

May 16, 2022
Unofficial Minutes
Russell County Commission Meeting

At 9:00 am Steve Reinhardt made the motion to open the meeting. Daron Woelk, seconded and Duke Strobel approved. Others present were Administrator John Fletcher, Clerk Mary Nuss, County Attorney Dan Krug, and Treasurer Trish Strobel.

Steve Reinhardt made the motion to approve the minutes of the May 2, 2022 meeting. Daron Woelk seconded, and Duke Strobel approved.

It was the consensus of the Commission to add Abigail Newacheck to Fire District 5 pending all paperwork is turned into payroll department.

Alan Kuntzsch, Public Works Director, updated the Commission on road projects in the County. Discussion was held regarding the possible re-decking of Hell Creek Bridge and the cost of such and where to start saving for this. It was the consensus to maintain the current bridge funds and add a line item in the budgeted funds and to start saving back for this repair. The Hell Creek Bridge was inspected last week. The Hell Creek Bridge FAS 420 at 4546 205th Blvd, does have a lot of hollow spots. State Parks is against shutting the bridge down during the repair process, but it would be cheaper to shut the bridge down to do the repairs. Alan is waiting to for the repair figures to come in.

The crews have been out patching on West Shoreline Road.

FAS 20 at 3677 200th Blvd, south of Dorrance and FAS 200 at 5328 177th St, North of Gorham are in need of repairs. He is waiting on quotes to repair these bridges.

Discussion was held regarding extending the warranty on two 2017 road graders. Steve Reinhardt made the motion to extend the warranty with Murphy Tractor in the amount of \$31,000.00 for 2 motor graders. Duke Strobel seconded, and Daron Woelk approved.

Duke Strobel made the motion to allow Chisolm Trail and R&R Refuse to increase their rates to \$22.00 a month. Daron Woelk seconded, and Steve Reinhardt approved. The City of Luray brought in 9.71 tons for their clean-up day, City of Russell brought in 11.68 tons and the City of Lucas brought in 17.09 tons.

At 9:54 am Duke Strobel made the motion to enter into a 5-minute executive session for an employee evaluation pursuant to non-elected personnel with Alan Kuntzsch and John Fletcher in attendance. Steve Reinhardt seconded, and Daron Woelk approved. At 9:59 am the meeting resumed with no action taken.

Judge Steve Johnson presented the 2023 20th Judicial District Court operating budget. Raylene Mattocks, Carla Miller, Clerk of District Court and District Court Administrator, Lundy Settle were also in attendance. Judge Johnson stated that they are anticipating 8 jury trials this year. Interpreter fees have increased as well.

Dave Anderson and Kaylee Connor presented the 2023 High Plains Mental Health Center's Budget. Pam Novak, Russell County Representative on the High Plains Board was also present. They have contracted services 3 days a week here in Russell County. One day a week is through the County Health Department and one is for children and one is for the elderly through the Hospital Clinic. The Budget request from Russell County is \$37,618.58.

David Caudill and Kevin Kreutzer came in to give the Commission an update regarding the Russell Regional Hospital. David stated that he believes things are on an upward trend. Dr. Joel Adams will start July 1, 2022. David said they are exploring daycare services, expanding massage services to the City of Lucas.

Tawnya Rohr, Director of Foster Grandparent Program and Senior Companion Programs are looking for volunteers. Must be 55 years or older and if income eligible could get a stipend to assist with these programs. She is requesting some annual funding for these programs. \$1,000.00 for the Foster Grandparent program \$11,919.00 for the Senior Companion Program.

Lyman Nuss, Kent Truan and Dustin Finkenbinder requested \$30,000.00 for 2023 Russell County Conservation District Budget. Steve Reinhardt made the motion to approve their 2023 Budget request of \$30,000.00 Budget. Duke Strobel seconded, and Daron Woelk approved.

At 11:50 am the meeting recessed for lunch until 1:00 pm.

John Fletcher, Sheriff Fred Whitman, Under Sheriff Andy Van Der Wege, EMS Director Chris Venters and Emergency Manager Keith Haberer came in about purchasing new radios for the Sheriff's Office, EMS, 2 Radios for the Emergency Manager, 1 for Health Department and for the Hospital. Darin Woelk made the motion to approve the purchase new radios from VLS Communications in amount of \$454,110.40 with ARPA Funds. Steve Reinhardt seconded, and Duke Strobel approved. The used radios that have been used by emergency services will be passed down to the County Fire Departments. Steve Reinhardt made the motion to use ARPA funds, up to \$5,000.00 total to reprogram the used radios for the County Fire Departments. Duke Strobel seconded, and Daron Woelk approved.

Duke Strobel made the motion to approve the CMB Application for Paige M. Krause/Del Ray LLC DBA Lake Wilson Marina. Daron Woelk seconded; Steve Reinhardt approved.

At 1:47 pm Steve Reinhardt made the motion to enter into a 15-minute executive session for employee evaluations pursuant to non-elected personnel with Kent Ellis and John Fletcher in attendance. Duke Strobel seconded, and Daron Woelk approved. At 2:52 pm the meeting resumed with no action taken.

Tony Mahoney came before the Commission with concerns regarding the recent tax appraisals and levies. Others present for this conversation were: Jimmie Strachan, Jeanine Byers-Long, Andy Phelps, Lisa Arnoldy, Darwin Steinle, Marilyn Dinkel, Kim Kilian, Eddie Heffel, County

Appraiser David Gillmore, Emergency Manager Keith Haberer, Treasurer Trisha Strobel, and GIS Director Chris Brown. Tony Mahoney states that the appraisals have skyrocketed and are out of hand. Tony's tax bills have increased over 100% in the last 10 years. How many houses have sold in the County if there is low inventory on houses? Wants a firm commitment whether there is a tax appraisal problem within the County. Duke says that we had a phone conversation with the State that said Russell County is out of compliance. Tony stated that the State has nothing to do with setting values. Steve says that yes, property taxes are too high. Lisa Arnoldy stated her values went up 125% this past year. David Gillmore stated December 20, 2022, is the final day to do a Payment Under Protest. Must pay ½ of your taxes, fill out the paperwork then you will meet with Appraiser, if not satisfied with that hearing then file small claims, then go to Topeka if still not satisfied. Jeanine Byers-Long asked the Governing Body to have departments come up with innovative ideas to help cut the cost of their budgets. Extensive discussion was held regarding appraisals, levies, and budgets. Jeanine also asked that the proposed budget hearing be held in the evening.

At 3:40 pm Duke made the motion to enter into 5-minute executive session for an employee evaluation pursuant to non-elected personnel with Mary Nuss. Steve Reinhardt seconded and Daron Woelk approved. At 3:45 pm the meeting resumed with no action taken.

Mike Parsons, Economic Development Director, was told by the Commission to ask for the full \$25,000.00 support from the City of Russell. Discussion was held with Mike regarding his Economic Development Budget.

Chris Venters, EMS Director, brought in Dalton Dreiling and Dillon Kraus, who are EMS employees that would like to be on the Dive Team to help recover bodies at the lake. They asked the Commission if the County would buy their dive equipment and get this program started. Bill Hickert, A Dive Team Instructor, recommended these gentlemen to start this program. The Commission asked Chris to get price information on the equipment and to look into grant possibilities.

LaDana Seirer, Luray Senior Center, brought in their 2023 budget request. They will have an open house May 28, 2022. They have been doing fund raising and renting out the building to help for equipment projects.

Treasurer Trisha Strobel stated effective immediately the Treasurer's Office will be closed from noon to 1:00 pm. They will be taking appointments for driver's license renewals, tag renewals and title work. Walk-ins will still be accepted but people with appointments will take priority. Again, appointments are encouraged to help avoid wait times.

Tax corrections 2021-42 thru 44 were signed with a tax decrease of \$9,282.19.

Checks were approved and signed to be deducted from the following funds:

100	GENERAL	\$ 127,527.95	290	GORHAM FIRE	\$ 1,961.76
110	ROAD & BRIDGE	\$ 16,674.78	300	LUCAS FIRE	\$ 1,189.06
120	SPECIAL BRIDGE	\$ 324.09	310	WAL-PAR-NAT	\$ 190.85
130	NOXIOUS WEED	\$ 10,830.50	320	DORRANCE FIRE	\$ 264.38
140	4H	\$ 85.53	328	RS CO FIRE #5	\$ 1,694.48
150	CVB	\$ 578.45	330	APPRAISER	\$ 1,798.63
155	ED	\$ 210.39	340	SPECIAL R&B	\$ 1,245.92
180	ELECTION	\$ 1,240.68	360	SOLID WASTE	\$ 5,955.63
190	AMBULANCE	\$ 4,227.28	380	EM TELEPHONE	\$ 106.98
260	HEALTH	\$ 5,028.38	718	CIT. RVW BRD	\$ 1,123.71

At 4:35 pm Steve Reinhardt made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Duke Strobel seconded, and Daron Woelk approved. The next meeting for the Russell County Commissioners is June 6, 2022, beginning at 9:00 am in Commission Chambers, Courthouse.