

Listed below are news stories as covered by the news department of KVOE-AM, KVOE-FM and KFFX-FM from Oct. 1, 2023, to Dec. 31, 2023. This list is by no means comprehensive.

## **EDUCATION**

10-4: Taking a deep dive into the broad topic of cybersecurity was just one of several purposes for a well attended conference held inside of the Emporia State University Memorial Union's Webb Hall Wednesday. The first CyBERCON welcomed right around 300 individuals including local residents, high school students from across the state and students from ESU. The conference welcomed several experts in the field of cybersecurity including former US Naval Intelligence Officer John Bryant, retired US Air Force Lt. Col. and manager of Missile Defense Agency's Cybersecurity Service Provider Computer Emergency Response Team Stan Richister and technology and cybersecurity director for Networks Plus and Blue Valley Technologies Jerry Horton. ESU Director of the Cybersecurity Research and Outreach Center (CYROC) Leticia Rust says it was great to have both a strong turnout of attendees and a wide range of expert perspectives on hand for the event. She says when it comes to the topic of cybersecurity there is still a lot of apprehension across the country due to certain misunderstandings of what cybersecurity truly is.

10-10: The tenth annual Emporia Middle School Walkathon managed to surpass \$25,000 in fundraising for the second consecutive year. To be exact, the walkathon raised \$25,075 in donations benefiting five local organizations that will also take part in the 2023 Match Day next month -- Hispanics of Today and Tomorrow, Camp Alexander, Food For Students, Flint Hills Animal Advocates and the C4 Food Pantry. Organizer Madison Dragonas tells KVOE News the key to success hinged a lot on the passion and hard work of their students. In addition to the above mentioned organizations, two EMS community members also benefited from the funds raised with \$5,000 each given to the family of EMS student Reagan Hermann and EMS faculty member Vanessa Hinds. Dragonas says both donations come as the Hermann and Hinds families have been battling significant health issues.

10-12: Emporia State University has announced a new full-ride scholarship for incoming freshmen majors in education and nursing. The Jones Premier Nursing and Education Scholarship is available to students with a 3.7 weighted grade point average or above — or a minimum 28 ACT score. Students will also need to complete two essays and live in Lyon, Coffey or Osage counties. There will be six scholarships available, three each for education and nursing. One each in the different categories will be for students in Lyon, Coffey or Osage counties. ESU Provost Brent Thomas says the scholarships come at a pivotal time as their continues to be a critical need for both qualified educators and health professionals across the nation.

10-13: A master plan for future expansion is now in the works for Flint Hills Technical College and it appears to have a high level of support from the Regional Development Association of East Central Kansas. That was the response from RDA President Chuck Scott when he spoke with KVOE News following the RDA Board's meeting Friday morning. During the meeting, FHTC President Dr. Caron Daugherty laid out the college's plans for developing a master plan in partnership with Ben Moore Architect and Josh Walker of Lloyd Builders. Daugherty says the first step in the process will be to conduct a facilities assessment over the next 60-days. Overall, Daugherty says the master plan will help to shape what future programs and facilities could look like and how they would fit into the college's identity five to 10 years down the road. While still in early development, the process was an exciting update for Scott who stated the RDA is and will continue to be committed to supporting the college in any way it can.

10-18: Three of the longest tenured leaders in Flint Hills Technical College History will now forever have their legacies attached to the institution following a special ceremony Wednesday afternoon. As part of the college's 60th anniversary celebration the college renamed three of its facilities in honor of past presidents during a renaming ceremony. This included the main campus building which now bares the name of the late Richard Metcalf who led the institution, then known as Flint Hills area vocational-technical school, from 1966 to 1988. Metcalf's son Tim Metcalf spoke with KVOE News just prior to the ceremony and says his father would have been honored by the gesture. He tells KVOE News FHTC and vocational education as a whole meant a great deal to his father. The college's construction building has been renamed in honor of Keith Stover who led the college from 1988 to 1999. Stover says being back at the college and seeing how far it has come since his tenure was a wonderful moment. Finally, the college's technology facility was renamed in honor of Dean Hollenbeck who led FTHC from 2006 until 2021. Hollenbeck says Wednesday was a humbling moment for him.

10-21: USD 252 Southern Lyon County is celebrating a major grant to help with operations of its early childhood center. The state's Child Care Capacity Accelerator Program has granted the district \$207,000. Superintendent Ryan Muhlig says this will help with salaries, technology and "soft costs" -- things like rubberized playground mats, shade canopies for outdoor areas and toys. While the grant will help employees and give students an enhanced experience, Muhlig says it likely won't lead to expanded enrollment. Muhlig says this is a reimbursement grant, so the district will have to make purchases and send receipts to the state so it can obtain the funds. The district has to spend the money by the end of the state fiscal year June 30, but Muhlig says the grant could be fully expended by early next year.

10-26: USD 252 Southern Lyon County is celebrating another big haul from the Kansas Can Star Recognition Program. The district was honored in all eight categories for the third straight year -- the only district in the state with that designation. Other area districts fared well. Details for all area districts are online at [KVOE.com](http://KVOE.com).

10-30: A strong alumni base is essential to the strength of a university, and that theme resonated through the 2023 Homecoming activities held this past week at Emporia State University. President Ken Hush noted increased alumni attendance for this year's Homecoming activities versus past years. He says ESU added special recognitions to highlight the ongoing transformation on campus. Director of Alumni Relations Tiffany Wilson says the importance of alums can't be understated. The Black & Gold Gala recognized Tyler Curtis, Erren Harter, Paula Sauder and Emporia Main Street with Outstanding Advocate awards. It also recognized alum, one-time Regent and former lieutenant governor Gary Sherrer with the Lifetime of Leadership award.

11-9: The National Memorial to Fallen Educators will be the focus of a special grant through Kansas Tourism next week. The National Teachers Hall of Fame will receive a \$16,000 check as part of an on-site presentation at 10 am Nov. 16 at the memorial. Hall of Fame emeritus director Carol Strickland says this was a pleasant surprise. The grant's goal is to "enhance an existing state attraction," so funding will be directed towards advertising and additions to the memorial outside Emporia State's One-Room Schoolhouse. The purpose of the memorial is to honor the lives of teachers, support staffers and administrators who have died in the line of duty throughout our nation's history. The names of nearly 190 educators are now inscribed on three granite tablets. The original memorial, dedicated in June 2014, had 114 names on two granite tablets.

11-10: For the second time in two cycles, Flint Hills Technical College is one of the top 150 institutions eligible for the \$1 million Aspen Prize. The college's selection in the top 150 two-year institutions was announced earlier this week and FHTC President Dr. Caron Daugherty says to have been selected out of thousands of institutions is truly an honor. The Aspen Prize recognizes colleges that demonstrate "outstanding achievement" in six benchmark areas -- teaching and learning, certificate and degree completion, transfer and bachelor's degree attainment, workforce success, access and equity for students of color and low-income environments. Daugherty says schools must apply for the prize and it is a "lengthy" and sometimes "cumbersome" process.

11-16: For the 32nd consecutive year, KVOE did its part to support the best and brightest in education Thursday night. The annual National Teachers Hall of Fame Radio Auction took over the airwaves and brought in a total of over \$13,000. NTHF Administrative Assistant Jennifer Baldwin expressed her gratitude to everyone who contributed to this year's auction, including various hall of fame inductees from around the country. Baldwin says their participation in the

auction illustrates how the Hall of Fame is far more than just a weeklong experience in Emporia each year. KVOE Station Manager Ron Thomas says the auction is not only a fun night for all, it is an important one.

11-27: Residents are encouraged to get a look at Emporia State's new sports offering this week. Esports will be the focus of a special open house and ribbon-cutting ceremony Wednesday afternoon at Cremer Hall. Nathan Goodwin, Emporia State's esports coordinator, says upwards of 30 students are on Emporia State's team. Members practice at least six hours per week at a minimum, but Goodwin says many play at least 10-15 hours a week -- and they get a lot of lessons playing games like chess, Overwatch and League of Legends. Goodwin says competitive gaming is also a nearly \$1.5 billion industry per year, which offers numerous career opportunities besides gamer -- including business, marketing, finance, project management, personal trainers, psychologists and even personal chefs.

12-15: What started as a dream many months prior became a reality for students in the Flint Hills Technical College nursing program Friday afternoon. Half-a-dozen students received their pins as part of a special ceremony on the college campus. The list of students included Topeka native Brooklyn Carper who says she felt a great deal of pride during Friday's ceremony adding her career journey originally had a different destination prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Along with friends and family and FHTC administration, in attendance for Friday's ceremony were local health care representatives including Newman Regional Health Chief Nursing Officer Heather Aylward. Aylward says the ceremony is a very special moment and one they are proud to share in.

12-16: White Auditorium was bustling for Emporia State's winter commencement activities. President Ken Hush was glad to celebrate the achievements of the students Friday night and Saturday morning. He says people heard a lot about transformative measures on campus last year. They are seeing those this year, in large part because of early work on major construction. Regent Cindy Lane says the combined work between Emporia State and the Board of Regents is all about recognizing and enhancing Emporia State's role as a regional university.

## **ECONOMY**

10-11: The City of Emporia will be submitting a grant application to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development for a planned renovation of a downtown property. During a special meeting Wednesday morning, commissioners approved the submission of an application to the HUD's Hope VI grant program. The program, born out of recommendations from the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing, seeks to help cities revitalize severely distressed properties. The city is seeking a \$500,000 grant to

assist with a revitalization project at 502 Commercial. According to developer Ben Moore, the plan is to create seven residential units on the basement and second level of the property with the first floor to be used as commercial space.

10-12: Kansas Governor Laura Kelly is using the recent, sudden closure of a hospital near the KVOE listening area to bolster her longstanding push for the state to expand Medicaid. Herington Hospital, in operation since 1919, announced its closure suddenly last week, citing "lengthy financial struggles and consistently low patient volumes" for its demise. Services ended Monday. Kansas is the 10th state not to expand Medicaid. Governor Kelly says Herington becomes the eighth hospital in Kansas to close since the option of expanding Medicaid became available, and she says over half the state's rural hospitals are at risk of closure if Medicaid is not expanded to another 40,000 to 50,000 residents soon. Conservative Republicans in the Legislature have said they support expanding medical access to residents through reducing government regulation, expanding competition and increasing transparency, but they also say expanding Medicaid would increase "government-run" health care, according to Senate President Ty Masterson -- who says the expansion would harm people Medicaid is intended to help.

10-20: The state of the local economy was discussed in several categories as part of the recently-held Emporia Economic Outlook Conference. Emporia State Assistant Professor Bekah Selby has been one of the featured presenters for several years now and was focused on the local economy. She says inflation is a concern, although it appears wage increases may be catching up. Selby says the area has a "robust" manufacturing category with a lot of products that remain in high demand, including pet food and processed meat, while the workforce is versatile. She cautions that real estate -- or the lack of attainable housing -- has a definite economic impact on other sectors and the current local combination of high interest rates and high housing costs makes it tough for residents to get homes. She also says there are some concerns about a developing recession, although it could take months or even up to two years for those concerns to be confirmed.

10-21: The Emporia Area Chamber Foundation's push to buy the former Maynard Early Childhood Center has gained a lot of momentum in a short period of time. Chamber President and CEO Jeanine McKenna says the Foundation has secured a Capital Projects Fund Accelerator grant worth almost \$1.76 million. The funding comes from the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund and was made possible by the US Treasury. The new grant amount goes towards the property purchase and Phase 1 building renovations. It's designed to refurbish at least three rooms, the kitchen and several commons areas. It also comes on top of a \$552,000 Child Care Capacity Accelerator grant announced earlier this month for funding the director's position, operations and supplies. If all goes according to plan and the USD 253 Emporia Board of Education approves the purchase, a director could be on board by January and the Phase 1

renovations could be done by spring 2024. The board is meeting Wednesday but does not currently have the item on the agenda.

10-24: Weather permitting, there should be work to expand the Emporia Pavilions shopping center relatively soon. Developer Spencer Thomson has confirmed to KVOE News plans to start pouring slabs for the next three tenants, although the timetable isn't finalized yet. Information from the city has a bit of a change-up, however. Earlier this year, three new tenants were announced: Five Below, Old Navy and Ulta Beauty. However, city documents show Maurice's will move from Flinthills Mall, with Ulta not in this round of construction. The Ulta slab may get poured next spring. Thomson also says he is nearing completion on leases for two more national tenants, although it may take a month or longer for those plans to be announced.

10-31: Next month, the Emporia-Lyon County Metropolitan Area Planning Commission will hear a special zoning request from Newman Regional Health. The hospital has requested for several related changes to the city's zoning code with a possible effort by Topeka's Stormont-Vail Hospital to build an "ambulatory surgical center" in Emporia. A public hearing is coming at 6 pm Nov. 21 at the Municipal Court Room. Newman Regional Health Chief Executive Officer Cathy Pimple tells KVOE News this reflects changes in approach from Stormont-Vail administrators in terms of the hospitals' ongoing partnership, especially since August. If the initial plan released to the resident-owned Emporia hospital goes through, this could mean the loss of nearly \$7 million in annual revenue because of duplicated services.

11-2: Parking matters were a major talking point for a pair of local business owners and Lyon County Commissioners Thursday. As part of their regular action meeting Thursday morning, commissioners received a proposal from Jarom and Melanie Smith, the owners of Justice Painting and Raise Your Paws, to convert the current Lyon County Area Transportation bus barn property into public parking. The Smith's submitted the proposal noting their is a lack of available parking in the downtown corridor for both business owners and customers and opening the space would help to resolve the issue somewhat. Commission Chairman Rollie Martin says there are a few factors that gives the commission pause to do so. Jarom Smith says opening those parking spaces would be "in the public's best interest."

11-3: One of two significant housing projects in Emporia is moving quickly -- relatively so -- towards above-ground construction. Emporia City Engineer Jim Ubert had a status report on the Mahtropolis project on KVOE's Morning Show this week: Mahtropolis is building out nearly 30 single-family homes near the Trusler Sports Complex. Ubert says seven lots fronting Riley Street could see home construction realtively soon. Meanwhile, the Kretsinger project -- over 50 homes near the David Traylor Zoo -- is in the final design stage and easement negotiations are continuing. Ubert says initial construction could begin next year,

with the project possibly going out to bid before the end of this year. A third project is in the process of gaining City Commission approval. The Lockwood Heights development is tentatively set to build 24 homes along West Sixth immediately west of Stratford. Developers are seeking Reinvestment Housing Incentive District status from the city.

11-7: Saying its local space is insufficient and outdated, and saying there is enough patient traffic for two similar operations, Stormont-Vail Health Regional Administrator Mary Martell joined KVOE's Morning Show to discuss the hospital's plans for a new ambulatory facility in Emporia. Martell says there are a lot of factors supporting Stormont's idea for what she calls a freestanding facility, including patient data from the Kansas Hospital Association. Stormont-Vail and Newman Regional Health have had a working relationship dating back nearly 30 years. Martell says Stormont has nearly 80 employees in Emporia, 17 of which are doctors at Newman Regional Health. She says the potential facility is moving ahead because Stormont's Emporia lease ends in 2026, and a new space is needed to bring state-of-the-art technology to the area while keeping Stormont at the forefront of physician recruitment. The plan also includes consolidating staff in one location.

11-14: For the past several months, Kansas Governor Laura Kelly and her administration have been hard at work on the latest potential expansion of Medicaid for the state of Kansas. Those efforts brought the governor, and local leaders, to Emporia Childcare Tuesday morning for a roundtable discussion on expansion and its potential impacts on the childcare sector. For Emporia Childcare Director Deb Crawl, the issue of childcare is not one of space or availability, but rather one of staffing. Crawl noted Tuesday they have plenty of space to accommodate children and families within their facility but they do not have enough staff on hand to serve those children. Crawl says one of the major issues with finding qualified staff is that access to health care is scarce to almost non-existent for most childcare workers. She says in recent months she has lost a number of staff to other positions because of this issue. Governor Kelly says it is vital the state have affordable and accessible childcare as it plays a major role in the success of the state's economy. She says interactions with businesses from around the state in recent years has made it clear access to childcare is "absolutely fundamental to their bottom line."

11-17: Simple economics have meant a major bump in city sales tax collections for Emporia over the past year. That's according to City Treasurer Janet Harouff who tells KVOE News that ever rising costs for products has pushed the city's collections seven percent higher year-over-year. To be exact, this same time last year the city had collected \$5.013 million whereas this year, the city has brought in more than \$5.3 million in collections as of October. Harouff tells KVOE News this increase is not a rarity, in fact it has been the norm for the past few years. Harouff says another contributing factor is the ability for the city to also collect on web sales and when asked if she believes a decrease in inflation could mean a

dip in collections Harouff says that would depend greatly on if manufacturers lowered their prices. With that in mind, Harouff says given the increase in wages noted locally and nationally in recent years any price change that could occur would not put us back at pre-pandemic levels.

11-21: Evergy's base rates for customers across the KVOE listening area -- and much of Kansas -- are going up for the first time in around six years. The Kansas Corporation Commission says it has approved a settlement agreement with Evergy that increases monthly rates for the Evergy Kansas Central area -- the territory formerly known as Westar -- although not to the same level as Evergy had proposed. Evergy had been seeking a nearly 10 percent increase for Evergy Central and a nearly 2 percent increase for Evergy Kansas Metro, the Kansas City metro area formerly known as KCP&L. There will now be a 3.54-percent increase for Evergy Central and a nearly 5-percent decrease for Evergy Kansas Metro.

12-11: Graves Pharmacy in downtown Emporia is now officially closed, however, the conveyance store portion of the business will continue operating for at least a few more weeks. That's according to Graves owner and president Melissa Daniels who spoke with KVOE News Monday after news of the store's potential closure broke. Daniels says the pharmacy officially closed up for good at the end of business hours Monday with the conveyance store portion of the business set to remain open until all assets have been liquidated. Daniels couldn't say how long the liquidation process could take, however, she says the storefront could remain open through early next year.

12-19: Following its second series of discussions on Newman Regional Health's proposed zoning code text changes Tuesday evening, the recommendation from the Emporia Planning Commission is that it has no recommendation. That decision came as the result of a 3-2 vote during the commission's monthly meeting where it was decided the matter would move forward to the Emporia City Commission for consideration and possible action with no recommendation or action made as to how city leadership should proceed. Commissioners Monica Duncan, Tammi Ogle and Ken Weaver voted in favor of that motion with Duncan presenting it for a vote. When asked her reasoning, Duncan stated she could not find cause to move for either approval or denial of the proposed change. She believes the decision should rest with Emporia City Commissioners rather than a board comprised of volunteers. Newly appointed Commission Chairman Raymond Rogers and former Chairman Kenton Thomas voted against the motion, after both voted in favor of a previous motion made by Rogers to deny the code change. Weaver, Duncan and Ogle voted against that motion with commissioners Larry Bucklinger and Bill Barnes abstaining from both votes due to a conflict of interest.

## **AGRICULTURE**



10-9: Local summer harvest yields were not quite what most had hoped for this year and that has a lot to do with the combination of drought and extreme heat that impacted the area almost throughout the entirety of the season. According to Lyon County Extension Ag Agent Brian Rees, bean yields, specifically soybeans, took a heavy hit from the high temperatures that came at a critical time. On a positive note, Rees says not all beans are "quite ready for harvest" which means there is a chance they could have taken advantage of some of the rainfall that came through the area over the past month or so. Speaking of moisture, drought is still a prevalent issue across the local area and Rees tells KVOE News that could be an issue for the winter season mainly for cattle. He explains that when it comes to the winter you want to have plenty of runoff to help refill ponds.

10-17: The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks says it has successfully stocked a pair of protected freshwater mussel species in rivers, including one species in the Neosho River. It's actually the second stocking of the federally-endangered Neosho Mucket mussel, which has naturally occurred in Kansas, Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma but no longer occupies nearly two-thirds of its historical range. Almost 1,400 mussels were released into the Neosho. Wildlife and Parks Species Recovery Coordinator Trevor Parks says this is the first stocking of its kind as part of the Wildlife and Parks Aquatic Species Recovery Program. As part of this effort, landowner agreements try to re-establish self-sustaining wildlife populations while offering regulatory protections to landowners.

10-26: Progress continues to restore water service to Chase County residents affected by a significant water main break this week. Water service is slowly coming online for affected customers. The plan is to bring Cottonwood Falls residents online by mid-morning Thursday, followed by Chase County Rural Water District 1. Strong City residents successfully came back online Wednesday night. Boil water advisories continue for affected customers until further notice.

10-26: Flood-related travel issues from earlier this week appear to be easing as we get to the end of the week. There is still a long list of closed roads in Lyon County, but several reopened Thursday morning. Lyon County Engineer Chip Woods tells KVOE News the range of damage to county roads may well vary. The city's storm drainage system was hammered with almost 1.7 billion estimated gallons of water Tuesday night into Wednesday, according to City Communications Manager Christine Torrens. The up to 10 inches of rainfall this week contrasts with the city's average annual rainfall of around 36 inches. City Manager Trey Cocking says there was some short-term localized flooding and some sewer backups, but the storm drain system did well for the most part -- given the fact this was a 25-to-100-year event.

12-7: Drought conditions are improving for most of the KVOE listening area. Having three to four inches or more of liquid equivalent over a two-week stretch can do that. Thursday's update from the US Drought Monitor shows moderate drought for most of the KVOE listening area. Abnormally dry conditions, the mildest on the Drought Monitor scale, is now posted for the area's northeast quarter -- including most of Lyon County's north half, almost all of Osage County and a significant part of central and southeast Wabaunsee County.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

10-2: A significant power outage is underway affecting portions of central and west Emporia. The outage was first reported shortly before 8:50 am and now affects over 1,700 Evergy customers, mainly from 18th south to Road 160 and from West to just west of Industrial Road. Besides affecting a large residential area and significant parts of the West Sixth Avenue and Industrial Road business corridors, this has also knocked out power to several streetlights. A cause has not been determined. Drivers at the affected intersections are asked to follow traffic laws while the outages are in effect.

10-12: Road resurfacing work begins Thursday in Greenwood County. The Kansas Department of Transportation says resurfacing of US Highway 54 across much of the county could last into early December. Work will start at the Greenwood-Butler County line and move to the west Kansas Highway 99 junction outside Eureka, meaning about 16 miles of highway will be repaved. There will be no work in the Eureka city limits with this project. The work list includes a 1.5-inch asphalt overlay, rumble strips and edge wedge. Flaggers and a pilot car will direct one-lane traffic through the work zone. Delays of up to 15 minutes can be expected. APAC-Kansas Shears Division of Hutchinson won the project with a \$3.5 million bid.

10-18: Physical work on a major water line replacement project is set to begin by the middle of next year with a contractor now in place. Emporia City Commissioners have accepted a greater than \$4.2 million bid from Apex Excavating to handle the water line replacement on 24th Avenue and Prairie Street that will see the replacement of a nearly 100-year-old 20-inch line. City Manager Trey Cocking says the project will see increased efficiency within the water system and will significantly help to reduce the frequency of water line breaks in the area. Design work on the project is underway with physical work scheduled to begin in June 2024 and be complete by June of 2025. That being said, Cocking tells KVOE News the project's timeline could be affected by several factors, namely supply chain issues and other projects.

10-23: The city of Emporia has announced a pair of excavation zones in effect this week. City Communications Manager Christine Torrens says city crews will handle some hydro-excavating at 12th and Washington as well as the crosswalk

on West 18th between Emporia High and Flint Hills Technical College. The process leads to the installation of "lighted crosswalks," also officially called rectangular rapid flashing beacons. Torrens says the process involves excavating a hole four feet deep and 20 inches in diameter before crews install or repair concrete forms. Concrete is then poured and the forms are removed a week later. Two beacons get installed at each location and there are three other locations that will see this kind of project later.

11-2: After getting service restored this past weekend after a significant water main break over a week ago, most residents in Chase County got more good water-related news Wednesday. Chase County commissioners, Strong City and Cottonwood Falls officials have replaced their rather longstanding water warnings with water watches, reflecting notable rainfall totals recently. This follows a resolution passed by Chase County's Public Wholesale Water Supply District 26. The designation changes say "the probability of a major water supply shortage is no longer a concern." Matt Markley, the water operator for all four announced entities, tells KVOE News it's a relief to be at this point.

11-20: The East 12th Avenue Water Tower is back online and the city of Emporia's two month water watch has been rescinded. Those were the two main announcements from Emporia City Manager Trey Cocking to kick off the latest installment of KVOE's Monthly Q&A With Trey segment Monday morning. After two months worth of work, the tower has both a new interior and exterior work with a new design adorning the tower thanks to a cooperative effort with Emporia State University. Cocking says the new design exceeded his expectations. Cocking says he is hopeful the new design will be just the starting point for similar projects across the community in the future.

12-8: Cashless tolling comes to the Kansas Turnpike by next summer. By the end of 2025, the Emporia interchange -- and many others up and down the highway -- will be reconfigured. Turnpike Authority Communications Director Rachel Bell had preliminary details on KVOE's Morning Show on Friday: Besides removing the tollbooths, Bell says the work will involve narrowing the lanes coming off the highway to "funnel" traffic in a safer manner. Emporia's tollgate was modernized in 2014, five years after work to simplify the interchange — and remove the so-called "spaghetti bowl" of junctions connecting the Turnpike, Interstate 35 and US Highway 50. The KTA has been working for over two years towards cashless tolling after about 10 years of study.