

# County

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2020 (chip seal, hot mix, fog seal, culverts, bridges, etc.). Many of the 2020 projects were discussed during county commission meetings the past several weeks.

The 2019 annual report included the following information:

- Snow & Ice - 8 storms Jan. 11 to March 1, \$363,909.35.
- Gravel Winter Repair: nu-

merous from Feb. 27 to May 14, \$397,299.26.

- Flood Repair: 430 spots from May 9 to July 16, \$924,982.20.
- Chip and Seal: 41 miles
- Fog Seal: 28, chip and fog total \$867,584.21.
- Asphalt: 13 miles, \$1,283,902.
- Work Request: 40 locations, \$249,990.44.
- Gravel Rocked: 17 miles, \$266,543.56.
- Gravel Ditched: 1 mile, \$56,435.69.
- Precast: 1, \$56,460.46.
- Bridge Replaced: 1, cost not

available.

- Crossroads Replaced: 7, \$70,657.00.
- Structures Maintained: 5, \$17,121.70.

*Total: \$4,554,895*

Commissioners expect to approve the 2020 Construction Project Plan on Jan. 6.

Blackbourn said Wayne Houston, a truck driver, plans to retire effective Feb. 28.

Commissioners also waived the county's purchasing policy as to advertising and approved the purchase of rock as needed for 2020 from the following quarries: Mid-State Materi-

als, LLC, Nelson, Harshman, APAC-Kansas Shears Division and Harshman-Knight Land, LLC, respectively, depending on the location the rock is to be used. Informal quotes were obtained from all local active rock quarries.

County Clerk Angie Kirchner presented a spreadsheet showing preliminary year-end transfer amounts to see if commissioners wanted to make any changes.

Commissioners discussed how long courthouse employees were required to work on Dec. 31. Courthouse offices

close to the public at noon Dec. 31; however, employees continue to work to balance year-end books. In past years, employees in some departments leave at noon while other employees have to continue working. Saueressig suggested everyone work until it is announced everyone can go home, which commissioners concurred.

Commissioners also authorized Chairman Meats to sign:

- One tax abatement to the county tax roll in the amount of \$491.80.
- A real estate mortgage release, acknowledging satisfac-

tion in full debt secured by Dirk Leroy Beaty, lots 9, 10 and 11, in block 138, Burlington.

- A real estate mortgage release, acknowledging satisfaction in full debt secured by Tommy K. Saueressig and Sharon K. Saueressig, lots 3, 4 and 5, in block 134, Burlington.

Commissioners questioned and signed December warrants and vouchers prior to recessing until 11 a.m. Tuesday to approve year-end transfers. The first regular meeting of the new year will be 9 a.m. Monday in Room 201 of the Coffey County Courthouse.

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Luke said. "They have made indications - the building has been on the market for some time - that they would be willing to sell it to us, but we have not entered into any formal negotiations at this point in time."

During Memorial Day Weekend, rising water in Rock Creek threatened a number of businesses in the 300 block off Neosho and nearby areas. Water seeped into the basements of many downtown buildings. As the water crept toward Burlington City Hall, on the southwest corner of Third and Neosho streets, the decision was made to move to the former LCEC building located at 1013 N. Fourth Street. Luke explained that all the city's servers and computer hook-ups - essentially the ability for the city to function - were located in the basement of city hall.

At some time after the Memorial Day Weekend flooding, the city hall roof started leaking. It was discovered after the Aug. 1 severe storm that brought hail and high winds to the area.

Before the Aug. 21 meeting, Burlington's governing body said little about city hall in open session. Prior to adjourning, the governing body met behind closed doors for a Kansas Open Meetings Act exception that allows preliminary discussion relating to the acquisition of real property.

The Republican asked its Facebook followers if city hall should remain downtown at Third and Neosho or stay at its temporary location in the former LCEC building at 1013 N. Fourth Street. Portions of the 56 comments, overwhelmingly in favor of remaining at the downtown location, were printed.

**(Nov. 14, 2019) — 5-0 vote to purchase LCEC building** — On Nov. 6, the Burlington City Council unanimously agreed to purchase the former Lyon-Coffey Electric Cooperative building for \$137,500. The motion was made near the end of the 40-minute meeting, following a 10-minute executive session to consult the city attorney in matters deemed privileged under the attorney-client relationship.

The motion also authorized the mayor to execute the purchase agreement and all required documents to purchase the property. The closing will be consummated within 30 days of completion of pending repairs that are the responsibility of the seller.

Luke said negotiations to purchase the LCEC building started about six to eight weeks ago. "We received the agreement from the sellers Wednesday afternoon before the meeting," Luke said. "It was not necessarily the best timing, but it was when their attorneys got the paperwork to us with their signatures."

Luke expected LCEC to make building repairs this week. The repairs are largely related to hail and rain damage - roof leaks, damage to metal sides of the building and ceiling tiles inside. Repairs will include a new roof, gutters and downspouts and miscellaneous smaller repairs.

The city closed on the sale on Dec. 18.

## County treasurer sues county

**(Jan. 17, 2019)** — Coffey County Treasurer Karen Maley on Jan. 9 filed a civil suit in Coffey County District Court naming the Board of County Commissioners of Coffey County as defendants. Maley claims county commissioners unlawfully reduced her county treasurer salary. She is seeking a judgment that would not only restore her wages and pay lost wages, but also include an amount in excess of \$75,000 for retaliation.

Commissioners passed a resolution on April 10, 2017, setting salaries for unclassified employees, including Coffey County treasurer. Maley's annual salary was set at \$62,588. In November, Maley submitted a voucher to be paid an additional \$10,161.20 from the motor vehicle fund, which would make her total annual compensation nearly \$73,000. Previous Coffey County treasurers did not submit vouchers for additional compensation and county commissioners understood the treasurer's salary included compensation for motor vehicle work.

On Jan. 29, 2018, commissioners passed a resolution reducing the county treasurer's annual salary from \$62,588 to \$50,000, retroactively to Jan. 1. Maley claims the reduced salary was done in retaliation for seeking motor vehicle wages and it was not done in connection with job performance or disciplinary action.

Maley is seeking a judgment from the court finding the county commission's actions to be unlawful. She is seeking compensation from the county's general fund for her full salary of \$62,588 from Feb. 1, 2018 through March 2018 and \$66,250 continuing thereafter. She claims she is entitled to full wages plus interest and penalty of 1 percent per day until paid in full. Maley also seeks claims in an amount in excess of \$75,000, for her costs incurred, her attorneys' fees incurred in bringing this claim and for any such further legal and equitable relief as the court deems appropriate.

## Shopko closing

**(Jan. 17, 2019)** — Employees at the Shopko Hometown store in Burlington learned the Wisconsin-based retailer planned to close the store by April 7. A liquidation sale at the Burlington store began Jan. 11 with everything in the store is 20 to 40 percent off.

Shopko announced the closing of 39 stores in December, including six Kansas stores. The closures overwhelmingly impacted the Shopko Hometown format, which focuses on 15,000- to 35,000-square-foot stores located in smaller towns. Shopko Hometown stores carry apparel, home furnishings, toys, consumer electronics,



seasonal items, groceries and lawn and garden products. Addition closings were announced in January and February.

Numerous media reported claims by pharmaceutical supplier McKesson Corp. that Shopko intended to file for bankruptcy protection on Tuesday, Jan. 15. McKesson claimed Shopko owes the vendor \$67 million for drugs supplied since Nov. 11. McKesson had not been paid since early December.

Thirteen employees were affected by the closure of the Burlington store.

The Wisconsin-based retailer had 363 stores in 24 states. According to Bloomberg, Sun Capital, a private equity firm, purchased Shopko in 2005 for about \$1.1 billion. The following year, real estate investment trust Spirit Finance Corp. bought the retailer's real estate in an \$815 million sale-leaseback transaction.

In 2012, Shopko acquired Pamida's 193 stores — including Burlington's Pamida store.

## Coffey County spelling bee

**(Jan. 31, 2019)** — Kadyr Speer, an eighth grade student at Lebo Jr./Sr. High, made quick work of the Coffey County Spelling Bee Tuesday, Jan. 29, at SCC Middle School, clinching the top spot in eight rounds by correctly spelling the word 'tragic.' This was Kadyr's first appearance at the county bee, where she earned a trip there by placing second at her local school bee. Kadyr would represent Coffey County at the 66th annual Regional Spelling Bee March 9 at Newman University, Wichita.

Waverly Elementary School fourth-grader Evelyn McMillen was runner-up, and Kaitlyn Wild-Ayers, an eighth-grader from Burlington, placed third by winning a spell-off against Tucker Wright, her eighth grade classmate, also from Burlington.

## Dale inducted into Kansas Music Hall of Fame

**(March 28, 2019)** — Jim Dale, Burlington, was inducted into the Kansas Music Hall of Fame on April 13, in recognition of his 50-plus years as a singer/songwriter.

Dale was one of eight inductees in the KM-HOF Class of 2019. They were inducted in a ceremony at Liberty Hall in Lawrence.

Dale's music career paralleled a teaching career. After writing and recording a song about a friend's VW, he began entertaining regionally. His music took him to new levels in Nashville then to California where he continued to write, record and rub elbows with others well-known in the industry. He settled down in Burlington 40 years ago.

The Kansas Music Hall of Fame was established in August of 2004 to recognize and honor performers and others who have made significant contributions to the musical history of the state of Kansas and the greater Kansas City metropolitan area. The Hall of Fame endeavors to promote public interest in the musicians of the past and encourage those of the present and future.

A story summarized Dale's career, including co-writing songs that included "Ten Long Years Ago," "Jesus is My Kind of People," and "Cravin'." By the end of 1972, Dale had been a part of two of the three best-selling country albums of the year.

"Jesus is My Kind of People" was recorded by other artists, including Etta James, L.J. Reynolds, Gladys Knight and as recently as 2015 by Rita Gumm.



## Planning board hears motocross track proposal

**(April 4, 2019)** — A proposal that included a commercial motocross race track operation northeast of Burlington drew more than 50 people to the March 20 meeting of the Coffey County Planning Board.

Melanie Turner made application in Case No. SU-2019-01 for the establishment of a multi-special use to establish campgrounds, privately owned recreational area and motocross race tracks on 15.5 acres at 1358 Native Road, an area that is zoned A-1 Agriculture. Orville Pirraglia was listed as agent.

Coffey County Zoning Administrator Heidi Harris outlined the case, which sought 10 camping spots for an RV park, various youth and adult activities and motocross tracks. Coffey County Sanitation Officer Marilyn Eccles outlined the sanitation requirements for the case.

Pirraglia addressed the planning board for more than an hour about the request. Fifteen people made public comments at the hearing - mostly opposed - and at least 15 letters had been received as correspondence in the case. When the public comment portion of the meeting closed, Pirraglia responded to concerns.

The Coffey County Planning Board tabled the matter until Wednesday, April 17 in order to obtain additional information. They denied the application.

## SCC High School sponsors two Honor Flights

**(April 18, 2019 and Nov. 14, 2019)** — Area veterans traveled April 12-13 on Southern Coffey County High School's 16th Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. The 17th Honor Flight was taken Nov. 7 and 8. On each Honor Flight, eight adults and 24 student guardians escorted 24 veterans from across the state of Kansas to visit war memorials and points of interest.

Places visited on the Honor Flights included the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the United States Air Force Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial (Iwo Jima Memorial), the World War II Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, U.S. Navy Memorial Plaza and White House.

The veterans on the 16th SCC Honor Flight included two World War II veterans, one Korean War veteran and 20 Vietnam War veterans. They represented four branches of the military, including eight in the U.S. Army, 12 in the U.S. Navy, three in the U.S. Air Force, and one in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Among the 24 veterans on the 17th SCC Honor Flight, one served in Korea; 19 served in Vietnam; three served in Iraq; and one served in Afghanistan.

Over the past 12 years, SCC has taken 17 Honor Flights. High school social science teacher Jeff True and former district clerk Roxi Newkirk organized the latest Honor Flight.

## Jury finds local woman guilty of second degree murder

**(May 2, 2019)** — Carol Sue Burris, 69, New Strawn, was found guilty Thursday in Coffey County District Court of reckless second degree murder of Michael Burris, her husband of 45 years. Jurors also found her guilty on a second charge, mistreatment of a dependent adult.

Charges stemmed from the mistreatment of Burris' husband between April 1, 2016, and Oct. 20, 2017. Authorities suspected abuse after seeing Michael Burris' severely emaciated body covered in dried and fresh human feces and urine, with many pressure sores in varying degrees of decomposition, when he was brought to the emergency department at Coffey County Hospital the morning of Oct. 17, 2017.

On Aug. 1, Chief Judge Taylor J. Wine sentenced Burris to 117 months for reckless second degree murder and 8 months for mistreatment of a dependent adult. The sentences are to be served consecutively in the Kansas Department of Corrections for a total of 125 months.

Michael Burris was 69 when he died. Fifteen witnesses testified during the four-day jury trial in April, including doctors, paramedics, wound care nurse and forensics pathologist.

Authorities suspected abuse after seeing Michael Burris' severely emaciated body covered in dried and fresh human feces and urine, with many pressure sores in varying degrees of decomposition, when he was brought to the emergency department at Coffey County Hospital the morning of Oct. 20, 2017. He died at Stormont-Vail Regional Health later that night. The cause of death was loss of nutritional support, which makes it impossible to live.

## True earns All-America honors

**(June 13, 2019)** — Wichita State University Shocker Aaron True claimed First Team All-America honors in the men's javelin throw Wednesday, June 5, at the NCAA Outdoor Championships held at Mika A. Myers Stadium in Austin, Texas.

True wasted no time in the men's javelin competition, as he jumped out to a strong start recording a throw of 73.08 meters, or 239 feet nine inches, on his first attempt. True followed his first attempt with a throw of 71.87 meters, or 235 feet nine inches, before fouling his last attempt in the preliminaries.

The redshirt senior bounced back in the finals, recording a mark of 70.08 meters, or 229 feet 11 inches, on his fifth overall attempt, before letting it fly for his farthest throw on his final attempt, landing at 73.11 meters, or 239 feet 10 inches, and earning All-America honors with a fifth-place finish.

True becomes the first male Shocker in the program's history to become a two-time First Team All-American in javelin. He finished with First Team All-America honors in 2018, with an eighth-place finish at the NCAA Outdoor Championships, and in 2019, with his fifth-place finish.

The LeRoy native was one of two American-born athletes to finish in the top five.

## Three die in house fire

**(Aug. 22, 2019)** — The Kansas State Fire Marshal's office continues to investigate a fatal house fire that occurred early Friday morning, Aug. 16, at 216 Hudson Street.

Jennifer Rose Pope, 27, and her two daughters, Faith Garrett, 5, and Hope Garrett, 6, per-



ished due to the fire. Richard Powell, 52, the owner of the house, died Aug. 29.

The Coffey County Sheriff's Office received a 911 call at 4:48 a.m. Friday, Aug. 16, about a structure fire in the 200 block of Hudson Street, Burlington. Emergency responders arriving at the scene found the single-story house fully engulfed.

Hudson Street in front of the house remained blocked off until late morning, while fire investigators were at the scene. The Kansas State Fire Marshal's office continues to investigate the fire.



## Wolf Creek begins 23rd refueling and maintenance outage

**(Sept. 26, 2019)** — Wolf Creek began its scheduled refueling and maintenance outage on Saturday, Sept. 21. The station mobilized 800 supplemental workers during the outage to help complete more than 8,000 work activities.

Since the end of its last refueling outage, Wolf Creek was online for 491 consecutive days, safely generating carbon-free power around the clock.

In addition to replacing a third of the fuel assemblies in the reactor, the Wolf Creek team completed several major projects and hundreds of maintenance tasks.

Projects included upgrades in the electrical switchyard and replacing large pump motors as part of long-term preventive maintenance strategies to increase reliability.

## BRC celebrates 30 years

**(Sept. 26, 2019)** — The USD 244 Recreation Center - nearly 50,000 square feet - opened in the fall of 1989 and has been used by patrons of all ages for 30 years. To commemorate this milestone, the City of Burlington has issued a proclamation declaring October as USD 244 Recreation Center Appreciation Month. Burlington Recreation Center (BRC) employees planned a variety of special programs, classes and events throughout the month of October.



**(Nov. 21, 2019)** — Union Pacific's historic Big Boy steam locomotive No. 4014 passed through LeRoy early Sunday afternoon, Nov. 17 on its way from Durand (U.S. 54 and Otter road) to Garnett. A number of people gathered near the railroad tracks to watch Big Boy No. 4014, which toured the Union Pacific system in 2019 to commemorate the transcontinental railroad's 150th anniversary. The Big Boy's return to the rails is the product of more than two years of meticulous restoration work by the Union Pacific Steam Team. No. 4014 is the world's only operating Big Boy locomotive.

## Christmas Craft Festival celebrates 40 years

**(Nov. 21, 2019)** — A number of people tackled their Christmas shopping early and picked up unique, one-of-a-kind gifts at the 40th annual Christmas Craft Festival Saturday, Nov. 23 in Burlington. The event continues to be one of the largest craft festivals in the area with a number of small businesses, individuals and organizations present to help kick off the Christmas shopping season.

As always, there were a variety of items to choose from with 150 booths open at the Burlington High School. Burlington Middle School had over 100 booths filled with commercial items from home-based businesses in addition to arts and crafts.



**(Dec. 19, 2019)** — Bill Stutesman was crowned "King of Coffey County" Dec. 11 following the Lighted Christmas Parade. Jerame and Randi Huginin, Burlington Construction, and Mercedes Landis Photography helped sponsor the first "King of Coffey County" contest to raise money for the Coffey County Cancer Support Group. The total amount raised was \$2,080.54.