

Logan County Commissioners Work Session
May 27, 2025

Present: Mike Brownell, Jim Yahn, Jim Santomaso, Alan Samber, Debbie Unrein, Marilee Johnson, Byron Pelton, Lauren Bower and Jennifer Crow.

Chairman Brownell called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS SESSION - Commissioner Yahn moved to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2025 Work Sessions as written. Commissioner Santomaso seconded, and the motion carried 3-0.

REVISIONS TO THE WORK SESSION AGENDA – Commissioner Brownell added discussion on developments on the Veterans Service Officer agreement. Alan stated that he should have this to the Board by the end of today or tomorrow. Phillips County will be sending him information on salary as well to assist in getting this completed.

JOSILYN LUTZE EMPG GRANT – Josilyn Lutze met with the Board. Her position is reimbursed through a 50% grant funded through EMPG or Emergency Management Performance Grant. The State DHS and Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management are allocated funds each year from the Federal Government dispersed through the State. The State keeps some for operations and state employees and then they pass the rest of it on to counties.

With the change in the Federal Administration, President Trump paused on all grants to see where wasteful spending is going. Unfortunately, FEMA is currently under review, so the State has not received any of their Federal money yet. Counties have not been able to get their NOFOS or Notices of Funding for 2025. Normally the State gets \$23 million from the Feds and passes \$17 million to the counties. In 2024, Logan County's share was \$58,500. If the State gets their Notice of Funding for 2025, they are unsure if they will be able to accept it because of the terms and conditions from the Trump Administration dealing with immigration in Colorado. Commissioner Yahn said that others have to do with transportation and DEI. Since Colorado is pushing back against all of that, the Federal government might cut funding.

The State said that they are going to do a modified grant for January 1 through September 30, through the end of the third quarter. This is estimated to be around 80% of what we normally get, roughly about \$46,800 for the year. They were trying to figure out how much the State staff will be paid through June of next year. If they do get the NOFOs for 2025, they're going to rerun that math to figure out how to make up the difference for the fourth quarter for all counties. They held a call on Tuesday with DHS Director Klein sent to Emergency Managers. A press release was sent to everyone by the state emergency manager's PIO.

As we get more information about the new budget, and we are working on our budget, that will help us know more about how we need to react. We should know about the 80% funding in approximately 3-4 weeks. Josilyn will keep the Board updated as information is available from the state and the feds.

In February we had a virtual meeting regarding DHS policies and the grants. It was supposed to be a site visit from DHS. They had some guidance regarding the personally identifiable information, also known as HIPPA. They want employees' information protected and more of a whistle blower policy for the public if they see something inside of the county they want to report. Regarding equipment purchased with grants, they want a better management policy on equipment. They also want to see an inventory listing for the equipment that is purchased with grant funds, listing which grant, and how much was spent, etc. If there is a regional grant to make sure there is a check-in, check-out process and a reference to the condition it was in while it was here

and how it was returned. For example, Jerry Casebolt had a tower light purchased with a regional Homeland Security grant. We just need to make sure that there's a check-out and check-in process if another county would need to borrow it and to note what condition it was in when it left. She has reached out to other counties for copies of their policies to use as examples.

MAY 23, 2025 TORNADO AND HAILSTORM - Last Saturday, the National Weather Service came out and met with Washington County regarding the tornado that started in Logan County. They ended up rating it an EF-1. She received a video of the tornado from Dan Wiebers, the Merino Fire Chief. It started at around County Road 10 and County Road 15. There were other tornados in Washington County. It did not have a true coherent damage path. There was no tornado damage in Logan County. There was some hail damage in Logan County. Commissioner Santomaso had three windows broken in his house and a hole in his roof. There was some crop damage to wheat in Washington County and a tornado hit one house in that area. The Board thanked Josilyn for her work.

SALES AND USE TAX EXTENSION DISCUSSION – The Board met with Debbie Unrein and Marilee Johnson to discuss strategies for running a ballot question to extend the sales and use tax. The Justice Center was paid off in 2019 and there was not quite a million dollars left that was in the account from paying off the bond that was transferred in 2020.

The original question said that the sales tax was to end either when the Justice Center was paid off or December 31, 2025. Through interest earnings, etc. we were able to pay off the Justice Center early. The tax can specifically be used for other things, including infrastructure, maintenance of county buildings, and utilities for the Justice Center. Debbie Unrein explained that the operation of county buildings can be costs of lighting, heating, and air conditioning, replacement of equipment, ovens, etc. Funds are not used for the house at the fairgrounds, the Shooting Sports Complex, or Sunset Memorial Gardens.

From when the tax started coming in back in 2020, we have collected about \$14.5 million. To date, there has been a little over \$10 million of that amount spent. Right now, there is cash in the fund of \$4.4 million.

The Mitchek Event Center was paid using about \$2.3 million for that. Other things that the funds were used for were Justice Center upgrades that ARPA funds did not pay for including parking lot repairs, lighting upgrades, new carpet, new lights in the fairgrounds stadium area, etc. Upgrades to the windows and HVAC for the Courthouse and Annex totaled around \$3 million. Funds paid for Fairgrounds parking lot asphalt. This cost was over \$240,000. Justice Center utilities have been a little over \$1.3 million to date since 2020. The average sales and use tax collected each year is \$3.6 million. Commissioner Brownell said that if utilities for other county buildings are added it would add another \$250,000 in expenditures.

The Board discussed the Fairgrounds fence and the cost of the welding of each section. Originally the donation of \$350 for the memorial fence was to cover the materials for each section. However, the cost of steel has gone up, and the prison is no longer building the sections of fence for the County. The county has the jigs at Road and Bridge. The County could possibly ask NJC if their welding program could build some sections of fence for practice for their students if the county purchased the materials. If the county can sell the sales tax ballot proposal more on the idea of not using the General Fund for maintenance. The sales tax could also be used for security cameras and mowers at the fairgrounds then there is more money for road maintenance the ambulance service, and other things.

Alan Samber has been working on a contract for the new billing and collections company for the Ambulance billings accounts. The contract with Wakefield ends July 15th. The Board will have a meeting on June 9th for ambulance and EMT matters. They will bring this up then as well.

Commissioner Yahn asked if the sales and use tax ballot question should be a permanent tax. The sales tax on \$100 comes to 0.50 cents. Telling people how little it really affects them should be mentioned as one of the bullet points. Since it is a sales tax, Logan County residents aren't the only ones to pay it. Logan County residents are being assisted by others in paying costs that are used in the county. It's important for the current maintenance of our facilities and the necessary improvements. If the tax is not extended, services may have to be cut if the General Fund has to be tapped for utilities for the Justice Center, etc. Commissioner Santomaso stated that we should not put a negative tone on any publicity.

Senator Byron Pelton entered the room. He suggested putting a sunset of 10 years on the sales tax rather than no sunset on the tax. He feels that it will not pass if it does not sunset. Brownell stated we could use this instead of utilizing General Fund dollars and get a temporary tax credit because we have control of that. Marilee Johnson has access to visitor spending statistics in Logan County. It will be helpful to have these numbers while looking into this.

Commissioner Brownell asked Senator Pelton about the new jail standards coming down through committee. Pelton stated that if it is an interim committee the Board does not have to worry about it. The Legislature got rid of all the interim committees. Commissioner Brownell heard about some recommendations that the committee put out. Pelton stated that the State has already cut the assessment values once, he wouldn't be surprised if they tried again. That's what he would say to help sell the sales tax ballot measure. Commissioner Brownell commented that if we have to pull the dollars out of the General Fund, we will have to start cutting into essential services that the county provides. This will affect Road and Bridge as well because the mill levy is distributed among four funds according to Debbie Unrein.

Marilee will write some proposed talking points to bring to the next meeting. It is important to remember that we are not asking to raise the tax, this will keep it the same. Commissioner Brownell would also like to have proposed press releases to send out about the sales tax ballot issue to review at the next Work Session. Marilee will have the visitors' spending numbers ready for that meeting.

BRIDGE ASSESSMENTS - Commissioner Yahn got a call from Wayne Howard of SEH. He met with Jim regarding doing an assessment of Logan County bridges and culverts so that they could be submitted with grant applications. He came up with a proposal for determining or looking at an inventory of all of them. Commissioner Brownell has not heard any more about the grant that has been awarded. He will talk to Kent Vance about the Washington County grant that Logan County should be a part of.

Logan County owns more bridges than most counties in this area because of all the ditches we have here. There is concern about the date they were built since they were all built around the same time. We need to have a plan in place to replace them. We just had another culvert that went out on County Road 46 and County Road 37 where you turn to go the reservoir off of North Seventh Avenue. There's a culvert that's pretty much gone and a farmer couldn't get his water through. The County guys went out and dug it out so that he could get his water, but it still needs a new culvert. Wayne Howard quoted \$700 per structure as his quote for the surveys, and there are about 75-100 structures.

Debbie Unrein noted that the Red Lion Bridge grants still have not been closed out. It has been extended twice. Mr. Howard said that it is almost finished. SEH has been short on help. Logan County is going to get about \$120,000 remaining on that grant. SEH has been very helpful on this grant.

She also noted that the County hasn't received the funds for missile site maintenance for last year. They stated they will combine it with this year's funds. We should get about \$120,000 because that is all that is left.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 10:07 a.m.