



SHERMAN SMITH/Kansas Reflector

Linus Thuston, left, walks with his defense attorney, Scott Poor, as they leave the Neosho County District Court after a hearing Wednesday.

County Attorney retires while facing charges

By SHERMAN SMITH
Kansasreflector.com

ERIE — A rural Kansas prosecutor retired from office this week after being accused of numerous crimes, disciplined for telling a woman she owed him a sexual favor and working out an undisclosed plea deal with state authorities.

Linus Thuston, the Neosho County attorney for the past 12 years, retired at 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, according to a letter filed with the county clerk's office and obtained by Kansas Reflector.

"It has been my distinct pleasure to serve the citizens of Neosho County as County Attorney," Thuston wrote in the letter. "I have worked in government service in Kansas the majority of my adult life. My wife and I prayed in 2020, and decided that I would retire in 2024."

Kansas Reflector also obtained a previously undisclosed document from the Kansas Disciplinary Administrator's Office that reveals Thuston received an informal admonishment in April for requesting the sexual favor. See CHARGES, Page Three

City of Erie leaving grocery biz

By EDDIE HIBBS III
Record Publisher & Owner

Council agrees to lease grocery store

The City of Erie will officially leave the grocery business at the end of the month, and council members couldn't be more pleased.

Despite numerous attempts and efforts, the Erie Market under city ownership was devouring city funds faster than Cookie Monster of Sesame Street fame with a plate of cookies in front of him.

The grocery store account was hardly the only city account struggling to stay in the black recently (see related budget story also appearing on the front page), but it was the one account the city council had the most options, including selling or leasing the building and equipment.

In early spring, the council opted to advertise the availability of the Erie Market. The council ran a business card size add through the state-wide program offered by the Kansas Press Association via The Erie Record. The city received only one official inquiry. One response was all it took.

Jason Stephens of River Grocery, who owns two other grocery stores (one in Nebraska and one in Kansas), visited the store with his partners. Apparently, they saw the potential in Erie's lone grocery store.

For weeks, the council met in extended executive sessions, discussing the proposal. During Monday's meeting, the council and Stephens signed a one-year lease for River Grocery to operate the store, beginning Sept. 1.

After a 10-minute executive session with just city officials followed by a 5-minute executive session with River Grocery officials, the council announced the deal.

"We are closing the store Aug. 30," said council man Jason "JT" Thompson, "but we are leasing it out for the first year."

Some of the highlights from the three-page lease contract:

- The lessee agrees to purchase all non-perishable inventory items for the wholesale cost of those items. The parties acknowledge the total wholesale



Submitted photo

Erie Mayor Lester "Butch" Klingenberg and Jason Stephens shake hands after the signing of a lease agreement for the Erie Market.

cost of non-perishable inventory items will be determined by scanning each of the items into the point-of-sale system.

- The parties agree that Lessor shall conduct a store-wide sale prior to the commencement

of the lease in order to reduce the overall number of inventory items on hand and to sell the perishable inventory items that Lessee will not be purchasing.

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FROM FRONT PAGE

City reviews budget, 2023 audit

By EDDIE HIBBS III
Record Publisher & Owner

Erie City Council members have a lot to think about before the next regularly scheduled meeting Monday, Aug. 26. It is the night the council is expected to approve the 2025 budget. The council approved the publication of the prepared

budget at Monday's meeting. The budget is required to be posted to the newspaper of record (Notice of Budget Hearing), which is The Erie Record (and appears on Page 7 of this edition), and must have 10 days between the publication and the meeting for approval of the budget.

Residents are allowed to share their concerns or support at the budget hearing. But

so much changed Monday night as it relates to the 2025 budget. The council signed a contract to lease the Erie Market to Jason Stephens for one year, starting Sept. 1.

That drastically changes the budget, which in all likelihood, will have to be adjusted. Also, the 2025 budget had roughly a 5-mill levy increase to the property taxes.

See BUDGET, Page Two

We are happy to announce that a generous Donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, has Pledged to make a monthly contribution to the City of Erie of \$4,444 for up to twelve months in order to pay the monthly debt service on the Erie Grocery Store during the present rental arrangement with the new private grocery store operator. The Donor has indicated these monthly contributions could continue after twelve months at the discretion of the Donor. Further, in the event the grocery store closes, and the property needs to be put to a different public use, the Donor would like to have some input as to the use to be made and would consider continuing contribution to the alternative use.

This is great news for the citizens of Erie. Without this Donor's generosity in donating the amount necessary to pay the monthly debt service obligation on the grocery store, the City was facing the very real necessity of presently having to increase utility rates to all utility customers in Erie, regardless of whether the grocery store was closed or remained open. This City Council is well aware that many Erie residents live on a limited fixed budget and how financially difficult a rate increase would be. Thanks to this Donation it appears any present utility rate increase can be avoided.

The City of Erie deeply appreciates the Donor's Pledge and willingness to help out Erie in trying to save the availability of a much needed grocery store in this community.



MAYOR LESTER KLINGENBERG AND COUNCIL MEMBERS STEVE MAHER
CINDY FRIEDRICH, TEREASA DEMERITT, KYLE BUNTIN AND JASON THOMPSON