

January 19, 2026

Official Minutes

Russell County Commission Meeting

At 9:00 a.m., Duke Strobel called the meeting to order and made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2026, meeting. Alan Kuntzsch seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Others present at the meeting were: Administrator Stephanie Grisham, County Clerk Kristi Whitman, and County Attorney Dan Krug.

The Commissioners had their review. There are still road condition complaints. Duke Strobel stated he attended the Zoom meeting hosted by KAC reviewing bills in legislation. Jason Krug stated he wants to meet with the landowners, David and Martin Schneider, about the washout south of Luray.

Duke Strobel made a motion to approve a pay increase of \$1,217.00 per year for County Attorney Dan Krug. Dean Haselhorst seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Alan Kuntzsch made a motion to keep Duke Strobel as Chairman of the Commission and Steve Reinhardt as Vice-Chairman of the Commission. Jason Krug seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Duke Strobel read the Commission Appointments for 2026. Duke Strobel made the motion to approve the following appointments for the year 2026. Jason Krug seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS 2026

MENTAL HEALTH REPRESENTATIVE – Sheriff Andrew Van Der Wege

HEALTH OFFICER – Jennifer Funk

COUNTY HEALTH MEDICAL CONSULTANT – Dr. Tyrel Somers, MD

KPERS AGENT – Connie Schinkus

WORKMAN'S COMP PHYSICIAN – Dr. Tyrel Somers, MD

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER – *Russell County News & Lucas-Sylvan News*

DEPOSITORIES – All county banks meeting statutory requirements

REP. NW PLANNING KANSAS PLANNING BOARD – Commissioner Jason Krug

REP. KANSAS LEGISLATIVE POLICY GROUP – Russell County Commissioners

ADVISORY COMMISSION FOR PARKS & REC – Convention & Visitors Bureau

JUVENILE CORRECTION ADVISORY BOARD – Heather Fletcher

CENTRAL KS COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS ADVISORY BOARD – Stephanie Grisham

SPECIAL DEPUTY CORONER – Chris Venters, Ashley Stierlen

POST ROCK SCENIC BYWAY COMMITTEE - Commissioner Dean Haselhorst

CENTRAL KS LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING GROUP – Commissioner Steve Reinhardt

ASST EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR – Sheriff Andrew Van Der Wege

SOLID WASTE COMMISSION – Commissioners Steve Reinhardt and Alan Kuntzsch, Stephanie Grisham, Chadd Stevenson (City of Russell), Jennifer Buzzell (County Household Hazardous Waste)

ZONING APPEALS & RUSSELL COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION (3-YEAR TERMS) - Commission with their appointment years is as follows: Olivia Anderson (2028), Cindy Haselhorst (2027), Mike Murphy (2029), Dean Koehn (2028), Mike Waymaster (2027), Carl Denning (2029), Victoria Tomlinson (2028)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD

County Appointed: Duke Strobel, Jon Birky, Karla Berry, Malinda Walker, Aaron Talbott, Jamie Malone, Alex Lofland, and Laci Shirley. There is one vacant position that will be filled at a later date.

City Appointed: Kayla Schneider, Dustin Madden, and Jeannine Byers-Long

FIRE DISTRICTS

GORHAM FIRE DIST #1

CHIEF – Jeffery Blundon

ASST CHIEF – Colby Haselhorst

SECRETARY/TREASURER – Isaiah Robbins

LUCAS FIRE DIST #2

CHIEF – Kenny Cain

ASST CHIEF – Brent Steinle

SECRETARY – Lori Lamb

WALDO/PARADISE/NATOMA FIRE DIST #3

OVERALL DISTRICT CHIEF – Dustin Finkenbinder

PARADISE STATION CHIEF – Todd Schneider

NATOMA STATION CHIEF – Dale Eickhoff

WALDO STATION CHIEF – Dustin Finkenbinder

TREASURER/CLERK – Dylan Pruter

DORRANCE FIRE DIST #4

CHIEF – Nathan Pasek

ASST CHIEF – Justin Mermis

SECRETARY/TREASURER – Andy Phelps

RUSSELL COUNTY FIRE DIST #5

CHIEF – Tracy Kuntzsch

BUNKER HILL ASST CHIEF – Josh Vopat

LINCOLN TWP STATION CHIEF – Dan Cook

TREASURER/CLERK – Justina Opdycke

Duke Strobel made a motion to add Aurora Kuntzsch to the Russell County Fire District #5 roster pending all paperwork being turned into the Payroll Office. Dean Haselhorst seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Duke Strobel read the 2026 Observed Holidays:

January 1, February 16, April 3, May 25, July 3, September 7, October 12, November 11, November 26 and 27, December 24 and 25, 2026. On December 31, 2026, we will be closed to the public for end-of-year business. Dean Haselhorst made a motion to approve the 2026 Holidays as presented. Alan Kuntzsch seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Duke Strobel made a motion to approve April 4, 2026, and July 4, 2026, as Landfill holidays and will be closed. Dean Haselhorst seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Justin Mermis, Public Works Co-Director, gave an update on the Road and Bridge department. Dean Haselhorst presented three bids for trucks. Discussion was held. Duke Strobel made a motion

to table the bids on purchasing a truck. Steve Reinhardt seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Commission discussed possibly purchasing a tractor.

Stephanie Grisham, County Administrator, stated Russell County Fire District #5 would like to purchase a truck from Road and Bridge. The Commission stated they will allow Road and Bridge to sell surplus trucks to county fire departments based on an average Blue Book for each truck.

Mike Parsons, Economic Development Director, and Ryleigh Wagner, CVB Director, presented Resolution 2026-3 authorizing participation in the Rural Opportunity Zone student loan repayment program for calendar year 2026. Duke Strobel made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-3. Alan Kuntzsch seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Mike Parsons and Ryleigh Wagner presented an 80/20 grant opportunity for community facilities that would utilize the 4H building. They requested the consent of the Commission to move forward in the grant process. The Commissioners agreed to have Mike and Ryleigh pursue this grant opportunity.

Resolution No. 2026-3

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF RUSSELL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
AUTHORIZING PARTICIPATION IN RURAL OPPORTUNITY ZONE STUDENT
LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM CALENDAR YEAR 2026

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF RUSSELL COUNTY, KANSAS,

Section 1. Pursuant to K.S.A. 2025 Supp. 74-50,223, the Board of County Commissioners expressed its intent to participate in the Rural Opportunity Zone (ROZ) student loan repayment program.

Section 2. Russell County has been designated a Rural Opportunity Zone pursuant to K.S.A. 2025 Supp. 74-50,222. As of July 1, 2025, the County population was 6,620 as certified by the Kansas Department of Revenue.

Section 3. Russell County Commissioners hereby obligate Russell County to participate in the ROZ student loan repayment program as provided by K.S.A. 2025 Supp. 74-50,223 for a period of five years, which shall be irrevocable.

Section 4. Russell County agrees to pay in equal shares with the State of Kansas the outstanding student loan balance of any resident individual for five years if the resident individual meets the terms of qualification provided by the State of Kansas in K.S.A. 2025 Supp. 74-50,223, and the appropriate rules and regulations. The number of qualified resident individuals receiving such payments will be subject to the availability of funds.

Section 5. Pursuant to K.S.A. 2025 Supp. 74-50,223, financial contributions by the State of Kansas shall be subject to any restrictions imposed under applicable appropriation acts enacted by Kansas Legislature. As required under Senate Bill 125 from the 2025 Kansas Legislative Session Laws, the Russell County population was 15,000 or less as of the 2020 census.

Section 6. Russell County intends to enter into partnerships with Cities, Employers, and Foundations for the direct sponsorship of Rural Opportunity Zone Applicants. Sponsored Applicants must meet all qualifications of the ROZ program. All sponsorships will be subject to ROZ student loan repayment rules and regulations.

Section 7. The maximum student loan balance for each qualified resident individual to be repaid jointly by Russell County and the State of Kansas shall be \$15,000 over a term of five years.

Section 8. Russell County shall allocate \$0.00 a year for the purpose of matching payments from the State of Kansas to qualified resident individuals. Russell County shall revise its ROZ budget on an annual basis submitting a new Resolution to the State of Kansas by January 30th each year. Russell County shall submit their obligation in full to the Department of Commerce before the first day of October each year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution shall be published once in the official county newspaper and shall be in effect from and after its date of publication.

Adopted this 19th day of January 2026 by the Board of Russell County Commissioners, Russell County, Kansas.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF RUSSELL COUNTY, KANSAS

s/ Duke Strobel

Duke Strobel, Chairman

s/ Steve Reinhardt

Steve Reinhardt, Member

s/ Dean Haselhorst

Dean Haselhorst, Member

s/Alan Kuntzsch

Alan Kuntzsch, Member

s/ Jason Krug

Jason Krug, Member

ATTEST: (seal)

s/ Kristi A. Whitman

Kristi Whitman, County Clerk

Sheriff Andrew Van Der Wege stated he needs to replace the patrol vehicle that was involved in an accident. The Commission agreed to have a vehicle added to the Fleet Management Leasing contract for \$920.00 per month with the Sheriff's Office up fitting the vehicle with the equipment.

At 10:50 a.m., Duke Strobel made the motion to enter into a 5-minute executive session for non-elected personnel with Sheriff Andrew Van Der Wege, Administrator Stephanie Grisham, and County Attorney Dan Krug in attendance. Dean Haselhorst seconded. The motion passed unanimously. At 10:54 a.m., the meeting resumed with no action taken.

At 11:00 a.m., Duke Strobel made the motion to enter into a 20-minute executive session for attorney-client privilege with Administrator Stephanie Grisham and County Attorney Dan Krug in attendance. Steve Reinhardt seconded. The motion passed unanimously. At 11:18 a.m., the meeting resumed with no action taken.

Tax corrections 2026000002-3, 5-8 were signed with a tax decrease of \$10,830.30.

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

100	GENERAL	\$474,741.23	290	GORHAM FIRE #1	\$ 419.38
110	ROAD & BRIDGE	\$ 31,615.88	300	LUCAS FIRE #2	\$ 11,758.56
120	SPECIAL BRIDGE	\$ 255.40	310	WAL-PAR-NAT FIRE #3	\$ 457.39
130	NOXIOUS WEED	\$ 1,705.30	315	WAL-PAR-NAT FIRE #3	\$152,672.00
140	4-H	\$ 396.81	320	DORRANCE FIRE #4	\$ 928.27
150	CVB	\$ 2,382.90	328	RUSSELL CO FIRE #5	\$ 5,782.96
155	ECO DEVELOPMENT	\$ 2,321.00	330	APPRAISER	\$ 1,782.07
180	ELECTION	\$ 372.37	340	SPECIAL R&B	\$ 1,986.50
190	AMBULANCE	\$ 7,310.75	360	SOLID WASTE	\$ 3,274.91
260	COUNTY HEALTH	\$ 2,412.77	370	EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	\$ 59,686.00
280	ED 1/2 CENT SALES TAX	\$ 11,490.00	380	EMER TELEPHONE	\$ 495.66

At 11:18 a.m., Duke Strobel made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Jason Krug seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The next meeting for the Russell County Commissioners will be on Monday, February 2, 2026, beginning at 9:00 am in the Commission Chambers, Courthouse.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF RUSSELL COUNTY, KANSAS

DUKE STROBEL, CHAIRMAN

STEVE REINHARDT, VICE CHAIRMAN

JASON KRUG, MEMBER

DEAN HASELHORST, MEMBER

ALAN KUNTZSCH, MEMBER

ATTEST:

KRISTI A. WHITMAN
COUNTY CLERK

