

## NEWS

## Friends . . .

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ties, donors, and consumers as benefiting" the library. It also noted that FOOLs entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the library on Jan. 29, 2025, part of which reads as follows: "The FOOLs agree that if they cease to actively fundraise and promote the library, they will disband and allow for a new Friends group to be developed in the future, and any assets will be distributed to the Oskaloosa Public Library."

Here, Castillo argued that because the funds FOOLs received before Oct. 27 were accepted to benefit the Oskaloosa Public Library and only the Oskaloosa Public Library, those funds are restricted.

The letter also stated that FOOLs' failure to either register with the Attorney General's Office or provide the office with an exemption, its failure to "wholly respond" to the subpoena it had gotten from the Attorney General's Office, and the withholding of assets from the Oskaloosa Public Library "very likely violates" the MOU between FOOLs and the library, the Kansas Charitable Organizations and Solicitations Act, and the Kansas Consumer Protection Act.

According to a footnote at the bottom of page 4 of the five-page letter, evidence collected by the Attorney General's Office "reflects" that ever since FOOLs simultaneously changed its name and expanded its purpose, it "has not 'actively' fundraised" for the library and "has taken action to not promote" the library.

Finally, the letter demanded that FOOLs start the charitable organization registration process and distribute the funds in question on or before the 15th. But on Feb. 25, Morgan Hardy, Coordinator for Licensing and Inspections, determined that the non-profit corporation didn't need to register as a charity.

In a letter dated Feb. 23 that Castillo got from Friends of Jefferson County Readers by way of email, the Friends group said it wasn't provided with a copy of the Herzbergs' complaint and pointed out that the couple had never donated to, participated in, been solicited by, or helped with any of Friends' activities.

The Friends letter took issue with the inclusion of a copy of a short story from the June 19, 2025, issue of The Oskaloosa Independent, a story about an upcoming FOOLs Book Sale, in Castillo's letter. The story wasn't "generated" by Friends, the letter pointed out.

The letter also took issue with the inclusion of a copy of a check for \$10 purported to have been deposited in Friends' bank account, noting that Friends hadn't been notified that the account was "accessible" to the Attorney General's Office. The check, which represented a donation, was dated April 12, 2025.

According to the letter, the Herzbergs' complaint was based on the MOU, but the library board and its director haven't followed anything in the MOU. "For example, the library has not provided the bookstore with any books but is selling them at the library," the letter stated. "Also, the director instructed the staff to not give any help to Friends when using the copier, etc., or to provide any space for informational materials. The director removed signage for the bookstore, and staff will not inform patrons that the bookstore exists. Friends, as stated multiple times in meeting minutes, has offered help, with, again, no communication from the director or board. The board and director also never provided a wish list that went beyond an Amazon wish list for summer reading supplies."

Spencer said the statement about Herzberg telling library employees not to help the Friends group with the use of the copier wasn't true.

The letter went on to dispute the claim that the Friends group "refused to transfer funds" and noted that its meeting minutes showed that whenever a request for funds was made by the library, "Friends fulfilled that request."

In support of this position, the letter mentioned Friends coming up with \$1,088 on short

notice last May to cover the cost of a surveillance system, doing so without the desired input from an ad hoc committee.

Fast also objected to the claim that Friends hadn't honored requests for money.

The letter also stated that Friends of Jefferson County Readers "has not ceased activity or library promotion with the name change and expanded purpose," and that FOOLs, which officially became a non-profit corporation in January of 2023, "did not disband."

The letter concluded with the following paragraph: "We also maintain that if Sammy Herzberg wishes to obtain funds through this complaint without any discussion with the Friends group, creating community ill will for the small rural public library she is steward of, funds should be only those that were collected during the FOOLs foundation date of January 20, 2023, and the name change date of October 27, 2025."

The amount of money FOOLs took in during this 33-month period of time wasn't reported in either letter, but according to a text the paper received from Hierstein on March 17, since 2001 FOOLs has given the library a total of \$37,461.

Obviously disappointed by the downturn in the relationship FOOLs and the library once enjoyed, Fast at one point commented to Bond and Spencer, "It is what it is. It's very unfortunate."

Afforded the opportunity to supply the paper with a prepared statement in the wake of the library's Board of Trustees meeting held March 16, Bond issued the following statement via email this past Friday: "The Oskaloosa Public Library Board of Trustees have reviewed and support the decision of the Kansas Attorney General in the matter of funds raised for the benefit of the Oskaloosa Public Library."

A week earlier, also via email, Snyder furnished the paper with the following prepared statement:

"In October 2025, Friends of Oskaloosa Library Inc., expanded our purpose and changed our name to Friends of Jefferson County Readers Inc., in order to work with other libraries and needs in the county. This was prompted by the OPL director's and Board of Trustees' unwillingness to work with us. The director, as an individual, filed a complaint with the Office of the Attorney General for perceived violation of the Kansas Charitable Organizations and Solicitations Act. We were found to be in violation, in their opinion, and we have been forced to turn over our entire bank account to the library. "Friends Inc. has consistently and transparently supported OPL summer reading, library emergency repairs and maintenance, and provided minimal support of the used bookstore. The relationship between the OPL and the Friends group has consistently deteriorated over the last couple years, coincident with the new director's tenure, with much concern and confusion on our part.

"We are sorry that this action means we are unable to meet any of our goals to support readers in the county. The library is a tax-supported entity, and as such, please stay in touch with how they now plan to spend the donations that we have collected over the years."

DeDee Skaggs  
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## BOCC . . .

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ed at the improvement district's current Board of Directors, Shannon Cannon, Mark DuBois, and Madelyn "Renee" Morales.

Speaking on behalf of a Robert Buck, Collier also asked the commissioners about the safety and legality of some stop signs that have reportedly been installed in Lakeside Village along Main Street.

Domann told Collier he hadn't heard from Buck and asked that Buck be encouraged to give him a call sometime.

Blankenship said there has never been a sign resolution at Lake Shore Estates. And Domann said he wasn't aware of any list of resolutions that are in effect in the three improvement districts.

County Counselor Josh Ney indicated to Collier and Domann that he would get back with them on the possible need for either the improvement district or the county to pass a sign resolution.

Collier also told the commissioners that she thought the improvement district's Board of Directors had given residents the go-ahead to clean up county-owned lots there. Ney responded to the report by saying anyone cleaning up these lots needed to have been invited to do so by the county first.

Metzger made the commissioners aware of what he called a "pretty significant scam" that involves Planning and Zoning officials across the state. He said scammers were creating official-looking letterheads for the purpose of sending letters to people asking them to wire large amounts of money to the local office to pay for zoning fees they supposedly owed.

According to Metzger, the county's highest zoning fee is \$250, and the most expensive building permit costs \$400.

The Community Development director told the commissioners that he and his co-workers were "trying to be more proactive" in dealing with the scam and said they wouldn't be asking citizens to wire the office thousands of dollars to pay for unpaid zoning fees.

County Appraiser Janet Allen reported that her office mailed the 2026 valuations to property owners on Feb. 27 and would be accepting appeals of the valuations through March 31 (i.e., this past Tuesday). She said 86 appeals had been received so far and that there were 113 appeals last year.

Allen told the commissioners that she would prefer to see property owners appeal their valuations in March and not in November after the valuations



Photo by Rick Nichols

**Jefferson County Emergency Services Director James Tweed, center, and Deputy Director of Emergency Medical Services Jim Schoepf, right, talk with County Commissioners David Christy, left, and Doug Walbridge, second from the right, in the large living room of the new EMS facility in Perry, the former City Hall, as Perry Mayor Ramon Gonzalez Jr. listens. Christy, Walbridge, and Gonzalez toured the remodeled building following last week's meeting of the Board of County Commissioners.**

have been converted into tax statements.

Both Allen and Walbridge subsequently indicated that they were closely monitoring the actions of the Kansas Legislature, which has been considering the possibility of setting an annual limit on valuation increases.

County Treasurer Douglas Bond reported that Denison State Bank in Meriden had been awarded the third \$2 million Certificate of Deposit the county has solicited interest rate bids on and that bids on a fourth \$2 million CD would be accepted up until noon that Friday.

In response to a request for additional information, Bond told the paper March 24 in an email that DSB's bid on the six-month CD put the annual percentage yield at 3.73%. He also told that the fourth CD would be bid on as a three-month CD, then subjected to additional bidding in June as a six-month CD.

According to the email, the first \$2 million CD, a six-month CD, was awarded to Union State Bank in McLouth in February on the strength of a bid that put the APY at 3.75%.

As for the second \$2 million CD, a three-month CD, it was awarded to DSB in February on the strength of a bid that put the APY at 3.81%. This CD will be subjected to additional bidding in May as a six-month CD.

The email went on to report that two more \$2 million CDs are to be bid on sometime this month, one as a six-month CD and the other initially as a three-month CD.

Geographic Information Systems Coordinator Kirk Webb informed the board that his department had launched a new data download site for the

downloading of information about 2-foot contours.

This site can be reached by visiting <https://jfkcs-data-downloads-jfcogis.hub.arcgis.com/#contours> or <https://www.jfcountyks.com/225/GIS>.

Webb told the commissioners that he hoped to put more data on the department's page in the days ahead.

Domann subsequently asked Webb about the accuracy of the existing LiDAR data and was told that the level of accuracy across the dataset wasn't uniform. He said the level of accuracy depended on the land cover present, as it tends to fall off a bit when there is vegetation on the ground or the terrain is complex.

Webb told Domann he didn't have the pertinent numbers committed to memory and would have to return to his office to get that information. Unsolicited, an email from the GIS coordinator was sent to the paper later in the day, part of which read as follows:

"The 2015 Kansas LiDAR dataset provides highly detailed elevation data across the state. The resolution of the data is approximately 1 meter, meaning each pixel in the digital elevation model represents a 1-meter square on the ground. The point density is roughly 2 points per square meter, which determines the level of detail captured.

"Overall, the dataset meets USGS standards for high-quality LiDAR and is widely used for mapping, engineering, and planning purposes."

LiDAR is an acronym for light detection and ranging, while USGS stands for U.S. Geological Survey.

Christy told Webb that he was "hearing rumors" the county might have to modify its

website because of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The GIS coordinator responded by saying there had been some "changes in the legislation" and more were expected.

Voting 3-0, the board OK'd the proposed issuance of a proclamation designating May as Motorcycle Awareness Month in Jefferson County.

Before the action was taken Christy noted that both he and County Counselor-designate Jonathan Ehrlich are motorcyclists.

The proclamation read in part as follows:

"Whereas, motorcycle riding has become a popular form of transportation and recreation for a vast and growing number of people in the state of Kansas; and

"Whereas, there is a growing need to promote safety for motorcyclists and cooperation among drivers of all motor vehicles on the road; and

"Whereas, it is especially important that drivers be aware of motorcycles and give them our space and respect on our streets and highways; and

"Whereas, during the month of May, all streets and highway users should unite in the safety of motorcyclists, striving to share the roadways in the state of Kansas.

"Now, therefore, I David Christy, county commissioner of Jefferson County, do hereby proclaim May 2026 as Motorcycle Awareness Month in the County of Jefferson County, Kansas."

The proclamation was provided to the board by Lori Harden, the state treasurer for ABATE of Kansas, which is headquartered in Perry.

ABATE is an acronym for A Brotherhood Against Totalitarian Enactments.

Walbridge took the time to thank the county for the flowers it had sent his way as a gesture of sympathy following the recent death of his father, Maurice Walbridge. "We're all family," he suggested in recognizing the act.

Finally, Christy announced that the commissioners would be traveling to Perry after the meeting to tour the new Emergency Medical Services facility there, EMS 3. "County business may be discussed but not between us," he declared.

**Executive Session**

At the request of Metzger, the commissioners met privately with him for 10 minutes for the stated purpose of discussing

See BOCC Page 4

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