

Logan County Commissioners Work Session
May 13, 2025

Present: Mike Brownell, Jim Yahn, Jim Santomaso, Alan Samber, Jason Thyne, Mike Burri, Debbie Unrein, Marilee Johnson, Jeff Rice and Jennifer Crow.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS SESSION - Commissioner Yahn moved to approve the minutes of the May 6, 2025 Work Session as written. Commissioner Santomaso seconded, and the motion carried.

REVISIONS TO THE WORK SESSION AGENDA – Jennifer stated that the Commissioners Proceedings Can be struck from the agenda as they are not ready.

Commissioner Brownell received a call from a lobbyist organization based in Colorado Springs. They help counties and municipalities with proposed missile site renovations. He asked if the Commissioners would be available Thursday for a short meeting to listen to what they do and see if they can help the county.

Commissioner Brownell also had an email from Cynthia Mills, the Heritage Center Director, concerning the possibility of a Memorandum of Understanding for a feasibility study for the Heritage Center and City of Sterling Recreation Center.

Commissioner Brownell also added discussion of a possible ballot issue extending the one-half percent county sales tax.

Commissioner Yahn added for the record that the County lost an employee over the weekend in a farming accident. Jason Sobieray was the lead truck driver at the Road and Bridge Department. He will be missed. Our thoughts and our prayers are with the family. The funeral will be held on Friday at 11:00 a.m. at Breidenbach's Lake.

JASON THYNE STERLING REGIONAL MEDCENTER INTERIM CEO – Jason Thyne, Interim CEO of Sterling Regional MedCenter met with the Board. Mr. Thyne told the Board that Mr. Ned Resch left in March of this year for a position at Regional West Health Services in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. Mr. Resch has done a lot of incredible work for the last three years at Sterling Regional MedCenter. The hospital was recently recognized as a top 20 rural hospital this year for the first time in its history by the Charters Rural Health Association.

The hospital just recently had their joint commission survey, which is their big three-year CMS survey on site. They had zero conditional findings, and very few low-level findings. This was one of their best surveys that's happened in Banner in the entire year of all of their facilities.

Banner has invested a lot of money in the Sterling facility in the last few years. They have been focusing on getting up to speed with technology and the latest equipment available. For example, they've got a brand new, linear accelerator in the David Walsh Cancer Center, which is a state-of-the-art unit that will help the radiation oncology doctors be able to be very specific with their treatments and their doses and their location.

In conjunction with that, currently being installed is a new CT scanner that's going to allow them to do low dose lung cancer screenings, and it's going to have capabilities that will align with their new linear accelerator; to further improve the quality of care they're going to be able to do on the cancer oncology side. They have

a new floral suite that's also being put into play right now, along with the CT project, and it is going to allow them to do a lot more interventional radiology type procedures with greater specificity and accuracy.

Later this year, they are anticipating a new OR air handling unit which is going to help improve the air quality in those spaces. The hospital is also starting renovation of two of the OR rooms where they will get new booms and lights.

The final project for this year is rehab renovation, moving the rehab team into the DaVita building. DaVita moved into the shopping area near Wendy's. May 31st is DaVita's last day in the building, then the hospital will start working on the project to renovate that space for a new rehabilitation center for the community.

As far as providers, the hospital is really focusing on general surgery and ortho surgery positions, the radiation oncology position, and med oncology positions to get them completely full and have consistency and not rely on locum coverages.

Commissioner Yahn mentioned that the Commissioners have been having meetings concerning the future of the ambulance service. Ned Resch attended one of the meetings before he left. He invited Mr. Thyne to attend the meetings if he would like to be involved. Commissioner Yahn will make sure that Mr. Thyne is added to the email invite list.

Mr. Thyne explained about the hospital's current ambulance transfer program. They have a medevac program with one fixed wing aircraft and one helicopter stationed at the airport. They also have one ambulance. They are cross training, trying to get to where if they can't fly, they at least have some way to transport patients to a higher level of care. The college has a paramedic program going on and is trying to get people trained for our local regions.

Commissioner Brownell offered the Board's support if needed if there is legislation that helps rural hospitals or if there is something that the hospital needs assistance with. The Board can contact CCI to possibly help in those areas. The Board thanked Mr. Thyne for coming and congratulated him on the top 20 designation for Sterling Regional MedCenter.

ROAD AND BRIDGE OPERATIONS MANAGER MIKE BURRI – Mike Burri met with the Board concerning a RAISE grant. One RAISE grant was awarded to all of northeast Colorado. Commissioner Brownell said that there are a lot of towns and counties involved in it. Kent Vance put it together. Washington County is the fiscal agent on the grant. Logan County should have a share of the \$5 million grant. The region has not put in for the new grant as far as he knows.

Early this spring each entity was supposed to put in what they are asking for. Commissioner Yahn said it sounded like there was a new grant that came out just for engineering and infrastructure for bridges and roads. The smallest award was a million dollars. A grant for an assessment of all of our bridges in anticipation of getting future grants would help the county be more ready to go for other grants. This grant would be awarded in September, applications are due mid-June.

Commissioner Brownell noted that if the engineering is done first, the construction grants are substantially higher. CDOT was encouraging the region to apply for it because they don't award many grants in the rural areas.

Burri said that several department employees requested permission to display Jason Sobieray's truck at his funeral service at Breidenbach's Lake. They have not asked his widow yet but wanted to get permission from the Board first. The Board agreed that it would give permission if the family was OK with it.

Burri discussed a letter from the Defense Access Road Program to upgrade four cattle guards on missile roads. Commissioner Brownell talked to a gentleman yesterday from a group that watches out for municipalities and counties to make sure that we are getting all the federal funding that we're supposed to on these projects for the missile roads. Commissioner Brownell asked Jennifer to add this to the business meeting for May 20th. The Air Force is proposing to pay half the costs of the cattle guards, with the county installing them. This is a one-time \$38,601 cost-share towards the county's replacement of four cattle guards. Burri said they seem like a simple install; the county excavator should be able to lift the concrete boxes.

REVIEW OF COUNTY POLICIES DISPOSAL OF SURPLUS PROPERTY – Debbie Unrein met with the Board to discuss County policies. The first policy discussion was of the disposal of surplus property. A 2017 resolution outlines the procedure for disposing of county property. Recently during meetings with the auditors, it was discovered that a bid award letter for a large piece of equipment for the landfill showed the price of the new equipment. A purchase requisition form was not done, because of the bids. All of the bids indicate that there was a trade-in allowance for a piece of equipment. The bid award letter was sent in for the full amount of the piece of equipment and did not mention a trade in allowance. The minutes mentioned the award of the bid at \$919,000 but did not mention a trade-in of an old machine. The new machine was delivered in July. They took a piece of equipment as a trade in and did not pay the county for it or deduct it from the invoice. This year during the Capital Asset Inventory, it was discovered that this piece of equipment was gone. The department said that it was traded back in July. However, the Finance Department had no record of receiving payment or credit for it. The Finance Department sent an invoice for it and received the payment for it in January 2025. The auditor wanted it to be brought up to address the property disposal policy. The auditors will report this in our management letter, but will not report it in the audit. It is not a negative item in the audit.

Debbie told the Board that all vehicle titles are titled under Logan County. Anytime any vehicle that is sold at auction, the Board signs the titles. Every department operates under the Board. The department may get checks written directly to them, but the only EIN (Employer Identification Number) is Logan County. The titles are signed during the Commissioners' Business Meetings. Commissioner Yahn suggested that the Board send a letter to the Department Heads as a reminder of the disposition of county property.

PURCHASING POLICY - Debbie discussed the suggested changes she has made to the purchasing policy. She has increased the limits. She also looked at other county's policies. She followed Morgan County's policy and took several things from their policy. Currently, Logan County's policy says formal bids are required for anything over \$5,000 which doesn't work anymore. In both policies it states we don't need to do purchase requisitions for general maintenance. It's also for repair and maintenance of facilities. She increased that limit to \$25,000.

Alan Samber noted in the policy that verbal approval or discussion with the Board does not negate the requirement of the purchase requisition on page seven. There is a statutory requirement about Road and Bridge construction projects.

Mike Burri has asked about using a company called Sourcewell. Debbie has not addressed that in the Purchasing Policy, however it is something that could be added. It's not just for heavy equipment. The Sheriff used it for their Tyler software program. Debbie used it for her department's software bids, she went through Sourcewell and that is how they ended up with Tyler.

Current policy requires that all requests for bids for road construction projects likely to involve expenditures of \$50,000 or more shall be advertised in the county newspaper, no less than 10 days before the contract is let. Alan read in the statutes that if the commissioners desire to let out any work on a County Highway by contract,

it may advertise in a legal newspaper or post a notice in the courthouse for a period not less than 10 days before the contract is let seeking sealed proposals for performing the work. That would be less than \$50,000. If it's \$50,000 or greater, then we must publish the notice in the newspaper.

The difficulty is that our newspaper now requires advertisements to be submitted to them by Friday to be published in the newspaper next Thursday, because it is published only once per week.

Purchase requisition will be required for anything over \$5,000. Anything over \$5,000 to \$25,000, they would get informal bids and attach them to the purchase requisition. After discussion, the Board agreed to increase the limit for formal bids to \$50,000.

Debbie added the purchase of bulk fuel to the policy. Currently, the Road and Bridge Department calls for prices on bulk fuel and the Board signs a purchase requisition for it. Debbie eliminated the purchase requisition requirement. Due to the volatility of fuel pricing, they will show their price research attached to their vouchers.

Debbie added a paragraph concerning conflict of interest. If the Department Head has a conflict of interest in a bid award, they cannot participate in the selection or the award. She also included information about sole-source purchases. If departments are seeking to purchase an item with a single source or the repair of an item that only certain companies can repair, they can avoid completing a purchase requisition for that item.

Debbie removed the wording concerning items approved for purchase during budget meetings and not having to get three bids at the actual time of purchase. Departments are not getting three bids for budgeting purposes. By the time they purchase the item, it is often a different price, and they may not even be purchasing it from the company that is discussed at the budget meeting. Debbie warned the Board that they may receive push back on that.

Commissioner Brownell discussed the Sheriff's Office cars that are fully equipped that are purchased from a company in Oklahoma. For awhile during COVID, they couldn't get vehicles so they would have to buy something in Denver and then have to equip them with emergency equipment. This is a better way to purchase the Sheriff's vehicles, and they are delivered ready to go. The Board can decide whether to allow bids like that or require the Sheriff to write a purchase requisition.

VETERAN'S SERVICE OFFICER SALARY – Commissioner Brownell mentioned that during discussion with Phillips County last week, it sounded like Phillips County was getting a bigger reimbursement from the state with fewer veterans. Debbie said it is based on the number of hours that the Veteran's Service Officer reports. It used to be based on the number of calls.

Phillips County seemed to think they were getting reimbursed \$25,000. Up until recently the Phillips County Veteran's Service Officer was not working even 20 hours. Before the changes to the Veteran's Service Officer system, 30-32 was full time. They have to do 20 hours to keep their certification up. According to Glen Marciniak, the State Veteran's Service Officer, they take the total number of hours in the state and divide it by our hours and so every county gets a share.

The Phillips County VSO lives between Sterling and Haxtun. Alan said that he indicated that he does not want to be paid mileage to drive to Sterling, but he would like mileage if he has to run errands after he gets here.

SALES AND USE TAX EXTENSION – Commissioner Brownell stated that the Board needs to determine whether to put the extension of the Sales and Use Tax question on the ballot. It will need to be on the ballot

this year as it expires December 31st. The way that it is written, the County only pays utilities for the Justice Center with the proceeds of the sales and use tax. Commissioner Brownell suggested that the language on the ballot question be changed so that the sales and use tax could be utilized for all County buildings.

Currently, sales and use tax funds can also be used for capital improvements to various buildings. Some of the funds were used to help build the Mitchek Event Center. The ARPA monies funded the majority of the County building HVAC upgrades, but overages were paid with sales and use taxes. Any kind of maintenance and repairs to County buildings qualify. Any building listed in the original Sales and Use Tax ballot issue qualifies. The Logan County Shooting Sports Complex is new since the sales tax was enacted, so no monies can be used there. Sunset Memorial Gardens does not qualify either as it is not written in the ballot issue.

The Board will need to decide what voters will buy into and support on a ballot issue. People cannot see utilities. The Mitchek Event Center was a good investment, people really like the new building, and it is something that people can see. The Board discussed various Fairgrounds projects that are waiting to be completed, from the stadium roof which still has a pending insurance claim on it to a proposed increase in livestock barn space. Commissioner Brownell mentioned the CU Denver architecture students project which involves a proposed Heritage Center/Recreation Center building. The project included estimated costs and preliminary drawings. They've done the same thing at the Fairgrounds for possible expansion. The proposed project expands the north livestock barn and takes one wing that sits at an angle, and adds a larger building on the north end that would also have bathrooms and showers, etc. They also wrote a proposal for a big, covered arena east of the current event center. DOLA paid \$2,000 for the Heritage Center/Recreation Center project and probably will pay around the same for the Fairgrounds project.

Commissioner Yahn suggested that the Board develop the talking points for the ballot issue that everyone can agree on. Some of the language included in the Tabor blue book could be used. Since it is a sales tax, people from outside the County pay it. The tax is minimal and is only five cents on \$10 or fifty cents on \$100. Conservative estimates for 2025 for the current sales and use tax, are that it will bring in about \$3.8 million. The Board discussed extending the tax indefinitely. It can be promoted in our radio interviews and talked about in meetings, and it will be ready for the Tabor Notice.

Commissioner Yahn mentioned that Jerry Sonnenberg talked to a company that would do a survey for a fee of about \$7,500. They ask questions about things like if the tax was permanent would it change your mind? After discussion it was decided that most people do not answer their phones for unknown calls or texts and that the money spent would not be a good idea. People see the improvements made at the Fairgrounds and love them, if that point can be made it will help promote the extension of the sales and use tax.

The talking points could be printed up on posters or small cards to be placed around the Fairgrounds during the fair asking people to "Vote Yes" on the ballot issue or reminding them that the Sales and Use Tax helped make this possible. The Board will discuss this matter further at the May 27th Work Session.

Commissioner Brownell discussed the lobbying group, Waller and Associates, that the county has contracted with and has a monthly conference call with. The cost is approximately \$1,600 a month. They have a grant writer, that he has tried to get the Sheriff's Department connected with her, but it has not worked out. He does not believe that the County is getting their money's worth from the group. CCI lobbies for the counties. Commissioner Yahn said that the irrigation district has a lobbyist that is really involved. He feels that a monthly call is not enough during the legislative session. Bills are coming up all the time and if you wait for a month, you will miss out on something that is pushed through. Jerry Sonnenberg may have talked to them more outside of the monthly call. Next Tuesday is the next scheduled call, Commissioner Brownell would like to tell them the County will not be using their services any longer. Alan will look at the contract to determine if there is a notice necessary to cancel the contract.

Commissioner Yahn suggested the draft purchasing policy be sent to department heads to ask them if they have any concerns or suggestions before it is made official.

INDIGENT BURIALS - Commissioner Yahn was discussing the indigent burials with Interim City Manager Don Saling. He thought maybe there could be a designated place at Sunset Memorial Gardens for them. Alan Samber thought there was something in the IGA that discussed indigent burials. He will look into it. Saling was OK with designating a location at Sunset for indigent burials.

AMBULANCE SERVICE ADDITIONAL EMPLOYEE – Commissioner Yahn discussed the hiring of an additional employee for the ambulance with Don Saling. The City has agreed to use the savings in salaries from employees out on workers comp. to pay the salary until the employees on workers comp return.

MOU FEASIBILITY STUDY ON HERITAGE CENTER RECREATION CENTER – Commissioner Brownell will talk to Don Saling concerning an MOU for a feasibility study on the Heritage Center/Recreation Center project.

Debbie mentioned that the Finance Department is a little slow getting the schedule of bills sent out this week. She will ask Kristen to bring Jim Santomaso a hard copy to sign since his computer is not set up yet.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 11:09 a.m.