

Kansas

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Inside:

Kansas Welcomes the President

Main Street Face-Lift

Atchison Saves While Providing Health Insurance

-2012- CONFERENCE HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS & RESERVATION PROCEDURES

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10

Contents

Volume 98 • Number 1 • January 2012

Features

- 6 A Historic Transformation
- 10 Reliving History: Kansas Welcomes the President
- 15 2011 City and County Public Improvement Awards
- 19 Main Street Face-Lift
- 22 Atchison Saves On Health Insurance



15

Departments

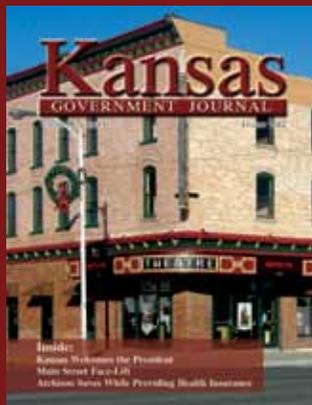
- 5 State Scene
- 13 On the Road
- 14 Mainstreet News
- 18 Legal Forum
- 25 Best Practices
- 26 Classified Advertising
- 27 Professional Services
- 30 Moler's Musings



19



22



About the Cover:
The City of Phillipsburg's newly renovated Majestic Theatre. See related article, beginning on page 6. Photo provided by the Phillips County Community Foundation.



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The mission of the League shall be to unify, strengthen, and advocate for the interests of Kansas municipalities to advance the general welfare and promote the quality of life of the people who live within our cities.

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February

- 15 - KMIT Supervisor Seminar, Atchison
- 16 - KMIT Supervisor Seminar, Abilene
- 17 - KMIT Board of Trustees Meeting, Hillsboro
- 20 - Presidents Day
- 22 - KMIT Supervisor Seminar, Kinsley
- 23 - KMIT Supervisor Seminar, Maize
- 24 - MLA: Ethics, Gardner

March

- 2 - LKM Governing Body Meeting, Topeka
- 7 - KMIT Supervisor Seminar, Goodland
- 8 - KMIT Supervisor Seminar, Stockton
- 16 - MLA: Finance, Planning & Policy Concepts, Webinar
- 31 - MLA: Finance, Planning & Policy Concepts, Webinar

April

- 20 - MLA: Civility and Public Service, Webinar
- 27 - KMIT Board of Trustees Meeting, Marysville
- 28 - MLA: Civility and Public Service, Webinar

Obituaries

Kenneth L. Erickson, 92, died September 21, 2011 in Clarkston, Washington. Erickson was active in the Wamego community serving on the Board of Education, City Council, and also serving as Mayor for two years. Erickson was also the general manager of the local rural electric utility company. He was also active in the State and National Rural Electric Association until his retirement in 1983.

Bernard "Bud" A. Hentzen, 83, died November 22, 2011. He served as a Sedgwick County Commissioner for two terms. Hentzen was a 4th degree knight with Knights of Columbus Council 4118, a member of the Wichita Sierra Club, Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, VFW Post 112, Wichita Area Builders Association, Wichita Independent Business Association, Wichita Pachyderm Club, and Metropolitan Area Planning Commission. He founded Hentzen Contractors, Inc. in 1963 and was a co-founder of the Christian Foundation for Children and Aging (CFCA) in 1981.

Marion Kencell Hunt, 94, died November 22, 2011 at Lawrence Memorial Hospital. Hunt retired as a truck driver for Freight Ways Freight in Topeka after 20 years of driving. He also owned and operated Hunts Service Station in Meriden for many years and served as the Mayor for the City of Meriden for two terms.

Mary Susan "Lewis" Royse, 102, died December 5, 2011. Royse was born on Kansas Day January 29, 1909 south of Howard, Kansas. In 1956, Royse became the City Clerk of Longton until her retirement in 1981. Prior to that, she was a school teacher, homemaker, wife, and worked as a Southwestern Bell operator in Longton and Elk Falls.



Kansas Departments Awarded Grant

The Kansas Department of Commerce and the Department of Agriculture have been awarded a grant of more than \$505,000 from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) through the State Trade and Export Promotion Grants Program (STEP).

The STEP grant is focused on encouraging businesses to explore export markets.

Much of the money will be made available through the International Market Development Grant program that will provide funding assistance for Kansas businesses as they explore overseas markets.

The grant will also fund state-led international trade missions where Kansans will host booths at trade shows and one-on-one meetings. The Kansas Department of Commerce is preparing to exhibit at the Farnborough Air Show in England. Both the Department of Commerce and the Department of Agriculture are planning mission activity to China. Additionally, agriculture-specific missions are scheduled for India, Russia, Germany, and

Costa Rica in 2012. Department of Agriculture staff will coordinate these missions, including Kansas producers, agribusinesses, and agriculture organizations to assist in developing the business connections needed to continue a trade relationship with foreign buyers.

Finally, the grant will enable Kansas to develop and enhance training programs and workshops to assist Kansas small businesses in exporting and marketing their products and services globally.

“Kansas has a proud and rich tradition in agriculture and understands that the international market is a key to the growth of the industry,” Kansas Agriculture Secretary Dale Rodman said. “Through participating in trade missions, the Kansas Department of Agriculture’s goal is to recruit new export clients for Kansas agriculture and food production.”

The STEP program will provide \$60 million in grants. It is authorized for federal Fiscal Years 2011 and 2012 for states and U.S. territories.

BP Wind Energy Builds in Kansas

BP Wind Energy will build a 419 megawatt Flat Ridge 2 wind farm in Barber, Harper, Kingman, and Sumner counties. The company also announced that it has entered into a long-term power purchase agreement totaling 314 megawatts from the wind farm.

Flat Ridge 2 will be located on a 66,000 acre site approximately 43 miles southwest of Wichita in south central Kansas. The wind farm will utilize 262 GE wind turbines each with a rated capacity of 1.6 megawatts. BP Wind Energy is actively marketing the remaining capacity to other customers in the midwestern United States.

“The Flat Ridge 2 wind farm is an investment of approximately \$800 million and demonstrates BP’s continued commitment to the State of Kansas,” said John Graham, president and CEO, BP Wind Energy. Graham also stated that “the project’s development will create some 500 jobs during peak construction and will provide over \$1 million annually to the local communities without impacting traditional farming and ranching activities.”

The Flat Ridge 2 wind farm is 100% owned and will be operated by BP Wind Energy. The wind farm is expected to become commercially operational by year end 2012, and on completion will be the largest to be built in the state of Kansas.

State Receives Health Bonus

Kansas is receiving a bonus of \$5.9 million from the federal government to make it easier for families to enroll children in programs covering their health care.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) said it is the third straight year Kansas has earned a bonus.

HHS said Kansas is being rewarded because it is using the same enrollment forms for Medicaid and the Children’s Health

Insurance Program (CHIP). Medicaid covers health care for the poor while CHIP provides coverage for working-class families.

HHS also said Kansas doesn’t require face-to-face interviews with applicants for the programs, which can be difficult for working parents to schedule. The federal government said Kansas also has made it easier for families to retain coverage year to year.

State Expects Money From Bond Settlements

Kansas expects to receive \$266,000 from national legal settlements involving two financial firms over complaints about their activities in the municipal bond market.

The attorney general’s office said the money will go to cities, nonprofit groups, and the Kansas Development Finance Authority, which issues bonds for many state agencies.

About \$208,000 is expected from a settlement with GE Funding Capital Market Services. The firm has acknowledged that from

1999 through 2004, former traders manipulated the bidding process on contracts for investing proceeds or managing risk associated with bonds. The company said it no longer employs those traders.

Kansas also expects \$58,000 from a settlement with Wells Fargo & Co., which purchased Wachovia Bank in 2008. Wachovia faced allegations that it had rigged municipal bond transactions.



A HISTORIC TRANSFORMATION

BY BRIDGIT SMITH

Nestled in the southeast corner of Phillipsburg's downtown is the Majestic community owned theatre. Coined as the longest continuous operating entertainment venue in the State of Kansas, this grand building has just undergone a complete façade renovation. The transformation signifies countless hours of volunteer labor, sizeable contributions from the private as well as public entities, and funds from the Kansas Department of Commerce Small Community Improvement program.

In 1905, this building opened as the Winship Opera House. Mr. Winship in 1925 had the foresight to renovate this building into a moving picture theatre. Through the years, the theatre business in Phillipsburg progressed along with the movie industry. From preschool age to retirees, the doors of this theatre have welcomed

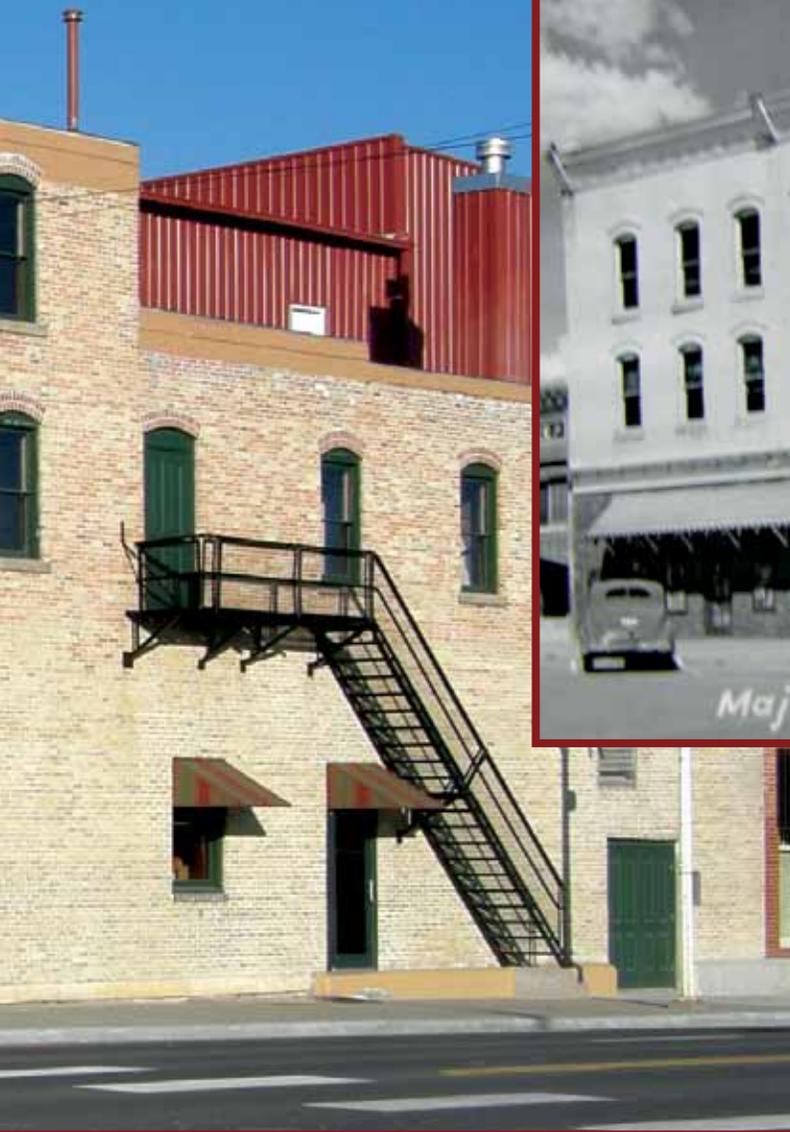
generations of residents. It has played the role of entertainer, baby sitter, first date attraction, and educator to the many who stepped into this magical world.

MAJESTIC THEATRE BECOMES COMMUNITY OWNED

In 2000 when the previous owners of the Majestic Theatre discussed closing, the community rallied together in order to save this long-standing community icon. A volunteer committee was formed, 501(c)3 tax status sought, and funds raised to purchase the equipment from the owners. The owners then sold the building for \$1.00 to the Community Foundation. The theatre has always been an integral part of nearly every resident's memories and the social life of Phillips County.

Left: The completed project of the Majestic Theatre renovation.

Below: The original Majestic Theatre photographed by long-time local photographer Bill Clarke, believed to be taken in the 1940s. Photos provided by Phillips County Community Foundation.



THREE – PHASE PLAN

When the plans were completed, the magnitude of this project overwhelmed the theatre board. Even with the “can-do” attitude the community so easily presents, the dollar amount needed seemed unattainable. With the feasibility study in hand, the board completed a three-phase plan. Phase I was to purchase updated equipment, Phase II renovation of the concession area and update bathrooms to be ADA compliance, with the final phase being exterior façade renovation.

Phase I was completed in October of 2009. The Dane G. Hansen Foundation and Phillips County Economic Development granted money to purchase 3D/Digital equipment. With this state of the art equipment, the theatre now shows first run movies, four nights a week. After the equipment was purchased, the other two phases switched in priority. With the public’s interest in seeing the façade restored, coupled with an opportunity that presented itself, the group decided to make the façade renovations a priority.

SMALL COMMUNITIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

In mid-November 2009, it seemed destiny was shining down on this dilapidated little theatre. The committee stumbled upon the Small Communities Improvement program (SCIP) through the Kansas Department of Commerce. The SCIP is designed for communities that are undertaking improvement projects through sweat equity and volunteerism. Self-help requires communities to determine that parts of the project they can complete on their own. The community acts as the general contractor, organizing local labor and equipment, and coordinating work that needs to

Over the years, the theatre board and community have done what was needed to keep the building open and operating. Gene and Fran Earl, a retired couple, volunteered countless hours of labor in order to do the needed maintenance. Each weekend 16 volunteers worked the concession stand. At one point, the Prairie Horizon Agri-Energy ethanol plant donated labor to help clean up the various store rooms where junk had accumulated. The City of Phillipsburg partnered with the ethanol plant and provided dump trucks and city workers to drive and haul off the debris. Yet, the major repairs and renovations to this building continued to need attention.

In 2009, the theatre board, Phillips County Economic Development, Discover Phillipsburg Main Street, and the Huck Boyd Foundation discussed how to deal with the necessary repairs and renovations. The economic development office and the Albert and Leona A. Morgan Foundation provided a grant for Bruce McMillan, AIA, Architects, PA out of Manhattan, KS to provide a feasibility plan for the Majestic Theatre.



Top: The Majestic Theatre in the Spring of 2009 before the renovations. Right: Community members gathered holding “This Place Matters” signs as part of National Historic Preservation month activities in May 2010. This was the initial start of the façade renovation project. Photos provided by Phillips County Community Foundation.



be done by a subcontractor. Self-help and volunteerism must result in savings of at least 40% of the project’s marketplace price.

While this program seemed like a natural fit for the renovations and the Phillipsburg community, there was a small window of time to complete the application. The grant application was due the beginning of December, leaving only three weeks for the community to write the application, identify volunteers, and raise matching funds.

Once again the Phillipsburg citizens came through. The frame-work was completed to apply for the grant and change the appearance of this community icon. Through public service announcements, newspaper articles, social networking, face to face meetings, and an interview with committee members on the KKAN/KQMA Tadpoll radio program, townspeople made the commitments needed to apply. There were over 280 volunteer signatures, monetary donations totalling \$94,000, and donated equipment with a value estimated at \$15,000. There was an air of excitement amongst Phillipsburg residents. With the sentiments so many have for their hometown theatre, Phillipsburg once again showed it is a confident and resourceful community in the face of challenge.

With over 50 support letters, the application was sent into the Kansas Department of Commerce. One of the support letters was written by Connie Hull, the 88-year-old daughter of Ralph

Winship. In it Connie wrote, “My daddy Ralph Winship ran the theater 56 years. How I would love to see the Majestic Theatre brought back to life.” And so it was.

In February 2010, Chris Harris, Project Manager with the Kansas Department of Commerce notified the community that the theatre project was awarded \$125,000 from the SCIP. The budget for the façade renovations was \$267,000, which required \$43,176.00 in volunteer labor match. With the commitment of SCIP dollars, matching money, and the volunteer labor needed, Phillipsburg knew it was time to get to work.

FAÇADE RENOVATIONS BEGIN

Howard King, a recent retiree, committed to taking the reigns as volunteer project director. In April 2010, Howard, along with architect Bruce McMillan, and Dave Telley from Restoration and Waterproofing Inc., addressed over 45 community volunteers. These men discussed the projected work, basic chain of command

through the duration of the project, and the volunteer hours needed to complete the grant requirements.

On May 16, 2010 the community went to work. Instead of a ribbon cutting, the community held a “film-cutting” with Connie Hull cutting the film—signifying to this small rural community, the project was underway. Old awnings were removed, trees trimmed, and paint stripper applied. “The old grey elephant” as one board member had begun to call the building, was now in the process of a complete face lift.

Restoration and Waterproofing, Inc., of Topeka spent the summer removing the grey paint as well as replacing brick and tuck pointing. During this time, volunteers searched high and low in the county to find brick which matched the existing ones. Enough were found to have the brick work completed.

Volunteers throughout the summer painted, helped with tuck pointing as well as clean up duty. By September, the first steps were completed. The paint had been removed, tuck pointing done, and it was time for storefront and window replacements.

Bids were taken during August for the upper-story window restoration. Then Norman Follis, a volunteer from the community stepped forward and offered to help restore the existing 100-year-old-windows. Over a 12-month period, 27 of the 100-year-old windows were restored by Howard, Norman, and a host of local volunteers.

The new storefront windows and doors were designed to look like the original 1925 storefronts and were replaced during the winter and spring of 2011. Because of the extensive tear out and frame work needed to complete the storefronts, a contractor

was hired to work on this portion of the project. Because of the harsh winter, the installation of these windows did not begin until February. Finally, the first week in April this portion of the project was completed.

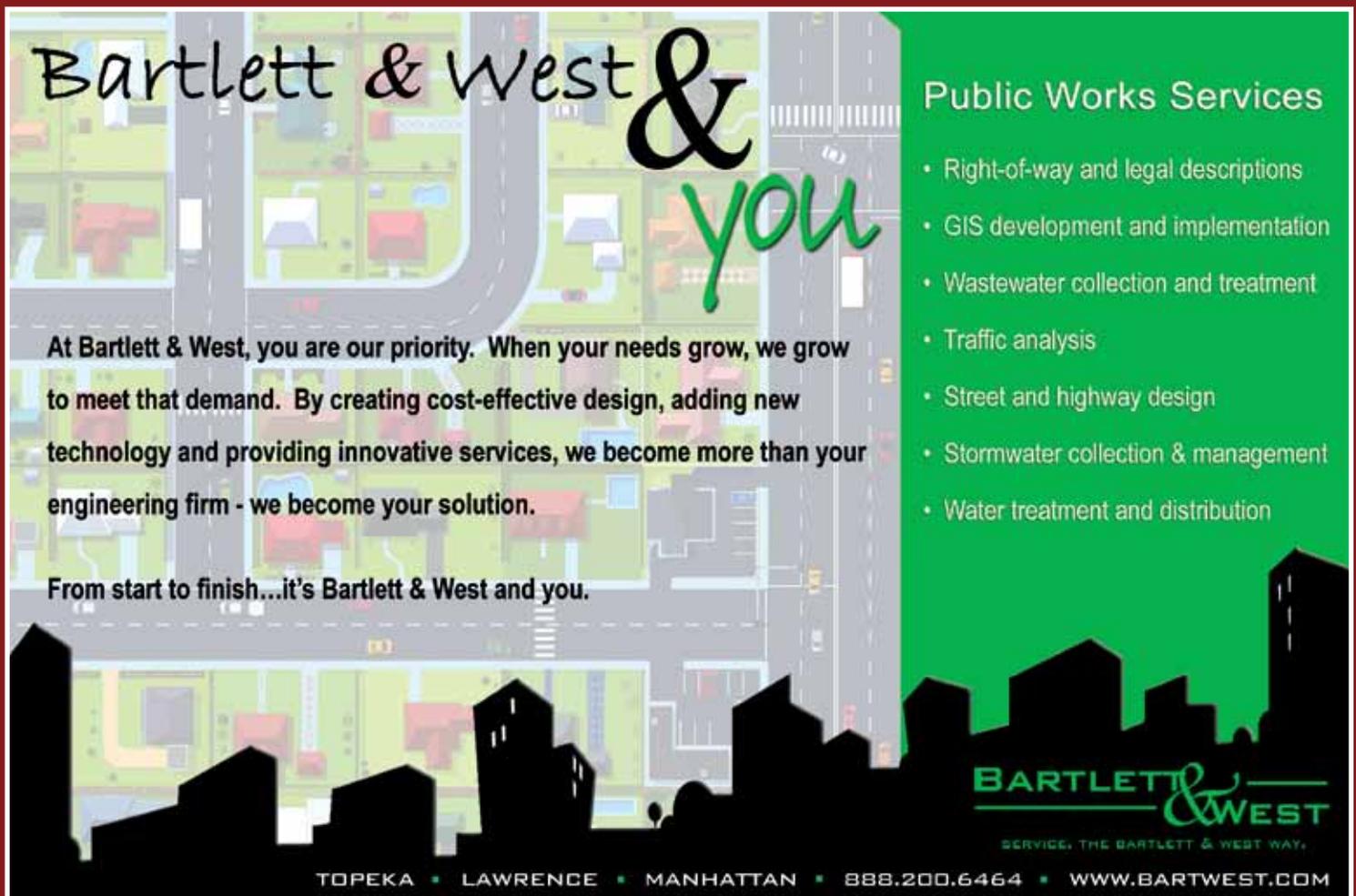
NEON LIGHTS ARE BRIGHT

Although the marquees were not a part of the SCIP budget, they became a part of the renovation. The community raised an additional \$34,386 to restore an existing marquee and replace the one that had been removed from the building in the 1970s. Through generous donations by local businesses and individuals, the neon lights are bright on State Street in Phillipsburg.

The Majestic Community Theatre façade renovation project was completed in October, 2011. Over 2,704 hours were donated by 107 volunteers to help see this dream become a reality. Those volunteer hours compute to over \$48,000 in donated labor. With the \$4,453 in donated equipment and \$93,000 in contributions coupled with the Small Community Improvement Program funds, this project was able to meet and exceed the original budget.

Phillipsburg Mayor Fred Robison sums up the project when he commented, “The value of this renovation project to the entire community is immeasurable as it is a symbol of the continuing commitment of the Phillipsburg community to not just survive but to progress and be a place to come, live, and work!”

 Bridgit Smith is the Executive Director for the Phillips County Community Foundation. She can be reached at pccf@ruraltel.net.



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Reliving History: The President Comes to Kansas

In 1910, surrounded by approximately 30,000 people, Former President Teddy Roosevelt came to the small City of Osawatimie and laid out his vision for what he called a *New Nationalism*. “Our Country means nothing unless it means the triumph of a real democracy...of an economic system under which each man shall be guaranteed the opportunity to show the best that there is in him.” Following his speech, Roosevelt was called a radical, a socialist, and even a communist. Yet, his speech was called perhaps “one of the most important ever given in Kansas” and “the greatest oration ever given on American Soil,” according to the *Kansas Historical Quarterly*. (<http://www.kshs.org/p/kansas-historical-quarterly-theodore-roosevelt-s-osawatimie-speech/13176>)

A little more than 100 years later, in an attempt to create the same vision, President Barrack Obama delivered his plans on the middle class economy in the same small city. “I’m here in Kansas to reaffirm my deep conviction that we’re greater together than we are on our own. I believe that this country succeeds when everyone gets a fair shot, when everyone does their fair share, when everybody plays by the same rules.”

On Tuesday, December 6, 2011, President Obama was greeted by thousands outside and in Osawatimie High School for his speech. Former Kansas Governor and current Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius accompanied the President on his visit. On Sunday before the historic event, more than 1,000 people lined up overnight and throughout the morning to get a ticket. Five hundred tickets, the maximum capacity that the gymnasium would hold, were handed out.

For the City of Osawatimie, the President’s visit livened up the town of 4,600 residents. Local business owners were excited about the President’s visit, hoping it would boost their sales for the day. “We’re hoping for lots of people to come to town,” said Joyce Schrader, who has owned Coach Light, a clothing store for women, for 35 years. “We’re excited the President is coming to town.”

Hoping to catch a glimpse of the President, she closed the doors while he passed through the city.

“I think it will be exciting just to see his motorcade drive by,” she said. “And that’s what I plan to do, be outside with a flag watching his motorcade go by.”



Color Photos: President Barack Obama speaking at Osawatomie High School; Osawatomie Mayor Philip Dudley pictured with President Obama. Photos provided by The White House (official White House photo by Pete Souza).

Historic Photo: Former President Teddy Roosevelt in the middle of a gathered crowd, chose Osawatomie for his “New Nationalism” speech in 1910. Photo provided by the Country Thinker Blog, www.countrythinker.com.

Osawatomie High School was eagerly waiting for the historic day. “It’s exciting times at Osawatomie High School,” Principal Douglas Chisam said. “We’re looking forward to what’s obviously coming ahead.” About 50 to 100 students were able to attend the President’s speech, said Principal Chisam. Other students who were not able to get tickets watched the speech via live television in the school’s auditorium.

Though most voters in Kansas lean Republican, that didn’t dampen the excitement about the President’s visit. According to a *USA Today* article. (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/>

[story/2011-12-05/Kansas-Obama-payroll-tax-holiday-extension/51662300/1](http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/story/2011-12-05/Kansas-Obama-payroll-tax-holiday-extension/51662300/1))

Osawatomie Mayor Philip Dudley said, “Given the topic of the President’s speech, many in the audience are unlikely to vote for Obama. But, they’re eager to hear his pitch for extending the payroll tax holiday.” The article also stated:

Obama made extending the payroll tax holiday—which lowered the payroll tax rate from 6.2% to 4.2% in 2011—a top priority and has sought to paint the GOP as less concerned about middle class Americans. Senate Republicans blocked an Obama-backed plan that proposed lowering the payroll tax rate to 3.1% for 160 million Americans through a 3.25% surtax on 350,000 others that earn more than \$1 million. The President also warned that failing to extend the payroll tax holiday could hurt the economy and recently spoke of an unease that federal policy is skewing in favor of the wealthy—similar to the same message that Roosevelt spoke of in his Osawatomie speech.



*Photos L to R:
President Barack Obama is pictured walking back to Marine One helicopter after greeting local residents at “We Be Smokin” BBQ in the City of Paola. Photos by John McCullagh.*

*Right:
Hundreds lined up to get tickets to President Barack Obama’s Middle Class Economy speech at Osawatomie High School. Photo by KCTV5 News in Kansas City, MO.*

“I know people here that are living paycheck to paycheck, working two or three jobs and every little bit helps,” Dudley said. “We do understand that we do need to get the federal deficit under control—nobody disagrees with that statement—but the payroll tax ultimately started out as our money.”

The President continued his speech about the middle class economy talking about inequality and bringing jobs back to America. He stated that the importance of higher education being the surest route to the middle class. He continued on:

...if we want an economy that’s built to last, we need more of those young people in science and engineering. This country should not be known for debt and phony profits. We should be known for creating and selling products all around the world that are stamped with three proud words: Made in America.

In his closing remarks, the President claimed an assurance to capture the middle class through the same values that stood more than a Century ago, but with some modifications:

And well into our third Century as a nation, we have grown and we’ve changed in many ways since Roosevelt’s time. The world is faster and the playing field is larger and the challenges are more complex. But what hasn’t changed—what can never change—are the values that got us this far...” “...And we still believe, in the words of the man

who called for a *New Nationalism* all those year ago, “The fundamental rule of our national life, the one rule which underlies all others—is that, on the whole, and in the long run, we shall go up or down together.”

The President’s visit to Kansas didn’t end in Osawatomie. After the speech, he and Sebelius stopped by “We Be Smokin” BBQ in Paola.

Terry Bright, owner of the BBQ restaurant said he didn’t know for sure if Obama was going to physically come inside. He did have to shut down the restaurant during his visit. About 30 people were inside the restaurant, mostly consisting of kids, with a few family and friends. “Everybody was happy to meet the President and the kids were real excited,” said Bright.

Bright also mentioned that he heard the President decided to come into the restaurant only because he seen all the kids waving at him.

“They [President and his staff] were all super nice to the kids. They even got to take pictures in front of the Marine One helicopter.”

Marine One helicopter transported the President to Osawatomie and Paola before flying back to Air Force One at Kansas City International Airport.

President Obama’s visit to Kansas certainly made history in the small town of Osawatomie. The attempt to recreate the same vision that was once proclaimed 100 years earlier will certainly be something to watch for in the future.



...Just Before the Christmas Break

I usually try to squeeze in a couple of short excursions just before my Christmas break each year. Often, this also gives me a chance to take Granddaughter Maddison out with me, and I know those opportunities will be few-and-far-between from now on... Maddi is now a teenager—that mostly tells that story.

I have taken some of my vacation days around Christmas time (typically, just before Christmas to just after the New Year) for so many years (since my own kids, now nearly 30 and 35, were young), that it would seem very weird not to do that. My wife, Sue is a career nurse, and that has always meant that if somebody was going to be off during those days to spend time with the kids, it was going to be me. Not that I haven't enjoyed that...in fact, it has been one of life's great pleasures for me.

On the Wednesday before Christmas (and the initial day of the school break), Maddi joined me on a short one-day road trip—first stop, Augusta. The coolest thing about stopping in city hall in Augusta happened as I handed my card to City Manager Bill Keefer's Administrative Assistant, Nancy Turnage—when Nancy (whom I don't think I had ever met before), looked past me, and stated, "You must be Maddison." How wonderful was that? Have I ever told you that this job has a few marvelous perks? This totally-spontaneous gesture on Nancy's part both complimented me (it showed she reads and remembers this column) and gave Maddi a very warm fuzzy feeling. Bill and I had a long visit, and Maddi (for the most part) patiently listened. Bill has been in Augusta for about 15 years now; we have known each other well over 20 years. Bill is one of those solid public servants, who tends to keep his nose to the grindstone and do his job. We need more Bill Keepers. Bill also gave Maddi an unsolicited testimonial of my former prowess at basketball (in a time LONG ago and FAR away). Thanks, Bill. Grandpas often need verification.

Maddi and I spent much of the rest of our trip missing people. We made a few city stops, but mostly didn't have much of a chance to talk to people. Some days are like that....

The next day, I headed south down K-15 on a solo mission. My friend Nick Hernandez had asked me to come to Ark City for lunch on numerous occasions, and this seemed like a good chance to take him up on his offer. I first met Nick about five years ago, at the International City/County Management Association Conference in San Antonio, when he was a grad student at WSU. A native of Spearville and a proud Marine Corps vet, Nick has come a LONG way in a pretty short time since then. His first post-grad school job was as an intern in Salina, working for Jason Gage and Mike Schrage. His first city manager job was in Osage City, and then he moved on to Arkansas City just this past summer. Since then, Nick and his wife have welcomed a third child into their family, and have already bought a very nice, big house. Nick is a go-getter whom you will hear about in the future.

Several weeks earlier I had made two trips within 4 days back to Halstead, where, as you might know, I worked and lived for 12 years, what seems like a lifetime ago. The first visit was a sad one, to pay my last respects to a dear old friend from my Halstead life. Jim Will passed away rather suddenly the day after Thanksgiving. A Halstead native and confirmed bachelor, Jim was for many years a Vice President of The Halstead Bank and the City Treasurer of Halstead. Jim was one of those really nice guys who remained "unsung" his entire life, but also probably contributed more to his community than anybody ever knew. If it needed done, Jim was there. Jim was the unpaid treasurer of the Optimist Club when I was in the Club, served on nearly every board and committee in town, and volunteered for anything and everything that needed doing. At the time of his death, Jim (77 and retired) was a board member of the Housing Authority. Jim never served in an elected public position (that I know of); he was merely one of those special people who just found a way to make a contribution...and for decades he did that better than anybody. Jim was a team player...he was the little guy on the end of the bench when Halstead won the Class B state basketball championship in 1952. Jim was a teammate. He got the job done, and he lived a very good life.

The second trip to Halstead was the first Saturday in December (3 days later), and was via an invitation to the dedication of the new fire house. Sue and Maddi and I had a great time seeing people Sue and I knew back then. The firehouse was marvelous, too. Maddi also greatly enjoyed visiting (yes, she bought something interesting) at the Old Hardware Store (<http://oldhardwarestore.halsteadkansas.com>), which is a very special place, owned and operated by Margaret and Gary Kraisinger. Margaret taught at Halstead High School when our kids went there.

My book recommendation this month is *That Used To Be Us: How America Fell Behind in the World and How We Can Come Back*, by Tom Friedman (author of *The World is Flat*) and Michael Mandelbaum. This is an highly intelligent and insightful look at where our country is today, and how we might approach improving it. Anyone who has read or heard Friedman knows that he is one of the great thinkers of our era, and he has a ton of direct experiences from all over the world (see a Friedman interview at this link: http://www.fastcompany.com/1778214/that-used-to-be-us-thomas-friedman?partner=homepage_newsletter). He is not merely a "think tank" philosopher."

☀ *Don Osenbaugh is the Director of Finance and Field Services for the League of Kansas Municipalities. He can be reached at dosenbaugh@lkm.org*



Small City Readies For Big Exhibit

Lifelong City of Franklin area resident Phyllis Bitner announced in September that the Smithsonian had selected the small community to serve as host of a traveling exhibit.

The exhibit is expected to bring a significant increase in tourism to the small city. It wasn't until Bitner attended a recent planning session in Topeka with the project's co-chair, Debbie Close, that she knew the true extent of what it could mean in terms of tourism.

"I think our mouths dropped open," she said. "It's definitely going to impact us more than we think."

Previous attendance records show the affect the Smithsonian had on hosting communities. Kaplan, Louisiana, (pop. 5,000) had 8,192 visitors during the 6-week exhibit.

"They said they are usually lucky to have 500 visitors in an entire year," Bitner said.

Ruston, Louisiana, had 16,388 visitors during the 6-week exhibit—about 3/4 of the City's total population of 20,546, which is comparable to Pittsburg's population.

Franklin, an area of southeast Kansas settled by coal mining immigrants in the early 1900s, has a population of 250.

Called *The Way We Worked*, the exhibit explores the stories of America's workers through photographs, audio and video clips, and hands-on artifacts.

It is scheduled to be displayed in Franklin at the Miners Hall Museum from May 11, 2013, through June 23, 2013.

The Miners Hall Museum, located at the Franklin Community Center & Heritage Museum and slated for a grand opening in May 2012, was selected as 1 of only 6 host cities for the exhibit under the direction of the Kansas Humanities Council. Lyons, Hugoton, Goodland, Concordia, and Baldwin City were the other cities chosen to host the traveling exhibit.

For a complete tour schedule and more information, visit <http://kansashumanities.org/site/component/content/article/40-programs/211-the-way-we-worked.html>

Kinsley Library Wins Contest

The Kinsley Library in Kinsley, Kansas was recently recognized in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service's first ever Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) "Food, Fun, and Sun!" Story and Photo contest. The library, which participated in the SFSP for the first time this year, was awarded first place in the Creative category of the story and photo contest.

The SFSP provides free, healthy meals to children in low-income areas during the summer months. The Kinsley Library received its award for its summer reading program, themed *One World – Many Stories*. The program focused on stories and snacks from around the world. The main activity, World Festival, was attended by about 75 kids each week and took place in the city park. Kids were able to sample foods from different cultures including cinnamon rice cakes from Asia and hot funnel cakes and watermelon from Scandinavia. Two cooking groups also met each week to prepare

and cook international cuisine while learning about nutritious meal planning.

The "Food, Fun, and Sun!" Story and Photo contest allowed the public to vote for SFSP sites that have proven to provide successful programs in their community. In total, more than 100 submissions were received for consideration in one of the four contest categories: Volunteers, Older Children, Rural, and Creative.

The SFSP is a federally funded program in partnership with the USDA, state agencies and local organizations designed to alleviate hunger in low-income areas for children 18 years old and younger. For more information on the SFSP Story and Photo contest, visit www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/contest/default.htm. If you would like to initiate a SFSP for your community this summer, call the Child Nutrition and Wellness Team at the Kansas State Department of Education at (785) 296-2276.

Rubbermaid Expands Facility in South Central Kansas

State and local officials announced that Newell Rubbermaid will expand its presence in Winfield by relocating 200 jobs from a facility in Texas to the south central Kansas community. Rubbermaid also will invest \$26.6 million to expand its operations.

"The continued commitment Newell Rubbermaid has shown to Winfield and to Kansas is certainly great news," said Kansas Governor Sam Brownback. "This expansion and the jobs associated with it will provide a much needed economic boost to Cowley County. I wish Rubbermaid every success moving forward."

Newell Rubbermaid's Winfield facility currently manufactures Rubbermaid® outdoor storage and outdoor living products, as well as insulated water coolers and ice chests. Capacity will be increased to add manufacturing of Rubbermaid® outdoor refuse and home organization products. In addition, the company will construct a new 500,000 sq. ft. distribution center adjacent to its

current facilities. The expansion projects are set to be completed in the fourth quarter of 2012.

"Rubbermaid has a long history of investing in the Winfield community and we appreciate the strong partnership we have with the state of Kansas and the people of Winfield," said Michael Grant, director of operations for Newell Rubbermaid Winfield. "Together with our dedicated employees, we are proud to continue to offer our consumers innovative and quality products made in the U.S.A."

The company worked with the Department of Commerce, city of Winfield and Cowley County Economic Development Partnership. At the state level, the company is eligible for certain incentives, including Promoting Employment Across Kansas (PEAK), Kansas Industrial Training (KIT) funding, and other programs designed to expand the Kansas economy and create jobs.

2011 City and County Public Improvement Awards

by Amy Dubach

Congratulations to the 2011 winners of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Kansas (ACEC of Kansas) City and County Public Improvement Awards. The ACEC of Kansas is a professional association of private-practice consulting and engineering firms in Kansas. Sponsored by ACEC of Kansas, the Public Improvement Awards competition is unique in that it recognizes engineering projects for their benefit to the citizens of a community and not for engineering design. This is the 50th year ACEC of Kansas has presented both the City and County Public Improvement Awards.

-The Winning City Projects-

City Public Improvement award winners are selected from four different population categories (under 5,000; 5,000-19,999; 20,000-49,999; and above 50,000). City representatives as well as engineering firm representatives were presented with awards at the December 1, 2011 luncheon of the Kansas Association of City/County Managers Annual Conference in Topeka.

In the Under 5,000 population category, the City of Rose Hill won for the Resource Management Facility. The engineering firm for the project was Professional Engineering Consultants, P.A., and the general contractors were Waltern Morgan (WWTP Upgrades) and Conco (Admin Building).

Faced with the need to make improvements to its wastewater treatment process, the City of Rose Hill recognized that an opportunity existed to provide more than just a new treatment facility for the community, but to incorporate a complete Resource Management Facility for the entire county.

The Rose Hill Resource Management Facility is a unique concept. Centered around the new wastewater treatment plant, the facility also provides the City with a tree farm, green waste program, single stream recycling, and biosolids reuse. A Public Works Maintenance Building is planned to be added to the site in the future.

Average influent plant flows, increasingly stringent effluent quality requirements, and blue-green algae concentrations in the summer months indicated that Rose Hill needed to update its lagoon system.

The new plant transitioned to a 1.0 MGD (2.5 MGD Peak) mechanical facility capable of preliminary and biological treatment, as well as sludge handling.

The new facility was designed to:

- Code compliance, safety, and regulatory requirements;
- Process average day and peak flows through the year 2030;
- Meet current and projected regulations for process and effluent quality; and
- Incorporate technology and process capability to match the City's operations and maintenance budget constraints.

The facility benefits the Rose Hill and Butler County community by consolidating many resource management centers into one facility. The new wastewater treatment plant, tree farm, green waste program and single stream recycling as well as an opportunity for biosolids reuse provides opportunities and makes it easier for the community to be green. It provides a resource management model for other cities to emulate.

In the 5,000-19,999 population category, the City of Wellington won for the Water Reclamation Facility. The engineering firm for this project was Professional Engineering Consultants, P.A., and the general contractor was CAS Construction, LLC.

Necessity is the main reason for Wellington's new Water Reclamation Facility. Facing capacity and regulatory issues with their existing wastewater treatment plant, the City of Wellington chose to improve and expand its treatment capacity by building a new facility. The plant, located off of East Botkin Street on the southeast side of Wellington, is twice as large and treats twice as much wastewater as the former plant. The state-of-the-art facility is more energy efficient and provides more effective treatment than the former facility, which was last updated in the 1970s. It offers cleaner water downstream, by removing phosphorus and nitrogen. These nutrients were causing problems with algae growth.

The Water Reclamation Facility project offered opportunities for unusual accomplishments including the following:

- The contract completion date for the project was October 21, 2010. Despite the fact that rain delayed the construction startup, no major adjustments to the contract time were made. The project was



L to R: In the under 5,000 population category, the City of Rose Hill was awarded for their Resource Management Facility project and in the 5,000-19,999 population category, the City of Wellington was awarded for their Water Reclamation Facility. Photos by Jay Bachman.

substantially complete and brought online in July 2010, well before the contract completion date;

- An innovative process treatment design was used to meet current and future NPDES water quality standards and simplify the treatment processes; and
- The treatment facility is in full compliance with the KDHE and EPA rules, providing a higher quality effluent discharge, and is designed to meet foreseeable future regulations.

The new Water Reclamation Facility benefits the Wellington community in many ways, including:

- The on-site effluent pond holds about 10 MG of treated effluent water. This water can be sold, at a minimal cost, to adjacent farmers for irrigation. The water is also available for future industry development;
- The plant includes a reuse water system using the effluent water for some process equipment and for maintenance around the plant grounds, reducing the need to use potable water;
- The Water Reclamation Facility minimizes capital and operation/maintenance costs assuring continued reasonable utility costs; and
- The facility provides far more energy efficient equipment than the previous wastewater plant.

In the 20,000-49,999 population category, the City of Leavenworth won for the US 73 and 20th Street Interchange. The engineering firm for this project was TranSystems, and the general contractor was Leavenworth Excavating & Equipment Company, Inc. (Lexeco).

The City of Leavenworth selected TranSystems to complete a project by providing final design and construction management services for the proposed new interchange at US 73 and 20th Street, and for the northern extension of 20th Street. This project would connect the city's western bypass to US 73. The interchange alternative had been demonstrated as more desirable for improving traffic flow and safety than a signalized intersection at 18th Street as well as for utilizing the US 73 bridge when extending 20th Street.

The necessary phases of the project were completed to ensure the City of Leavenworth had the best solution to their safety enhancement improvement project, including:

- Constructing new standard-diamond and folded-diamond, interchange ramps;
- Widening bridge on US 73 to provide additional deceleration lane; and
- Improving intersections at 20th Street and Metropolitan Avenue, 20th Street and Hancock Avenue, and 20th Street and Honor Farm Drive.

The final solution provided the City of Leavenworth with a new two-lane, collector-status 20th Street extension after passing under the US 73 bridge. The new extension has intersections at the Honor Farm Drive service entrance to the Federal Penitentiary and the Hancock Avenue gate into Fort Leavenworth.

The new interchange, therefore, has a diamond with a folded-loop for the east bound off ramps. To slow traffic traveling down a hill before it reaches this lower-speed ramp, the design provides for widening the existing bridge to offer a deceleration lane. The east bound on ramp is continued as an additional lane into town, providing better accommodation for in-bound traffic as US 73 transitions from a two-lane to five-lane highway facility.

The City of Leavenworth also has overall improvements to the affected roadways as there are new enclosed storm sewers, cross road drainage structures, pavement markings, and highway signing.

In the above 50,000 population category, the City of Olathe won for the South Cedar Creek Sewer Improvements. The engineering firm for the project was George Butler Associates, Inc., and the general contractor was Whiting Turner Construction.

The South Cedar Creek Sewer Improvements project consisted of the design and construction of a gravity sewer, a forcemain, and a submersible pumping station. The purpose of the project was to provide sanitary sewer service to properties that are being developed that will support the BNSF Railroad's Intermodal Development in southwest Johnson County, Kansas.

Due to the City's desire to give the improvements the longest life span, special attention was given to the horizontal and vertical alignment of the sewer interceptor. The horizontal alignments were chosen to:

- Minimize the chance for future interceptor disruption by stream channel movement; and
- Reduce the amount of large diameter hardwood tree loss.

To lessen the "power line" visual impact along the stream corridor, the construction clearing limits were alternated on each side of the project centerline. The locations of the project's stream crossings were essential to preserving the Riparian Corridor and increasing the probability of properly operating asset.

One of the key benefits produced by this project is the additional property tax that will be generated by the light industrial and commercial properties that can now be built due to the presence of sanitary sewer service. Since the capital costs for the project are being paid for by the special benefit district and not by the city at large, the citizens of Olathe



L to R: In the 20,000-49,999 population category, the City of Leavenworth was awarded for the US 73 and 20th Street Interchange and in the above 50,000 population category, the City of Olathe was awarded for the South Cedar Creek Sewer Improvements. Photos by Jay Bachman.

will receive the long-term benefits of additional property tax income without the capital debt.

An equally important benefit to the citizens of Olathe is the environmentally conscience manner in which the project was constructed. Once the restoration vegetation matures, the visual impact of this infrastructure project on the stream way corridor will be greatly diminished. The clearings that resulted from the interceptor installation will allow the park department to create opportunities for citizens to enjoy the extensive trail systems.

-The Winning County Projects-

County Public Improvement award winners are selected from two different population categories (Under 10,000, and Over 10,000). Unfortunately, there were no entries (and thus no winning projects) in the *under 10,000 population category*. County representatives as well as engineering firm representatives for the Over 10,000 population category were presented with awards at the November 14 Kansas Association of Counties Annual Luncheon in Topeka.

In the over 10,000 population category, Miami County won for the 223rd Street Grade Separation Project. The engineering firm for the project was Wilson & Company, Inc., Engineers & Architects and the general contractor was Oldcastle/APAC - Kansas.

As a part of the continued growth of the Spring Hill region of Miami County, Kansas, the county contracted with Wilson & Company, Inc., Engineers & Architects to design a grade separation of the BNSF Railway railroad at 223rd Street. This roadway is the primary east and west route in northern Miami County. It services Spring Hill, Bucyrus, and a significant portion of northern Miami County. Access is provided through interchanges with major north-south highways US-69 and US-169, which connects to the Kansas City metropolitan area.

The current at-grade railway crossing has flashing light signals with gates and supports an ADT of approximately 4,700 with a future 20-year

ADT of approximately 9,600. The grade separation project (including the temporary shoofly track) was designed for the maximum authorized train operating speed and not to present a significant impact to the BNSF Railway's operations.

The roadway typical section was developed to allow for future expansion in a similar fashion to the future double track for the railroad. The current traffic volume only warranted the construction of a two-lane section. However, grading and typical section provided for expansion to a four-lane section when development in Spring Hill warranted the additional lanes.

Prior to the construction of the grade separation, the average delay for motorists was five to seven minutes per train. This delay was a major concern for emergency services given that the track carries 48 trains per day on average (one train every 30 minutes). The only other grade separated crossing is a four-mile detour.

During the design and also during construction, Wilson & Company and the contractor, Old castle/APAC-Kansas, coordinated with various utility companies to minimize impacts. Provisions were made to allow for future growth and development.

This project has benefited the citizens of Miami County by:

- Eliminating an at-grade railroad crossing and providing a safer route for motorists to traverse between US-169 and US-69;
- Improving safety by improving sight distance;
- Making the east side of the tracks more attractive to development; and
- Woodland Road remains free flowing and provides access to the new Spring Hill High School.

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The Changing Landscape of Alcoholic Liquor and CMB

The alcoholic liquor and cereal malt beverage (CMB) laws in Kansas continue to create confusion for city officials trying to regulate and issue permits for establishments in the city. This is compounded by new laws adopted every year to expand the licensing scheme or address unforeseen problems that arise as a result of new venues and events that wish to sell alcoholic liquor or CMB. Here is an attempt to unravel some of the confusion, although new bills in the 2012 Legislature could impact the ultimate analysis. First, remember that alcoholic liquor means wine, strong beer, and spirits, while CMB is no more than 3.2% alcohol by weight.

Several such bills currently in the Legislature include allowing tastings of wine and spirits in liquor stores, creating a venue license that would eliminate the need for catering or temporary liquor permits at the same location by the same vendor, lengthening the time frame for which special event alcoholic liquor licenses may be issued, and allowing the sale of wine, beer, and spirits in convenience and grocery stores. It is likely that several of these bills will pass, once again changing the landscape of liquor and CMB regulation.

Alcoholic Liquor

- State regulation of alcoholic liquor is primary, so any vendor wanting to sell alcoholic liquor must first get a state license. Cities may also have a local license for which a fee is charged, but only after the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Division has issued its license. Alcoholic liquor is not subject to sales tax, but is taxed by the State.
- There are several types of liquor licenses available including for package sales (liquor stores), clubs and drinking establishments, caterers, temporary permits, private clubs, and keg registration. The rules are different for each type of license, so do not get confused between liquor by the drink and liquor stores. The licenses for all but the caterers, temporary permits and keg registration, are now issued on a biennial basis by the state and cities must also issue biennial licenses. The biennial license structure is between \$200 and \$500 for private clubs, and clubs and drinking establishments; and between \$200 and \$600 for packaged liquor.
- Liquor by the drink, if allowed in a jurisdiction, is the result of a countywide vote. If it passed in the countywide election, it may be sold anywhere in the county with the proper license. It is either not allowed at all because it was defeated in the countywide vote, is allowed with 30% food sales, or is open saloon, meaning establishments may sell liquor by the drink without regard to food sales.
- When the term wet or dry is used, it usually refers to liquor stores and whether or not alcoholic liquor may be sold in the original package for off-premise consumption. Packaged liquor sales are city by city, so if allowed in the city one of two things happened. Either it passed at some time in the past in a city election, or in 2005 when the Sunday sales law passed, the city allowed itself to become wet without taking affirmative action to remain dry.

CMB

- Cereal malt beverage, CMB, is regulated at the local level. Although there are state statutes that set forth qualifications for holding a license, losing a license, hours and days of sale and that type of thing, a vendor must only get a local license. There is no state license. The ABC does, however, issue a stamp to put on the license for which the vendor must pay \$25. The Attorney General also approves the form of the application.
- There are separate CMB permits for those selling CMB in the original package for off-premise consumption (limited retailers), CMB for consumption on the premises (general retailers), and special event permits. These are all separately issued permits for which application must be made, the appropriate fee paid, and \$25 for each sent to the ABC. As with alcoholic liquor, there is also a provision for keg registration for CMB. The city may charge between \$25 and \$200 for general retailers and between \$25 and \$50 for limited retailers.
- Cities may have local regulations such as the distance from churches, schools and libraries that CMB may be sold or consumed, and the types of conduct prohibited in establishments where CMB is sold.
- CMB is subject to retailers' sale tax, unlike alcoholic liquor, which is not.

General Information

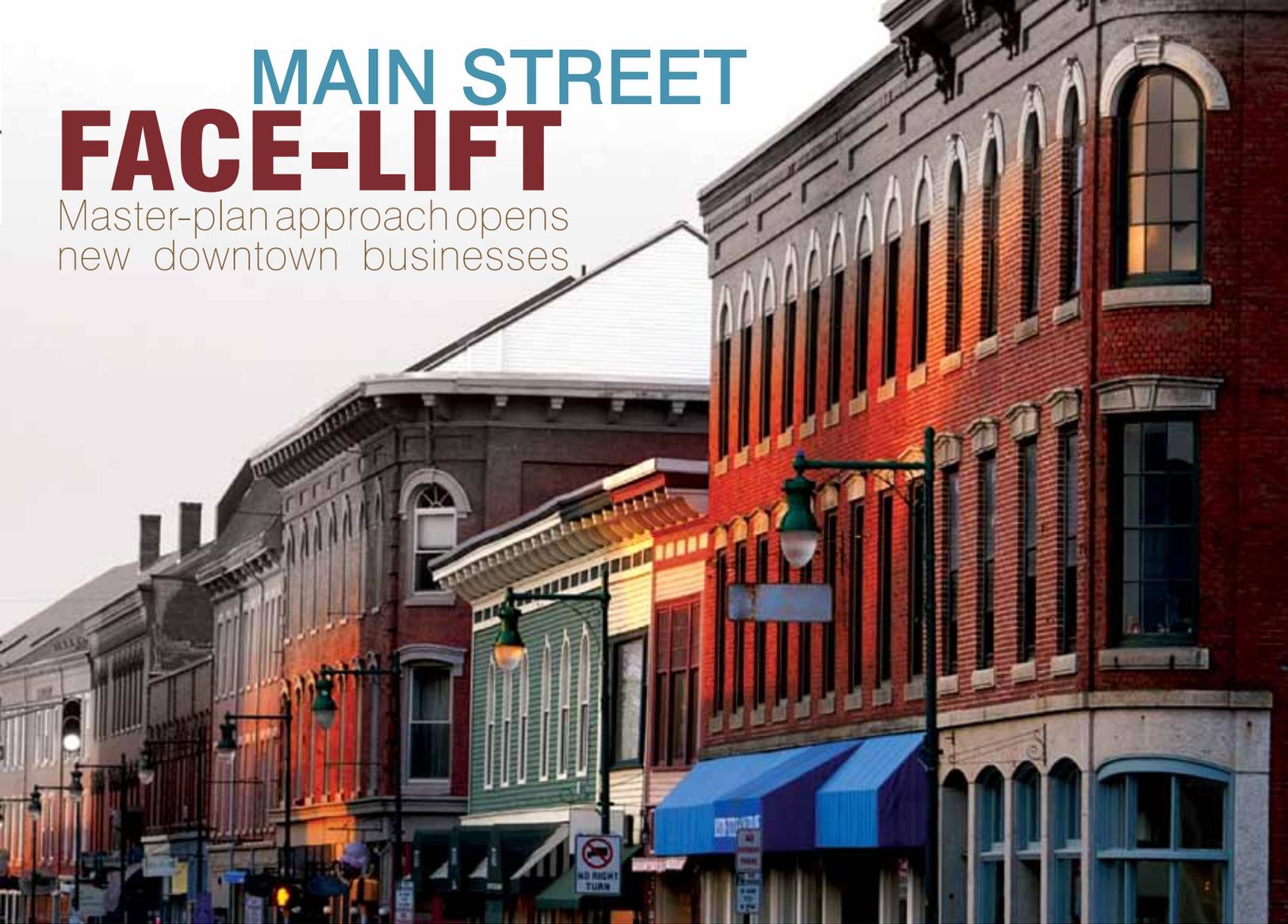
Cities are now able to allow for the Sunday sales of packaged CMB and alcoholic liquor when the proper procedure is followed. The two are linked, so one cannot be allowed without allowing the sale on Sunday of the other, presuming that both are permissible in the city. This takes an ordinance, which looks much like a charter ordinance requiring two publications and a protest period, but only a simple majority is required for passage. It would be subject to a mayoral veto in council cities. When referring to general CMB retailers, such as taverns, bars, and some restaurants, Sunday sales means something different. The city may allow, by ordinance, the sale of CMB in such establishments with 30% food sales. Some cities set the threshold at 50%. This is a local choice and has nothing to do with the Sunday sales of packaged liquor and CMB.

Because of the existence of both CMB and alcoholic liquor, there is certainly room for much confusion regarding the responsibility for each at the local level. It is important when thinking about the issue to make sure each is properly distinguished, because that will lead city officials to the correct set of laws. Sometimes it is not clear what type of license or permit the vendor needs, without asking more questions, so do not hesitate to seek clarification. It is always a good idea to consult with the city attorney for any questions about alcoholic liquor and CMB to make sure the city is proceeding appropriately under the law.

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MAIN STREET FACE-LIFT

Master-plan approach opens
new downtown businesses



by Tracy Brown and Scott Lazenby

Local governments often use matching grants to encourage renovation of the façades of older downtown buildings. These programs are often passive, with the results driven by the owner of the private property. Although the city or county exercises some control over the improvements—often by paying an architect directly—the building owner must still come up with matching funds and deal with the red tape the locality imposes.

In many cases, the results are spotty at best. Even with a low private match requirement of 50% or less, the building owner may be reluctant to put money into aesthetic improvements. This is especially true for absentee building owners who are satisfied with the rents they earn from their business tenants.

Even when property owners take advantage of the incentive, the improvements may be scattered throughout a downtown area, with attractive, renovated buildings surrounded by less attractive ones. The challenge a local government faces is to get a bigger bang for the public buck.

Case Study: Master-Plan Approach in the City of Sandy

Sandy, Oregon, is a city of 9,655 on the western foothills of Mt. Hood. The City is celebrating the Centennial of its incorporation, and its historic downtown is on the route of the Oregon Trail. U.S. Highway 26 is the downtown's main street, and businesses benefit from the 30,000 to 60,000 cars per day that pass through.

Downtown buildings are a mix of historic wood and concrete structures; other historic buildings marred by 1960s and 1970s “improvements” using stucco, out-of-date mansard roofs, and cheap siding; unremarkable buildings built new in the 1960s and 1970s; and more modern buildings done in a variety of architectural styles.

In recent years, the City has adopted design standards for new commercial buildings in an attempt to tame the architectural chaos that was taking place. Rather than create an artificial theme, the design standards simply call for elements that are compatible with the “Cascadian” style that characterizes Mt. Hood’s Timberline Lodge, built by Portland-area craftsmen employed by the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression. Exceptions to the standards in the downtown core preserve the historic character of existing clusters of buildings by encouraging infill development to complement the appearance of those buildings.

These standards have helped with new development, but the planning commission and city council wanted a mechanism to spruce up the existing, older downtown buildings. The City operates an urban renewal agency using tax increment financing, and it participates in the Main Street Program developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

During the past decade, \$5 million has been invested in downtown public infrastructure including parking, sidewalks, streetlights,



COOL PRINTING Before and After

In cases where the property owner wanted more extensive structural improvements such as a new roof or additional square footage, the City provided matching grants on a sliding scale.

DOLLY'S Before and After

and burying utility wires. The time seemed right to direct some of the urban renewal funds to improving the storefronts of private buildings. City staff explored the matching grant programs offered by other communities and worked with the Main Street committee to tailor a program to meet local needs.

In the middle of this process, this article's coauthor, Tracy Brown, attended a national Main Street conference in Chicago. The recession had caused a sharp decrease in subdivision activity, so he had time to serve as Sandy's Main Street coordinator in addition to planning director. At the conference, Randy Wilson of Community Design Solutions described a program he had used in South Carolina to spruce up entire blocks of downtown buildings at the same time.

The innovation in this approach was to buy the cooperation of the building owners by paying 100% of the cost. At the same time, money was saved by having a single contractor do all the work, which reduced the overhead and mobilization cost of multiple individual contracts.

How the Program Works

This idea was shared with the city council and other main street leaders in Sandy. The consensus was: "Let's give this a try." Here are the elements of Sandy's Master Plan Facade Program:

A total of \$1.8 million in urban renewal funds was budgeted for the project over 6 years. This is a large investment in private buildings. But with only 1/3 of the funds spent so far, the impact on the appearance of the City has been more dramatic than the result of the \$5 million spent to date on sidewalks, street lamps, and other public improvements.

City staff worked closely with an architect in designing the program. The architect, Ralph Tahrán, had also helped establish the design standards for new construction. He was masterful in evaluating buildings, sketching improvements, and working with building owners and the contractor.

The architect and Sandy staff members first "triated" all existing buildings, with a goal of maximizing the visual impact of the city's investment.

The team then met with the owners of the targeted buildings. The final design was arrived at by mutual consent, but because the City was picking up the full cost consensus was easily reached in most cases. A picture is worth a thousand words, and the architect was skilled at sketching concepts on tracing paper and using a digital display board to dress up the digital images of the buildings.

The out-of-town owner of a typical, boxlike 7-Eleven store, when seeing the Cascadian embellishment proposed for his building, said, "Tell me again: you're paying for all this?"

In the end, the City did require a 1% match, but even for the most expensive project—a \$50,000 makeover of a concrete building at the gateway to the downtown—the owner quickly agreed to his \$500 contribution.

Each property owner signed an easement allowing the City to perform the work on the building and agreeing to maintain the improvements for at least seven years.

A single contract was bid for the first batch of building improvements. The resulting economy of scale, in combination with the depressed construction prices caused by the recession, allowed the City to stretch its dollars. In the first phase, 11 buildings were improved for a total cost of about \$310,000, not including architectural fees.

The program did not cover such major structural changes as new roofs or additional space, but it did cover—depending on the condition of the building—new windows, doors, awnings, siding, paint, stonework, and the heavy timbers characteristic of Cascadian architecture.

Results

The contractor worked from one end of the downtown to the other during the summer of 2010, and the results of this first phase of the project were dramatic. With the proximity of the Mt. Hood and central Oregon recreation areas, traffic through town peaks in the summer, and many visitors stopped to comment on how good the place was looking.

Other property owners then wanted to jump on the bandwagon. The owners of two buildings—a historic log structure and a former grocery store—decided to make major structural improvements, including new pitched roofs and expanded space. The city provided matching funds on a sliding scale (80% up to \$5,000, 50% for the next \$45,000, and 30% for more than \$50,000), but the owners made investments in their buildings that exceeded the city's requirements.

One concern expressed by business members of the Main Street committee was that the building owners would have relatively little skin in the game. As it turned out, though, many of the owners or their tenants made concurrent investments in sprucing up the interiors of the building or redoing the outside landscaping.



Sandy, Oregon, paid 99% of the cost of improvements to the façades of selected buildings, allowing the City to exercise a high degree of control over the timing and design of improvements.

SANDY GLASS Before and After

The City's dollars leveraged building owners' investments in interior tenant improvements and exterior landscaping improvements, which are still in progress in the "after" photo.

Even in the midst of the recession, new businesses began opening in the downtown. One older building with several tenant spaces went from 100% vacancy to 100% occupancy, and the owner of the building, who was still on the waiting list for the facade program, immediately invested in upgrading the lighting and HVAC systems.

With the excitement generated by the program, the Main Street committee launched an event series, First Fridays, that included wine tasting, music, art displays, and sidewalk sales throughout the downtown. In spite of rainy spring weather—not a big surprise in Oregon—the series of Fridays was a huge success, and the participation rate by businesses has skyrocketed. Other activities and events have followed.

Lessons Learned

The city approached this as a pilot program and an experiment and kept careful note of what was working and what wasn't. A few of the lessons learned so far:

As a practical matter, it might be necessary to place a cap on the owner's cost. Given the reality of older buildings, the city's contractor sometimes uncovered such structural problems as dry rot. Ideally, this would remain the building owner's financial responsibility. Without a cap, owners of old buildings might be reluctant to participate if they are afraid of what they'll find when the building skin is removed.

In one case, the building owner, who was the landlord, enthusiastically supported the proposed improvements but didn't communicate with the owner of the tenant business (a restaurant) who had other ideas about such improvements as paint color and deck material. Legally, the city could have proceeded without the business owner's buy-in, but in the interest of peace and harmony the project was put on hold for a year until a compromise could be reached.

Different circumstances may require different approaches. Working with a single contractor made it easier for the staff to manage the project. But, especially because many small, local contractors are out of work, we are considering a general contractor–construction manager approach for the next phase, when small local firms can bid for parts of the subcontract work.

The program needs to have built-in flexibility to deal with the unknowns inherent in working with old buildings.

A new awning was a key component for one of the building makeovers, but the contractor soon discovered that the 80-year-old building couldn't hold the awning as originally designed. The project was set aside for the next phase to give the architect a chance to rethink the design.

Be prepared for problem negotiation along the way. The contractor wasn't given detailed engineering and architectural designs for each building but was instead given drawings and descriptions of the expected outcomes. The architect worked closely with the contractor when problems came up, and the city had to negotiate when the contractor asked for more money to address the unexpected problems. This is simply the reality of remodel work.

Community Support

A 99% grant program for private storefront improvements with no fixed limits is certainly more expensive than, say, 50% grants limited to \$5,000 each. But Sandy's concept of much larger grants was the key to moving the city from its role as a passive spectator to an active participant in upgrading the appearance of an older downtown.

The city was in the driver's seat as it selected which buildings would be treated, and how. And sprucing up many buildings in a brief period of time suddenly created a critical mass that spurred other investments and downtown activities.

The business owners were enthusiastic about the project in spite of the temporary mess during construction, and the community has supported the program strongly. Even though public, tax increment funds were used, residents are proud of the way their city is looking.

☀️ *Tracy Brown is the planning and development director for Sandy, Oregon. He can be reached at tbrown@ci.sandy.or.us. Scott Lazenby, ICMA-CM, is the City Manager for Sandy, Oregon. He can be reached at slazenby@ci.sandy.or.us. This article was Reprinted with permission from the October 2011 issue of Public Management (PM) magazine published and copyrighted by the International County/City Management Association (ICMA), Washington, D.C.*

ATCHISON SAVES ON HEALTH INSURANCE

BY MANDY CAWBY

As “people powered” organizations, an ever-bigger chunk of our budgets go towards the escalating expense of health insurance. How do we swim against the tide of rising health care costs to sustain benefits for our employees and return value to the taxpayers? The City of Atchison was caught in that rip tide until it changed the game and reduced its costs.

In mid-2010, the City was with the State health insurance pool, considering whether to renew at the State’s higher rates or go back to the marketplace. In years past, a couple of expensive claims had driven the City to the State pool when the private market failed to offer affordable plans.

Now, as the City prepared for renewal with a 15% bump for both the employee and employer, the City reached out to Hardman Benefit Plans, a benefits consultant out of Wichita.

Led by Mike Keller, the Hardman team examined the City’s needs and listened to employees’ fears of higher premiums and limited doctor choice. City leadership’s concern was customer service, improving responsiveness to reduce staff’s time on benefits administration.

Atchison was also steering blind-folded without access to its health data. Without knowing whether its health outcomes were most affected by diabetes, heart disease, obesity, etc., it was difficult to target wellness programs in a meaningful way or incent preventive care effectively.

“We said ‘no,’ we’re not going to accept this from the industry,” says City Manager Trey Cocking. “We’re not getting mugged for astronomical premiums anymore. And if we—as health care consumers—have to take a more active role in our care and coverage, so be it.”

Hardman Benefit Plans charged into the marketplace and guided the City through picking a new plan. On January 1, 2011, the City switched to an innovative high deductible

health plan from United Health Care (UHC) paired with a Health Savings Account (HSA) through UMB Bank.

Deductibles are \$2,500 for singles and \$5,000 non-single plans (\$2,500 per person max). However, the premium rates were so affordable that the City could afford to contribute “seed money” into employees’ HSAs - \$1,000 single and \$1,500 non-singles—to help offset the cost of deductibles.

HSA contributions offer a triple pre-tax benefit and they’re portable. By law, health savings accounts belong to the employees; the balance of the account is theirs whether they stay with the city or not. The unused dollars in employees’ HSAs roll over from year to year, accumulating for future expenses.

Employees also earn more HSA money by participating in wellness activities—up to \$1,000 for singles and \$1,500 for non-singles—plus bonus retail gift cards provided by UHC. By incenting wellness, the City had outstanding involvement from employees.

Wellness activities included biometric screenings, health risk assessments, health coaching, brown bag lunch seminars on healthy habits, an 8-week “biggest loser” series, and a choice of wellness events including community service credits. In addition to improving health outcomes for the employee, this proactive strategy provides both immediate and future benefit to the plan.

With the City’s automatic contribution and earned wellness dollars, employees’ total out-of-pocket exposure is \$500 for singles, \$2,000 for non-singles. Moreover, employees can fully fund their remaining deductible by maintaining payroll deductions equivalent to the decrease from their 2010 premiums without affecting their take-home pay whatsoever.

Hardman also got Atchison competitive vision and dental. The City took some of the premium savings and was able to

"THE CITY HAS A RICHER BENEFIT PACKAGE THAN IT DID A YEAR AGO AND HAS ALREADY REALIZED SIGNIFICANT COST SAVINGS."

provide employees with a supplemental life insurance policy and short-term disability coverage at no extra cost, adding value to the benefits package.

The results? Even with the City's contributions to HSAs and the added coverage for life insurance and disability, Atchison still saw a net savings of \$130,311 for the City and \$35,955 for the employees by the end of the third quarter 2011.

The plan is operating at a 19% loss ratio, an unheard-of outcome which is good news for the City for 2012. As Hardman began its 2012 negotiations with UHC, UHC initially projected an 8.5% increase to premiums, but Hardman—with data in hand—negotiated them down to a mere 2% increase.

What's next for Atchison? The City is committed to empowering employees to live healthier, happier lives and is using the data collected over the last year to design its wellness program into the future. Atchison's long-term goals are to maintain a comprehensive health management strategy to reduce absenteeism and "presenteeism" along with increased productivity by creating a culture of workplace wellness.

The City has a richer benefit package than it did a year ago and has already realized significant cost savings. Atchison plans to use future savings to build toward a self-funded plan within the next five years even as it continues to look for ways to add value to its benefit package.

By managing employees' health through an innovative plan strategy, Hardman Benefit Plans helped Atchison swim against the current, creating sustainable benefits for its employees and returning value to taxpayers.

☀️ *Mandy Cawby is the Finance Director for the City of Atchison. She can be reached at mandyc@cityofatchison.com or (913) 367-5500. Mike Keller represents Hardman Benefit Plans and can be reached at mkeller@hbpinc.com or (316) 685-5585.*



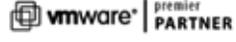
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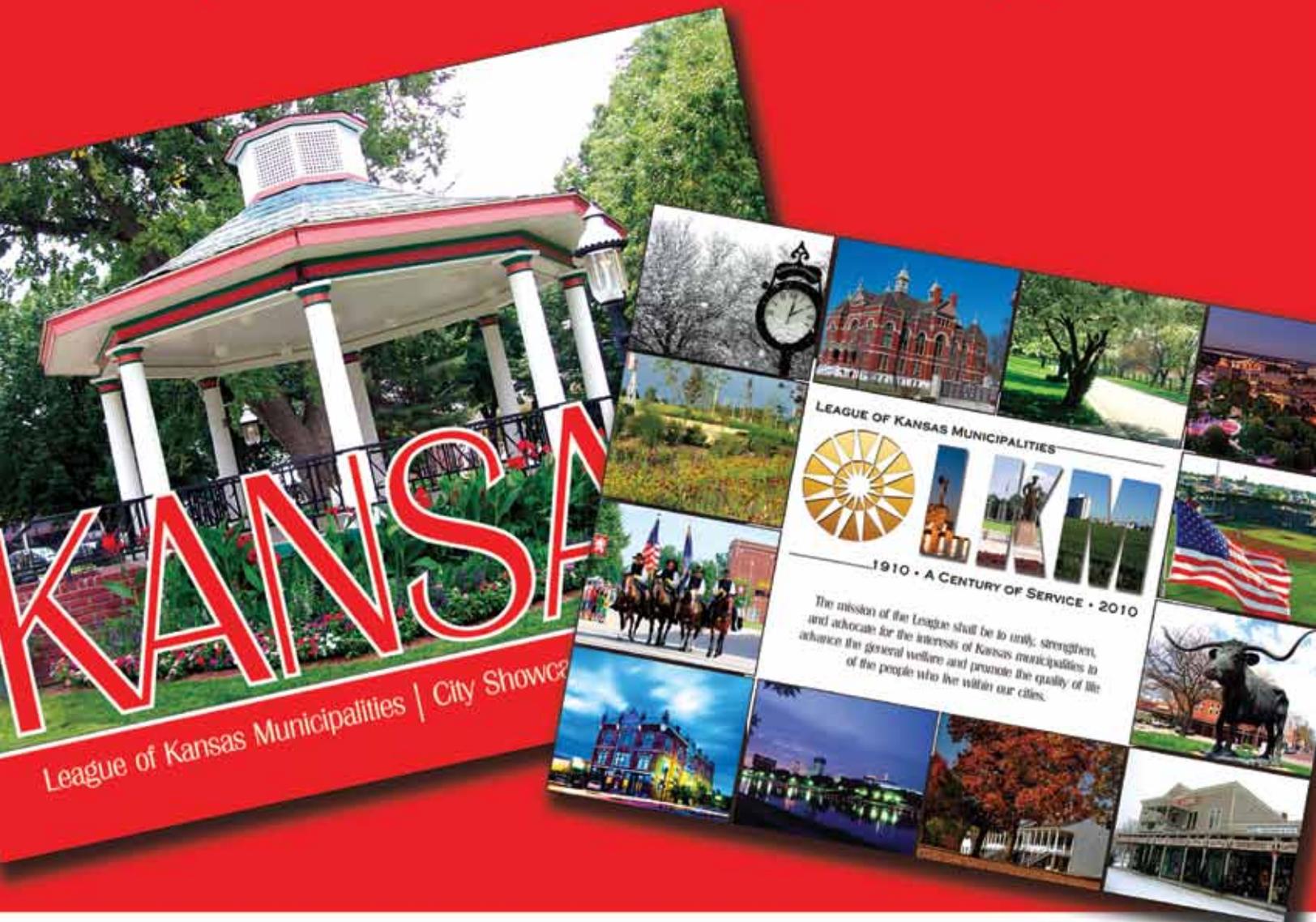
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Rethinking Civic Engagement

If you live in a small city, you know that the level of control you have over its well-being is a blessing and a curse. If you don't volunteer to help with the city festivals' supper, there might not be anyone to serve food. If you don't patronize your local businesses, soon Main Street may be full of empty shops. But with that control comes a sense of duty, which many express through volunteering, shopping locally, or some other social or financial contribution. The blessing is the feeling of ownership you gain in your community; a stake in your little corner of the world. There are hundreds of small cities across Kansas that have little economic or geographic reason for existing, but they persevere because their residents feel that duty to support "their" community.

How citizens interact with each other and impact their communities changes over time, though. Almost 90-years ago, researchers conducting the Middletown studies noted declining traditional neighborhood ties. They blamed new inventions like the radio and automobile for destroying the nation's social fabric by individualizing American culture. In reality, during these declines membership in community groups like the Rotary Club was increasing, replacing neighborhood relations as a means of community interaction. In the 1995 essay *Bowling Alone*, Harvard Professor Robert Putnam found that membership in those community groups was declining (the book's title references the fact that although bowling in the U.S. had increased 20%, membership in bowling leagues had declined). He blamed this round of social collapse on individualization caused by television and the Internet. However, during these declines parental involvement in groups such as youth soccer leagues increased dramatically. It seems that each generation reinvents how they interact within their community.

One problem community's face that has yet to be solved by reinvention is their citizen's lack of political engagement. Voter turnout has been declining for decades, and voter turnout in city elections has reached historic lows, averaging only 15% nationwide. Turnout is even worse amongst young voters, but surprisingly their lack of political participation isn't accompanied by a lack of civic involvement. Even though very few young people vote, studies show that 3/4 of all college-age students have volunteered in their communities. It appears that even residents that want to be involved in their communities are abandoning the political process as a means of impacting them. This political disaffection is regrettable since public policy remains such a powerful tool to maintain and improve the health of our communities.

Luckily, an innovative budgeting strategy may be reinventing how citizens engage in the political process. This strategy, known as participatory budgeting, works by turning over a set portion of the municipal budget to residents, who directly prioritize which proposals to fund. Generally, the process is administered as follows:

1. A city or neighborhood holds a meeting for its constituents. The attendees are given a description of the participatory budgeting process, then are asked to identify local priority needs, and choose a group of community budget representatives.
2. These budget representatives meet over several months to develop proposals. The representatives, at their discretion, may call additional meetings to solicit more ideas on how to spend the assigned funds.
3. The representatives then present their preliminary proposals at a city assembly. Based on community input provided at the assembly, the representatives may refine their proposals before submitting them to a final vote at the election.

4. Finally, residents gather at a city-wide assembly to deliberate and cast ballots on the projects they want to see financed. Those projects with the most votes become part of the city's capital budget for the following year.

Chicago was the first U.S. municipality to implement a participatory budgeting process. In 2009, the City set aside \$1.3 million for residents of the 49th Ward to spend on a menu of infrastructure projects. One-hundred volunteers developed 36 projects, and 1,600 voters selected 14 of those to become part of the budget. Alderman Joe Moore, who introduced the process, said that it was "easily the most popular initiative that [he has] ever undertaken" in his 20 years on the Chicago City Council. Inspired by Chicago's success, New York City's City Council enacted their own participatory budget process in October 2011. Their budget representatives are currently transforming the community's initial project ideas into full proposals. In March, New York City voters will select which projects to fund.

Another popular form of the process is e-participatory budgeting. This process generally starts with residents indicating their budgetary priorities through the city administration website. Then the city manager analyzes the technical feasibility of the suggestions and turns them into concrete proposals. The proposals are subject to an online voting process, and those with the most votes are funded by the city's budget. Bristol, U.K. initiated a similar scheme in 2010, and although it didn't engage citizens at the same level as the regular process, it was more accessible, more cost effective, and attracted more young voters.

Bristol and Chicago are just two of nearly 1,200 cities around the world that have experienced the positive effects of participatory budgeting. A *World Bank* study on the effects of the process in South America found that it has led to direct improvements in facilities, more civic involvement, and improved conditions for the poor. An April 2004 *Environment & Urbanization* article on participatory budgeting in Latin America and Europe revealed a pattern of increased tax revenues and decreased delinquency for communities using the process. These findings indicate that the participatory budgeting not only makes citizens less likely to evade taxes, but also encourages them to support paying more taxes toward municipal projects.

These studies prove what residents from small cities already know: when you give citizens direct control of their city, they will feel a duty to contribute to its well-being. But even though using participatory budgeting can increase civic engagement and improve the quality of life within a community, there's no guarantee that if cities in Kansas attempt the process that they will realize the same success. For participatory budgeting to work, residents have to be informed about the opportunity to become part of the budgeting process, and they have to want to impact their community. But in an era of low voter turnout and scarce municipal revenues, the best practice may be giving citizen's control over how to stretch their limited tax dollars. Reinventing how citizens are involved in the political process might just make them feel a duty to become involved.

☀ *Michael Koss is the Membership Services Manager for the League of Kansas Municipalities. He can be reached at mkoss@lkm.org or (785) 354-9565.*



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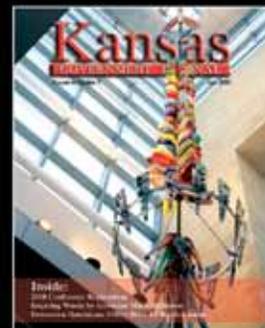
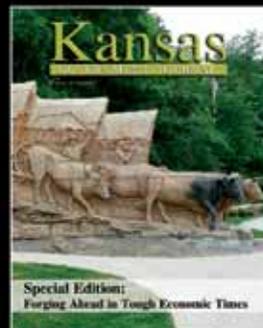
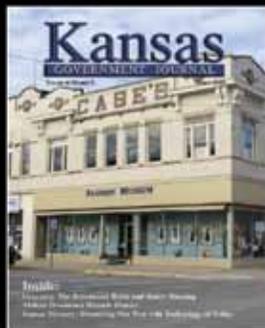
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No Mow for Kansas—Still a Good Idea



Almost exactly 14 years ago, I wrote a column entitled “No Mow for Kansas?” For the purposes of this column, and to give some context to my remarks, I am going to lift the following four paragraphs directly from *Moler's Musings* of July, 1998.

I am going to make a radical proposal. It has to do with the modification of a policy that has been in place in Kansas since the dawn of time, the advent of the power lawnmower, or somewhere between the two. I am speaking about not mowing along roads, highways, and other public rights-of-way. I know that we have all grown up with nicely manicured highways and roads. I would like to suggest, however, that this paradigm may be in need of a radical overhaul.

Specifically, I am suggesting that the State of Kansas, including local governments, move to a “low mow” or “no mow” policy. I am not suggesting that we abandon mowing in town, nor am I suggesting that we let the grass run rampant. I am, however, suggesting that a rethinking of the whole policy may be in order.

I offer the following reasons for this proposal: First of all, I foresee a tremendous savings in taxpayer dollars. This is clearly the result when one stops mowing literally thousands of miles of public rights-of-way in the state. (There are currently about 10,000 miles of public highways in Kansas.) The public would no longer have to pay as much for gasoline, diesel fuel, equipment, and the personnel needed to operate this equipment and to manage the departments that oversee them.

Secondly, there is a positive angle when one looks at the return of natural flora and fauna to the region. I would suspect that hundreds of thousands of acres could be returned to their natural state in Kansas. It would allow for natural grasses to return as well as to allow many more acres of natural habitat to return for birds and other wildlife native to the state.

With that as the background, I am happy to report that the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), as well as the Kansas Turnpike Authority (KTA), have both moved in the past 14 years to a low, or at least lower, mow policy than they had at that time. This does not mean, of course, that we are in a posture where we are not mowing the right-of-ways, but simply that we have reduced the assets that are being expended for this purpose.

After a little research, we found that KDOT currently spends approximately \$6.7 million a year on mowing for equipment,

personnel, and fuel. KDOT estimates that they have perhaps 150,000 acres of highway right-of-way that is subject to this mowing policy. Generally speaking, KDOT mowers are set for a 6 in. cut for mowing the shoulder strip. They also note that highway right-of-way in undeveloped areas is mown 15 ft. from the pavement edge. Areas outside the shoulder edge mowing are not mowed between April 15th and October 1st. The KTA has a mow clear zone, which is mowed four times a year with everything being mowed once a year, along the 236 miles of KTA right-of-way.

I think what we are seeing is that both of these entities have come to the conclusion that reduced mowing is a good thing. The question remains, however, that if you drive around the State of Kansas, and look at mowing policies from region-to-region and place-to-place, you will still see some areas in which mowing the grass on right-of-ways in rural areas remains a high priority, with a commensurate expenditure of monetary and energy assets. On our recent travels around the state, we unfortunately have come across a number of mowing crews cutting down grasses that had grown to maybe 7-12 in. tall. There was very little difference in the area right next to the road that had been recently mowed and the areas near the fence line that had not been mowed. Furthermore, the most surprising incident occurred when we saw a crew using weed eaters along I-70.

I have to believe that we can further improve things in this state simply by using some common sense in this area. With fuel prices for diesel fuel and gasoline heading to all-time highs, it only makes sense to look for ways to reduce the consumption of these precious natural resources. It also is a way to save money in already tight governmental budgets, and perhaps to allow some native species of flora and fauna to return to and thrive in our great state.

I continue to believe that low or no mow, especially in rural and more sparsely populated areas of the state, is a program well worth considering. It remains a somewhat radical departure from certain long-standing policies at the state and local levels concerning roads and highways in Kansas. However, as I commented over a decade ago, it is something that just seems to make common sense and does not really have much of a down side.

While keeping in mind that we must always mow around traffic control signs and at intersections, it continues to seem to me that implementing the lowest mow policy possible would have a wide-range of positive policy outcomes including: saving tax dollars, preserving native habitat and wildlife, public safety, and preserving fuel and natural resources. In conclusion, I would simply urge anyone who controls a mowing system to examine the policies they have in place to see if there is any opportunity for reducing the cost of the operation and the consumption of natural resources that it involves. As with all good policies, they need to be reviewed on a regular basis.



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