

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS? Contact Stephanie Jump at (620) 532-3151 or email sjump@kconline.com

Brandon Ritcha Named New Harper County Attorney

BY BOB MORRIS

Managing Editor

Brandon Ritcha will be the new Harper County attorney, pending Gov. Laura Kelly giving final approval, after the Harper County Republican Party appointed Ritcha to the vacancy.

Ritcha, who is currently the Kingman County assistant attorney, said that there has been instability in the Harper County Attorney's office "as long as I have been practicing law. That is not fair to the people of Harper County."

Not only did he want to help the people of Harper County, but Ritcha said he sees this as an opportunity for greater continuity between Kingman and Harper counties.

"Recent actions by the Harper County Commission make me believe they are serious about doing what is nec-

essary to make it a successful office," Ritcha said.

He added that his kids are busy with activities but he will be able to accommodate those with the schedule as Harper County attorney.

"Attending their activities is my favorite thing to do, so I wanted to move away from representations that had me attending regular evening meetings that conflicted with my getting to watch them," Ritcha said. "In the end, it just feels like the right time."

Ritcha also serves as the county counselor for Kingman County. He currently represents five different cities in some capacity, but Ritcha said he will be in the process of either winding those down or modifying his representation, along with being selective with private clientele.

"The bottom line, my positions in

Harper and Kingman County must and will take priority," he said. "I've always had a lot of obligations; it is a fact of life for attorneys serving in rural areas. I am looking forward to primarily focusing on just a few."

There is no statutory requirement for residency within the county for one to serve as a county attorney. Ritcha noted there are multiple instances of people serving as county attorneys for more than one county. He said that is primarily because of a lack of attorneys in rural areas.

Ritcha noted that, from the time he has started practicing law, Harper County has been "my second professional home."

"I spend a significant amount of time working in the county and for people from Harper County," Ritcha said. "I've developed great relationships there."

KNOELL

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Knoell had a Zoom interview with the Kingman city commission, then an in-person interview. He said they all were knowledgeable and professional.

"And to be completely honest with you, I'm looking forward to working with them," Knoell said. "It seems like a lot of them definitely have their heads on straight and they see what they want and they're not afraid to go after it."

"I know they've had to make some tough decisions over the last past several months and I personally feel they handled it very profes-

sionally with high class."

His visit Monday was the first time he met with city staff and Knoell said he was impressed.

"Again, I think they're very knowledgeable and they have the right ideas," he said. "And I'm extremely excited to help them grow and continue what their passions are."

"I think that Kingman's done a great job with the leadership side of the city. I haven't had the opportunity to meet everybody else yet, but I'm definitely looking forward to it."

Knoell said he looks forward to serving the residents of Kingman and getting to know the community.

"I encourage them to come have a conversation with me because I believe everybody has a voice," Knoell said.

"I can't always guarantee that what they're wanting or what they're needing will be successful, but everybody should have an opinion and every opinion should be heard. And I'm looking forward to finding different projects and continuing to improve whatever the infrastructure that needs improved to improve."

During Thursday's meeting, after nearly 30 minutes in executive session, the city commission voted in open session on a 4-1 vote to offer a contract to Knoell.

Vice Mayor Travis

Kaufman was the lone "no" vote but, before the vote was taken, said that his vote was because of certain language in the contract and not because he was opposed to Knoell being offered the job.

During commissioner comments, Kaufman said he believed that Knoell is an "outstanding hire" and added that "I am excited about bringing a new city manager along and I look forward to working with Mr. Knoell."

City Commissioner Jon Wollen added during commissioner comments that he appreciated the time that John Deardoff devoted as interim city manager and that he looks forward to working with Knoell.

Spivey Woman Sentenced After Taking Plea in Death of Mother

STAFF REPORT

A Spivey woman was sentenced earlier this month to more than three years in prison on charges in connection with the death of her mother.

Linda M. Oeding, 70, had pled guilty to two counts of mistreatment of an elderly person during a plea hearing held in January. On March 13, she was sentenced to 40 months in prison. A count of felony murder against Oeding had been dismissed.

Oeding had been arrested Sept. 12, 2025, in connection with the death of her 94-year-old mother Betty.

The case stemmed from a situation in which emergency medical services had been called to a Spivey residence on Sept. 5, 2025, shortly after 9 p.m. Linda Oeding requested her mother be taken to Hutchinson Regional Medical Center, according to a report form the Kansas Bureau of Investigation.

Per KBI, EMS personnel observed Betty Oeding experiencing malnourishment and improper living conditions and recommended transporting her to another hospital, but Linda insisted her mother be taken to Hutchinson. Betty was admitted, then moved to hospice care three days later. She died two days after that.

TANK

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would paint over the stars and they'd smear mud on them or any myriad of things."

He said he had pictures of tanks that had the stars removed but it would be up to the city about how they would want to move forward with the tank at the armory.

Wing advised that one would need to exercise care with any "sand blasting" to prepare the tank for painting. He said he talked to Robert Elder with the Kansas Historical Society

who recommended what was called a "media blast," which meant using something like walnut shells instead of sand.

There was some discussion about whether the city might be able to get a plate or serial number on the tank when it was utilized. But Kaufman said he had traced such numbers but they matched a tank currently in Europe.

The city commission's consensus was to get a contractor's statement of work by the next city meeting, so they could move forward with approval for the project.

KINGMAN CITY COMMISSION MINUTES

March 18 Meeting

Attendance:

Present: Mayor Winsor, Vice Mayor Kaufman, Commissioners Wollen, and Arensdorf were

present. Commissioner McFarland was late. City Staff consisted of Interim Manager Deardoff, Deputy Clerk Waltner, Attorney Graffman, Chief Lux, Director Kari Goldston, and Inspector Hendrixson.

Call to Order: Mayor Winsor called the meeting to order at 7:00p and Tad Hacker led the opening prayer.

Agenda: The commission reviewed the agenda. Vice Mayor requested that the fire protection contracts be removed from the consent agenda for discussion.

• Motion made by Kaufman, seconded by Arensdorf, to approve the consent agenda. Motion carried 4-0.

Consent Agenda: The commission reviewed and considered the consent agenda. After removal of the fire protection contracts, the following items remained on the consent agenda:

- Minutes: 2/26/2026
- Bills Payable: \$247,817.88
- Park Board Appointments
 - Payton Pickering
 - Katie Hague

• Motion made by Kaufman, seconded by Arensdorf, to approve the consent agenda. Motion carried 4-0.

Commissioner McFarland arrived at the meeting at 7:03pm

Fire Protection Contracts: Interim Manager Deardoff shared that the rates for the townships are the same and felt that if the City wanted to update the rate that we needed to do it ahead of budget season for both the city and the townships. Vice Mayor Kaufman would like to hear future discussions about raising the rates.

• Motion made by Kaufman, seconded by Arensdorf, to approve the fire protection contracts [Ninnescah, Hoosier, and White Townships] with an amendment to paragraph 5 of the Ninnescah contract to reflect the current year of 2026. Motion carried 5-0.

Public Comment: The following citizens provided public comments:

• Les Wing of 2527 N Main, Kingman KS: Provided some information and thoughts on the

restoration of the tank located at the Armory.

• Baja Barajas of 800 N Coronado, Kingman KS: Asked about the process of getting a speed trailer set up for the intersection of Ave G and Coronado. Manager Deardoff shared that the county's speed trailer is out of service for repair, and for the time being, the police department is trying to increase patrol. Mr. Barajas shared that the problem persists.

• Darlene Redden of 330 W Third, Kingman KS: Shared concerns regarding the credit and debit card transaction fees.

Ordinance 2154 – Water Rates: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER XV, ARTICLE 2, SECTION 15-221 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF KINGMAN RELATING TO WATER RATES FOR THE WATER UTILITY was considered.

• Motion made by Kaufman, seconded by Arensdorf, to adopt Ordinance 2154 as written. A vote as called with the following results:

- o Yea: Kaufman, Arensdorf, McFarland, Winsor, and Wollen
- o Nay: None

The motion was declared carried and ordered signed by the mayor, attested by the city clerk, and to be published in the official newspaper.

Ordinance 2155 – Sewer Rates: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER XV, ARTICLE 4, SECTION 15-436 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF KINGMAN RELATING TO THE MINIMUM CHARGES AND RATES FOR THE SEWER UTILITY was considered.

• Motion made by Kaufman, seconded by Arensdorf, to adopt Ordinance 2155 as written. A vote as called with the following results:

- o Yea: Kaufman, Arensdorf, McFarland, Winsor, and Wollen
- o Nay: None

The motion was declared carried and ordered signed by the mayor, attested by the city clerk, and to be published in the official newspaper.

Ordinance 2156 – Non-Resident Connections to Water Utility: AN ORDINANCE CREATING CHAPTER XV, ARTICLE 2, SECTION 15-246 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF KINGMAN RELATING TO REQUIREMENTS FOR NON-RESIDENT CONNECTIONS TO THE WATER

UTILITY was considered.

• Motion made by Wollen, seconded by Arensdorf, to adopt Ordinance 2156 as written. A vote as called with the following results:

- o Yea: Kaufman, Arensdorf, McFarland, Winsor, and Wollen
- o Nay: None

The motion was declared carried and ordered signed by the mayor, attested by the city clerk, and to be published in the official newspaper.

Street Sealing RFP: Manager Deardoff and Director K. Goldston presented an RFP for street sealing and addressed commissioner questions.

• Motion made by McFarland, seconded by Wollen, to approve the 2026 Street Sealing RFP Packet. Motion carried 5-0.

Karr Estate Settlement: Attorney Graffman provided background information on the Karr Estate, which is a property that needs mitigation where the property owner is deceased. The heirs have been found and have agreed to a settlement, which will eventually release the property to the City for mitigation and possibly adding it to the Kingman Land Bank. Attorney Graffman requested that the settlement be approved and signed to start this process.

• Motion made by Wollen, seconded by McFarland, to accept and sign the settlement as presented. Motion carried 5-0.

Demolition Bids – 602 N Coronado: Inspector Hendrixson presented bids to demolish the structure at 602 N Coronado. Inspector Hendrixson recommends the bid from B4 Services as it is the lowest bid and local.

• Motion made by Wollen, seconded by Kaufman, to approve the bid from B4 Services in the amount of \$7,500. Motion carried 5-0.

Commission Meeting Time Change: The Commission discussed changing the times of the commission from 7pm to 6pm and the utility hearings from 6pm to 5pm, with no changes to the days of the month.

• Motion made by Kaufman, seconded by Arensdorf, to move the commission meeting times from 7pm on the second and fourth Thursdays, to 6pm on the second and fourth Thursdays effective the April 7th meeting. Motion carried 3-2 with Wollen and McFarland

voting against.

• There is a consensus for the City Attorney to review the ordinance for the utility hearings and to draft changes if necessary to change the time from 6pm to 5pm.

Unpaved Roads Update: Interim Manager Deardoff addressed unpaved roads and explained it is difficult to plan and prioritize streets with no set budget. Mr. Deardoff shared that the commission should decide how much they want to budget in the future to help guide public works in prioritizing streets. He also shared that some streets may just need re-worked to improve drainage and maybe a different material be laid to help with the surface and drainage, which would be cheaper than paving them. Vice Mayor Kaufman discussed possibly using surplus funds for street funds in the future. Director K. Goldston reviewed the priority list for street sealing. No actions were taken.

Mill Race/Ninnescah River Update: Interim Manager Deardoff provided shared that he has spoke to Wilson & Company about rebuilding the mill race. According to Charles at Wilson & Company, changes in procedures have occurred since the last time the City had completed work on it and that the Army Corps of Engineers would not necessarily need to be involved. Mr. Deardoff said that if the City would like to explore options, he would recommend Wilson & Company do an assessment and address the commission in the future. No action was taken.

Executive Session – Attorney-Client:

• Motion made by Arensdorf, seconded by McFarland, to recess into executive session for 12 minutes with the City Attorney, City Manager, and Attorney Ed Keeley for consultation regarding a matter which would be deemed privileged in the attorney-client relationship pursuant to the attorney-client privilege exception in K.S.A. 75-4319(b)(2). Motion carried 5-0. The meeting recessed at 8:27pm and reconvened at 8:39pm.

City Manager's Report: Interim Manager Deardoff provided updates on the following items:

• The city is working on filling positions. Three positions have been filled on the electric utility,

one in public works, and one in the water utility.

• Park board is meeting next week, and they plan to talk about pickle ball

• There will be a special meeting next Monday at 5pm to interview city manager candidates

• Shared that the League of Municipalities is hosting a city leadership class in Salina next month and encourages those interested to get with the City Clerk to get registered.

Commissioner Comments:

Arensdorf

• Shared that Pickle Ball organizers plan to meet with the Park Board at their next meeting to discuss an outdoor pickle ball court at Riverside Park and invited the public who may be interested in attending the meeting.

McFarland

• Asked for an update on the 54 & Main traffic light project. Mr. Deardoff provided an update.

Wollen

• Followed up on a comment from Les Wing's public comment and encouraged folks to visit Nimritz Museum in Fredericksburg, TX if they have a chance.

Kaufman

• Visited with the VFW and American Legion, and both unanimously voted to support painting the tank. The total cost is looking to be \$1,200 and he would like to provide details for final approval at the next meeting.

Winsor

• Asked about the Mill Race gate repair. K. Goldston said that the heavy rains last year made it impossible and Director K. Goldston shared that they are not sure how to mitigate the water during the repairs. Interim Deardoff said that the Wilson & Company engineers may know how to do this and Attorney Graffman shared that water flow had been restricted before to allow

repairs.

• Spoke about KPI's and shared that the street priority list produced to K. Goldston was a good start to a process.

Adjournment:

• Motion made by Arensdorf, seconded by McFarland, to adjourn the meeting at 8:49pm.

Motion carried 5-0.