

Barton County Commission Agenda Meeting Minutes

Recorded audio is available on compact disk upon KORA request to the Barton County Clerk's Office, 1400 Main – Room 202, Great Bend, Kansas 67530.

Phone (620) 793-1835 \ Fax (620) 793-1990 \ Email clerk@bartoncounty.org

Meetings Live Streamed through **Microsoft Teams**® at the following link: <https://bit.ly/3iGs2Ts>

February 8, 2023

The Board of Barton County Commissioners convened this 8th day of February 2023, at the Barton County Courthouse.

Members present:

Duane Reif, Commissioner, 1st District
Barb Esfeld, Commissioner, 2nd District, (Chairman Pro-Tem)
Shawn Hutchinson, Commissioner, 3rd District, Chairman
Tricia Schlessiger, Commissioner, 4th District
Donna Zimmerman, Commissioner, 5th District
Bev Schmeidler, County Clerk
Matt Patzner, Director of Operations
Patrick Hoffman, County Counselor

I. OPENING BUSINESS:

Commissioner Hutchinson called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

Commissioner Zimmerman moved to approve the agenda.
Commissioner Schlessiger seconded the motion.
All voted aye. Motion passed.

Commissioner Esfeld moved to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2023, Regular Meeting as they were submitted.

Commissioner Reif seconded the motion.
voted aye. Motion passed.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

A. ANNUAL DEPARTMENT UPDATE: County Attorney's Office:

-Levi Morris, County Attorney, will provide an annual update on his department. At the request of Mr. Morris, this item was tabled until February 8, 2023.

Levi Morris, County Attorney, provided numbers of cases filed in 2022:

Prosecuted 1,016 Traffic cases
Filed 75 Juvenile Offender cases, up about 50%
Filed 45 Care & Treatments
Filed approximately 468 Criminal cases

The second full week in January, his office went live with their new case management system. The previous system had been used since 2004 and they were notified about 2 years ago that it would be ending due to loss of the state contract. The new software is Karpel Solutions. They have 660 clients, 17,000 users in 32 states. Forty-five Kansas county prosecutors are using this software now. The company provides great customer service and continues to renew the product. They welcome suggestions for changes to the system from users across the country and have approximately 600 enhancements already.

Morris said that Colin Reynolds, Assistant County Attorney, had left Barton County to become County Attorney in Miami County. Morris had not received any application for the open position.

Commissioner Esfeld asked Morris about Drug Court. Morris said both Ellis and Reno counties have drug court. They are specialty courts that take local action to happen. They are empowered or authorized by statute but the state does not pay for it to make it happen. It usually happens because of a grant. Drug

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Courts are where drug users go and get a different environment. In Barton County, for instance, a person convicted of a drug crime would be put on probation and have a probation officer. With drug courts, the person goes face to face before the judge much more often. A judge, as well as a prosecutor, would have to volunteer to be in court that often. It would be a great deal of extra work.

Commissioner Esfeld asked if they could look into bringing the program to Barton County. Morris said he could tell them more about it in a study session.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

A. POSITION OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR:

-Commissioner Shawn Hutchinson will provide details. On December 21, 2021, the Commission hired Matt Patzner as the Director of Operations. Given the statutory responsibilities assigned to the County Administrator, it is suggested that Mr. Patzner be appointed to that position.

Shawn Hutchinson, County Commissioner, said I was sworn into office as a Barton County Commissioner in January, 2021. I've had the privilege of working with Matt Patzner during my whole term as Commissioner. That's one title he has held. During the time that I've been with the County, Matt has had three titles – Finance / Human Resources Officer, Operations Director and now County Administrator.

I think it's import for the public to know why I believe Matt deserves this title –

Matt believes in a team. He's vested the employees under his supervision to work with him, and the Commission, in all endeavors. He shares their responsibilities, but allows them to shine in their efforts. Department Heads and line employees alike are valued for what they bring to the table. Matt makes that clear to all of them.

Matt is well-versed in our finances. Matt worked for both the County Treasurer and the County Clerk before moving to Operations. During that time, he learned from the ground up the check-and-balances of our bookkeeping system, he knows our processes and he's had a hand in improving the system over time.

Matt is experienced. Having worked under elected officials and along side other administrative employees, he knows the daily, month and annual work that is required to keep the business of the County rolling. He's bright enough, and involved enough, to spearhead the special events that happen.

I enjoy working with Matt and am delighted to watch his career grow with Barton County. With his open door policy and willingness to help everyone, he will thrive as the County's next Administrator.

Commissioner Zimmerman said she was lucky enough to have interviewed Patzner years ago and was thrilled when he chose to work at Barton County. She said she had worked closely with him on budgets and felt he was a top notch individual and very glad he was still here.

Commissioner Esfeld said when she was County Appraiser, she also worked with Patzner and was impressed with his maturity. She was glad he came back to his hometown and stayed. He was a blessing to the county.

Commissioner Schlessiger said Patzner had been very easy to work with and glad he was on board.

Commissioner Reif said he had enjoyed the time working with Patzner so far, he was very knowledgeable and quite deserving of the position.

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Commissioner Esfeld moved to appoint Matt Patzner, current Director of Operations, to the position of County Administrator.

Commissioner Zimmerman seconded the motion. Commissioner Zimmerman noted this would nullify his current contract he was operating under.

Commissioner Hutchinson said so he cannot double down.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

Patzner said he appreciated the kind words and said this was a great group of commissioners to work with. He appreciated how involved they all were. He said it was a great place to work and appreciated their confidence in him.

B. COUNTY COUNSELOR SERVICES:

-Mr. Patzner will present. Barton County accepted proposals for County Counselor services until January 25, 2023. No bids were received. This resulted in the Commission interviewing two interested parties on February 1, 2023. At this time, the Commission will consider hiring a County Counselor for the period of February 1, 2023 – January 31, 2025.

Matt Patzner, County Administrator, said Patrick Hoffman and Don Anderson were interviewed. The proposed rates were:

Patrick Hoffman	\$5,500/month
Don Anderson	\$5,250/month

Commissioner Hutchinson said both were good applicants but with everything going on, it would be prudent to stay with Patrick Hoffman.

Commissioner Esfeld said Hoffman had already worked with all departments and had proven himself. Hoffman had a lot of experience with county government and did not have a conflict with court appearances.

Commissioner Esfeld moved to approve the contract with Mr. Patrick Hoffman for County Counselor Services for the period of February 1, 2023 – January 31, 2025. Services to be provided as outlined in the January, 2023, Request for Proposal for County Counselor Services. Cost of services to be paid through the Special Liability Fund, Professional Services line.

Commissioner Zimmerman seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

C. COMMISSION: Barton County Façade Improvement Grant:

-Mr. Patzner will provide details. In 2021, the Commission dedicated \$630,000.00 to the Façade Improvement Project. Monies expended on completed projects totaled \$369,390.43, with extended projects estimated at \$229,009.45. The project remainder is \$31,600.12. In 2021, the Commission did not act on four projects that were labeled as alternatives. The Commission will consider providing priority funding should the business owners wish to move forward with updated applications.

Matt Patzner, County Administrator, asked that the commission consider providing priority to Keller Real Estate, 1101 Williams, Great Bend; H & R Block, 2023 Lakin, Great Bend; Gunn's Antiques, 107 N Main, Ellinwood and Front Street Merchants, 200 W Front St, Claflin going forward.

Commissioner Hutchinson said they felt the remainder of funds could potentially cover all 4 of these and some already approved but not yet completed could fall off.

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Commissioner Schlessiger moved to name the Keller Real Estate, H & R Block, Gunn's Antiques and Front Street Merchants as priority FIG projects.

Commissioner Reif seconded the motion.

Commissioner Reif said it had been a great improvement to every community.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

D. FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: Project Update:

-Chairman Hutchinson will provide details. Given the success of the Façade Improvement Project, the Commission will consider additional funding at this time, with updated guidance and district parameters.

Matt Patzner, County Administrator, said as discussed last week in study session, given the success of the Façade Improvement Project, asking the commission to approve an additional \$250,000.00 for the Façade Improvement Grant Program round 2.

Shawn Hutchinson, County Commissioner, said he had three reasons to run for office – Blaine, Elle and Eli. He wanted Barton County to be their future should they choose that for themselves. The only way that happens is if we understand that nothing we do is for today. It is all for tomorrow.

That is why, in 2021, he helped lead the County on a charge to provide \$630,000 in Façade Improvement Grants. We sparked a movement to create visual impact and increase economic prosperity, accessibility and quality of life in Claflin, Ellinwood, Great Bend, and Hoisington. The vast majority of funding was spent with Barton County contractors and Barton County suppliers. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, when you spend \$100 at a small business, \$48 stays in the community. Spend the same \$100 at a big-box store or national retailer and only \$14 stays. What does that mean? When our 45 projects are completed by June 30, 2023, there is a very real possibility that the \$630,000 in FIG funds helped \$300,000 into the local economy. Those funds continue to turn over today in our community.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked that the Commission support more Main Street businesses by pledging an additional \$250,000 to Round II for façade grants.

Commissioner Hutchinson said we are getting ready to vote on the HVAC project, but our responsibility to the Courthouse and our employees does not diminish our goal of sustaining or lowering taxes. He said when he asked commissioners their number one objective as a commissioner, there were two comments. One was more community involvement and the other was sustaining or lowering the mill levy. This checks both boxes. There are only two ways to do that – cut services or grow the tax base. The services currently provided are vital to our safety and our prosperity. So we need to look at growth. And what better way than to invest in our hometowns? When we increase the traffic count on Main Street...when we improve tax collections in our Cities... we make a difference in our tomorrows.

Commissioner Esfeld said she had been amazed, what a great way to enhance our downtowns, grow our tax base and lower the mill levy. This keeps giving back to our communities.

Commissioner Zimmerman moved to approve \$250,000.00 in funding for the Barton County Façade Improvement Grant program. Direct the encumbrance of project funding from the Capital Improvement Fund, Building and Fixed Equipment - General Line, 071-00-6305.

Commissioner Schlessiger seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

Commissioner Hutchinson said they did make a few changes such as whittling down the areas to be just Main Streets, only 25% could be for windows, 25% for signage and 100% for visual impact.

Commissioner Reif asked about the deadline.

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Commissioner Hutchinson said they wanted to get it started quickly and move fast. They would open the bidding process February 15th and close March 15th.

E. PROJECT OVERVIEW: Barton County Courthouse Improvement Project:

-Mr. Patzner will provide details. In late 2021, Barton County hired Orazem & Scalora Engineering, P.A. (OSE) and DMA Architects, P.A., to conduct a feasibility study and make recommendations for services related to the replacement of the existing heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) to address building ventilation to increase the air quality. In 2022, OSE was authorized to design and bid the project. Bids were accepted until January 18, 2023. The Commission will now consider award of the improvement project.

Matt Patzner, County Administrator, showed a power point presentation and provided details. Patzner said replacement of carpet and interior painting had been added to the project with the general contractor.

Commissioner Hutchinson said that made sense to do while the building was vacated.

Patzner said two bids were received:

Kruse Corporation	\$4,182,000
Glassman Corporation	\$4,495,040

Funding review, out of ARPA funds, \$2,803,700.37 and General Fund Reserves, \$5,787,707.37. Asked the commission to discuss and consider how to move forward.

Commissioner Hutchinson said in 1961, John F Kennedy made comments about serving the United States Government in the hour of our nation's need. I'm no JFK and this isn't Washington - but I believe the sentiment echoes here today. Highly condensed, he pledged himself and his colleagues to take initiative, responsibility and energy in serving the public interest, to recognize the value of dissent and daring – and to say with pride, I served.

JFK was facing a Cold War and civil unrest in 1961. That is huge. Locally we face the replacement of our heating, ventilation and air conditioning system at the Courthouse. That is huge for us. And when I say huge – I mean expensive.

These are the facts –

The Courthouse is over 100 years old. Leaders have made updates and repairs as needed over time. And over the last 20 years, cussed and discussed these systems and kicked the can down the road. I do not blame them given the expense and logistics.

We have zeroed in on the mechanical systems being installed when the building was completed through today, with major repairs in the 1980s and 2000s. But that's parts. As far as we can tell, there has been no coordinated update to the systems since the building was completed.

The HVAC registers and water pipes throughout the building leak – leading to replacement and repair costs, stained and ruined furniture, carpeting and walls and electrical issues. Plastic coffee cans hang from most joints to collect leaks and condensation. Most equipment is no longer being produced and replacement parts cannot be found. To put it in perspective, JFK was 43 when he was elected president. Our HVAC registers, which we believe were installed in 1982, are 41. Not quite 43. But they have outlived their useful life by at least 25 years.

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County has approximately \$2.8 million in ARPA monies that have been earmarked for the update. The project must impact environmental safety and improved air supply meets that qualification. We also believe that we could get \$1 million back in historical tax credits.

No one here wants to spend over 4 million dollars on these improvements. But we cannot continue to kick that can. It is time to take initiative. It is time to be responsible. It is time to put forth the energy and, in recognition of the value of 20 years of discussion, move forward with the repair of the HVAC system. To say with pride, on our watch, we made a capital investment in the future of this building and served the citizens of Barton County.

Commissioner Esfeld said this was a difficult decision and she understood why past commissioners had waited. Past commissioners did save money and put it in reserves. With the ARPA funds, reserves and historical credits available, this was a good time to take on the project.

Commissioner Zimmerman said she remembered a time when a leak occurred in the County Attorney's Office over a three day weekend. The County Attorney's Office was located directly over the County Clerk's Office and it raised concern about potential damage to voting equipment. You would have an insurance claim but equipment needs to be certified, tested and ready to go, so this was a big concern. Commissioner Zimmerman said the picture showing the patch right next to another patch, it had been patched about as much as possible. She added that she had heard stories that when the system was emptied out between heat and air, metal shavings were found so who knows what condition the pipes were inside.

Commissioner Reif said that the little bit of doubt he had was changed when he saw the patches on the pipes. To him, those were warning signs and it was their responsibility to keep up the building and take care of the employees. He said a lot of people had lost sleep over this issue and the commissioners preceding had been saving money for the project. It was a necessary improvement but he wished a person would be able to "see" the changes such as when a new building was built.

Commissioner Schlessiger said the new commissioners were sworn in 29 days ago and it had been wild days. She felt it was known that she was the holdout and that was because when she ran for office, she wanted to be fiscally responsible. She said they needed to be brave new leaders, was it brave to tackle the project or brave to not do it. She said they were going to be brave and go forth.

Commissioner Esfeld moved to award the Barton County Courthouse Improvement Project to Kruse Corporation. Estimated cost of project, \$4,182,000.00, to be paid as follows: ARPA Fund, Building Improvements Line, 906-00-6215-60 - \$2,803,700.37 from the Capital Improvements Fund, Building and Fixed Equipment – General Line 071-00-6305 - \$1,378,299.63. I did not get out of reading all those big numbers.

Commissioner Zimmerman seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

No Executive Session Held

F. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

-Chairman Hutchinson will present. Any Commissioner may make a motion for the board to recess to executive session at this time as allowed by K.S.A. 75-4319. Any motion must contain the justification for executive session, the subject matter to be discussed, any individuals in addition to the board who will attend the executive session and the time at which the regular session shall resume.

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VI. ENDING BUSINESS:

1. Announcements
2. Appointments

VII. OTHER BUSINESS:

There was no other business.

VIII. ADJOURN.

Commissioner Zimmerman moved to adjourn at 9:59 A.M.

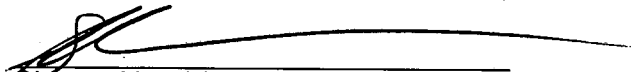
Commissioner Reif seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

ATTEST:



Bev Schmeidler
Barton County Clerk



Shawn Hutchinson, Chairman