

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

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February 3, 2026

The Board of Barton County Commissioners convened this 3rd day of February, 2026, at the Barton County Courthouse.

Members present:

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

I. OPENING BUSINESS:

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

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

Commissioner Schlessiger moved to approve the minutes of the January 27, 2026, Regular Meeting.
Commissioner Esfeld seconded the motion.
All voted aye. Motion passed.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

A. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE: Employee Recognition Award:

-Judith Castro, Employee Engagement Committee (EEC) President, will provide details. The EEC accepts nominations from employees for the Employee Recognition Award. Rita Sunderland, Assistant County Attorney I, was nominated by fellow employees. The nomination was based on her strong work ethic, positive, adaptable attitude and an ability to proactively solve problems.

Judith Castro, Employee Engagement Committee (EEC) President, said Sunderland's fellow employees said she demonstrated loyalty to the Barton County workforce with her years of successful service. They said Sunderland showed initiative by taking on extra tasks, solving problems proactively and suggesting new ideas. She was a reliable team player with a strong work ethic and positive, adaptable attitude despite being in a demanding position as Assistant County Attorney. Castro said they wanted to recognize Sunderland for the 4th Quarter, 2025.

Commissioner Hutchinson moved to honor Ms. Sunderland with the Employee Recognition Award, Fourth Quarter, 2025.

Commissioner Zimmerman seconded the motion.
All voted aye. Motion passed.

Sunderland said it was a privilege to work for Barton County for the last seven years with various County Attorneys. She said the current one was a strong leader and she was glad to do what she could to support the office. She gets to work with some great agencies and was humbled and appreciative to be recognized.

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EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION: Service Awards:

-Ms. Castro will present details. Barton County employees are recognized for continuous service for five, ten, fifteen, twenty and other years. The County Commission will recognize employees for their service.

Judith Castro, Employee Engagement Committee, (EEC) President, said they wanted to recognize the following employees for their years of service to Barton County:

Bj Wooding	35 years	Administration Department
Bev Schmeidler	35 years	County Clerk
Dena Popp	30 years	Communications
Michael Daniel	25 years	Juvenile Services
Jennifer Hamby	15 years	Solid Waste
Phil Kepka	10 years	Appraiser
Casey Rowland	10 years	Juvenile Services
Gina Werth	10 years	Solid Waste
Paige Volkel	10 years	Treasurer
Aaron Smith	10 years	Solid Waste
Ethan Bretz	10 years	Juvenile Services
Stephen Billinger	10 years	Sheriff
Mark Cooper	10 years	Environmental Management
Dodger Beckham	5 years	Sheriff
John Stettinger	5 years	Sheriff
Breauna Martinez	5 years	Health Department
Glennnda French	5 years	Road & Bridge
Corky Rankin	5 years	Health Department
Dee Davis	5 years	Juvenile Services
Shenee Kasselmann	5 years	Appraiser

Commissioner Esfeld moved to recognize those employees with 5, 10, 15, 20 and many other years of service.

Commissioner Schlessiger seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

C. COMMUNITY RECOGNITION: 2026 Western National Roundup:

-Wendy Prosser, County Appraiser, will present details. The 2026 Western National Roundup in Denver, Colorado, is a significant part of the larger National Western Stock Show, and features livestock judging, workshops and other cultural and educational events. Hadley Fleming, Kylee Miessler, Adessa Prosser and Ryann Stryker participated in the event and received fourth place in hippology. Team members will be introduced.

Wendy Prosser, County Appraiser, said the girls won the Kansas State Hippology competition last February which then qualified them to represent Kansas at the National Roundup in Denver last month. The team competed against other senior hippology teams from across the country in equine exams, hippology slides, horse stations, team problems and horse judging. Prosser was proud to say they took 4th Place overall. Prosser said that she and Coach Heather Miessler had the privilege of taking the girls to Colorado. Prosser wanted to recognize others who helped them along the way. Prosser said Deidre Moran was their coach when they first started with Julia Debes and Samantha Rathbun coaching as well as Miessler and herself.

Kylee Miessler said hippology was the overall study of horses. She said it covered anything from breeds and origins of the breeds, reproduction, horse anatomy and physiology, anything that related to horse management.

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Adessa Prosser said another competition was judging. Out of different classes, they had to pick the best rider and horse team or best structured horse. Some competitors had years of practice. She said they had little to no practice but placed third.

Miessler said they also did a written exam and slides as a team. The written exam covered things such as genetics, feed, diseases in horses and how to treat them. For the slides, they had to identify what a horse was doing or a disease and they placed fifth.

They thanked the commission for their support when they were fundraising for the competition. Prosser said it was a once in a lifetime experience.

Commissioner Reif said they were almost veterinarians.

Commissioner Zimmerman said it had been interesting following their journey. Youth were very busy with school and other activities and were able to compete at a national level. She was very proud of them.

Commissioner Schlessiger said she had been watching these girls for a long time, since they were very young and she was also proud of them.

Commissioner Esfeld said she was also proud of them and remembered watching Prosser in her first barrel race. They represented Barton County well.

Commissioner Hutchinson said he was proud of them and glad they could be recognized and were able to bring family along today.

L. COMMISSION REPORT: Kansas Legislative Policy Group Meeting Overview:

-Commissioner Barb Esfeld will provide details. The Kansas Legislative Policy Group (KLPG) is a bi-partisan coalition of western Kansas counties with the common interest in the preservation of the counties tax base and retention of local control. The KLPG Winter Meeting, 2026, was held in Topeka on January 27, 2026.

Commissioner Esfeld attended the KLPG meeting in Topeka and provided an extensive review for the commissioners.

E. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Grant Writing Services:

-Matt Patzner, County Administrator, will present details. In early 2025, the Commission hired NQSM Corp., d/b/a Hometown Grants, to create up to four grant applications during a 12-month period for \$50,004.00. In August, 2025, that contract saw a \$12,000.00 expansion for additional services for Ellinwood and Hoisington. As the Commission moves forward with project-based economic development funding, the 2026 agreement has been expanded to include one funding strategy each for Albert and Pawnee Rock as well as eight grant applications. These may include personnel and construction funding for Central Kansas Community Correction as well as infrastructure for Claflin, Ellinwood and Hoisington. The services are priced at \$122,400.00, with a \$24,480.00 contingency budget.

Matt Patzner, County Administrator, presented details and said the services were priced at \$10,200 per month for 12 months with a \$24,480 contingency budget. Patzner asked the commission to consider approval of the contract with Hometown Grants.

Commissioner Hutchinson said when we need to invest in growth, this was an organization that had a good track record of writing successful grants such as water grants, sewer treatment grants, things that cities and rural water districts a lot of money. He said if we, as a county, could help oversee the

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...less and bring in grant writers to get some of the projects done, we could save tax dollars in some of the cities and hopefully incentivize growth.

Commissioner Reif said it was a team of grant writers with avenues to find grants.

Commissioner Hutchinson said the most recent one they were successful with was for Rural Water District No. 2.

Commissioner Schlessiger moved to approve the Grant Writing and Funding Consulting Agreement with NQSM Corp., d/b/a Hometown Grants to provide certain grant writing services to Barton County for a monthly fee of \$10,200.00 for twelve months, with a \$24,480.00 contingency budget. Cost to be paid from the Finance General account of the General Fund, Economic Development Line, 001-26-6880. Commissioner Esfeld seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion passed.

No Executive Session Held

F. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

-Chairman Duane Reif 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.

IV. ENDING BUSINESS:

- Announcements
2. Appointments

V. OTHER BUSINESS:

Commissioner Hutchinson – he and Commissioner Esfeld attended the Ellinwood Chamber Banquet last week.
Commissioner Esfeld – she and Commissioner Reif attended the Hoisington Chamber Banquet also last week.
Commissioner Esfeld – Commissioner Reif's birthday February 4th. Commissioner Zimmerman and Diana Watson celebrated birthdays on February 2nd.

VI. ADJOURN:

Commissioner Schlessiger moved to adjourn at 10:16 A.M.
Commissioner Hutchinson seconded the motion.
All voted aye. Motion passed.

ATTEST:



Bev Schmeidler
Barton County Clerk



Duane Reif, Chairman