trish Giordano, and Kathy Tremont

Others present: Therese Hoff, Deputy County Clerk, Betsy Edwards County Counselor

Chairman Tremont called the County Commission meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Commission Review and Update:

Giordano: Attended- EPA- Recreation Economy for Rural Communities meeting-Mainstreet received a grant and this was an introductory meeting- to set goals they want to achieve, will meet again this week. Sat in on interviews for companies that sent RFPs for the comprehensive plan. The City of JC, Geary County and Wamego were involved- they ranked the companies and should pick one soon.

Ascher: Attended local government day in Topeka, met with Senator Argabright and attended various hearings and meetings.

Tremont: Attended a Pawnee Mental Health board meeting, was her introductory meeting, since being appointed to the board.

Attended Sheriff's Department Drug Canine-Nova's retirement ceremony.

Discussed the department head meeting conversation-whether to continue monthly meeting or move to quarterly meetings. Chairman Tremont suggested sending an email to department heads where they could express their feelings in an email, not a public meeting. A suggestion was made to have an agenda for the meeting and discuss agenda items. Commissioner Giordano thinks it is beneficial to meet, it is the commission's time to discuss with the department heads any public thoughts or concerns that have come up. Chairman Tremont thinks it is important to have a subject to discuss. She said the commission could talk about it next week to get more feedback. Commissioner Ascher thinks the department head meetings should be more constructive

Asked the other two commissioners if they had any agenda items for the joint City/County/USD meeting on February 23.

Crystal Malchose, Tiffany Havener, Tami Robison, Jayme Coffey, and Luisa White arrived at the meeting.

Chairman Tremont presented an award to Crystal Malchose-The Outstanding County Human Resources Professional. Tremont said the county is lucky to have Ms. Malchose and receiving this award shows her dedication, professionalism and leadership excellence to the job.

Crystal Malchose, Human Resources Director, gave the weekly report:

- Stated she attended Local Government Day with the Legislature. The KAC board meeting was held. It was a good meeting about the future of KAC.
- Stated March 3 will be County Day at the Capital. The county can have a table set up, the commission agreed to this. She will ask the CVB if they could set up with their supplies. Ms. Malchose and Ms. Havener left the meeting.

Curt Janke, Assistant Rural Fire Chief, gave the monthly report:

- Fires year to date-8, last year-3. There was a big fire on the 20th, 150 hay bales burned on Old Hwy. 13, \$34,000.00 loss.

- Held the retirement event for rural firefighter John Moyer.
- Reported there are 7 new recruits in class- 4 from county and 3 from Grandview Plaza. The basics being taught is from wildland fires and structure fires.
- Stated ISO will be here next week to evaluate the department-response time, training hours, trucks equipment and fire reports, which will set new insurance ratings for the rural residents in Geary County. If they live within 5 miles of a station with an engine, it will help lower their insurance ratings.
- Working with the new fire reporting system.
- Reported they have met with Grandview Plaza about the air pack grant. They will decide which packs they want, and with the increase in cost, they will be working on how many they can get within parameters of the grant.
- Stated he will be attending the Arson Recertification School in Wichita.
- Stated the Pipeline Association training is tomorrow.
- Stated the Risk Management meeting is February 18th at 2:00 p.m.
- Stated Mr. Berges is working on the regional mitigation plan.
- Stated they will be presenting a program to 5th graders at a career fair.
- Reported Mr. Berges is trying to get the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program going again.
- Reported there will be Severe Weather training on Monday March 16. Mr. Janke left the meeting.

Jeremie Myers, Public Works Administrator, and Kalynn Ross, Administrative Services Manager, gave the bi-weekly report:

- Introduced Jason Britt, Noxious Weed and HHW Supervisor.
- Commissioner Giordano asked Mr. Britt what he thought about the landfill being open more than once a month. Ms. Ross stated they have stats and will look at the last two years' numbers to see if it is beneficial.
- Presented a request and petition for a farm driveway entrance on lower Budden Road. Mr. Myers recommends approval. **Commissioner Giordano moved to approve the request and petition on lower Budden Road; Commissioner Ascher seconded and all voted aye.**
- Presented a request and petition to construct a water line across the road for water service to install a meter pit from Rural Water District #1 on Humboldt Creek Road. Mr. Myers recommends approval. **Commissioner Giordano moved to approve the request and petition from Rural Water District #1 on Humboldt Creek Rd-Commissioner Ascher seconded and all voted aye.**
- Reported that Rural Development has completed the review of the Geary County Sewer #4 Utility Improvement EA (Laurel Canyon Utility Replacement). A notice is to be published in the non-classified section of the local newspaper that serves Geary County. The notice should be published for three consecutive days if it's a daily newspaper, or for two consecutive issues if a weekly newspaper. Online publication should be included. In order for the Rural Utilities Service to move forward in the EA process, the county will need to provide at the earliest convenience copies of tear sheets of the newspaper, and/or publisher's affidavits, to show the notice appeared. The county will notify Rural Development when the 14-day comment period begins (date of initial publications) so they may track the environmental review process for this project and the county will be notified of any comments received during this time. Mr. Myers also had Randy Purdue-Kaw Valley Engineering review the notice. **Commissioner Ascher moved to approve publishing the USDA notice for Sewer #4; Commissioner Giordano seconded and all voted aye.**

- Stated KDOT announced their call for projects that will run through February 20, 2026, which id away earlier this year. Mr. Myers asked for approval to apply for the Kansas Local Bridge Improvement Program for Rurak Secondary 12 Bridge on Lower McDowel Creek Road which needs replacement. Geary County may not have the best chances of getting a bridge selected given all the success with these two programs over the last 3-4 years, but he wants to submit something. Bridge 19.6-T.7 on McNeal Road was picked on the Off-system bridge program in 2025. **Commissioner Ascher moved to approve submitting an application to KDOT for Rural Secondary 12 Bridge on Lower McDowell Creek Road; Commissioner Giordano seconded and all voted aye.**
- Discussed he had a meeting with the City of Junction City about the joint clean up. The county commission wants to participate again this year and work with the city, with a 50-50 split on the cost. The proposed dates for this year cleanup efforts would be April 20 through April 25. The dates coincide with Operation Earth Day. This year's plan would be to maintain the current roll-off dumpster distribution, with eight locations in Junction City and three locations in the County. Additionally, the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) facility will move its open date to Saturday, April 25 to coincide with the proposed dates. Based on lessons learned from last year, the joint cleanup team has agreed that tires, appliances and transfer station vouchers will not be accepted as part of this year's cleanup. They will begin communicating the plan to the commissioners now and coordinated planning efforts will continue involving the commissioners and the contractors.
- Munson/Rucker Road speed limit-discussion and possible resolution to lower speed limits on these roads due to their location with the Junction City High School. The TEAP study is wrapping up, and reports should be available soon. Mr. Myers said the county speed limit is 35 on gravel, and the city has 30 mph on asphalt. He would like to see 30 mph on the whole section. The Commission would like to see the speed limit set at 30 mph. in the area. **Commissioner Giordano would like to use the money from the sale of the foundation building to pave the roads by the school.** Mr. Myers will attend the joint city/county/school meeting to discuss the new software tracking snow removal.
- A presentation was made showing the last snow and ice event with the new tracking software.

At 11:18 a.m.; Commissioner Giordano moved to go into Executive Session under KOMA 79-4319(b)(6) to include legal counsel, Jeremie Myers and Kalyn Ross for 10 minutes, to end at 11:28 a.m.; Commissioner Ascher seconded, all voted in aye. The meeting resumed at 11:28 a.m. with no action taken.

Mike Rezkalla, CEO-Pawnee Mental Health and Eric Martin-Recovery Services Mgr. of Pawnee Mental Health Services gave an update:

- Discussed the 2025 State of Mental Health in America report. There was an overall improvement in the ranking for the state of Kansas. Young people are struggling, 11.3% of youth in the U.S. experienced a major depressive episode with severe impairment in the past year.
- Stated the Mobile Crisis Response has been expanded to 24/7, effective January 1, 2026. Over 120 individuals received MCR services in the last months alone.
- Reported on January 13, 14 and 15, Pawnee held 70th year anniversary kick-off events at the C.L. Hoover Opera House in Junction City, Manhattan, Midwest Dream Car Collection, and the Concordia Brown Grant Opera House. Each event featured a preceding slideshow of a collection of historical photos from years past, followed by a video of staff sharing their positive feelings

about Pawnee and reasons that others should see Pawnee in a new light and they are also celebrating a New Day at Pawnee.

- Stated the Community Mental Health Center Advocacy Day is approaching and will take place on February 10. Each year, all 25 Community Mental Health Centers including Pawnee gather at the Capitol for a full day of activities, including legislative sessions and hearings as well as one-on-one conversations with legislators and state officials. Pawnee will host a table at the event.
- Pancakes for Pawnee is an annual event celebrated on Fat Tuesday, February 17, 2026. Pawnee partners with Early Edition Restaurant to raise money that will help address mental health needs in the communities Pawnee serves.
- Reviewed the accomplishments to celebrate: expanded services like Mobile Crisis Response, renamed 1558 Hayes Drive location the Behavioral Health Access Center, added social detox, launched the client portal, passed CCBHC/CMHS/SUD certifications, modernized a portion of the network infrastructure, went live with the state data warehouse, thrived through federal and state cuts, serve more than 6,200 people every year, and enhanced hiring for open positions.

Eric Martin, Recovery Services Mgr. discussed addiction and mental health issues, recovery services offered-outpatient group and individual therapy, peer support services focused on lived experience and accountability, case management to address housing, employment, and basic needs, regular collaboration with probation to support compliance and long-term success, sober living house for men, providing structure and stability during early recovery. Mr. Martin said Pawnee has a high employee retention rate, driven by consistent engagement and strong therapeutic relationships, experienced, committed multidisciplinary team, services available to uninsured clients through grant-funded subsidies and strong partnerships with justice-involved systems to support positive outcomes. Mr. Rezkalla and Mr. Martin left the meeting.

County Counselor Edwards presented the transient guest tax charter resolution:02-02-2026-authorizing the governing body of Geary County to levy a transient guest tax not to exceed the rate of 2% upon the gross receipts derived from or paid directly or through an accommodations broker by transient guest for sleeping accommodations, exclusive of charges for incidental services or facilities in any hotel or motel or tourist court within Geary County, in order to provide revenues to promote tourism and conventions. **Commissioner Giordano moved to approve Charter Resolution 02-02-2026; Commissioner Ascher seconded and all voted aye.**

Public Comment: No one in attendance for public comment.

Raquel Cinco, CVB Director, gave the monthly update:

- Attended the Denver Travel Show the first week in January-very good show with over 30,000 people there. She used the new backdrop, distributed 1200 visitor guides, and promoted the fishing tournaments which showed a lot of interest.
- Will attend the travel show later in February, in Omaha, NE. She would like to take the new marketing person with her. The commission agreed to the request.
- Stated she visited the Hideaway and Three Sisters venues. They are both very good for the area.
- Received 4 rfp's at the convention center for out-of-town sports teams playing K-State in football.
- New marketing person has started.
- Stated 4 hotels have closed.
- Motel 6 should reopen by March 1 after renovations are completed.
- The former Super 8 is now the Red Lion.

- Stated the Flint Hills Regional Leadership Class is coming to an end with commencement on Thursday. Ms. Cinco left the meeting.

Charles Martinez, Health Department Director requested the Chairman of the County Commission sign a letter of intent for Geary County's continued participation in the KDHE-DHCF Health Families Outreach, Prevention and Early Intervention (OPEI) Program. This letter is a required part of the annual grant process and documents the county's intent to participate and provide the required local match. The required local match, up to \$64,000.00 is already incorporated into the approved departmental budget and funded through Ad Valorem revenues consistent with prior year. No additional appropriations, budget amendments, or staffing changes are required. The Health Department has had this grant for many years.

Commissioner Giordano moved to sign the letter of intent for the Health Department; Commissioner Ascher seconded and all voted aye. Mr. Martinez left the meeting.

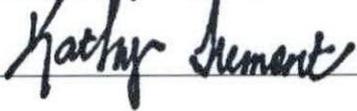
At 12:14 p.m.; Commissioner Giordano moved to go into Executive Session for contract services with legal counsel 15 minutes, to end at 12:29 p.m.; Commissioner Ascher seconded, all voted aye. The meeting resumed at 12:29 p.m. with no action taken.

Commissioner Ascher moved to approve change orders to correct clerical errors for real estate, personal property and trucks- 2026000034-2026000038, Commissioner Giordano seconded, and all voted aye.

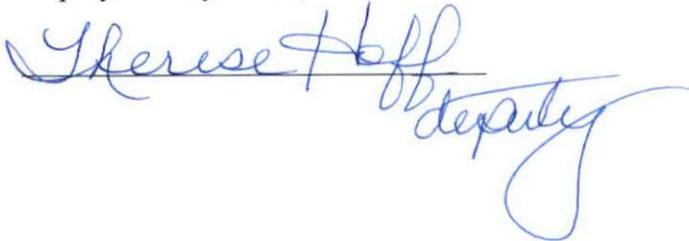
Commissioner Ascher moved to approve the minutes from 01/26/2026; Commissioner Giordano seconded and all voted aye.

Chairman Tremont adjourned the meeting at 12:40 p.m.

Chairman, Kathy Tremont



Deputy County Clerk, Therese Hoff



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