

Logan County Commissioners Work Session
August 19, 2025

Present: Mike Brownell, Jim Santomaso, Alan Samber, Mike Burri, Josilyn Lutze, Rick Cullip, Debbie Unrein, Marilee Johnson, Sue Gress, Jamie Ulrich, Dave Appelhans, Chief Lavon Ritter, Dave Conley, Callie Jones and Jennifer Crow.

Chairman Brownell called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS SESSION - Commissioner Santomaso moved to approve the minutes of the August 12, 2025 Work Session. Commissioner Brownell seconded, and the motion carried 3-0.

REVISIONS TO THE WORK SESSION AGENDA – There were no revisions.

REVIEW OF THE BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA – There was no discussion.

SUNSET MEMORIAL GARDENS - Sue Gress and Jamie Ulrich of the City of Sterling and Dave Appelhans joined the meeting to discuss Sunset Memorial Gardens. Ulrich stated that they met with Appelhans last week to determine an area that can be used to bury the unclaimed bodies in. Appelhans is budgeting money in 2026 to have surveying done. Ulrich asked if the \$50 payment for unclaimed bodies had to go to the state. Ulrich said that the County is responsible for a \$50 payment, but it is the County's land. He suggested putting the \$50 into a separate account that would help fund a new columbarium and a gazebo or structure where the old building used to be. This could further the process or speed it up as far as building a gazebo and a concrete pad for the columbarium.

Alan Samber had never heard of the \$50 fee. Dave Appelhans stated that the fee was built into the City's fee system since he worked at the cemetery in 1995 or 1996. It was a token charge as the County did not pay the full price that other people were paying for burial plots. The City was receiving the fee because it was on their property, and they were opening and closing the graves. The City will still be doing the opening and closing. The County could put the money in a separate account to accumulate for a pavilion near where the columbaria are, so when people are out there with their families, they have a nice place to sit. It will be wheelchair accessible.

At one time, Commissioner Joe McBride was working on a GOCO grant for the project. He was trying to keep the costs low. He applied and they said it wasn't comprehensive enough. Which meant it wasn't a large enough project. He wanted to pave the trail and add some trees and some irrigation. It was pretty expensive at the time, around \$200,000, but not enough for GOCO. They wanted us to tie it into other trails in town. The County ended up walking away from it because it was turning into a monster.

Ulrich said that the \$50 payment offsets some of the City's costs, including employee wages, etc. He was not sure if that was going to continue since Sunset Memorial Gardens is the County's property. Alan Samber noted that there is an Intergovernmental Agreement for the cemetery, but it does not say anything about paying the City for indigent burials.

There was discussion about whether or not the statutes allow indigent or unclaimed person's remains to be cremated. Mr. Ulrich claimed that the legislature just changed the statutes to now allow for cremation of unclaimed persons. Sue Gress commented that there are two different terms, indigent persons, and unclaimed persons.

The local funeral homes have cremains of over 30 persons that they have that are sitting on their shelves. Alan Samber stated if there's no family or friends that will claim the body for burial and assume the financial responsibility for it, that's when the county is obligated to provide a decent burial. For an indigent person, there is a process for the family to apply for assistance at the Department of Human Services to help pay for the costs for the burial. Appelhans stated that is probably where the wrong term is being used.

The City sets up the fee structure for all of the openings and closings and the County provides maintenance of the cemetery and the care of the grounds. Alan Samber stated that according to the IGA, the County cannot bury indigent persons or unclaimed bodies in the cemetery. The indigent persons or unclaimed persons must be cremated, and the families must give permission for them to be cremated. Ulrich stated again that the law has recently been changed to allow cremation. Alan Samber said that he would check into this, as he had not heard about it.

Ulrich continued the discussion with the Board on the City/County IGA for Sunset Memorial Gardens. The recent IGA allows transfers of Sunset Memorial plots to anyone. Mr. Ulrich would like this to go back to transfers only to family members. According to the amended IGA, plots can be transferred to anyone. If someone was to transfer a plot, unfortunately they don't know exactly where every grave is in the cemetery, due to the number of years that went by with nobody really measuring out the graves. Even if it says that the plot is there and nobody is buried in it, we're not positive that it is actually the truth. If they start digging a grave and they come across something, they have to stop, and it turns into a big deal. Ulrich believes that transfers need to go back to family, because of the liability because they don't know what's actually in the ground in some of the areas. There have been numerous phone calls on transferring plots. Some people have picked up paperwork, but they have not had anyone come back in with the actual transfer paperwork.

Appelhans said that the rules say that if something unfortunate happens and someone is already buried in the plot, or they're off by half or whatever, that it is up to the discretion of the administrators of the cemetery to choose a different lot. It can turn into a big fight especially if they've set a stone or memorial marker or something. There were two or three private parties running Sunset Memorial Gardens at different times. They were hiring different people to come out and dig graves. They may not have been measuring them correctly every time. Grave sites can't be off even by just a little bit because down the row it will cause the rest of the graves to be off.

To change the transfer policy, the City/County IGA would need to be amended again. The Board will need to visit with the City Council about it and approve another amendment to the IGA. The Board's concern at the time was that it was taking away people's property rights by not allowing the transfer of the plots.

Appelhans said that if there is a big enough spot at the cemetery when the area is surveyed, the County could expand the cemetery to have an area where there could be reciprocity spots for people. Those people who want to transfer their cemetery plots could transfer them in the new section so they could be satisfied. Instead of setting 12 pins for four rows, he could ask the surveyor to double it and set 24 pins. This would alleviate the problem of not knowing whether the current plots are occupied or if the locations are correct. Commissioner Brownell believes that this would be a reasonable compromise. If the City and County could agree to amend the IGA once the surveying is done and the new plots are added. The old plots would be voided in the existing part of the cemetery if people decide to transfer them to new owners that are not family members.

An account could be set up in the county budget for the \$50.00 fee for the unclaimed persons to be used in the future. Jamie Ulrich stated that the City of Sterling does charge the County \$50 for the payment basically to cover the City's cost at Riverside Cemetery. Once they start burying them out at Sunset, that is the County's property, so the \$50 fee is up in the air right now. Alan Samber will look at the IGA to determine if the fee

is mentioned. The County does not see the \$50 fee because it is in the funeral home's bid.

The columbarium at Sunset is just about half sold out. Appelhans is working with a monument company instead of the company used in the past because they're claiming they can get the material cheaper than from the same quarry as they were getting it from before.

CHIEF LAVON RITTER – Sterling Fire Chief Lavon Ritter met with the Board. Commissioner Brownell stated that he visited with Debbie Unrein last week and also Commissioners Santomaso and Yahn. The consensus of the Board was that Chief Ritter is authorized to hire the two new ALS providers for his staff. The funds are budgeted and hopefully the new billing company will come through with increased funds for everything to make it all work.

Chief Ritter thanked the Board. Alan Samber explained that the Board is authorizing the Washington County Ambulance to temporarily cover a motorcross event in Logan County for ambulance standby. Chief Ritter stated that Commissioner Yahn had called him to discuss this. It takes at least four people to cover the event; five to six people would be better. It also takes an ambulance completely out of service for the community.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS - Rick Cullip explained that the Proctor Peppers 4-H club has distribution of peaches this week. This takes place under the grandstands. They unload the peaches and then all the families come and pick them up the same day. An area has been added to the form for the Board to check off whether they agree to waive the fees and sign their approval. This will be added to all rental forms in the future.

Commissioner Brownell asked whether Cullip had visited with Jared on the electrical for the body scanner. Cullip said it has been scheduled. He believes the body scanner is ordered.

ROAD AND BRIDGE DEPARTMENT – Mike Burri met with the Board. He discussed the Crook shop building. It is a really nice building. However, the floor is made up of large rocks. They can't use jacks in the building because of the rocks. He would like to do some work on the building in the future and fix it up. He would like to install a concrete floor and add adequate lighting. There is about \$10,000 in the 2025 budget for building repair and maintenance. The shop is just large enough to fit a motorgrader and a pickup truck. It also has a small office in the corner. Rob Kasper is getting measurements for concrete estimates. Currently, they use extension cords running for the garage door opener that needs to be taken care of. They need to get some quotes to fix that problem too. Burri did get the garage door fixed. The Board agreed that while an electrician is working out there everything should be fixed and up to code.

MESA COUNTY LETTER OF SUPPORT REGARDING UNFUNDED MANDATES – Commissioner Brownell mentioned that Mesa County was asking counties around the state to write a letter to Governor Polis about unfunded mandates. There is a special session of the legislature coming up this week. The Board asked Alan Samber to draft a letter to send to Governor Polis.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 9:29 a.m.