

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/3Vx7UUd>.

April 8, 2025

The Board of Barton County Commissioners convened this 8th day of April, 2025, at the Barton County Courthouse.

Members present:

Duane Reif, Commissioner, 1st District, *(Chairman Pro-Tem)*

Barb Esfeld, Commissioner, 2nd District

Shawn Hutchinson, Commissioner, 3rd District

Tricia Schlessiger, Commissioner, 4th District, Chairman

Donna Zimmerman, Commissioner, 5th District

Bev Schmeidler, County Clerk

Matt Patzner, County Administrator

Patrick Hoffman, County Counselor

I. OPENING BUSINESS:

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

Commissioner Hutchinson moved to approve the agenda.

Commissioner Zimmerman seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

Minutes of the April 1, 2025, Regular Meeting were not available.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business.

III. APPROVAL OF APPROPRIATIONS:

-Bev Schmeidler, County Clerk, will present details. An Accounts Payable Register will be submitted to the Commission for the period of March 25, 2025, and ending April 8, 2025.

Bev Schmeidler, County Clerk, presented details and asked for approval.

Commissioner Reif moved to approve appropriations for the period of March 25, 2025, to April 8, 2025.

Authorize the Chairman to sign on behalf of the Commission.

Commissioner Esfeld seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

A. PROCLAMATION 2025-05: National Public Health Week:

-Members of the Health Department Advisory Committee will present details. The week of April 7-13, 2025, is National Public Health Week and the 2025 theme is "It Starts Here". Celebrating 30 years of the National Public Health Week event, Public Health officials are proud of the fact that Americans live an average of 35 years longer today than when the American Public Health Association was founded over 150 years ago. The contributions to that longevity are many and include advancements in testing, treatment and medicines; improvements in the availability and nutritional value of our foods; safer water and building material and better care and treatment of our own bodies.

Krista Smith, Health Department Advisory Committee, said one of the many strengths of the Health Department was the collaboration of services with other county agencies that they had instituted. They strive to increase access to public health by providing as many grants as possible that help keep the

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county costs lower. They are a very dedicated and innovative staff. Smith said she and Perry Smith were proud to serve on the board.

Krista and Perry Smith read the proclamation.

Commissioner Zimmerman said she was very appreciative of the work the Barton County Health Department did.

Commissioner Schlessiger thanked the Health Department and the Advisory Committee for all the time they dedicated.

Commissioner Hutchinson moved to adopt Proclamation 2025-05, National Public Health Week.

Commissioner Zimmerman seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

B. PROCLAMATION 2025-06: National Crime Victims' Rights Week:

-Camila Komarek, Victim Advocate, will provide details. In recognition of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, the County Attorney's Office has requested that the Commission adopt Proclamation 2025-06. The week of April 6-12, 2025, has been selected to reaffirm the County's commitment to respect and enforce victims' rights and address their needs during Crime Victims' Rights Week and throughout the year.

Camila Komarek, Victim Advocate, said during National Crime Victims' Rights Week, we celebrate the accomplishments of the Victims' Rights movement and reflect on how far we have come. This year the theme was Connecting, Kinship and Healing, recognizing that shared humanity should be the center of supporting all survivors and victims of crime. Kinship is a state of being with survivors that drives vital connections to services, rights and healing. Kinship was where victim advocacy begins. The annual observance challenged us to build a world where every built through kinship between survivors, advocates and communities held the potential to heal and show love for one another with empathy and intention. It was a collaborative effort among agencies within Barton County to make sure victims of crime had a voice and received the necessary services to recover from the trauma and begin the healing process.

Komarek read the proclamation.

Commissioner Zimmerman said the work Komarek did was very important and she remembered the time before Barton County had a Crime Victim Advocate.

Commissioner Reif said we heard several proclamations last week and today, it was very important to bring awareness and keep the public informed.

Commissioner Zimmerman moved to adopt Proclamation 2025-06, National Public Health Week.

Commissioner Hutchinson seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

C. PROCLAMATION 2025-07: National Public Safety Communications Officers Week, April 13-19, 2025:

-Dena Popp, Communications Director, has asked that the Commission consider the adoption of Proclamation 2025-07, National Public Safety Communications Officers Week. In part, the Proclamation honors Public Safety Communications Officers for their vital role in protecting the life and property of Barton County citizens.

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Dena Popp, Communications Director, said we used to have to dial a seven-digit phone number to summon emergency service personnel. In February 1968, the first 911 emergency call was made by a state politician in Haleyville, Alabama. Barton County became a consolidated PSAP, Public Safety Answering Point, in 1989. Instead of every agency having its own staff sending emergency services out, there was now one point of contact for all emergency service personnel. There have been many changes since then with ever-changing technology and the financial side of staying on top of it. Since then there has been the introduction of Next Gen 911, rapid deploy for accurate mapping, text to 911, video to 911 and What 3 Words App. Behind the scenes with ever-changing passwords, keeping up to date with certifications and training, much higher call volume, more tasks to assist the agencies we dispatch for such as calling road crews, utilities, wreckers and Juvenile Services. Extreme multi-tasking is a must for dispatchers, there was high stress, working rotating shifts with nights, holidays and weekends making the job not just for anyone. Popp said for some dispatchers, the things heard on calls could take a toll on their mental health. Over the last year, they had calls that reminded them of why they loved the profession. Popp said she was blessed and thankful for the committed staff. It was often a thankless job as many people think of the first responder as the police, fire or EMS, forgetting that the dispatcher was the first line of communication. Popp thanked her staff for their dedication and sacrifices over the years. She was very proud to have them as part of this profession and the Barton County team. The second week of April is recognized nationally as National Public Safety Communications Officers Week and Popp asked the commissioners to recognize the Barton County Communications staff. Popp encouraged everyone to check the Facebook page for Communications where they post important weather and road closing information.

Popp read the proclamation.

Commissioner Schlessiger said everyone had been touched by a dispatcher and she appreciated all they did.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked when the tornado sirens were sounded. Popp said they were tested every Tuesday at noon unless law enforcement said not to due to potential inclement weather.

Commissioner Esfeld said she appreciated Popp and her staff. All of them love their job.

Commissioner Zimmerman asked Popp to talk about the training for a dispatcher. Popp said they provide all training required which included CPR and First Aid; NCIC, National Crime Information Center; EMD, Emergency Medical Dispatch; geography of the county; 911 addressing and meeting emergency service personnel. Training was a minimum of 3 months and a maximum of 6 months.

Commissioner Reif said he was amazed how fast they get the notifications out to everyone necessary to respond in an emergency. They seem to inform people before they are asked.

Commissioner Esfeld moved to adopt Proclamation 2025-07, National Public Safety Telecommunications Week.

Commissioner Reif seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

D. PUBLIC PRESENTATION: Oxford Houses-Great Bend, Kansas:

-Tracy Reeves, Oxford Alumni, will provide details. Oxford Houses is transitional living for people in recovery from alcohol and drug addiction. The houses are not a boarding house or a halfway house, but a home run democratically by the service participants themselves. The mission of the Oxford House is to provide a supportive, drug and alcohol-free environment for people recovering from substance addiction.

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Tracy Reeves, Oxford Alumni, said she was a grateful member of Oxford House Deliverance in Great Bend. Oxford House was a transitional living for people in recovery from alcohol and drug addiction. The houses were not boarding houses or halfway houses but a home run democratically by the service participants ourselves. The mission of Oxford House was to provide a supportive, drug and alcohol-free environment for people recovering from substance abuse addiction.

Reeves shared a video about Oxford Houses.

Mike Swalley said he was a person in long term recovery and said that he had not had a drink or drug since October 17, 2014. He has been involved with Oxford House since 2010, he went through Oxford House in Wichita, Kansas. In 2016, he received a call from a friend in Oklahoma who worked at Oxford House asking him to keep an eye on new houses opening in Great Bend. The first men's house in Great Bend was opened February 1, 2016. A month later, Swalley's wife moved here and opened the first women's house. They opened five houses. Swalley said as the video showed, when things went south in a house, they stepped in and shut down a house. They had to close 2 of the houses because addiction was rampant. Swalley said Kansas was the only state that was a FORA state. FORA does not do much for them, he wished that Kansas was an Oxford House state because then there would be outreach workers and opening many more houses. The statistics say that if a person stays in a house for 18 months and actively works on a program of recovery, you had an 87.7 % chance to never get drunk or high again. DePaul did a study every year at Oxford Houses and every year, the statistics come up a little bit. Swalley said they were financially self-supporting, with no cost to the community. If a person does not pay their bills, they must move on.

Tracy Reeves said she was a grateful recovering addict and had not had a drink or a drug since December 16, 2024. Reeves said she was a 911 dispatch survivor and thanked Popp. She was also a mother and a college student. She was going back to school full-time to become a licensed addiction counselor.

Kenny said he had 68 days clean and sober thanks to Oxford House. He said he had a rough past and had not known how to overcome it. He did not have any guidance or the right people in his life to show him how to be a good person. Kenny said he lived in Barton House and was very thankful for it. They have 9 members with 2 openings currently. Kenny was currently working and getting his GED.

Albert said he represented Hope Central. He said he had used drugs since he was 12 years old. Being in Oxford House he has structure, hope and a reason to live again. Oxford House had done a lot for him and he loved the men he lived with like his brothers, they saved him.

Jamie said she was a member of house Deliverance and was very grateful for Oxford House and the support she receives. She recently lost her brother to a drug overdose. She has learned how to be responsible, pay her bills, take constructive criticism as well as how to care for others and be genuine.

Commissioner Esfeld said she met Mike Swalley and these fine folks through Oxford House. Her own family had been touched by addiction and one of her sons went through Oxford House. A lot of the recent proclamations the commissioners had been adopting tied to Oxford House. The lives you get to enjoy now was better for our community. Commissioner Esfeld said you were able to branch out to Hays and asked how many houses were there now. Swalley said they had just opened number 7 in Hays. He said there were more resources there with Drug Court and a rehabilitation facility.

Commissioner Esfeld said you all are our resources and there for people to reach out to for help. She appreciated them.

Commissioner Schlessiger thanked all who spoke for sharing their stories.

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Commissioner Zimmerman appreciated them stepping up and the awareness, letting the community know there was help and resources.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked what “I’ll take another 24” meant. Swalley said it meant they were not going to get high or drink the rest of the day. They were going to take another 24 hours, look forward to the next day.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked what the biggest problem was in our community with drugs. Swalley said methamphetamine and fentanyl.

Commissioner Reif thanked them for being brave and sharing with everyone today.

No Executive Session Held

E. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

-Chairman Tricia Schlessiger 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 the 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.

V. ENDING BUSINESS:

1. Announcements
2. Appointments

VI. OTHER BUSINESS:

Commissioner Zimmerman - Former Barton County Treasurer Jan Karlin passed last Friday April 4, 2025. Jan will be laid to rest next Monday. Jan was a long-time county official, who began her county service in the County Clerk's office and went on to serve several terms as the County Treasurer. Jan's family has been invited to attend the April 15th commission meeting where we will consider the adoption of a Proclamation honoring her for her service. Jan was a strong advocate for women and was a champion for county employees and will definitely be missed.

VII. ADJOURN:

Commissioner Reif moved to adjourn at 10:02 A.M.
Commissioner Zimmerman seconded the motion.
All voted aye. Motion passed.

ATTEST:

Bev Schmeidler
Barton County Clerk

Tricia Schlessiger, Chairman