

N.S. approves ordinance updates, drainage resolution

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Managing Editor

NEW STRAWN — The New Strawn City Council approved an ordinance update, authorized legal action related to a drainage easement and moved forward with City Hall remodeling plans during its regular meeting Thursday, Feb. 12, at City Hall.

Mayor Jeanne Haas presided over the meeting. Council members present included Stephanie Baker, Butch Gilkison, Dan Haller, Ty Skillman and Deb Stuke. Others present were Maintenance Operator Steven Dwight, City Attorney Philip Wright, City Clerk Lana Johnson and Code Enforcement Officer Ray Wards.

Gary Haehn addressed the council regarding street lighting, drainage concerns and the proposed City Hall remodeling project.

Haehn said early morning conditions in the Arrowhead Hills area are dark when children are picked up for school and suggested the city consider installing solar-powered streetlights for safety. He also questioned whether remodeling City Hall was the best use of funds, suggesting the city consider constructing a new building at another location instead.

Haehn spoke about long-standing drainage issues near his property, stating the issue has been discussed for several years and that water accumulation following snowmelt has made portions of his property unusable. Haehn asked the council to address the matter and requested a timeline for action.

Zoning Administrator Brian Hanson approved two zoning permits: a 55-foot by 40-foot addition at 348 Hillview Drive for Giles and a 50-foot by 40-foot residence at Kafir and Lakeview for Marc Glades.

Council members reviewed the city's extra-territorial zoning area, particularly the Country Estates development between New Strawn and Burlington. Planning board representative Robert Harkrader said extra-territorial zoning allows the city to maintain control over development immediately outside city limits, noting that eliminating it would shift authority to Coffey County.

Discussion included accessory building regu-

lations and special use permits, which account for much of the planning board's activity. No action was taken, but council members indicated potential revisions could be considered in the future.

Code Enforcement Officer Ray Wards reported addressing a recent dog-related issue and resolving a parking concern. Additional nuisance property reviews will take place as weather improves, noting many residents have been working to improve properties.

Maintenance Operator Steven Dwight reported on park and equipment needs and recent repairs. The council approved obtaining quotes for park restroom repairs and for the purchase of a lawn mower. Dwight repaired a small leak since the last meeting.

City Clerk Lana Johnson is preparing for the city's annual audit scheduled for Feb. 18. She provided updates on a computer upgrade, which came in under budget. Johnson presented information on potential online payment services, with additional information expected next month.

The council unanimously approved an agreement with American Legal Publishing to host and maintain the city's online code of ordinances in a searchable format. The agreement includes a \$595 setup fee, a \$595 annual hosting fee and a 2 percent annual increase. The code has been available online, but not in a searchable format.

City Attorney Philip Wright presented Ordinance 2026-02 regarding the MT Networks franchise agreement. The ordinance corrects language in the existing ordinance related to franchise fees and compliance with current law regarding internet-based services. The council unanimously approved the ordinance.

The council and Haas entered a five-minute and a 10-minute executive session, both for attorney-client consultation as allowed under the Kansas Open Meetings Act, with Wright, Johnson and Dwight also present.

Upon returning to open session, the council unanimously adopted Resolution No. 2026-109, authorizing the city attorney to file a quiet title action regarding a drainage easement adjacent to 102 Seneca Circle and confirming compensation terms under

the city attorney's contract for professional services outside the scope of routine services.

Mayor Haas provided an update on the Jan. 20 City Hall remodel and finance work session. Council members discussed proposed changes including painting trim and baseboards and making plan adjustments before bidding. The council approved advertising for bids for the remodeling project, including alternate options discussed during the work session, with a bid deadline of May 7. Council members noted the city does not currently have funding available to construct a new building, making renovation the preferred option at this time.

The council scheduled a budget preparation workshop for 6 p.m. Tuesday, April 28.

Council members authorized Mayor Haas to sign a letter of support for the Coffey County Rural Champions Trails Grant application.

New Strawn has been awarded a Hazard Mitigation Assistance grant, which will allow the purchase of a generator for the community building. The council approved the purchase of a 28-kilowatt Generac generator from Blue Dot for emergency power needs at the community building at a cost of \$18,800. The grant will pay 75% of the cost. The mayor was also authorized to sign the Hazardous Mitigation Grant agreement.

Committee and department reports included updates on finance and economic development, community center improvements, utilities and

Storm

Continued from Page 1

summer storm season.

For those unable to attend the in-person session, a virtual Storm Spotter Talk will also be offered March 30 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Participants can register online in advance for the virtual presentation.

Officials encourage residents, especially those living in rural areas or who frequently travel during severe weather, to attend the training to better understand storm safety and reporting procedures.

For more information, contact Coffey County Emergency Management at 620-364-2721.

Health advisory, safety tips for prescribed fire season in Flint Hills

TOPEKA — The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) reminds Kansans that March and April are when large areas of the state's rangelands are burned, especially within the Flint Hills.

Prescribed fire is a tool used by landowners and managers to help preserve the tallgrass prairie ecosystem, control invasive species, reduce woody encroachment from species such as Eastern Red Cedar, and provide better forage for cattle. Prescribed burning also reduces the risk of wildfires and is effective in managing rangeland resources. Smoke from the burns can influence the air quality of downwind areas. The use of smoke management techniques is vital to reducing air quality and health impacts.

KDHE activated the Kansas smoke modeling tool on March 1, prior to widespread burning in the Flint Hills. The computer models use fire data and current weather conditions to predict the potential contribution of smoke and air quality impacts to downwind areas. There are approximately 2.1 million acres burned on average in the Flint Hills of Kansas and Oklahoma each year.

"We are entering the 16th year that we have been able to provide this important tool for the prescribed

fire community," Douglas Watson, meteorologist and KDHE Bureau of Air, said. "We continue to encourage ranchers and land managers to utilize smoke modeling resources, such as the smoke modeling tool to mitigate potential air quality impacts."

Prescribed burns release large amounts of particulate matter and other pollutants that can form ground-level ozone. Particulate matter and ozone can cause health problems, even in healthy individuals. Common health problems include: burning eyes, runny nose, coughing, and illnesses such as bronchitis. People with respiratory conditions, cardiovascular diseases, children and elderly are more vulnerable to experience symptoms.

Steps to protect your health on days when smoke is present in your community include:

- ▶ Healthy people should limit or avoid strenuous outdoor exercise.
- ▶ Vulnerable people need to remain indoors.
- ▶ Keep indoor air clean by closing doors and windows and running air conditioners with air filters.
- ▶ Stay hydrated by drinking lots of water.
- ▶ Contact your doctor if you have symptoms such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath

or severe fatigue.

For more information about the prescribed burning in the Flint Hills, the Flint Hills Smoke Management Plan, April burn restrictions, and the smoke modeling tool, visit The Kansas Flint Hills Smoke Management Website.

Waverly

Continued from Page 1

were approved. Major expenses included \$49,335 to Crow Moddie Chevrolet for the 2026 Chevy work truck and \$20,690 to the Kansas State Treasurer for the city's water bond payment.

Jan. 21 Special Meeting

During the 45-minute special session Jan. 21, council approved Cassie Bailey's renewal application for Grand Central Station Inc. to sell cereal malt beverages.

Council discussed sidewalk and pathway needs, including improvements along Sixth Street from Dane Street west to the Heck Addition, as well as potential culvert replacements along Fourth, Fifth and Sixth streets. No action was taken.

Funding options for infrastructure in the Heck Addition were discussed, but no motions were made.

water usage, street maintenance planning and preparations for Strawnfest. Council members discussed addressing a major Decker Street project next year and to address less costly parking lot repairs this year.

The council discussed

potential revisions to the city's animal ordinance, including moving away from breed-specific restrictions toward a dangerous-animal designation based on behavior. The city attorney will review the ordinance and bring recommendations back to

the council.

The council approved the consent agenda, including the Jan. 8 meeting minutes, warrants dated Jan. 6 through Feb. 9 totaling \$26,634.59, January payroll totaling \$11,881.13 and a plumbing license for Cook's Plumbing.

County

Continued from Page 1

and Virginia Mefford, 715 S. Sixth St., Burlington, whose garage was destroyed by fire. Stuke said the Meffords suffered a total loss of the garage and its contents and are rebuilding.

Commissioners approved an ag lease agreement for approximately 242 acres at 1234 Old Highway 50, Lebo, between Coffey County and Aaron Skillman. The lease covers the 2026 calendar year and ends no later than Dec. 31, 2026.

Brown met with commissioners to discuss Resolution No. 760-B regarding county burn regulations.

Brown reported the fire district currently has 115 volunteers, down from its typical 125 to 130, and operates 52 pieces of apparatus countywide. Over the past 10 years, the district has averaged 679 calls per year, with an additional 30 to 40 grass fire calls per month in March and April.

He and Bowie raised questions about whether the existing burn resolution clearly applies within city limits and suggested updates to clarify enforcement and potential penalties. Bowie noted that burn ban violations could be prosecuted in district court and suggested financial penalties may be more effective than jail time.

Brown reviewed the burn permit process, explaining that permits are available at fire stations,

libraries and city halls and that residents are asked to notify dispatch before and after burning.

No action was taken, but Bowie will work with Brown to review and potentially update the resolution language.

Presley provided an update on the county's communications tower project, reporting that the LeRoy tower and shelter have been built, the Lebo tower has been built, and the Gridley tower is nearing completion. The shelters should be delivered to the Lebo and Gridley sites by March 11. Completion is anticipated in April.

The board entered executive session at 9:44 a.m. for 15 minutes with Bowie, Tatman and David Lendo to discuss personal financial affairs related to a request for an economic development loan under K.S.A. 75-4319(b)(4). No action was taken.

Two additional executive sessions were held at 10:09 a.m. and 10:27 a.m. with Bowie and Presley to discuss non-elected personnel job performance under K.S.A. 75-4319(b)(1). No action was taken following either session.

Later in the meeting, commissioners entered two more executive sessions at 11:49 a.m. (10 minutes) and 12:02 p.m. (5 minutes) with Bowie and Cael Johnson to discuss non-elected personnel job performance. No action was taken.

Durst discussed the upcoming Kansas Department of Transportation cost-share program and potential projects near the

Coffey County Airport and other locations.

Commissioners approved a request for proposals for a preliminary engineering study for County Bridge 165 (R.7-3.6), south of LeRoy, to evaluate options for rehabilitation or replacement.

The board also approved a 2026 engineering services agreement for landfill work with Blackstone Environmental, to be paid from the solid waste fund.

Commissioners authorized solicitation of sealed bids for seasonal mowing at Old 50 Park, Rock Creek Cemetery, Hope Cemetery and Strawn Monument (16th and Fauna).

April 13-18 was designated as Spring Clean-Up Week, with notice to be published.

Durst was also authorized to advertise and hire one equipment operator to fill a vacancy created by a voluntary resignation.

Stockman provided an update on Phase II of the Coffey County Law Enforcement Center project, reporting that interior wall construction and utility rough-ins are progressing.

Commissioners approved Application and Certificate for Payment No. 26 to River City Construction, LLC, in the amount of \$175,242.56 for work completed through Jan. 31. Funds will be paid from the Jail Construction Project Fund (Fund 111).

The board recessed at 12:08 p.m. until 9 a.m. Wednesday to sign warrants and vouchers and address any additional business.

DUST CONTROL PROGRAM FOR RURAL AREAS

DUST ABATEMENT PROGRAM

Coffey County will continue the program to reduce the amount of road dust in front of rural homes. In May and June, Liquid Magnesium Chloride will be applied to a strip of rock road in front of eligible houses. This application of Magnesium Chloride shall be a minimum of 300' and a maximum of 700' in length for any owner or tenant requesting the dust control treatment. The cost will be \$ 1.70 per lineal foot of treated Road. Counties are NOT required to provide dust control on roads in Kansas.

WHAT IS MAGNESIUM CHLORIDE?

Magnesium Chloride is a compound refined from the waters of the Great Salt Lake in Utah. The liquid compound is sprayed on the Road Surface and is allowed to penetrate to a depth of approximately 3 inches. The major property of the material is such that it attracts moisture which stabilizes the aggregates on the Road Surface. Each new introduction of additional moisture in the form of high humidity or rainfall reconstitutes the material and re-binds the aggregate. **Unlike the Asphalt previously used for Dust Control, Magnesium Chloride is applied for one season application only and will be re-bladed as needed to remove any small pot holes and rough areas as required for normal road maintenance.**

APPLYING MAGNESIUM CHLORIDE

Liquid Magnesium Chloride will be sprayed on to the Road. It will usually take one to two hours for the liquid material to soak into the Road. Vehicles driving through the recently applied Magnesium Chloride may be slightly splattered but this can be easily removed with water. Due to the large number of Dust Control Strips to be applied, the County will not be able to erect Barricades and large warning signs. Drivers will be able to see the darkened and moistened area ahead. Vehicles should drive slowly in the material for the first several hours. The County will NOT clean or pay for cleaning cars.

WHAT HOUSES ARE ELIGIBLE?

Any rural home in Coffey County, outside of an incorporated area, that is located within 300 feet of a rock or gravel road, is eligible for Dust Control treatment.

WHEN AND HOW TO APPLY

Anyone wishing to have Dust Control treatment placed in front of their residence should fill in the attached form and return it to the Coffey County Highway Department Office at the County Shop at 1510 S. 6th Street in Burlington. Each application request must be accompanied by a check made out to the Coffey County for the full cost computed at the rate of \$1.70 per lineal foot treated. **The deadline for submitting applications is 3:00 P.M., Friday, March 27, 2026.** All applications received after the deadline will be returned. Additional information may be obtained by calling the County Highway Department Office at 620-364-2441.

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ ZIP _____
PHONE# _____ ALTERNATEPHONE# _____

I hereby request Coffey County to provide _____ feet of Magnesium Chloride Dust Control Treatment at my residence listed above. The cost of this treatment is herewith paid for at the rate of \$ 1.70 per lineal foot to be treated; and a check for the full amount is enclosed.

A check for the full amount of treatment, payable to Coffey County must accompany this application.

Check this box for a receipt.

MAIL TO: COFFEY COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
DUST CONTROL
1510 S. 6th Street
BURLINGTON, KS 66839