

RAHJES

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“That is one thing I hope will continue—the relationship between cities and counties and the State legislature. I hope we continue to do that and that we can work together because we really serve the same constituency. The difference is I come to Ellis about half a dozen, maybe 10 times a year. You all see them every day. They walk in your businesses. You see them at church. You see them Saturday night out at supper. So we all need to make sure we communicate better,” said Rahjes.

When asked about the property tax relief, Rahjes stated that although property tax relief was the topic legislators heard most about over the past year, frustratingly the Kansas Senate and House had different ideas what “tax relief” was.

“So what we did was what we can do as the State. What the State does is one and a half mills and that goes to the schools and then for fixing up our State properties, primarily the university campuses,” said Rahjes. He stated that he continues to work for ways the State can relieve stress on counties and municipalities.

“We as a State complain about the management of the Federal government. Well, we need to do better with the mandates we send back to our counties,” said Rahjes. He stated that he will fight again next year for a publications bill that allow taxing entities to save money by posting legal notices on their websites. “If you want to still use your paper, we’re not saying you can’t. But for those who are trying to save money, even a \$1,000 or \$2,000, they could utilize their websites. “That’s one of those the things we’re trying to do, little by little,” Rahjes said.

Rahjes acknowledged concerns exist about tax changes passed by the 2025 Kansas Legislature and stated that the great thing about the legislature is that if a mistake was made, it could be changed next year.

“We know that if agricultural land becomes taxed the way it does in Nebraska, people won’t buying hardware. They won’t be buying a whole lot of things. Sometimes it’s one of those things you have to have in order to move forward. It’s absolutely great if you can say this doesn’t make sense. But then I am no good to you, no good to anybody because then most conversations won’t happen. Knowing there are safeguards and guardrails there, then we can look at it and whether it works,” said Rahjes.

Rahjes stated that he fights “model legislation” because he wants Kansas solutions.

“I don’t a lock-step concept. Just because it works in one state doesn’t mean it will work here,” said Rahjes. He added that he is occasionally accused of not being a team player for this stance or put in “time out.” “Like everything, all sides have special interests, but what has disappointed me is when we have legislation that is just handed in without really knowing how it will work with current laws we have. It may work good in simulation, but in real life, does it really work,” Rahjes said. He added that the budget must also be taken into account.

“I think it’s going to be that way. I don’t know if she [the Governor] is going to call us in for Special Session. I know revenues came in okay but not maybe as strong as expected. So, if we might need to cut more in the Ste budget. I’m guessing all states, counties and cities are going to have to tighten up a little bit more. And so what that means is that you do the basics---you do protection, and you do maintenance on your roads and your streets. After that, it’s going to be a challenge. We’re all going to have to face that because there’s a lot of uncertainty going on a few 1000 miles east of here. That could change tomorrow and the next day. That’s what we’re all trying to deal with,” Rahjes said.

Rahjes chairs the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee and is also a member of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Budget and Appropriation Committees as well as the Joint Committee on Special Claims Against the State. Visit https://www.kslegislature.gov/li/b2025_26/members/rep_rahjes_ken_1/ for more information.

32nd/33rd & 13th Projects “moving right along” despite recent rains

By **Gaille Pike**
Special to the Hays Daily News

Deputy City Manager Collin Bielser indicated in his April 24, 2025 Progress Report to the City Commission and again this week in follow-up comments to The Hays Daily News on April 29, 2025 that despite recent rains both the 32nd/33rd and 13th Street Reconstruction Projects are on schedule.

“On 33rd St, reconstruction is moving right along. Currently small sections of curb and gutter have been replaced on the north side of the street and replacement of the pavement has begun,” said Bielser.

He explained that only east-bound traffic is allowed while the contractor is removing and replacing the north lane. “They are making good progress and hope to move to the south lane in about three weeks or so, pending weather. While concrete is being removed and replaced on the south lane, traffic will only be west bound.

The project’s deadline is end of September,” Bielser said.

No street parking is permitted adjacent to the project during construction and motorists are urged to use caution. For questions, contact the Project Contract, Vogts-Parga Construction LLC, at 316-320-6650 or the Office of Project Management at 785-628-7350.

“The 13th St. reconstruction continues to progress smoothly. There’s a lot of dirt work and storm water infrastructure on that project. And of course, with all the rain, it might take a few days to dry out to get back in there,” said Bielser. He noted that currently traffic is one-way west bound but that the contractor hopes to eventually open traffics to two-way traffic.

“However, at certain times later in the project, it will have to be reduced to one lane again. I do not have an estimated time when those traffic control measures will be switched, but the roadway must be open by the time school starts,” Bielser said. For more information or if there are any questions, contact CC Steel at 218-770-8286 or the

City Office of Project Management at 785-628-7380.

Last Fall [Sept. 2024] APAC-Kansas was awarded the \$3,032,606.57 contract to reconstruct East 13th St. from Anthony Drive to Commerce Parkway before the Fall start of the 2025-2026 USD489 School Year, a joint project between the City and USD489.

Prior to the City Commission’s acceptance of APAC’s bid, Public Works (PW) Director Jesse Rohr detailed the City’s side of the project which includes reconstruction with mill and overlay of the entire roadway from Anthony Drive to Commerce Parkway, widening sections along E. 13th Street from two to three lanes and installation of an 8 ft. wide multi-use path along the entire north side.

The City’s share of the Total Project Cost is \$2,269,156 dollars. The City’s \$2,330,000 Total Budget for the reconstruction of 13th Street includes \$730,000 from Commission Capital Reserves, a \$400,000 Ellis County Contribution and a \$1.2M Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) Cost-Share Grant.

May Community Events

By **Gaille Pike**
Special to the Hays Daily News

Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) Executive Director Melissa Dixon opened her remarks at the April 1 Hays City Press Briefing by noting that this month is a very busy month in terms of events scheduled in the community. Before CVB Executive Director Dixon highlighted a selection of this months “Hays Happenings,” she reminded residents that a complete listing can be found on the Events Calendar can be found on the Events Calendar at visithays.com.

CVB Executive Director Dixon remarked on all the entertainment opportunities available this month including the Fort Hays State University (FHSU) Spring Band Concert on May 8th and two events at The Fox Theater: the COLD

Anniversary Concert Tour on May 24th and John Caparulo’s “Mad Cap Comedy” on May 30th.

“Out at RPM Speedway, they’ll have their regular races on May 10th and on May 16th the Hays Public Library will host their Annual Cowboy Poetry Contest,” said CVB Executive Director Dixon. She added that May 24th is opening day for the Downtown Hays Market which will take place 7:30-11 am every Saturday through October at the Downtown Pavillion.

“Another new event, “Picnic in the PARC,” will take on May 24th to showcase the Art Park and Splash Pad from 11 a.m.- 2 p.m. And May 31st is the Hays Aquatic Park opening day so get your early bird passes now,” CVB Executive Director Dixon said. She commented that a variety of community events are scheduled over the Memorial Day holiday weekend including a Memorial Day Observance Ceremony at 10 a.m. on May 26th at Veteran’s Park.

CVB Executive Director Dixon stated at the Bickle Schmidt Sports Complex, approximately 45 teams are expected to participate in the May 30th – June 1st USSSA Summer Blast Fastpitch Softball Tournament.

“There’s also the High Plains Mental Health Fundraiser: Masquerade on Main on May 31st. And it is graduation season, so I have these reminders for you. KAMS, Kansas Academy of Math and Science will have their completion on May 10th in the FHSU Union. FHSU Tech-North Central will be having their graduation on May 15th at Gross Memorial Coliseum. May 14th and 15th, FHSU will have their Spring Commencement, also at Gross. And then on the 18th, Hays High will hold its graduation at 1:30 pm at Gross Coliseum and TMP’s graduation will be at 3 p.m.,” said CVB Executive Director Dixon.

Visit <https://www.visithays.com/> for a complete listing of February Community Events.

Rain a boon for County Road maintenance, extends Catharine Road construction/closures

By **Gaille Pike**
Special to the Hays Daily News

On May 1, Ellis County Public Works (PW) Director Brendan Mackay stated that over-all County roads are in “great shape,” with a few isolated areas where heavy rainfalls have resulted in edges of the road washing away and debris from the fields washing and plugging the drainage structures. He explained that these rains did slow the Catharine Road Projects because all of the territory operators were needed in their districts.

“This recent moisture has been very good for

the roads,” said Mackay. He stated that moisture is needed for building purposes because it allows the material to be compacted and hold its shape.

“It’s like building a sand castle in a sandbox or beach. If you try and build a castle/structure with the dry material it will fall apart when the forms are removed. If the material has the optimal moisture level, the shape will stay when the forms are removed and will stay together better as the material dries out,” Mackay said.

On Apr. 30, 2025, The Ellis County Public Works Road & Bridge

Division announced updated project completion dates for three road construction projects on Catharine Road. The road construction project taking place in the 2400 block of Catharine Road is now due to be completed by Thursday, May 8th.

The road construction project taking place in the 2300 block of Catharine Road is due to be completed by Monday, May 12th. And finally, the road construction project taking place in the 2200 block of Catharine Road is due to be completed by Monday, May 19th. These updated project completion dates are pending

weather conditions. “All three blocks will be closed to through traffic. The closed area will from Codell Avenue to Cathedral Ave,” said Ellis County Public Works Director Brendan Mackay.

Motorists traveling in the affected area during the closure are advised to use caution and alternate routes of travel until the project is complete and the Ellis County PW Road & Bridge Division appreciates the public’s cooperation during this project.

Please direct any questions to the Ellis County PW Road & Bridge Division at 785-628-9455.

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