

Listed below are news stories as covered by the news department of KVOE-AM, KVOE-FM and KFFX-FM from July 1, 2023 to September 30, 2023. This list is by no means comprehensive.

EDUCATION

7-12: Believe it or not, it's time to start enrolling children for the upcoming school year. USD 253 Emporia officially begins the process Monday, and Community Relations Director Lyndel Landgren says parents should be getting their official paperwork before the end of the week. For parents of returning children, there shouldn't be any changes to the process from past years. Landgren says parents using the online enrollment process can take care of related fees if they set up a RevTrak account. Parents can also go online to usd253.org to apply for free or reduced meals if they so choose. Online enrollment ends Aug. 1.

7-12: The Emporia Area Chamber of Commerce now has until mid September to secure funding for its planned purchase of the former Maynard Early Childhood Education Building. The extension follows approval by the USD 253 Board of Education Wednesday night and now extends the closing for a minimum of 60 days, double the Chamber's original request of 30 days. The Board of Education approved the chamber's bid to purchase the facility back in April provided it could secure \$2.5 to \$3 million to support the purchase and renovations of the building with plans to convert it into a 24/7 childcare facility. Earlier this month it was announced the chamber had not received an accelerator grant it was seeking to support staffing and operational costs and Wednesday night Chamber President and CEO Jeanine McKenna stated the chamber is still awaiting word on a second grant application through the Kansas Department for Children and Families for which no timeline has been given. Both of these factors led to the request for an extension and McKenna says she is grateful for the board's support.

7-12: Needs assessment was one of several items on the USD 252 Southern Lyon County Board of Education's agenda Wednesday. As a part of a brief discussion of the 2023-24 budget to board members Wednesday night in their board meeting, new Superintendent Ryan Muhlig mentioned three priorities, citing the ongoing need to recruit and retain quality teachers, as well as special education programs and student attendance. Separately, board members voted 4-3 to have the district contribute \$600,000 towards the Olpe Fitness Project. \$200,000 will be distributed each year for until July 2025. Muhlig said he likes to see improvements that benefit kids. However, it's a place that can be utilized by everyone.

7-13: With hearings next week in Lyon County District Court on the future of several terminated Emporia State University professors, a lawsuit involving those educators and others dismissed last fall has now been filed in federal court.

Hearings are currently on the July 19 county docket for Michael Behrens, Rob Catlett, Dan Colson, Amanda Miracle and Lynette Sievert, with the Kansas Office of Administrative Hearings and presiding officer Jennifer Barton listed as co-defendants in each individual case. All five were reinstated after OAH rulings earlier this year, although ESU has denied the reinstatements and is challenging them in Lyon County District Court. On Wednesday, attorney J Phillip Gragson of the Topeka firm Gragson & Vogelsberg announced the filing of a federal complaint supporting the efforts of the aforementioned professors as well as Charles Emmer, Brenda Koerner, Sheryl Lidzy, Chris Lovett, Max McCoy and Mike Morales.

7-15: The USD 251 North Lyon County Board of Education continues mulling a recently-published facilities study and its path forward. Following the board's regular meeting, Superintendent Bob Blair tells KVOE News a 13-member strategic planning committee has had two meetings since the public discussion of G Kent Stewart's 30-page study in late April, including a building tour at Northern Heights. Blair says Stewart's study of enrollment trends and facility needs led to several potential outcomes. Another option is to build an addition at Northern Heights High School outside Allen. Stewart recommended at least keeping the capital outlay budget level and considering an engineering study for the heating, ventilation, air conditioning, plumbing and mechanical systems at both North Lyon County Elementary-Junior High and Northern Heights.

7-19: Emporia State University has received another major boost to its developing Nursing and Student Wellness building project. The Sunderland Foundation, a Kansas City nonprofit foundation focusing on brick-and-mortar investments especially for higher education, health care and hospitals, has granted the project \$5 million. Sunderland Foundation President and CEO Randy Vance says the foundation is "impressed by the transformational changes Emporia State is planning for the future and their commitment to investing in important academic areas like healthcare. Their visionary approach to preparing more nurses to serve our region after graduation made Emporia State a natural recipient of a Sunderland Foundation grant." ESU President Ken Hush says: "Educating the next generation of nurses is a tremendous benefit both locally for the Emporia area and throughout the region to address the current nursing shortage."

7-21: With enrollment continuing and the first day of classes less than a month away, USD 253 Emporia is getting ready to celebrate the end of renovations and new construction at two schools. On the Emporia Showcase this week, Director of Community Relations Lyndel Landgren said work is in the end stages at Emporia Middle School. Village Elementary is roughly 90 percent completed with egressed windows now in place for the multi-purpose room and a new kitchen nearly completed. Riverside and Timmerman Elementary are both around 20 percent finished, with drywall installed and painted in remodeled classrooms. Footings have also been installed at Riverside and will be installed soon at

Timmerman. Work for William Allen White is in what's called the schematic design phase, with construction bidding set to begin early next year.

8-7: Evaluation and bid gathering is underway for USD 386 Madison Virgil following significant damage to Madison High School as a result of severe storms early Sunday morning. According to Superintendent Tammy Baird who spoke with KVOE News Monday afternoon, the district's insurance adjuster has been onsite throughout the afternoon Monday assessing the damage. Early morning storms peeled about half of the high school's main gymnasium upward and separated it from the previously built roof and the building. Baird says the next step in the process will be to present information to the board of education during its next regular meeting on Monday. That information will include bids from local roofing companies, five or six of which had already reached out the district by Monday afternoon according to Baird.

8-11: USD 251 North Lyon County Superintendent Bob Blair says the district's most recent state assessment data has some positive trends included. School board members went through the data during their most recent meeting Wednesday. Blair says the district's focus the past few years has been on individual achievement while offering a range of interventions to help students below grade-level get where they need to be academically. Board members also discussed the ongoing building needs assessment process. Blair says early-stage discussions continue. The building needs assessment work follows the unveiling of a 30-page study done earlier this year by G Kent Stewart, which had several potential options for the district moving forward.

8-12: Classes begin Monday at Flint Hills Technical College, and President Caron Daugherty says students can still enroll even with the semester getting started. Besides enrolling for in-person classes, Daugherty also suggested that prospective students enroll for online classes to take as their schedules permit. The start of classes follows a burst of late preparation for the fall term, including a staff welcome and professional development day Tuesday and an enrollment drive to close out last week.

8-15: As USD 253 Emporia embarks on a new school year, it also is beginning a new venture to help its staffers. This is the first year for a quartet of childcare classrooms. On KVOE's Showcase on Tuesday, Superintendent Allison Anderson-Harder said the early returns are impressive. Anderson-Harder says it has taken over a year to begin this initiative after coordination with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. Meanwhile, the district is continuing its partnership with Boys and Girls Club of South Central Kansas for after-school activities for the second straight year. Parents wanting more information or to enroll their students can call Zach Mundy at 316-889-5406.

8-28: Emporia State administrators say the campus is in the middle of a transformative period. Provost Brent Thomas spoke to that overall topic on

KVOE's Newsmaker segment that aired Monday. Thomas says the reinvestment process now almost a year old has borne a lot of fruit, in part with a restructuring of programs by their "commonalities." Emporia State has also gained a lot of attention for its new nursing facility, which continues to get significant financial contributions. The process of "doing fewer things but doing them better" was not without a lot of pain -- namely in the dismissal of over 30 faculty and the cutting of several programs, including the noted debate program. However, Thomas says Emporia State needed to make adjustments.

9-12: A lot is coming between now and late October as Flint Hills Technical College celebrates its diamond anniversary this year. President Caron Daugherty had details on KVOE's monthly Tech Talk program during Tuesday's Morning Show. The college is marking its 60th year of operation, and it's doing so in a big way by renaming its main education buildings. Daugherty says this was a staff idea that developed quickly once it was floated. The buildings will be named in honor of past college presidents who served at least a decade in that role: Richard Metcalf, Keith Stover and Dean Hollenbeck. The main campus will be named after Metcalf, while the technology building will bear Hollenbeck's name and the construction building will be named after Stover. Before the naming ceremony, the college will have a Wrangler Friends and Family event on Sept. 27. After the ceremony, the college will have its annual cooking competition The Cut on Oct. 19. The Alumni and Friends cornhole tournament is Oct. 21.

9-27: On Tuesday, Emporia State University President Ken Hush used an open letter to repeat a caution heard earlier this year on KVOE's airwaves, saying fall enrollment would likely be down from last academic year to this. He was right. Data released by the Kansas Board of Regents on Wednesday showed Emporia State headcount enrollment at 4,658, down almost 700 students or 12.5 percent from the 2022 fall term -- easily the most enrollment shrinkage noted at any Regents university. The five-year drop was almost 20 percent, or over 1,100 students. The 10-year drop? Almost 23 percent or nearly 1,400 students. Stats for full-time equivalent students weren't any better for Emporia State. year-to-year numbers dipped by more than 500 and are now at 3,431 -- a drop of 13 percent. The five-year decline is almost 24 percent from nearly 4,500 students in 2018 and the 10-year decline is over 25 percent from having nearly 4,600 FTE students in 2013. Flint Hills Technical College enjoyed a nearly 2-percent enrollment gain or 29 students between fall 2022 and fall 2023, now standing at 1,639. Enrollment is up 15 percent, or almost 270 students the past five years. Enrollment is nearly double the 832 reported in 2013. President Caron Daugherty thanked the college's administration and recruiting staff for their work to boost enrollment numbers. She says students, education partners and prospective employers see the value of a Flint Hills Technical College degree.

ECONOMY

7-1: The Emporia Area Chamber Foundation is continuing its efforts to bring a 24-7 daycare facility to Emporia. funding plan needed an adjustment after Kansas Governor Laura Kelly announced the recipients of almost \$44 million in funding through the state's Child Care Capacity Accelerator Grant program. Emporia's \$2 million funding request was not approved, but Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Jeanine McKenna says local officials knew the grant would be highly competitive when they applied.

7-4: Businesses connected to the Emporia Area Chamber of Commerce who didn't take part in the Chamber Blue's health insurance option for this year are encouraged to take a survey if they want to be involved next year. Actually, Chamber President and CEO Jeanine McKenna says the survey is needed. Chamber Blue is a partnership between Chamber of Commerce Executives of Kansas and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas. Nearly 60 Chambers statewide are part of this association plan. McKenna has said an association plan like Chamber Blue is a good option for businesses because it lowers overall risk and offers more health options -- potentially with much more competitive pricing than if the businesses had their own separate plans.

7-6: Goodwill has moved. For years, the thrift store had occupied space at 904 East 12th, but leadership has been eyeing a move west for a while -- and a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday let the community see the new location at 2200 Industrial, the former Staples building. President and CEO Laura Ritterbush says the new store offers benefits for shoppers, donors and staffers. Besides the additional space for shoppers and staffers, Ritterbush also says the new store could well lead to more foot traffic because of other stores nearby including the Emporia Pavilions development, Flinthills Mall and Walmart. Ritterbush says the Emporia store has been among the state's top performing stores despite the previous store's limitations, in large part due to the work of local management.

7-7: The agreement isn't sealed, but it's delivered and — most importantly — signed. Which means Harbor Freight is indeed headed to Emporia. Flinthills Mall Manager Clarence Frye says mall ownership and Harbor Freight representatives have inked the necessary signatures for the agreement. The goal is to have the store ready for customers by fall. Harbor Freight will occupy the former Sears store on the south side of the mall — the same space rented by Spirit Halloween last year. Some preliminary work has already take place immediately south of the space as mall workers have installed a new sidewalk in the front of the store. Other work to make the parking handicapped-accessible, including a new parking lot slope, will happen before Harbor Freight moves in.

7-10: With a valuation increase affecting all Lyon County residents, Emporia city leaders are planning to trim the 2024 mil levy to keep that valuation impact as low as possible. City Manager Trey Cocking says the levy will be down, possibly maxing out at 43.5 for next year, but a 12-percent increase in valuation will likely bring in more tax dollars for the city. The City Commission's decision last week to

set the max levy for next year sets in motion a process to get residents more involved. Cocking says there was a bump in the levy last summer -- from 43.8 as approved to 44.426 as actually levied -- only because of valuation changes between official approvals at the city and county level.

8-9: Michelle Margeson is changing leadership roles. She's also changing organizations. Having served as Newman Regional Health's events coordinator the past few years, Margeson has been named as Ignite Emporia's third director. Emporia Area Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Jeanine McKenna says the position drew a lot of interest. McKenna says Margeson will continue work to implement Ignite's five-year plan, including workforce development, housing development and revitalization, business retention, community development and childcare. McKenna says childcare has become a major initiative, including the Chamber Foundation's push to buy the former Maynard Early Childhood Center from USD 253 Emporia and convert it into a 24-7 daycare hub.

8-10: Olpe's fitness park project has approval for over \$100,000 in tax credits. The project, organized by Olpe Community Improvement, was granted \$115,400 in tax credits from the Kansas Department of Commerce. Project spokesman Tyler Schmidt tells KVOE News donors to the Community Health and Wellness Campaign have a chance to offset or defer 70 percent of their related tax obligations as part of the credits. Using \$1,000 as an example, Schmidt says \$700 would either be used as a full credit or a partial credit for the donor, depending on that person's tax liability. The total value to the fitness park is actually more than \$165,000. The window to take advantage of these tax credits began July 1 and continues through 2024. The funds generated through this tax credit move the overall project closer to construction -- specifically for Phase 1 of the project: a new football stadium, including field, eight-lane track, bleachers, press box and fencing; as well as the start of a fitness trail.

8-22: Increased efficiency is one of the greatest benefits of the new Evergy district service center which officially opened its doors Tuesday morning. During a ribbon cutting event for the new center at 683 Road 180, District Service Manager Rolland Trahoon II noted that this is the first time where all of the utility's services are all located under one roof. Trahoon notes the centralization of these services means the utility will be better poised to respond quicker to severe weather events that may knock customers offline. Also in attendance for Monday's event was 60th District Representative and former Evergy, then Westar, employee Mark Schreiber of Emporia. Schreiber says the new center's location in Emporia shows Evergy's recognition of the "growth pattern" across the state and Emporia's position in that. Lyon County Commission Chairman Rollie Martin says not only is the new center an advantage to Emporia, but also to the smaller surrounding communities within Lyon County. The new center is the product of 16 months worth of planning and construction. Trahoon says the

process did encounter some speed bumps along the way, namely multiple severe weather events that stretched resources thin.

8-27: By the end of next year, the longtime home of the Emporia Gazette may well have a new use -- or uses. Tentative plans are to have at least part of a new development open to the community by the end of 2024, and building owners Rick and Colleen Mitchell and project partner Sarah Eimer outlined their plans during a special presentation at Red Rocks State Historic Site on Sunday. Eimer says she's drawn to the restaurant idea specifically and the ability to bring people to Emporia in general. Once the Zoo Education Center shifts back to the David Traylor Zoo as part of its Oasis capital campaign, work can start on what's being called the Gazette Collective. Colleen Mitchell says a staggered start may well be how things unfold. After noted publisher William Allen White purchased the Emporia Gazette in 1895, the building at 517 Merchant saw use as a newspaper for over 100 years until digital technology adjusted the need for space.

9-12: With the sale of Hostess Brands underway, new management says it's "excited" about the prospects for adding the Emporia bakery to the fold. JM Smucker spokesman Frank Cirillo tells KVOE News Smucker executives are looking forward to meeting with representatives of the Hostess bakery in Emporia -- and Smucker is also looking forward to "the opportunity to add this facility and talented employees to our company." Cirillo says there will be conversations over the next few months, both for evaluation purposes and also ongoing conversations with Emporia management to "best support continued productivity." For its part, Hostess has deferred comment to Smucker representatives. On Monday, Smucker announced its upcoming purchase of Hostess for an estimated \$5.6 billion -- perhaps no later than January. Emporia's bakery has had a vital place in Hostess for decades and was made the company's production hub shortly after C. Dean Metropoulos and Apollo Global Management purchased Hostess following the company's bankruptcy in 2012.

AGRICULTURE

7-14: The Kansas Department of Health and Environment is returning Friday to the site of a crude oil spill at a northwest Lyon County waterway. KDHE Director of Communications and Legislative Affairs Matt Lara says the agency was notified of the spill on a tributary of Wright Creek on Sunday. Lara says the affected stream is not flowing at this time, so water quality issues have been limited to a stagnant pool. Booms have been used downstream to prevent any crude oil spread. Lara also says no dead fish or wildlife have been found. On Tuesday, Lyon County Emergency Management Director Jarrod Fell confirmed a spill of around 50 gallons near Roads 300 and D, about eight miles northwest of Americus and five miles southwest of Bushong. Early indications are a crew with Lighthouse Drilling Company of El Dorado was using a pump truck to remove

water from a non-flowing waterway when the spill developed. A valve was apparently opened before the pump was primed.

7-17: Emporia's annual Homegrown Celebration is coming this weekend. The market begins at 8 am, with the Homegrown activities beginning shortly afterward. Here's Farmers Market Coordinator Trisha Fullerton: Kids ages 5 and below can be part of the watermelon rolling contest, while kids between ages 6-9 can enter in the eating contest and kids between ages 10-13 can be part of the seed spitting contest. Prizes, music, crafts, Kasasa capes through ESB Financial and more activities will be part of Homegrown. ESB Financial has sponsored the event for years, and Fullerton says ESB Financial's support of Homegrown specifically and the market in general has been vital to the success of the market.

7-19: USDA Rural Development Director for Kansas Christy Davis is encouraging local ag producers and small businesses to apply for a share of funding for renewable and energy efficiency grant opportunities. As KVOE News has reported in recent months, the USDA's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) saw a significant increase in available funds thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 which went into effect last August. According to Davis, the total sum is right around \$2 billion with grants and lending available for both The energy and energy efficiency grants. Davis says the funding is available for producers and businesses in communities with populations under 50,000 residents. Davis says in addition to the increased funding, the USDA has also increased the percentage of project costs that can be covered by REAP funds from 25 to 50 percent.

7-20: A longtime effort to demolish Fanestil Meats' original production plant just south of Emporia is finally underway. Crews started demolishing the nearly 40,000-square-foot building last week. As part of an agreement, the city acquired the property earlier this year, taking advantage of \$1 million through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which is covering 75 percent of the demolition costs if the building is returned to green space. Established in 1942, Fanestil had to stop production numerous times due to flooding from the Cottonwood River just north of the Highway 99 facility. This concludes a better than 10-year effort to both end operations in the Cottonwood floodplain and expand the business at its current address, 4700 West Highway 50.

8-3: An equipment malfunction at a west Emporia business is believed to have been the cause of a call to the Emporia Fire Department early Thursday afternoon. According to Battalion Chief Ryan Conley, crews were toned out to 1318 Industrial Road, Tractor Supply, just before 1:40 pm for a reported structure fire. Conley says upon arrival and entry into the building they did note a slight haze and faint smell of burning rubber, however, no fire was ever found. Conley says the exact cause has not yet been determined, however, they believe an AC Unit may have malfunctioned causing the haze inside of the building. The business was evacuated for roughly 30 minutes before the all clear was given.

8-4: Good Way Gardens will be hosting its latest Good Way Sunday concert this weekend. The concert at the Historic Howe House, 315 East Logan, will run from 5-8pm Sunday evening. Organizer Elexa Dawson says this month's concert will feature Weda Skirts as the headlining act. Dawson, a member of Weda Skirts, says ahead of their performance, local band Cosmic Collission will be opening the event. In addition to the concert, Dawson says there will be children's activities, a plant sale and tours of the Howe House courtesy of the Lyon County Historical Society. Good Way Sunday is completely free to attend with donations accepted throughout.

8-6: A two-week-old heat wave is broken, thanks in part to strong and severe thunderstorm activity late Saturday night and early Sunday morning. Storms brought widespread rainfall to Kansas, as well as severe wind to many locations:

*Eureka: 60-72 mph wind gusts

*Matfield Green: 63 mph wind gusts

While the high wind reports were isolated, the storms left a lot of area residents without power. Evergy is reporting over 1,000 customers between Madison and Hamilton without power, while Eureka has over 900 customers offline and south Greenwood County, including Severy and Fall River, has over 1,000 customers without power. Smaller-scale outages were noted in Emporia, Allen, Council Grove and Lebo.

8-16: Agriculture exports are at high levels for Kansas, judging by the export total announced by Governor Laura Kelly on Tuesday. Governor Kelly says the ag export total was nearly \$5.5 billion last year, listed as the highest export total in decades. Kelly says Kansas reported \$3.8 billion in ag exports when she took office in 2019. The top export was red meat, totaling \$2.1 billion and comprising nearly 40 percent of all the state's ag exports. Cereals, including corn, wheat and sorghum, were second at nearly 25 percent of the total, followed by oilseeds -- mostly beans -- at 12.5 percent. Mexico was the state's largest trade partner, importing almost \$2.2 billion of Kansas ag products or just short of 40 percent of the state total. Japan was second at \$781 million, followed by Canada at nearly \$600 million.

8-17: Another summer staple Emporia event is fast approaching. Public activities for Flint Hills Beef Fest kick off Friday with festivities being held throughout the weekend. Beef Fest committee member Danny Broyles joined KVOE's Morning Show Thursday to preview the weekend's festivities. Broyles says Beef Fest is a way to celebrate local producers who produce beef for consumption not only for Kansans, but for patrons across the United States. Broyles added the event is a great showcase of the grass cattle industry. Festivities kickoff at 9 a.m. with the Livestock Show at the Sale Barn. At 11:30 a.m. is the Beef Producers Seminar with lunch included at the Bowyer Building. Friday night activities include the

Ranch Feed at 6 p.m. at the Bowyer Building with the Ranch Rodeo being held at 7 p.m. in the grandstands. Saturday's festivities begin at 8:30 a.m. with registration for the cornhole tournament that begins at 9 a.m. The free hamburger feed starts at 11 a.m. Saturday night's festivities begin at 5:30 p.m. with the awards banquet, followed by a steak dinner and entertainment from comedian Tim Moffett. The Steve Kile Band will close out Saturday's activities with a dance from 9 to 11:30 p.m. at the Bowyer Building.

8-24: Many area crop producers have some uncomfortable decisions ahead -- and they may not have much time before those decisions can't wait. Lyon County Extension ag agent Brian Rees says the combination of extreme summertime conditions this week has done a number on corn. Rees says a lot of corn has already been cut for silage -- earlier than some farmers had hoped. Beans aren't faring much better. Rees says there were some uniform stands with some recovery, especially with lowland areas, but those appear better than they probably are and upland beans are likely done. Rees says farmers who are at least considering converting their beans into hay need to check their product labels -- specifically those for herbicides. Many bean herbicide labels explicitly tell farmers not to use those crops for hay or animal feed.

8-25: Crops are suffering as our current heat wave finally dissipates. Livestock, meanwhile, are holding their own if they can stay out and about, according to Lyon County Extension ag agent Brian Rees. Rees says there have been reports of heat issues with cattle at a small feedlot in northeast Kansas. He says those reports demonstrate the concerns in place when large animals go onto a high-energy feed ration with little space and limited air circulation. There has been some good news in that concerns about blue-green algae in stock ponds hasn't bloomed, despite the extreme heat over the past week and reducing water levels. However, Rees says there hasn't been much to any water runoff since this past spring in some cases and last fall in others. Given how dry the ground is -- Chase County being over two feet below normal the past two years as an example -- Rees says it will take a lot of water to soak the ground and get to runoff.

8-25: Horse owners around the KVOE listening area need to be advised confirmed cases of West Nile virus have been found nearby. The Kansas Department of Agriculture says West Nile has been confirmed in Butler County, as well as in Barber, Douglas and Pratt counties. The KDA Division of Animal Health says West Nile is preventable through animal vaccinations. All the currently-confirmed cases are in horses that were either unvaccinated or have unknown vaccination history and are assumed to be unvaccinated. KDA says horse owners should work with their local veterinarians for vaccination plans, in part because the virus can be fatal to horses and in part because it can infect people, birds and other animal species. KDA stresses West Nile is not directly contagious from horse to horse or from horse to human.

9-7: Unfortunately, drought continues to deepen for the KVOE listening area. Thursday's update from the US Drought Monitor shows an expansion of extreme drought to cover half the coverage area, essentially along and south of a line from Eskridge to Emporia to Neosho Rapids to New Strawn. The update also includes pockets of exceptional drought, the worst on the Drought Monitor scale, in central Chase County and in northern Greenwood County. The rest of the listening area is in severe to moderate drought.

INFRASTRUCTURE

7-3: There isn't much left to do for a major road improvement project just west of Emporia. APAC (AY-pak) has been handling the asphalt paving project between the Lyon-Chase county line and Lyon County Road E-5 since mid-April. Kansas Department of Transportation engineer Dustin Hardin says there is some clean-up left as well as applying the permanent pavement markings. The current goal is to handle the striping Wednesday and Thursday, although there are currently good chances of showers and storms for Wednesday -- and at least slight chances of rainfall all the way through the upcoming weekend.

7-6: LCAT riders have likely noticed the new fare schedule as approved earlier this year. The new rates went into effect this past weekend, and Director Shane Brunner says LCAT joins a list of other price increases residents have been seeing the past two years. Besides the new rates, Arb says LCAT continues to see heavy demand for its regional bus, which takes riders to places like Kansas City, Topeka, Wichita or neighboring states if riders call to set up a transport schedule. LCAT has also added demand routes to meet the ongoing need -- and Arb says LCAT may end its longstanding route buses. Residents who want to give their input can email lcats@lyoncounty.org.

7-7: Residents wanting to give their input on how the Emporia Recreation Commission should proceed with a recreation center building need to complete a survey soon. The Rec Commission's Needs Assessment Survey is available online at emporiarec.org. Questions include whether residents are satisfied with the current Lee Beran Recreation Center as a whole, how often residents use the Rec Center's amenities and satisfaction levels for those features, possible improvements, possible new programs and desired location. The survey is the latest step in the Rec Commission's conversation on facilities. The Future Funding Task Force, which started meetings earlier this year, will use the survey data to help develop recommendations for either expanding the current rec center, taking over another existing space or building a brand-new facility.

7-7: Construction could begin soon on a brand-new feature for Emporia's Whittier Park. Following approval by Emporia city commissioners this week, the stage is set for a new skate park. City Manager Trey Cocking says this follows months of planning and conversation. Initially, plans were to renovate the longstanding

skate facility at Santa Fe Park, but the city changed locations after discussions with property owner Burlington Northern Santa Fe -- which asked for a change in lease length from 99 years to one year. Cocking says the city has reached out to a contractor, American Ramp, to see when construction could begin. Construction timetables aren't set, but Cocking would like to see work underway by early next year.

7-12: Several road closures are planned next week as bridge work continues over parts of the Kansas Turnpike in Lyon County. The Turnpike Authority says it plans to close Road M-1 south of Kansas Highway 99 on Tuesday, followed by a closure of Road M north of K-99 on July 25. The KTA says "soft closure" barricades will go up at Roads 220 and Road M when the closures go into effect. So-called "hard closure" barricades will then go up at the junction of K-99 and Road M. This is part of a project to increase the clearance height of two bridges, one just south of KTA mile marker 133 and another near mile marker 140.

7-14: Water service in east Emporia will benefit from a major underground utility project beginning this fall. The Peyton Street waterline project is tentatively set for construction between September and February. City Engineer Jim Ubert says this project continues the city's work to improve water service and reliability from the Water Treatment Plant to southeast Emporia after a massive water main break near 15th and Prairie in 2017. It also recognizes the increasing water use in southeast Emporia. Carlson Utility was selected as the contractor with a nearly \$2.4 million bid. The project will get funds through the Kansas Public Water Supply State Revolving Loan Fund.

7-19: Emporia City Commissioners have approved the establishment of a new advisory board focused on overseeing issues of homelessness within the Emporia community. Commissioners approved resolution 3700 during their regular meeting Wednesday morning establishing the homelessness advisory board which will be overseen by a city staff liaison to be appointed by city manager Trey Cocking. The board will meet monthly and provide regular updates and recommendations to the commission on the most pressing issues facing the local homeless population. Mayor Susan Brinkman, who has been very vocal in the need for additional oversight for homeless residents, says this is an important step for the city. The board's establishment was one of several recommendations and will be an extension of the city's task force on homelessness that was established following the passage of a controversial ordinance prohibiting "public camping" last November.

8-11: Two major housing developments in Emporia continue moving forward. On KVOE's Morning Show this week, City Engineer Jim Ubert said the Mahtropolis subdivision near Trusler Sports Complex has hit one milestone already with the installation of water and sanitary sewer lines, although final testing hasn't taken place yet. The Mahtropolis development is adding nearly 30 homes to Emporia's inventory. Separately, pre-construction work continues for the Kretsinger housing

addition near the David Traylor Zoo. Ubert says this project is in the design phase, with a goal of bidding the project by this fall and installing both streets and underground utilities by next summer. The Kretsinger tract is cleared to bring over 50 homes to far south Emporia.

8-11: Water operations are back to normal for customers of Lyon County Rural Water District No. 1. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment has lifted a boil water advisory announced Wednesday for most of the district's coverage area after a 6-inch line failed near Roads 310 and F. Originally, the advisory covered several areas:

- *North of Road 290 and west of Road F
- *Road D at or north of Road 280
- *City of Allen
- *City of Bushong

RWD 1 Office Manager Julia Langley says the water pipe was on a block of rock, so crews had to jackhammer the rock away to make repairs. Langley credited District Operator Jonathan Seimears for repairing and clamping the line in relatively short order.

8-14: A traffic study is coming soon to determine whether West Sixth Avenue near downtown Emporia will have any traffic flow changes down the road. At issue are the flashing signals along Sixth at Congress and Constitution. City Engineer Jim Ubert says a traffic study will start after classes begin, possibly later this month or in early September. The question is simple: whether the current traffic flow merits one or both of the flashing lights to remain in place. With the lights on US Highway 50, there has been talk that they would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to restore if they are removed and traffic patterns change to warrant their return. Having said that, Ubert says the city would like to improve traffic flow on the west side of downtown, and that may be a benefit if one or both signals are removed. The light at Sixth and Congress has been flashing for over a decade. It was part of tentative traffic plans for a hotel and convention center at the former Lowther North school building that have now been dropped. The light at Sixth and Constitution has been flashing for several weeks after a lightning strike.

8-23: The city of Emporia is asking residents across town to conserve water on a voluntary basis through at least the rest of the day. City Manager Trey Cocking joined KVOE's Morning Show on Monday for an update, saying water use is up around 50 percent this week from normal. Through the rest of Wednesday, residents are asked to hold off on car washes and lawn watering -- and to limit indoor water use. Residents are also asked to report any and all water leaks to Public Works at 620-340-6339. Cocking says the city will re-evaluate the situation late Wednesday before determining whether similar steps are needed for Thursday or Friday. The goal, he says, is to keep the water storage tanks full

and avoid any boil water alerts from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

9-11: Unlike Chase County, Emporia city officials aren't telling residents to conserve water on a long-term basis just yet as drought continues -- but they are tracking the situation closely and they are grateful residents complied a short-term request for conservation late last month. Public Works Director Dean Grant admits things were "a little nerve-wracking" when a combination of extreme heat and heavy water demand completely drained the water storage tank outside Industrial Park 3 and brought the East 12th water tower down to about a third of its capacity. Emporia residents and businesses were asked to conserve for about a week in late August. Chase County, however, has been in a water warning for nearly a month and a near-total burn ban for over a week. With two massive water main improvement projects already slated for construction the next three to four years, Grant reminded residents the city doesn't use general fund dollars to make repairs as needed.

-20: The city of Emporia now has a new supplemental purchase contract in place for water from the Council Grove Reservoir in place. The contract renewal, which goes through 2045, was approved unanimously during the commission's regular action meeting Wednesday morning. The renewal brings with it several changes from the original 40-year agreement that expires next month. Chief among the differences is the volume of water it reserves for the city, 7,000 acre-feet to be exact. That is more than double the 3,400 acre-feet previously approved and it comes at roughly five-times the price of the original agreement according to Public Works Director Dean Grant. Additionally, Grant tells KVOE News the contract now places the city into an annual variable price point, meaning the cost of the water will increase annually by more than 4 percent. The good news according to Grant is there is the potential for state debt payments to help offset some of those costs.