



—STORMS ROLL THROUGH—



ABOVE: Tree branches were scattered across the campus of Sterling College and around various locations in town Tuesday morning following a storm packing strong winds and dumping 1.15 inches of rain.

BELOW: An additional 2.22 inches of rain with small hail caused streetlights to turn on in the afternoon on Tuesday.



2026 wheat harvest stalls after a slow start

Central Prairie Co-op's Grain Division Manager Jason Dale reports they are just scratching the surface of the 2025 harvest and with a total of 3.37 inches of rain reported between Monday and Tuesday he expects everything to be shut down for several days.

Dale reported taking in the first load of the season on June 10, but the first day that all locations were receiving grain was Monday. Farmers worked late trying to get as much cut as possible before the rains set in overnight.

Yields have been reported between 40-60 bushels to the acre and test weights have been about 59-60 pounds per bushel, but the rains may change that in the future.

Button, t-shirt sales begin

Sterling Chamber Main Street (SCMS) has announced the sale of this year's Old Fashioned 4th of July t-shirts and buttons, featuring the design of fourth-grader Riah Van Veldhuizen. The t-shirts are priced at \$20, while the buttons are available for \$10 each from Tee 9 Design.

Those interested can visit tee9designs.com to order or call 620-904-7002. Buttons and t-shirts will also be on sale at the Chamber Main Street booth at Sterling Lake on July 3 and 4.

The commemorative

button provides entry into the Thursday, July 3, Late Night Swim at the Sterling pool. On Friday, July 4, button holders will be able to ride the SCMS train and eat at the community barbecue 6:30-7:30 p.m. Additionally, attendees wearing their buttons will have the chance to participate in a \$100 drawing at 7:55 p.m. (must be present to win).

A "draft" schedule of events can be found at www.sterlingkschamber.com under the "Old Fashioned Fourth" tab or call 620-904-7002.

Music takes centerstage for Sterling summer show

This summer, music takes center stage—literally—as the Sterling Community Theatre Troupe brings the heartland to life with "The Spitfire Grill – the Musical," a soul-stirring story wrapped in rich harmonies, raw emotion and the down-home sound of Americana. The show will be presented Thursday and Saturday, July 3 and 5 at 7:30 p.m., with a Sunday matinee on July 6 at 2 p.m., all at the Betsy Dutton Theatre at Sterling High School.

With music and book by James Valcq and lyrics and book by Fred Alley, The Spitfire Grill is based on the 1996 film of the same name. It blends bluegrass, folk, gospel and country influences to tell a moving story of hope, healing and second chances in a small Midwestern town.

What makes this production especially unique is its live musical presence onstage. Instead of being tucked away in an orchestra pit or in front of the stage, the musicians for The Spitfire Grill will perform from a raised "loft" platform upstage behind the set, fully visible to the audience throughout the performance.

"Music provides the heart and soul of this show. So, it only makes sense to place the musicians and the music upstage elevated above the action. We

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City board approves interlocal animal control facility

By Janie Perico

Sterling Commissioners approved the proposal for a shared Animal Control facility with the city of Lyons at Monday night's meeting.

As discussed in the previous City Commission meeting, the veterinary clinic will no longer provide animal control services effective July 31. This change prompted the push for a shared arrangement between Lyons and Sterling for a new animal shelter.

The estimated cost of the project is totaled at \$26,000, with Sterling responsible for purchasing the structure—a shipping container—at an estimated cost of \$11,000, while Lyons will cover the installation expenses.

The basic terms of the agree-

ment remain unchanged, with the rate being \$15 per animal per day charged by Lyons for any animals housed at the facility. For comparison, the city of Sterling currently pays approximately \$800 per year for animal control services. The Lyons Vet Clinic will continue to provide euthanasia and cremation services.

The terms of the agreement allow for additional jurisdictions to use the facility, with a \$1,000 startup fee required from each.

According to the terms, the facility will be officially owned and operated by Lyons. They will be required to comply with all governmental regulations related to animal control, and will be responsible for any possible damages to the facility.

The motion to approve the agreement was made by Dicko Jones and seconded by Todd Rowland; the motion was approved unanimously.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Received the Fiscal Year 2024 financial statement and audit.
- Discussed the Fiscal Year 2026 Water Fund budget.
- Approved fireworks application for Rainbow Fireworks, Inc.
- Approved special event permit for the Sterling Old Fashioned Fourth of July.
- Approved special event permit for the Fourth of July Street Dance.
- Approved fireworks stand application for Sterling Athletics Fireworks.

—COMMUNITY VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL CELEBRATION—



ABOVE: Pre-K students enjoy a foam party on the final day of Vacation Bible School Friday.



LEFT: The "Foam Daddy" sprays foam over the elementary age students during the celebration.

RC commissioners discuss RCECC staffing shortage

By Rene Wilson

Commissioners heard a quarterly update from Emergency Communications Director Josh Michaelis Monday morning, with staffing issues topping his concerns.

The Rice County Emergency Communications Center (RCECC) currently has eight dispatchers, down three from a full staff.

Michaelis did report that he had interviews scheduled this week, but noted they could only train a couple dispatchers at the same time.

He discussed concerns over wages, noting Rice County's starting wage of \$16.92 per hour was considerably lower than other counties similar in size to Rice County that average \$19.20. Surrounding counties, including Barton County (\$18), Reno County (\$19.96) and McPherson County (20.01) also offer higher wages.

Michaelis also noted one of his most recent departures was an employee leaving for a 9-5

job that made \$21 per hour.

In further justifying the need for a wage increase, Michaelis noted that the center's number of 911 phone calls has increased by 23% since 2022 and dispatchers are handling 46% more calls than they did in 2011.

After surveying the agencies serve by the emergency communications center, including law enforcement, fire and EMS, Michaelis reported 24% said they had experienced delays due to staffing issues at the center and 70% felt the RCECC workers were being stretched.

For his 2026 budget proposal Michaelis said he would like to see a \$3.03 increase to the base pay bringing the starting wage to \$19.95, with the same increase to current staff members.

Commissioners agreed that changes were definitely needed in the 2026 budget, and wondered if it might be necessary to make a mid-year change to fill in

the gaps and questioned what that would do to the department's current budget.

No action was taken at this time.

In other business commissioners:

- Updated the county's travel requisition form and adopted a business travel policy with reimbursements to mirror what the state of Kansas establishes each year for mileage and meal allowances of up to \$80 per day (\$20 breakfast, \$25 lunch, \$35 supper) for travel and training over the standard workday. Meal expenses will be reimbursed with a copy of the receipts;
- Approved a \$696 bill to Birzer Funeral Home for transfer of a deceased person to Kansas City for autopsy;
- Approved a quote from First Group for liability insurance at the airport for \$1,815 with 25% being reimbursed by the City of Lyons. The quote is an \$86 increase over last year;
- Approved a payment

of \$4,640.05 to P.B. Hoidale for the airport fuel system to be reimbursed through the Kansas Airport Improvement Program;

•Approved a paying a bill from Reach Solutions for the purchase of a laptop for Economic Development as previously approved for \$1,139;

•Approved a request by Harvest Hub Director Bill Tillman to move the farmer's market day from Sunday to Saturday;

•Discussed the need for an appointment to the Center for Counseling board;

•Approved a tax abatement of \$70 resulting in a refund of \$35;

•Heard from Clerk of the District Court Jane Hrabik that she is working to increase public access to records by adding indexes of digitized files to the county's website; and,

•Met in executive session to discuss employee salaries for non-elected personnel.

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