

December 23, 2024

Monday, 5:30 p.m.

The Board of Bourbon County Commissioners met in open session with all three Commissioners and the County Clerk present.

Heather Ethridge, Deb McCoy, Mike Wunderly, Tim Emerson, Anne Dare, Michael Hoyt, Clint Walker, Rachel Walker, Marita Meech, Elizabeth Meech, and Kaety Bowers were present for some or all of the meeting.

Jim opened the meeting with the flag salute.

Clifton made a motion to approve the consent agenda which includes approval of minutes from 12-19-2024 and approval of November financials. Brandon seconded the motion and all approved.

Heather Ethridge, President of West Plains and Centerville Cemeteries stated she has a problem with the cemetery plot deeds. Heather stated they have several deeds that have not been registered with the county and that she doesn't need them filed, only scanned in. Heather said the Register of Deeds office informed her it would cost \$23.00 per deed to file. Heather asked for the fees to be waived. Clifton said we would have to waive for all cemeteries and questioned if it was a state requirement to charge the fee. Brandon stated Lora Holdridge, Register of Deeds, text him and said it is a state statute that requires them to charge the fee. Jim suggested letting them talk to the Register of Deeds office and putting the matter back on the agenda in two weeks.

Deb McCoy asked the Commissioners if we follow state guidelines for the abatement process as she was informed that Bourbon County doesn't have any policies or procedures in place. Deb stated that Legacy Healthcare notarized their abatement application in March 2024 and chose the exemption reason of KSA 79-201b which is for hospitals. Deb stated they have not been operating as a hospital and questioned why they were allowed to use that exemption and who knew about the application as she does not remember it being discussed in open meeting. Deb asked if the Commissioners would do the same with the lots that Legacy broke off from the original parcel that the county donated to them in 2022. Jim stated it is hard to explain how

helpful Legacy was with getting KRI and Freeman here and that the state forgave the tax dollars.

Anne Dare said she did some digging in her documents and that BEDCO hired Rob Harrington in 2021 and the name of the organization was changed to REDI. Anne expressed her concerns regarding the amount of county funds that were being spent so quickly at the end of the year. Anne stated she has not filed a KORA request yet but questioned where the spending for this year is in relation to the past few years at the end of year. Anne said she received a report through a KORA request for the amount that Bourbon County has paid to REDI and it is \$630,000 total and she implored the Commissioners not to fund REDI and if they do to have a written contract going forward. Anne stated she wished the Sheriff could use the in person in house for budget help instead of paying \$34,000 for a financial advisor. Anne said she remembers when the survey for the lot behind the EMS building was approved in open session and she requested the invoice for the services and was informed that Bourbon County has not received an invoice. Anne closed her statement urging the Commissioners to be careful with tax dollars.

Michael Hoyt said he would speak later about the redistricting and said that he thought there was some confusion about him circulating a petition and leading the redistricting committee and asked why it was a bad thing.

Pete Owenby asked if REDI requested the \$75,000 during budget time. Clifton stated they put the money for REDI in a contingency fund along with the soil conservation district. Pete asked if we had a contract with REDI and Jim stated no, it was just a verbal vote for funding. Pete asked if the City of Fort Scott or USD 234 were supporting REDI. Jim stated he was unaware of anybody supporting REDI.

Kelly Perry stated she is a small business owner in Bronson. Kelly said that there is an organization at Kansas State University that could redistrict the maps and possibly save some tax dollars. Kelly stated she does not think that funding should be spent on REDI. Kelly stated that REDI is a 501(c)(3) and that due to their stated charitable purposes she does not think it allows them to bill us for economic development. Kelly stated she served on the REDI board and that she had to sign an NDA but suggested looking at their by-laws and charters as well as looking into if they are legally able to bill us for economic development. Kelly stated she tries to be non-biased and to be good to people while not being self-serving and that she has not spoken out due to the fear of backlash. Kelly stated if anybody had any questions to reach out to her.

Eric Bailey, Public Works Director, stated he has a utility permit application for Dale Jackson for 160th Street south of Wagon Road. Eric said a few years ago the utilities were run but were not in conduit and now is asking to redo and put the utilities in conduit. Brandon asked if they would bore or trench the road. Eric said they would trench the gravel road and that Mr. Jackson owns the parcels on both sides of the road. Brandon made a motion to give Dale Jackson a utility permit for 160th Street south of Wagon road for utilities across the road since both parcels are his. Clifton seconded the motion and all approved.

Jennifer Hawkins, County Clerk, asked to amend the agenda to speak about an invoice. Clifton made a motion to amend the agenda to allow the County Clerk to speak. Brandon seconded the motion and all approved. Jennifer stated she received an invoice this afternoon from KWORCC who is our workers compensation insurance. Jennifer explained that the way we are billed is an estimated premiums amount is sent at the beginning of the year then our account is audited and any additional premiums will be billed. Jennifer stated the estimated premiums invoice for 2025 is \$111,375.00 which is \$27,488.00 more than last year. Jennifer stated the additional premiums over the last few years have been anywhere from \$6,000 to over \$21,000. Jennifer said the total amount of premiums paid to KWORCC in 2024 was \$92,443.00, so during the budget process a total of \$110,000 was budgeted for 2025. Jennifer stated she wanted the Commissioners to be aware of the increased amount due.

Jim asked if the Commissioners had any questions regarding the Freeman agreements that were passed out during last week's meeting. Clifton made a motion to accept the MOU and to allow the Chairman to sign it with Freeman of Fort Scott. Brandon seconded the motion and all approved. Jim said he would sign the agreement and told the County Clerk that Justin would like a copy. Jim said they went over the equipment list with Dr. Nichols, Justin, and Freeman and that it is listed in the equipment agreement handed out last week. Brandon made a motion to approve the equipment list agreement with Freeman of Fort Scott and to allow the Chairman to sign it. Clifton seconded the motion and all approved. Jim said he needs to amend the agenda to talk about a letter that Freeman needs for the IRS. It was determined that the letter would fall under Freeman agreements, so the agenda was not amended. Brandon asked if the letter is for their tax exemption. Jim said the letter states that Freeman intends to be operation by 6-1-25 and Clifton added it says funding is contingent upon the 6-1-25 date. Clifton made a motion to approve the letter Freeman needs for the IRS and to allow Chairman Harris to sign it. Brandon seconded the motion and all approved.

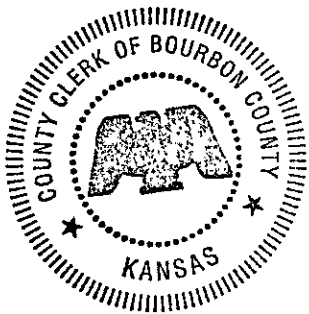
Sheriff Bill Martin was back with Ben Hart from Baker Tilly. Jim asked the other Commissioners if they had any questions after the discussion at last week's meeting. Jim said that Susan sent them reports that showed the County Counselor had \$21,800 left in his budget, there is \$64,000 in the courthouse maintenance fund, and \$50,000 in the Commission contingency fund. Brandon said he doesn't know why we need to pay for two bookkeepers. Jim said that next year the CFO position will go away. Bill asked Ben Hart to explain the reasoning. Mr. Hart said there are two ways of looking at budget numbers and that he would handle things a different way and will have input from the elected official. Mr. Hart said that the levy for the Sheriff's budget has gone down the last few years even though operations go up. Jim said that County Counselor Meeks has informed him that Bill can enter into a contract without the Commission's approval. Clifton made a motion to transfer \$36,000 to Sheriff Martin out of the Commission contingency fund by the end of business tomorrow. Jim asked Clifton to add to his motion that if for some reason that money has been moved to take it out of the building maintenance fund as well as the counselor fund. Clifton added "that if the money is mysteriously missing then that money be taken out of the building maintenance fund to transfer to Sheriff Martin to pay Baker Tilly for services and/or the county counselor fund." Brandon said he had a question. Jim stated he had a motion and Clifton added "so, anyway \$36,000 transferred to Sheriff Martin not out of his accounts out of the accounts I stated so that he can hire Baker Tilly to assist him in 2025, by the end of business day tomorrow." Jim asked if the contract will be December to December? Ben Hart stated that was correct. Jim seconded the motion. Brandon questioned why the amount requested this week was \$36,000 when last week it was stated \$34,000? Mr. Hart said the agreement you have has never changed it is \$3,000 per month. Brandon opposed the motion. The motion passed 2-1.

Jim requested a 10-minute executive session for non-elected personnel. Clifton made a motion to go into a 10-minute executive session under KSA 75-4319 (b)(1) to discuss personnel matters of individual non-elected personnel to protect their privacy to include the three Commissioners and Patty Love and will return at 6:32. Brandon seconded the motion and all approved. Clifton made a motion to resume normal session at 6:32 with no action. Brandon seconded the motion and all approved.


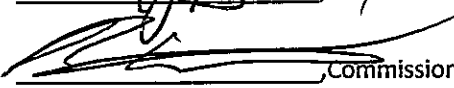

Jim said he had a contractor call today and they want to be on the agenda next week for a possible housing development for. Jim handed out an MOU for the other Commissioners to review for next week and said it pertains to the possible opportunity for some new housing south of town. Jim said it is estimated 20 to 25 houses and that the company will be here next week to do a presentation. Samuel Tran asked if the name of the company could be released and Jim stated it is Middle Water LLC out of Overland Park.

Michael Hoyt said he received letters of interest for those who wish to be on the redistricting committee. Mr. Hoyt gave the list of names to the Commissioner and said he would like to step back from the committee. Clifton said that SAM will do the redistricting and present the Commissioners with three maps for them to choose from. Jim said he would like the committee to get together for the redistricting. Brandon asked why not do it all at once have the committee present when the maps are given next Monday then open it up to the public. Kay Tran asked if the public would be allowed to speak and Jim said yes, they would. Pete Owenby asked what the state statute outlines for the process. Brandon said it is the Commissioner's decision and then it will be sent to the state to file the new map. Jim said he is confident that they can make a decision next week. Brandon read the list of names provided by Michael Hoyt and they are: Kelly Perry, Jim Sackett, and Ron Miller for district one, Josh Jones, Don and Jean Tucker, and Pete Allen for district two, and JD Handy for district 3. Kaety Bowers asked to be added to the list.

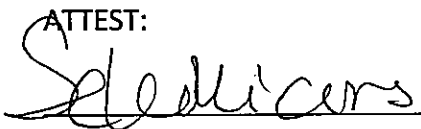
Jim made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:42. Brandon seconded the motion and all approved.



THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF BOURBON COUNTY, KANSAS


_____, Chairman

_____, Commissioner

_____, Commissioner

ATTEST:



Selena Williams, Bourbon County Deputy Clerk

12-30-2024 Approved Date

