



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

Manhattan/Riley County

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LEAGUE CALENDAR

Keeping up with the League

January:

Thursday, January 12—7 p.m. at Manhattan Public Library. Mayor Jim Sherow will be the guest speaker. Topic: Looking ahead to 2012 in Manhattan. And Local League Program Planning for 2012.

Thursday, January 26—3 p.m. at Meadowlark Classroom. Mayor Jim Sherow will be the guest speaker. Topic: Looking ahead to 2012 in Manhattan. And Local League Program Planning for 2012.

February:

Date and place TBD—Panel Discussion. Topic: Governor Brownback’s proposal for a new school finance formula. What are the implications for education in Manhattan?

March: National Program Planning

April: Annual Meeting

Message from the Co-Presidents

Greetings and best wishes for the new year. As we enter the cold month of January, it is a good time to make plans, resolutions, wish lists. Will you try something new this year?

Eleanor Roosevelt was quoted as saying something to the effect that if you do not go outside your comfort zone at least once a day, you aren’t doing much. I like that. It pushes me to make phone calls for League or write this president’s letter. I am most comfortable doing the day-to-day routine and reading newspapers and complaining about what is happening in Manhattan, in Kansas, the country, and the world.

2012 promises to be an important year for Kansans and an exciting year for the League. Some of the issues that affect you and actions needed:

- Local funding of community social services
- Funding of schools
- Educating voters about photo identification and proof of citizenship
- the way we are taxed and that taxes are used.

January: Local program planning. **Put Thursday, January 12 at 7 PM at the**

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Presidents' Message, continued

Manhattan Public Library or January 26 at the Meadowlark Classroom on your calendar. Mayor Jim Sherow will be our speaker. He will be looking ahead to what 2012 will bring for Manhattan.

After his speech and question/answer period, you will have an opportunity to tell us what you think should be local League priorities for 2012.

For program planning, review local League positions, which are on our website: lwv.manhattanks.org.

February: Governor Brownback's proposal for a new school finance formula. What are the implications for education? How will this affect our taxes? Come to hear a panel of experts discuss this issue. Date and speakers available in early January. Check our website for updates: Lwv.manhattanks.org. Check our state League website for more information about state finance.

March: Save the second Tuesday for National Program Planning. There is a national study of privatization going on. Our local League has a very good position on privatization. It will be an opportunity to become familiar with that position and to review present national positions.

April: Annual Meeting

Are you registered to vote? Do you have a photo ID to get access to voting? Kansas' new law, drafted by Secretary of State Kris Kobach, requires voters, beginning in 2012, to show a photo ID at the polls. Before they can register to vote in 2013, Kansans will have to produce a proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate.

A survey by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law found that 11 percent of citizens—21 million people—do not have a current photo ID. That fraction increases to 15 percent of low-income voting-age citizens, 18 percent of young eligible voters and 25 percent of black eligible voters.

For decades the League of Women Voters has been known for its election protection work at the local, state, and federal levels. The League of Women Voters has a long history of support for the Voting Rights Act. The League needs your help now ensuring that eligible voters are registered to vote.

Enell Foerster and Jean Lee

November Forum on Voting Law

At the League-sponsored Voter Registration Forum held on November 14, Jolene Keck, Supervisor of Elections at the Riley County Clerk's Office, spoke about the new legislation regarding voter registration. We are pleased to report an attendance of 26. The following is a summary of Ms. Keck's presentation:

The 2010 Legislature passed the Kansas Secure and Fair Elections (SAFE) Act as encouraged by Secretary of State Kris Kobach. The SAFE Act is intended to ensure that all voters are qualified to vote and to make it more difficult to cast an illegal vote. All provisions take effect on January 1, 2012, except the requirement that applicants for voter registration provide proof of U.S. Citizen-

ship. Both Keck and Riley County Clerk Rich Vargo had been serving on a Kobach committee to develop regulations in response to the new law. The new state regulations have yet to be issued but are expected by January 1.

Keck said **Phase I** will commence on January 1, 2012 and represents virtually no changes in the voter registration process: 1) Each voter must show a photo ID at the polling site in order to vote, and 2) Security will be enhanced when mailing an advance ballot.

Phase II – beginning January 1, 2013, each person registering to vote will be required to provide proof of citizenship. Continued on page 3

The following documents may be used as acceptable photographic identification for purposes of voting in Kansas:

- Driver's license issued by Kansas or another state;
- Photo ID card issued by Kansas or other state (including K-State ID Card). If under age 65, ID must be currently effective; over age 65, ID may be expired;
- Concealed carry of handgun license issued by Kansas or another state;
- U.S. Passport;
- Employee badge or photo ID if issued by a government agency at any level. Note: Most such badges/ID's do not have an expiration date. (Jolene will check if applies to hospital employees, such as at Mercy.)
- U.S. Military identification
- Student ID card issued by an accredited post-secondary institution of education in Kansas.
- Public assistance ID card issued by a government agency.

These documents are acceptable to prove U.S. citizenship for purposes of registering to vote in Kansas: birth certificate, U.S. Passport, U.S. naturalization documents, U.S. military record of service showing voter's place of birth in the U.S., Bureau of Indian Affairs ID card, certificate of citizenship, certificate of birth issued by U.S. Department of State, final adoption decree, and a driver's license or non-driver's ID card issued by Kansas or another state (if it has a notation indicating that the person has provided satisfactory proof of U.S. citizenship).

The current population of Riley County is 71,341, the 6th highest in the state. However, there are 31,899 registered voters in Riley County, the tenth highest number of voters in a county of the state.

Linda Morse

League Board Highlights

On November 3, 2011, the Board met with Ellen Miller, who is a membership and leadership development coach for local Leagues.

The Board discussed the plans for the November 14th program on voter registration and regulations. Jolene Keck, Riley County's elections supervisor, will be the speaker.

Board members discussed the current process for renewing League membership and how it is cumbersome for the Treasurer and the Membership Chair. The Board discussed switching to a standardized annual membership year. A standardized membership year would mean all members would renew their memberships at the same time of the year.

LWVK Legislative E-Report #1—Paul Johnson

There will be several fundamental economic and political issues debated in the 2012 Kansas Legislative session. Changing tax policy has been high on the Governor’s priority list. A reorganization of the Medicaid program and state agencies in Kansas has already begun. The Kansas Public Employee Retirement System (KPERS) is being studied by a select committee and legislation will be proposed to reform the system. Immigration legislation will be proposed by the Secretary of State. Changes in school finance have been proposed in general but the details have not been fully developed. All of this debate will come in the midst of an election year when 125 Kansas House and 40 Kansas Senate seats will be on the ballot. A few conservative Kansas’ House Republicans have already filed primary challenges to incumbent moderate Kansas Senators.

STATE BUDGET

The revenue picture has improved slightly for Kansas. On November 4, the consensus revenue experts increased tax receipts by \$200 million for FY 2012 (July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012) and an additional \$46 million for FY 2013 that begins July 1, 2012. The ending balance for FY 2012 is now increased to \$318 million while the ending balance for FY 2013 is \$389 million. There is some additional spending for schools (\$33 million) and human service caseloads (\$72 million) but no other existing budget cuts are restored. When school finance passed last session, a provision was added that one half of all new revenue estimates would be committed to base aid per pupil. The 2012 Kansas Legislature will have to implement or undo this provision since it is in law. Looking at the total budget picture for 2013, tax receipts are only \$71 million in excess of approved expenditures. 2014 is a much different budgetary picture. The temporary one-cent sales tax of the last two years is reduced to .4 and pledged to the highway program. This leaves a \$200 million dollar hole for the

State General Fund. There will also be higher interest payments on state bonds and increased retirement costs for state and public school employees.

SCHOOL FINANCE

The Governor’s office has been discussing a fundamental change to school finance. A basic per student amount would be provided for all school districts and a number of state block grants offered for vocational education, academic results, teacher improvements, etc. The promise is that no school district will end up with less money as this new system begins. There has not been enough detail provided to the State Board of Education to compute the actual numbers. For the record, base state aid per pupil has decreased from \$4,400 in 2009 to \$3,780 in 2012. The Governor argues that the state has increased retirement funding for school employees that does not show up in base state aid per pupil. This new funding formula would allow school districts complete freedom to raise local property taxes if approved by the voters. The new plan would allow counties to raise the sales tax to fund schools. The Kansas Supreme Court would eventually have to rule on the funding disparity this plan would create between the richer and poorer school districts. There is now a lawsuit headed for the Supreme Court arguing that the Legislature has not properly funded the existing school formula.

MEDICAID AND AGENCY REORGANIZATION

The Governor has unveiled a new reorganization plan for Medicaid and state agencies. SRS has now been renamed the Department of Children and Families. Mental health services and Medicaid waiver programs for the disabled have been moved to the Department of Aging and the agency renamed the Department of Aging and Human Services. In an effort to

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Legislative E-Report continued

decrease Medicaid costs - especially for the elderly and the disabled -, private managed health care companies will bid on contracts to provide the services. While managed care has been used for Medicaid services for some women and children, Kansas will be in the forefront in trying a statewide-managed care program for the disabled. The hope is that case managers can control the use of medical services and hospital visits. The promise from the Governor's office is that no changes will be made to the eligibility of the existing 330,000 Medicaid recipients and that reductions in payments to Medicaid providers will be a last resort. (For more and evolving details – Kansas Health Institute -- www.khi.org)

TAX POLICY

With the extra state revenues, there will be more discussion about lowering personal and corporate income taxes. Corporations pay 4% on the first \$50,000 and 3% after that thus generating \$225 million to the state. The individual income tax rate for \$30,000 and up or for couples making \$60,000 and up is 6.45%. The individual income tax generates \$2.7 Billion and comprises 45% of the revenue for the State General Fund (while the sales tax generates \$2.3 Billion – 39% of the \$6 Billion State General Fund). Kansas Secretary of Revenue Nick Jordan is developing a plan for the Governor to lower the income tax while expanding the sales tax by limiting exemptions or covering more services.

The Kansas House passed a tax bill last session that would freeze existing budgets of state agencies and use any future increase in revenues to lower individual and corporate income taxes. There would be a modified cost of living factor computed to allow some increases in existing state budgets. There is not a provision to recover from the existing budget cuts that have been made over the last three years. This bill was not heard by the Kansas Senate but is

still alive for the coming session. It will be a political challenge for the moderate Senators in an election year.

IMMIGRATION

Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach has promised there will be immigration legislation proposed for 2012. Some form of the Arizona or Alabama law will be proposed for Kansas. Parts of the Alabama law have been ruled constitutional such as the E-Verify provision. E-Verify is a federal clearinghouse computer system that verifies citizenship for employees. The Kansas House has passed such legislation mandating the use of E-Verify by employers but such legislation has never passed the Kansas Senate. The major farm organizations have fought such changes given Kansas' dependence on undocumented workers at the large packing plants or the mega-dairy and hog 'confined animal feeding operations'. SRS is implementing new rules mandating that citizenship be verified for households receiving food stamps. There are some real questions on the legality of these new rules and its impact on children in these households.

KANSAS PUBLIC EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT SYSTEM (KPERS)

A special legislative committee has been meeting to discuss the funding and future of the KPERS system. Presently KPERS has an unfunded liability of \$8 Billion over the next 30 years. KPERS' investments and stock portfolio has suffered along with the declines in the stock market. The present assumption is that KPERS has a contractual agreement with existing retirees and participants in the system and that cannot be changed. Rhode Island is under tremendous budgetary pressure so they have proposed substantial reductions to their public employee retirees. A court is reviewing this proposal and the nation is watching this court deliberation to see if it sets a precedent.

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Observer Reports—

USD 383 Board of Education—Kathy Dzewaltowski, Observer

Please note that observer reports are posted on a regular basis at www.lwvmanhattanks.blogspot.com and you can find current as well as previous reports at this site.

October 5, 2011

The board approved 6-0 the sale of the remaining bonds in the amount of \$6,125,000 and also approved refinancing some outstanding bonds from 2001.

The board was provided with an update on the construction project at Wilson Elementary School, which has been behind schedule and has had problems with the quality of work. Wilson's principal said he was feeling cautiously optimistic about the project due to the general contractor's hiring of a new project superintendent. It was anticipated that staff and students will be able to move into the new spaces around Oct. 27-28. Curt Herrman said he had recently toured the building and thought the new addition looked good, but the restrooms still looked terrible. The district's program manager said there will be a list of repairs and a schedule for completing them. The program manager also said he plans to report on Wilson's project at all board meetings.

Dr. Bob Shannon, Superintendent, presented a recommendation to increase the pay for substitute teachers by \$3/day to be more competitive with neighboring districts (Junction City pays \$20/day more) and to be able to attract quality substitutes. Pete Paukstelis asked if the district has had difficulty in being able to find substitutes, and Shannon said that some days it has been "tight," and he was worried about what might happen during flu season. Dave Colburn suggested increasing the pay by \$5/day, and Shannon said that the board might have to use contingency funds in order to do so. Paukstelis

said he would like to pay substitutes more, but not if that meant using contingency funds. The board approved 4-2 to increase the pay for substitute teachers by \$5/day, with Paukstelis and Herrman dissenting.

The board discussed the county's half-cent sales tax that will be up for renewal in 2012. Paukstelis and Leah Fliter had attended an intergovernmental meeting and also a City Commission work session to discuss the possibility of using some of the generated sales tax for the school district. The tax's structure could include schools, roads, and jobs. The City Commissioners had said they were willing to listen to ideas.

The board approved 6-0 the criteria for redrawing school boundary lines, which include following geographic barriers, maintaining contiguous areas, maintaining diverse student populations, and maintaining a "feeder" school system for the middle schools.

October 19, 2011

The board discussed the proposed changes to the state's funding formula that had been presented at the Kansas Association of School Boards' conference. Potential changes included reducing the 20 mills collected locally that go to the state to 10 or 15 mills, eliminating the cap on the local mill levy which would allow local boards to set the levy at the level they desire, keeping special education funding the same, and using a county sales tax for education funding, which could be problematic for districts like USD 383 which encompass more than one county. Dave Colburn said he was not personally buying it that the changes to the formula will be better for Kansas.

Carol Adams, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, presented state assessment results to the board. The district as a whole had achieved 93 "standards of excellence." The

Observer Reports

USD 383 Board of Education, cont.

greatest gains in performance were for students with disabilities and students who are English language learners. Adams reported that 38% of 4th graders who had been students in USD 383 for at least two years had made gains in their reading scores. There was still an achievement gap between minority students and white students, but the gap had decreased from a peak in 2006. Colburn commented that the achievement gap had been the impetus for creating the diversity coordinator position, and minority students had experienced gains since the creation of the position. (The diversity coordinator position was eliminated for the 2011-12 school year as a means to reduce the budget.)

Board members discussed compensation for substitute teachers. Administration had recommended increasing the pay by \$3/day. When the item had been previously discussed, the majority of the board had preferred to raise the pay by \$5/day to be more competitive with nearby districts. Dr. Bob Shannon, Superintendent, said that increasing the pay by \$5/day would put the district right at the amount budgeted for substitutes, and if there were more illness than usual, contingency funds could be used to fund any overrun. The board approved 7-0 to increase substitute teacher compensation by \$5/day.

November 2, 2011

Dr. Bob Shannon, Superintendent, reported that 38 new students with a connection to the military have enrolled in USD 383 since the official count date on Sept. 20.

The board was presented with a report on middle school football, which had allowed 7th graders to participate this year on the same team with 8th graders. Originally, the plan for adding 7th graders to the program had called for keeping the program revenue neutral and for not cutting any players, with the goal of having 55 players on the team. Approximately 80 students at each

middle school tried out for football this year, which meant around 25 students were cut from the program at each school. The middle school athletic directors reported that the 7th graders were able to compete skill and size wise with 8th graders. There were also positive side benefits, including improved student academics in order to stay eligible, reduction in behavior issues, and increased parental involvement in the booster clubs. Board members Curt Herrman and Walt Pesaresi expressed concerns about players' being cut from the teams, particularly 8th graders, because cutting players had not been part of the original plan.

Board members were presented with a report on the district's partnerships with Ft. Riley. Approximately 21% of the district's students have a connection to the military. The partnerships help the district provide communication and support for military families. One example of a partnership program is the "adopt-a-school" program, which involves a military unit adopting one of the district's schools. Soldiers in the unit then participate in activities with the students at the school.

November 16, 2011

Work session:

The work session focused on the proposed construction project for MHS East Campus. While developing the construction documents, the construction team had come to the conclusion that the way items had been prioritized needed to be adjusted. For example, the list created for the bond called for renovating the gym's locker rooms, while making improvements to the gym's roof and exterior skin less of a priority. The construction team felt it was important to improve the building's exterior and make it water tight before proceeding with interior projects, and board members agreed.

Regular meeting:

Carol Adams, Executive Director of Teaching

Observer Reports

USD 383, cont. and Board of Health—Sue Cohen, Observer

and Learning, presented information on new proposed courses and course title changes for the 2012-13 school year for MHS. The art department recommended embedding the content of the Digital Imaging course in existing photo classes. The Schools to Careers program requested to change its name to "Alternative Classes for Educational Success (ACE)." The Career and Technical Education program (CTE) is continuing to adapt its pathways in accordance with Kansas Dept. of Education (KSDE) guidelines and requested to add Baking and Pastry II as a new course. Additional CTE courses will be experiencing content or title changes to meet KSDE requirements.

Board members were presented with information about fees for outside groups who use the district's facilities. Slight increases were recommended to keep up with the district's increased costs. The city is allowed to use the district's facilities for parks and recreation programs at no charge, and in return, the district uses the city's facilities at no charge. Walt Pesaresi suggested that the agreement between the city and the school district for mutual use of their facilities should be reviewed at a future date. The board approved 6-0 the proposed fee schedule.

Board of Health

July 27, 2011

Michelle Markvicka provided the Department Highlight for the education of the Board. She is the receptionist for the Family Connections Clinic, Women, Infants and Children federal program (WIC), as well as Smart Start, which provides visits to new mothers and infants. She has been with the Health Department for three years, and that experience has enabled her to take on the many tasks related to these programs. She noted that she is the point of contact for people seeking services, making 150 referrals weekly and directing them to the right place, which requires her to know a great deal about each service. She also does a lot of charting and entering of data as well as alerting

the clinic nurses to problems. Essentially, she is so much more than a receptionist.

The treasurer's report touched on the ongoing transfer of the Health Department to the county. Charles Murphy, Director, reported nearly daily meetings to work out the transfer of the so-called "reserve funds" from CD's to money market funds. The city does have the right to them but have stated that all Health Department funds will go to the county. Karen McCulloh stated that she has the legal department working on this. The ongoing meetings with the county have been working on transferring the Health Department to the county policies relating to salary, benefits, etc. An educational session with the staff will be held when the transfer is completed.

The city has removed the segments of the code that required the Board of Health to enforce the nuisance ordinance. Nuisances will now be addressed by the city staff. The Health Department and the County Counselor are completing a state statute study to reaffirm the roles and requirements of the County Health Officer as well as the new County Board of Health.

Since Early Head Start has lost its funding, space is now available at the former Wharton Manor building. USD 383 has requested space for their Infant/Toddler Developmental Services program. The lease for the building is ending so that new rental rates need to be developed. The Board approved renting the space to USD 383.

Brady Burton, President of the Board, asked if there were any problems on the horizon, which led to a discussion of the immunization clinics that will be held at each school during August registration. The clinics will be open 12 hours in order to encourage and help with required immunizations. Dr. Paul Hesse stated that there had been a case of pertussis here (whooping cough). He also stated he had a great deal of concern about meningitis. Dr. Derek Moser

Observer Reports

Bd of Health, cont., and Riley County Commission

noted that there had been an increase in rabies, and that the present drought and heat were causing animals to enter town in search of water.

Next on the agenda was the question of how to handle the administrator position. The Board went into executive session for 25 minutes to determine this. For the time being, the decision was to continue the search for a new administrator rather than appoint an interim administrator.

Discussion of the Board's future led to the indication that the present Board members would not be interested in remaining on as an advisory board only and would only serve if the Board continued to have "teeth." Karen McCulloh stated that she would consult with the County Counselor as to how to charter such a board.

Riley County Commission

October 13, 2011

Lyndal Nyberg, observer

Mr. Johnson was absent.

Eileen King, County Treasurer, gave monthly financial reports. The interest on one-year investments is 0.30%, and the interest on the checking account is 0.02%. Earnings so far this year are \$142,144.41, which is 71.07% of the budget for the year. Sales tax revenues are healthy and are over \$2,295,000, which is 95.62% of the annual budget. Motor vehicle tax collections are at 82.72% of the budget. Ad Valorem tax collections are at 97.45% of the budget. Ms. King said there is every indication that the county will have income to meet budget estimates.

Clancy Holeman, Counselor/Dir. of Admin. Services, conducted an administrative work session. Holeman and Leon Hobson, County Engineer, discussed their meeting with township

officers, KSU representatives, KCC, and Westar officials concerning utility poles at College and Marlatt Avenues. They are seeking alternatives to moving the poles. Each pole has a cost of \$100,000 and consists of steel with a concrete apron, set 30 feet into the ground. Apparently, the poles are not actually on the county's right of way but are deemed hazardous. KCC has no jurisdiction because the lines do not carry sufficient power.

Holeman said he is preparing the charter resolution for the new Board of Health. It will be presented to the present board for discussion on October 26. The charter requires two publications at intervals with time following publications before it can be adopted. One question of vital importance is the position, powers, responsibilities and enforcement procedures for the Health Officer, who becomes a crucial actor in case of health emergencies (e.g. epidemics). Commissioners felt the Health Officer must be given enforcement power in cooperation with the RCPD. Composition of the Health Board, which will on January 1 become only advisory, should continue to include medical professionals such as doctor, nurse, pharmacist, dentist, veterinarian, etc. as well as expert or experts on public health. Holeman will attempt to assemble a final draft in good time, although if the deadline of January 1 is missed, the board will function under the old rules.

October 17, 2011

Julie Merklin, observer

Commissioners McCulloh and Lewis were present.

Manhattan Township petitioned Riley County to take over a number of roads in the Fairmont area. The Commission agreed to designate only two roads, Messenger and Rannels, because use of Fairmont Park increased the use of these two roads.

Observer Reports

Riley County Commission cont.

Resurfacing of roadways within Lakewood, Driftwood and High Meadows has begun. The cost of this will be assessed to the residents on these roads.

Andrea Feldkamp announced the 4-H Citizenship Washington Focus program garage sale Friday and Saturday at Pottorf Hall. The proceeds will be used to help fund the trip to Washington, D.C. Citizenship Washington Focus, is a summer educational conference held at the National 4-H Youth Conference Center. Through hands-on educational workshops and sightseeing tours in Washington, D.C., they will learn about the history of our nation, the leaders who have shaped it, and how they can apply the leadership and citizenship skills they learn during CWF when they return home.

The RCPD presented a certificate of recognition to Laurel Martin, a Riley County citizen who called 911 after she witnessed a car accident. The victim had been thrown out of the vehicle and Ms. Martin helped keep her calm and shaded her with a blanket to keep her and the emergency responders out of the 105-degree heat. Martin knew the victim and arranged to pick up her son from the Riley pool and care for him until the victim was out of the hospital.

Gregg Eyestone, told the Commission that there would be a tree tour in City Park on Wednesday at 5:30. The tour would highlight 35 varieties of trees, and the hope is that people would consider planting their own trees. Brochures with information about the trees and their locations are available in the park and at the Parks and Recreation offices.

Oct. 20, 2011
Julie Merklin, observer

Commissioners McCulloh and Lewis were present.

Clancy Holeman, Counselor/ Director of Administrative Services, participated in a work session reviewing the extension of a payment deadline on a promissory note from University Park Benefits District. The remaining principal is \$8,332; the simple interest of 6% on this is \$499.92 for a amount due on Oct. 7, 2012, of \$8,832.92. The commissioners approved.

Johnette Shepek, Budget and Finance Officer, gave a history of the REACH committee. There was a discussion of the future direction of this committee. The committee was formed in 1999 at the request of the BOCC and called "Esprit de Corps Committee." The mission was to help give the BOCC the employees' perspective, promote good employee relations and promote communication between county departments. These objectives are facilitated by Employee of the Month/Year recognition, blood drives, a Giving Tree and a monthly informational newsletter as well as other activities.

Cindy Volanti, Human Resources, talked about the changeover of the health department (from city/county to just the county) effective January 1, 2012. All health department employees including the administrator will follow all Riley County personnel policies and procedures, as well as all pay schedules and benefit plans. The current administrator's contract concludes Dec. 31, 2011. McGrath Consulting Inc. is making a classification and compensation study which will include the administrator's position. This position will be eligible for a cell-phone allowance, use of county provided vehicle for business use, and volunteer benefits of supplemental insurance plans and deferred compensation

Clancy Holeman presented a draft version of a possible structure and role that a Public Health Advisory Board would take on Jan. 1. The main concern was what authority the new board would have. The BOCC has the final

Observer Reports

Riley County Commission, cont.

responsibility, but the advice and expertise of the Health Advisory Board will be essential. Deb Nuss, a member of the current Health Advisory Board, said that since commissioners come and go, we could see a shift of philosophy when it comes to public health. The concern was also expressed that if the Advisory Board really had no power, it could be difficult to get people to serve.

Oct. 24, 2011,
Joan Strickler, observer

All Commissioners present, and McCulloh presiding.

Rod Meredith with Public Works reported that he and a K-State wildlife specialist checked into concerns about a dog being attacked by a coyote near the dog park area. It was agreed they did not expect safety problems inside the perimeter of the dog park.

Public Works Director Leon Hobson discussed master planning for Riley County space needs. Identified needs are prioritized as A, B and C. The priority A level need is to hire a master planner to determine if it is appropriate to maintain the existing office building with regard to energy conservation, usage, operational efficiencies and security needs. The cost of such a study is estimated at \$63,000. Commissioner McCulloh was concerned about making the fund commitment given the questions regarding the availability of tax dollars for the county next year. She said if the Governor is serious about cutting taxes, counties will have fewer dollars to work with.

Hobson stressed that the study is needed if the county is going to consider remaining in the current building. It would not be wise to invest dollars into the current building unless it is deemed feasible for Commissioners and personnel to remain there in the future. There was some discussion of the church building across from the courthouse.

Commissioner Lewis made a motion to fund the study. The motion passed unanimously.

The RCPD reported complaints about traffic on

McDowell Creek Road on game days.

Health Department Director Chuck Murphy said the first flu case has now hit the county. He said the season is just getting started and urged people to get their immunization shots now. The vaccine takes up to two weeks to build immunity.

Treasurer Eileen King reminded people that county treasurer's offices statewide will not be able to do motor vehicle transactions from December 1 through 7 as Kansas converts to a new record keeping system.

The Commissioners discussed the new visitor's center to be built at the junction of Hwy 177 and I-70. It will include a tower to allow people to view the Flint hills. A problem to be solved is getting water to the center. Possible solutions would be digging wells, tying into a rural water district or into the Manhattan water system.

Planning/Special Projects Director Monty Wedel worked with the Commissioners as they began an extensive review of proposed amendments to regulations to implement the Vision 2025 plan.

Oct. 27, 2011
Joan Strickler, observer

All Commissioners present, and McCulloh presiding.

Commissioners approved a contract for the purchase of real estate which will give better access to Fairmont Park. They also signed a letter to Manhattan Mayor Sherow regarding the ballot question language on an interlocal agreement regarding property taxes.

County Attorney Barry Wilkerson said his office currently is dealing with three homicide cases. This is a large increase over the number

Observer Reports

Riley County Commission, cont.

of such cases ten years ago and becoming very costly and time consuming for his office, the RCPD, and the courts.

A lengthy hearing was held with the residents of the Valleywood edition in regards to ongoing drainage problems. Residents complained of pouring money into years of efforts to alleviate flooding of properties. Several who spoke resisted agreeing to pay for any additional such efforts.

County Counselor Clancy Holeman said Westar has agreed to pay for guard fences for two large utility poles that could present a danger in case of vehicle accidents. There was some concern expressed about Westar not informing the county of its plans and failing to request permits.

The Commission agreed to seek bids for its 2012 financial audit.

Register of Deeds Debbie Register said the County is running \$130,000 over income estimates for this year due to several large commercial loans. She said counties and states increasingly have to deal with problems resulting from tactics used by some financial institutions, such as "robo" signing of contracts for housing loans and cloudy paperwork.

Jim Williams and Phil Anderson said they are willing to raise funds for a sign on the east pier of the river. The problem to be resolved is determining whether the city or the county owns the pier. The electronic part of the sign would advertise only non-profit events.

Following a lunch for local legislators, a discussion was held about legislative priorities of the county. The first issue involves the use of credit cards. Currently, the state and cities are allowed to accept credit card payments and pass on fees to the purchaser, but counties cannot pass on such fees.

County Commissions have a statutory obligation to immediately conduct soil erosion inspections. The Commission would like to have a requirement for some expert opinion added, such as evaluation by representatives of soil conservation districts.

The county treasurer described problems relating to Kansas counties' inability to title boats. In addition to the loss of income, it makes it difficult for law enforcement to deal with thefts. Mr. Wilkerson said some boats are stolen in Missouri and sold in Kansas, knowing no title is required. Also discussed was the loss of revenue to counties that the state formerly provided, which results in property tax increases at the local levels.

Legislative E-Report, continued

The Governor supports a 401-K benefit plan for new state and school employees. There may be a hybrid plan offered so that the existing retirement plan applies to a portion of the new employees salary and the new 401-K plan would apply to the rest of the salary. This would guarantee a certain income floor for the lower paid state workers. Kansas has no choice but to increase its contributions to KPERS to make up for some under-payments or no payments made in the last several years. Contributions by the employees will also be increased. There will be many proposals and options on KPERS considered in the 2012 session.

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