

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/3Q8Xdox>.

March 12, 2024

The Board of Barton County Commissioners convened this 12th day of March 2024, at the 1500 Kansas location.

Members present:

Duane Reif, Commissioner, 1st District

Barb Esfeld, Commissioner, 2nd District, Chairman

Shawn Hutchinson, Commissioner, 3rd District

Tricia Schlessiger, Commissioner, 4th District, (*Chairman Pro-Tem*)

Donna Zimmerman, Commissioner, 5th District

Bev Schmeidler, County Clerk

Matt Patzner, Director of Operations

Patrick Hoffman, County Counselor

I. OPENING BUSINESS:

Commissioner Esfeld 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.

Commissioner Reif moved to approve the minutes of the March 5, 2024, Regular Meeting.

Commissioner Schlessiger seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

II. APPROVAL OF APPROPRIATIONS:

-Bev Schmeidler, County Clerk, will present details. An Accounts Payable Register will be submitted to the Commission for the period of February 27, 2024, and ending March 12, 2024.

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

Commissioner Zimmerman moved to approve appropriations for the period of February 27, 2024, to March 12, 2024. Authorize the Chairman to sign on behalf of the Commission.

Commissioner Schlessiger seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

III. OLD BUSINESS:

-There was no Old Business.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

A. EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION: Service Awards:

-Judith Castro, Employee Engagement Committee President, 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.

Commissioner Esfeld said this topic was important to all the commissioners. She had done a presentation on employee retention in Topeka. She told them that Barton County was the best county in the state and had the best employees.

Judith Castro, Employee Engagement Committee President, said they appreciated partnering with the commissioners in recognizing employees. Castro presented the employees with a certificate.

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5 years of service:

Levi Morris, County Attorney
Dalton Lehmkuhl, CKCC
Dereck Hollingshead, IT
Leanne Delgado, Juvenile Services
Jay Burns, Noxious Weed
Lindsey Ensley, Public Health

10 years of service:

Christina Doyle, Appraiser
Melissa Fields, Communications
Drew Myers, Communications
Mark Cross, Road & Bridge
Natasha Beneke, Sheriff's Office

15 years of service:

Wendy Prosser, Appraiser
Barb Swayze, County Attorney

20 years of service:

Casey Hubbard, County Attorney
Darren Williams, County Works
Judy Goreham, Environmental Management
Ryan Lichter, Juvenile Services
Brian Batman, Sheriff's Office

25 years of service:

Susan Johnson, IT

30 years of service:

Sarah Younger, Solid Waste

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

Commissioner Zimmerman seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

Commissioner Reif said if his addition was correct, there was 265 years of service just for those recognized today. All of the employees were very important, these were milestones.

B. APPRAISER'S OFFICE: Valuation Update:

-Wendy Prosser, County Appraiser, will provide details. By March 1 of each year, the Appraiser's Office is to have completed valuation of property and mailed notices to the public per K.S.A 79-1460. The Commission will receive a report on the mailing of notices of valuation and valuation trends.

Wendy Prosser, County Appraiser, thanked the commissioners for the opportunity to provide an update on the 2024 real estate valuations. Barton County did complete the notices and mailed them out to all property owners on March 1st. In Kansas, property taxes were the primary source of revenue to fund local government services such as public schools, police, fire protection and public benefits. The accuracy of the appraisal was important because this was the allocation of the property tax burden, based on the value of each owner's property. When each property was appraised at its fair market value, as required by Kansas law, no owner was required to pay more than their fair share of the overall cost of local

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government. The county values were based on fair market value or the sale prices of similar properties. In addition, new construction, property characteristic updates or property deterioration could result in changes in values. The overall real estate valuation for Barton County decreased from 2019 to 2020 by 0.31%. In 2021, the results of Covid were seen and it increased by 2.24%. In 2022, the increase was 4.07% and in 2023, the countywide real estate valuation increased 14.6%. Prosser said she was relieved to say that in 2024, the countywide total valuation increase was only 2.16%. Overall commercial valuation increased 1.5%, residential valuations increased 6.7% and farmstead properties increased 11.5%. Ag land was not valued at fair market value, but an income driven formula. The formula was an 8-year average and had a 2-year lag from when the data went in. Therefore, the 2024 ag use values were using data from 2015-2022 to determine a price per area for soil type with the overall county valuation decreasing this year by 10%. In breaking down the increase for the four main towns in the county, the total real estate valuation in Great Bend increased by 3%, Hoisington increased by 5%, Ellinwood increased 10.5% and Claflin increased 9%. If property owners did not believe the 2024 appraised values reflected the fair market values or what they could sell their property for, they may call the Appraiser's Office and schedule an informal appeal. Informal hearings would be held by phone or in person in the office. By statute, property owners had 30 days to appeal from the mailing date of March 1st. March 29th would be the last day to call and schedule an appeal. Prosser said the personal property worksheets that were sent out in January were due back to her office by March 15th.

Commissioner Hutchinson said the valuation total in Barton County had gone up 23.25% in four years. He wanted to remind taxpayers that your taxes do not necessarily go up just because your valuation went up. Since 2021, Barton County had lowered their budget each year.

Prosser said if she would break statute, lower every valuation in the county by half, the budget needed to keep everything operational such as police, EMS and fire protection, the same money would be needed to operate and provide those services.

Commissioner Hutchinson said even if Prosser cut the valuations in half, everyone's taxes would remain the same. Prosser said correct.

Commissioner Esfeld said she liked the letter that Prosser included in the valuation notices. She said you really want the value to hold, not have the bottom fall out. People get hung up on the average increases, but individual homes and areas would vary.

Prosser said the informal hearings took about 30 minutes to make sure data was correct, explain the process and offer comparable properties.

Commissioner Reif noted that Prosser was always telling people to appeal if they did not feel it was correct so they could have their voice. She was not trying to hide anything and doing her best.

Commissioner Esfeld said property was still selling quickly.

Commissioner Zimmerman commended Prosser and her department on their customer service skills. Taxpayers came in upset but were able to get the information needed in a friendly environment. Last year, there was a \$28 million overall increase in value. The county was still able to lower the mill levy and not take advantage of the influx in value. Overall, the county was down 9.144 mills. Went down 2 mills in 2021, 3.2 mills in 2022 and almost 4 mills down in 2023. Commissioner Zimmerman said she appreciated all county departments that helped to make that happen along with Patzner and commissioners. She was not here for all of that but really appreciated everyone.

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Commissioner Hutchinson said when there was a valuation increase, you could lower the mill levy a little bit but still end up raising taxes. What Barton County did was actually lowered the mill levy beyond where our budget was to lower taxes.

Andrew Murphy, Great Bend Tribune, asked how Barton County compared to other counties with similar valuations.

Commissioner Hutchinson said it was hard to compare because of different taxing entities. It was also hard to compare just the county because Barton County had 389 miles of paved roads, one of the most paved roads in the state. He had tried for 3 years to compare with similar populations, ones with a community college, it was difficult.

Commissioner Zimmerman said some counties had county unit road systems, some had county hospitals, there were too many variables from county to county to compare easily.

Commissioner Hutchinson said the overall mill levy was about the only thing to compare.

Commissioner Esfeld said Barton County was a little lower than the average mill levy.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked Patzner if he could say how Barton County compared to other counties of similar size. Patzner said he would have to do research to answer. There were a lot of moving parts and differences between counties, it was not comparing apples to apples.

Commissioner Schlessiger said they tried to get information out to taxpayers with the pie chart showing where tax dollars go.

C. REQUEST FOR QUOTE: Coordination and Execution of Moving County Offices from Temporary Locations to the Barton County Courthouse:

-Matt Patzner, County Administrator, will provide details. In anticipation of the HVAC project ending, Barton County released a Request for Quotes in early February for moving services. The successful vendor will pack, haul and install office furniture and equipment currently located at 1500 Kansas, 1709 Main and 1520 Main, in the City of Great Bend, to the Barton County Courthouse. Three quotes were received. Monies have been included in the General Fund for this anticipated HVAC expense.

Matt Patzner, County Administrator, said three quotes were received.

The Armstrong Company	\$ 49,700.00	estimate 6 days to complete
Studdard Moving Group	\$119,748.37	estimate 16 days to complete
Two Men and A Truck	\$ 86,760.00	estimate 10-14 days to complete

Patzner had followed up on references and his recommendation was to go with The Armstrong Company. They had moved the City of Tulsa and some school districts in Tulsa. Our move would not be near the largest they had done. All references checked out and everyone contacted had nothing but good things to say about them.

Commissioner Esfeld said the differences in the bids were surprising.

Commissioner Schlessiger asked Patzner about the company training and doing prep work. Patzner said that was a big piece of it. The company would provide labels and boxes, and train staff on how to label things properly to make the move efficient.

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Commissioner Schlessiger moved to hire The Armstrong Company to coordinate and execute the moving of County offices from temporary locations to the Barton County Courthouse. Estimated cost of service, \$49,700.00, to be paid from the Courthouse General Account of the General Fund, HVAC Expense Line, 001-18-5516. Direct the Commission Chair to execute the Proposal Acceptance Agreement.

Commissioner Zimmerman asked Commissioner Schlessiger if she said 5516 or 5517.

Commissioner Schlessiger said she did not know what she said, but it was 5517.

Commissioner Hutchinson seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

No Executive Session Held

D. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

-Chairman Barb Esfeld 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:

There was no other business.

VII. ADJOURN:

Commissioner Hutchinson moved to adjourn at 9:34 A.M.

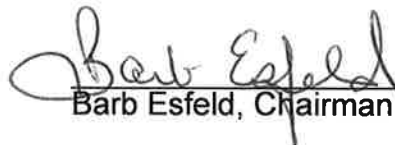
Commissioner Schlessiger seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

ATTEST:



Bev Schmeidler
Barton County Clerk



Barb Esfeld, Chairman