

## ***Minutes of January 20, 2026***

The Board of County Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 9 a.m., in the Commissioners Chambers. Chairman Mark Pruett, Commissioner Kelly and Commissioner Gerhardt were present. County Clerk Kristie Richter recorded the minutes. Cathleen McMahon and Ali Holcomb were also present. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Commissioner Kelly made the motion to approve the agenda as written, Commissioner Gerhardt 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. The motion passed 3/0.

Commissioner Gerhardt made the motion to appoint Judge Brian Yearout to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial Juvenile Corrections Advisory Board, Commissioner Kelly 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. The motion passed 3/0.

Mark reported on NEK Multi County Health Department and said there have been some administrative changes. Amberwell Home Health and Hospice will be taking over the home health and hospice care services. NEK will still provide the other services they offer.

Mark signed the Neighborhood Revitalization rebates for 2025.

The Commissioners approved a pay increase for Taylor Phillips with Juvenile Intake from \$29.49 to \$31.78. Juvenile Intake is grant funded.

Scott Kieffaber, Public Works Director and Joe Gardner, Road and Bridge Superintendent were in to give their weekly update. Scott asked if they had decided on the cost share program for the Weed Dept. Scott recommended they drop it to 14%. The Commissioners agreed. Scott presented the Commissioners with a purchase order for signs and posts. Commissioner Gerhardt made the motion to approve the purchase order from National Signs in the amount of \$7724.50, Commissioner Kelly 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. The motion passed 3/0. The annual bridge inspection is done. Scott reported they have spent approximately \$100,000.00 out of the rock budget already this year. Joe said they pushed to get more done since the weather was nice. The bridge at 246<sup>th</sup> and J2 is done but needs more work on the guard rails then they will do the final walk-through. Last week they put tubes in at X rd and 134<sup>th</sup>, oversized rock was put on H rd and 114<sup>th</sup>

road and 310th and W to fix the mudholes. An entrance was put in at B and 132<sup>nd</sup> road. The boom is off and they are putting a new one on. Mark spoke about College Road. He said it needs pothole work, specifically by Dee Barrows house. Keith said even with the groomer running down the road some places don't have gravel, so it is bringing up bigger chunks, they need to keep an eye on that. Scott said the chip and seal south of W rd and 16 Hwy on 174th is bad. He and Joe were talking about digging it up and putting rock in and compacting it. Scott asked if they had thought anymore about the company and the emulsion, leveling product. The Commissioners said they haven't talked about it yet and would need to find funding. Hauled gravel on the following roads last week: 278<sup>th</sup> rd between S and U, T rd between 278<sup>th</sup> and 286<sup>th</sup>, Z rd between 222<sup>nd</sup> and 206<sup>th</sup>, 106<sup>th</sup> between G and H, 106<sup>th</sup> between I and J, 278<sup>th</sup> Between T and U, 238<sup>th</sup> between U and V, 238<sup>th</sup> between U and V, 106<sup>th</sup> between J and K, 278<sup>th</sup> between U and V, T between 166<sup>th</sup> and 170<sup>th</sup>, 110 between K and N; K 116, 278<sup>th</sup> between V and W, V between 278<sup>th</sup> and 286<sup>th</sup>, 166 between S and T and K between 118<sup>th</sup> and 120<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Gerhardt made the motion to amend the agenda to add Jamey Doty at 10:00 am, Commissioner Kelly 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. The motion passed 3/0.

The Clerk clarified with the Commissioners that all discretionary days are to be removed for 2026. The Commissioners agreed that was correct.

The Clerk asked about the appropriations for 2026 and if they would like them to be encumbered. The Commissioners would like to have them shown as encumbered on the reports. The Clerk will take care of this.

Jamey Doty, Appraiser I, was in to discuss the letter that will be sent to Mr. Vanderputten.

The Commissioner made the motion to move \$25,000.00 from NEK AAA Transportation outlay fund to the Commissioners outlay fund.

Commissioner Gerhardt made the motion to approve the minutes of Jan 12th, Commissioner Kelly 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. The motion passed 3/0.

Recessed 10:10 am.

Back in session 10:12 am.

Keith talked about the possibility of health insurance going up next year. He would like to have a department head meeting to discuss this. The Department head meeting will be February 23<sup>rd</sup> at 9:30 a.m. but will exclude District Court, Juvenile Intake and Community Corrections. The topic of lunch with the Commissioners was brought up and Commissioner Gerhardt said she believed it was too expensive to do and they all agreed not to do it. They discussed zoning and how it would affect the community if they separated out the zoning and appraisal departments. A discussion was had that if a zoning officer is hired then an employee from the Appraisers office would move and be the administrative assistant in the Zoning Office. The Commissioners believe it is important to separate the offices so that the zoning and appraisal department would have time to perform their specific duties. The Commissioners believe this will give better customer service to the taxpayers for both the Appraisers Department and the Zoning Department.

The County Clerk discussed downsizing polling locations to save money and make it more secure.

Commissioner Kelly made the motion to go into executive session under the contract negotiations to discuss future hiring possibilities for 15 minutes in the chambers to begin at 11:10 am and reconvene at 11:25 am in the Commissioners chambers to include the County Clerk. Commissioner Gerhardt 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion, the motion passed 3/0. Session reopened at 11:25 a.m. No action taken.

Commissioner Gerhardt made the motion to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Kelly 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. The motion passed 3/0.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:32 a.m. The Commissioners will meet tonight at 6:00 p.m. in Memorial Hall with residents of the following townships to discuss road maintenance: Netawaka, Whiting, St. Creek, Liberty, Jefferson, Soldier, Grant, Garfield and Franklin.

The meeting began at 6:00 pm with several in attendance. All three Commissioners were in attendance. The County Clerk recorded the minutes. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Chairman Pruett started the meeting by telling them the reason for having them. We are trying to establish a group from each township to establish long term goals for each township and the projects that they think need to be addressed. We would meet quarterly with the boards and Road and Bridge. Commissioner Kelly said this is similar to what KDOT does. We would like to have input from each township with what they think is important in their area. Commissioner Gerhardt stated there are no special projects slated for 2026. W road will be finished this year. Someone asked how many miles of W road was it that was redone, someone else said it was from 254th to the parallel to Whiting (6.5 miles). It is an FSA route, so we thought it needed to be done.

A gentleman who lives in Liberty township and used to live in Nemaha County township said they had 3 people per township, and it worked well. Rob Wareham said that the county has done a great job in the last 3 years of getting the roads up to grade. He asked what it would cost to finish W road, Commissioner Kelly estimated around \$80,000. In the last 5 years we have put more gravel down than in prior years. Larry Kathrens asked if they were going to give county employees the equipment that they need to do their jobs. Kelly said the county has the best equipment money can buy at present, and that they are using it for the roads. Commissioner Gerhardt asked him to be on the township board. Chairman Pruett said that the graders are told to fix what they see and get in the ditches and clean them out. Tye Lippert asked if it would be an evening meeting or during the day. The Commissioners said that it would be an evening meeting just like tonight. Tye said he has been in contact with Scott Kieffaber and Chairman Pruett about some ditch work that needs to be done. Brett Morris talked about needing a blade operator in their township. The operator they have does not put his blade down and doesn't do the work. His road is an FSA route and should be bladed. From October to January, they didn't even run a blade for the snow but bladed some in April. He called his friend to come blade the road. That was from April to October. Brett said to please leave Ethan in his territory, he does a great job and could train the others. Jeff Green asked if we have any design standards in the county for the roads. Commissioner Kelly said yes through LTAP (Kansas Local Technical Assistance Program). Tye asked where do you get your rock? The Commissioners told him from Soldier and Denison. Tye stated the rock south of my drive is really limey and doesn't last. Bruce

Rinkes said what you're looking at is a massive number of decades of trying to fix the roads. Not every load of rock is going to fix the roads. He said that the KDOT specs would help extend the life of the rock and tell you if it is suitable or not to use. He said we are behind on the subgrade because the water hasn't been kept off the roads. Kelly said he had a good point about testing the rock. Bruce told the Commissioners that KDOT has a standard and will test the rock piles. He suggests fly ash or bentonite to soak some of the lime up. Diana Keith said Scott Kieffaber said we are not getting rock from Denison because it was too high. Pruett said the Atchison rock is what was used for W road. We received a price increase from Soldier this year and the others went up last year. Diana asked if we are using our county guys to haul the rock? Kelly replied yes, but we have hired it out before. She said on 206<sup>th</sup> road she watched 3 dump trucks with gravel go down the road and not a bit of it went on her road. Where did it go? She would be willing to be on the township board. She said taxes are going up and our roads are getting worse. Kelly respectfully disagreed with her. We spent 1.7 million last year on rock. She asked about the roads on the reservation and whether the county is maintaining the roads or if the tribe is. If so, are they receiving federal funding? We are struggling with the BIA to get answers; Kelly doesn't think it is the county's responsibility if they didn't build the bridge. Our fight is not with the tribe or the people but with the federal government and allowing the land off the reservation to be taken off the tax roll. Brett Morris asked, what about when they buy off the reservation? It is happening more and more. They are allowed to buy anything anywhere and put it into Trust. It is the federal government allowing this. Craig Bowser has taken up the fight for the county. They are hoping that their voices are louder than the county's. We are probably the only county that deals with this because of the Kansas Act.

Justin Rinkes asked how we are training our operators. Kelly answered, we are training with the best operators, and the Kansas LTAP has training that they have also been sent to. Kelly said that a blade is probably the toughest piece of equipment to learn to run and do it well. Rinkes asked, do you have quality control? Who is going around and doing quality control? Justin suggested to clean the ditches first and then lay the rock. Pruett said that's what we are trying to do now. Fred Fernkopf said that 238<sup>th</sup> road is excellent on his side of the highway. Would we be better off testing rock to see if it's better quality? Wouldn't we be better off paying for

it in the long run? Tye Lippert said, you spent 1.7 million on rock last year, but this year the budget is only \$1,000,000.00. Do you have a solution for this? Kelly said we will have more money for rock from different areas in the budget. Kelly said if they vote for the .05 sales tax in August it would help with the budget because 35% is from people that don't live in our county. Tye wants to make sure that there is money for rock. Kelly said unless someone can tell me how to gain revenue without raising taxes, then that is what it comes down to. Kelly said if the groomer is run correctly, it does a good job. A gentleman said that it is pulling up 3-inch rock and that it is the base, so he doesn't believe that it is useful. The Commissioners said they are trying to do the best we can. Fred said that the township boards would be able to tell the Commissioners if the machinery isn't used correctly. Nancy Davidson who lives in Cedar township, said the only road that has had improvements was S road between 158th-142nd to 134th to the pavement, but the rest of the roads are not good. She drives 166th every day and could lose her car to a pothole. She called and complained and nothing was done. There are natural springs that run through there. They haven't had a decent road grader since Bruce Hinkle was the operator. She never sees a road grader. She is willing to serve on the township board. Justin Rinkes said he has a good operator in his territory and asked why not run them in tandem? He suggested the average operator cleans ditches and let's put the good operators together and do an area. Shouldn't we cover 100 miles at least once a month? Someone asked about 142<sup>nd</sup> road and if it is maintained by the county. Yes, it is sprayed with dust control and therefore does not get bladed regularly. Brett replied, dust control? Nobody asked for that. Kevin Ingels, who lives on 222<sup>nd</sup> Road, said he would rather not have it since it isn't maintained. It may work if done properly, this last year was not done correctly in his opinion. He said that the county should hold a poll on the dust control on that road and see who really wants it. Kelly said when it's done correctly it holds the road together and is less maintenance and saves the county money. If they do it again, they need to blade it properly and get the potholes out. Kelly asked that anyone that wants to represent their township to please sign up with the County Clerk. Ron Kranz asked how many miles there are in Garfield township. Kelly answered, we maintain 1100 miles in the county, but he can't give the specific number for Garfield. Tena Brucken said, listening to the conversation, she hasn't heard one road

that's on the west side of 75 Hwy. Kelly asked Tena if she would like to be on the township board. Someone asked if the Commissioners thought it could be the person in charge? Kelly said we aren't here to talk about someone that isn't here to defend himself. It's not fair to talk about someone who isn't here, that's not what we are here for. Someone asked what FSA stood for: Federal Secondary Accessibility. Larry Amon asked if the grader operators have some discretion on fixing the spots in the road, he doesn't feel like he needs to call in to report something that the operator should see and fix. Someone asked if we could get fly ash from Jeffrey's and someone else said that it is not usable anymore as it has mercury in it.

Chairman Pruett thanked everyone for coming. We had several sign up to serve on the boards. The Commissioners look forward to working with the boards and making better roads for the County.

Attest:

Board of County Commissioners  
Jackson County, Kansas

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Kristie Richter  
Jackson County Clerk

Mark Pruett, 1<sup>st</sup> District

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Linda Gerhardt, 2<sup>nd</sup> District

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Keith Kelly, 3<sup>rd</sup> District