Public safety sales tax question on the Nov. 8 ballot

The county courthouse through the years
Fall 2016  •  Volume 3  •  Issue 3

JoCo Magazine, a publication produced by Johnson County Government, is mailed to every resident in Johnson County, Kansas, three times per year.

Mission: JoCo Magazine is dedicated to publishing stories that inform residents about county services and finances, as well as issues that may impact the quality of life.

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Editor: Sharon Watson

Design and layout: Chris Depusoir

Contributing writers: Chris Depusoir Jennifer Dunlay Austin Falley Gerald Hay Amanda Keller Lori Sand Eric Schultz

For information about advertising opportunities, please contact Che’rell Bilquist at 913-715-8920 or cherell.bilquist@jocogov.org.

JOCO Magazine: 111 S. Cherry Street, Suite 3300 Olathe, KS 66061 913-715-0725 jocogov.org/jocomag

Public safety challenge for our community

Johnson County is asking voters on Nov. 8 to approve a 1/4-cent, 10-year public safety sales tax to build a new courthouse and coroner facility to serve the county’s current and future judicial needs. The proposed public safety sales tax would mean 25 cents on a $100 purchase.

The courthouse has been functionally challenged for many years causing safety and security issues for those who enter the building.

A significant safety concern is the layout of the building that puts victims and jurors in the same hallways as inmates and criminal defendants. This can leave individuals feeling intimidated or experiencing re-traumatization. Ensuring the safety of the public is critical to the county.

Another concern with the current courthouse is lack of accessibility. Individuals with mobility challenges and people with disabilities face particular difficulties in accessing the courthouse and courtrooms. None of the 23 courtrooms currently meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines and only three of the building’s courtrooms meet minimal ADA guidelines.

Additional problems with the courthouse include the building’s aging structure, outdated technology and crowded courtrooms. With more than 400,000 visitors each year, for everything from marriages and adoptions to civil and criminal trials, the courthouse has the highest daily public traffic of any county government facility.

The current building was built in the early 1950s with the last major addition completed more than 40 years ago.

If the public safety sales tax is approved, it will fund construction, equipment and furnishings for a new 28-courtroom courthouse at a cost of $182 million. It will take four years to build the new courthouse, which will serve the county’s judicial needs for the next 75 years.

Johnson County does not have its own coroner facility. Autopsies are currently conducted at a pay-for-use facility in Kansas City, Kansas. A coroner facility would cost $19 million and provide the ability to conduct more autopsies and prioritize them, greatly reducing wait time for families and investigators. The facility would also provide on-site toxicology and real-time data reporting for epidemics and crime, neither of which is possible using the private facility.

Compared with the cost of a new courthouse, renovation of the existing courthouse is the more expensive option. The cost is estimated at $216 million, involving extensive work to bring the existing courthouse up to appropriate standards, ADA compliance and a four-story addition to address overcrowding and spatial needs — that’s $34 million more than building a new courthouse.

It’s important to note that the need for significant expenditures will not disappear if the public safety sales tax is not passed. This course of action would take much longer to complete, with construction work being performed in an occupied facility, requiring work after hours and on weekends, greatly increasing construction costs to the county. This action also does not include a much-needed coroner facility. Renovation of the existing courthouse currently has no determined funding source and would require additional tax revenue such as property tax increases. Also renovations would not eliminate safety issues of inmates and the public using the same hallways, and costs far more in the long run.

We urge you to review information at JoCoPublicSafety.org to help you reach a decision by Nov. 8 about this important public safety issue for our community.

Ed Eilert
Chairman, Board of County Commissioners
Fall 2016  •  Volume 3  •  Issue 3

Ways to engage with JoCo

Online
Visit jocogov.org to:
• Find your County Commissioner
• Get answers to questions
• Learn about the more than 400 services Johnson County provides to residents.

Social media
Twitter: @jocogov
Facebook: facebook.com/jocogov
Pinterest: pinterest.com/jocogov

By phone
Call Center: 913-715-5000
Kansas Relay Operator: 800-766-3777

In person
Attend a weekly Board of County Commissioners meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Thursdays on the third floor of the Administration Building, 111 S. Cherry St., Olathe, KS 66061.

Johnson County Elected Officials
Ed Eilert, Chairman
Ronald L. “Ron” Shaffer, District 1
James P. Allen, District 2
Steven C. Klika, District 3
Jason Osterhaus, District 4
Michael Ashcraft, District 5
John Toplikar, District 6
Stephen M. Howe, District Attorney
Frank Denning, Sheriff

Image above: Hundreds of school-age children visited the Johnson County Courthouse on Friday, Sept. 16, in observance of Constitution Day. The kids learned about the judicial process, observed court activities and took tours of the courthouse facility. More information about Constitution Day is on page 4.
Lanesfield Historic Site features seven new interpretive signs

Seven interpretive markers have been installed around the grounds of the Lanesfield Historic Site in Gardner. The signs will add a new dimension of interpretation to the site and the surrounding area. The Lanesfield Historic Site is open 1–5 p.m. each Friday and Saturday and by appointment. Patrons who visit outside of public hours will now have resources to learn about the area’s history. The seven signs discuss the impacts of the trails, Bleeding Kansas, and the railroad. These updates to Lanesfield were funded by a grant from the Board of County Commissioners through the Johnson County Heritage Trust Fund. To book a field trip or an appointment to tour the site, call the Johnson County Museum at 913-715-2570.

For more information, visit the museum website at jocogov.org/museum.

District court celebrates Constitution Day

On Sept. 17, 1787, our nation’s Founding Fathers signed the Constitution of the United States of America. This September, Johnson County District Court celebrated the birth of American government with Constitution Day, hosting evening events on Sept. 15 that were open to the public. On Sept. 16, nearly 900 elementary to high school students convened on the courthouse for student-focused events.

“We were so pleased to have Appeals Court Judge Arnold-Burger here to discuss the Informed Voter Project on both days,” said District Court Judge Keven O’Grady. “It’s important for us who work in the court system each day to do all we can to help everyone understand what we do and how we do it. On Friday, we were ecstatic with the school response and enjoyed hosting hundreds of students ranging from third grade to high school seniors.”

Students and members of the public met district court legal professionals, took tours of the courthouse and attended presentations about the three branches of government. The Johnson County Board of County Commissioners proclaimed Sept. 17, 2016, as Constitution Day at its Sept. 15 meeting.

In short

A glimpse into what’s going on at Johnson County Government

County nurses prepare students for school year

Nurses from the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment spent the first week of August preparing students from the Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD) for the first day of school. More than 75 students — kindergarten through high school seniors — were given immunizations and physical assessments to meet state requirements to attend school or participate in sports. “This is something that we’ve wanted to do for a long time,” said Shelby Rebeck, registered nurse, health services coordinator for SMSD. “Each year we have to exclude kids who are not compliant with their immunizations. This was a way to bring the immunization clinic to those families that find it difficult to get to the health department because of transportation or finances.”

Clinics were held at Shawneeoe Elementary in Shawnee, and Rosehill and Santa Fe Trail elementary schools in Overland Park.

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Quotable

“We call upon the people of Johnson County to acknowledge the importance of our United States Constitution, our legal and judicial systems, to conduct ceremonies and programs that bring together the community to recognize the enduring strength of our state and federal constitutions.”

— Board of County Commissioners Constitution Day proclamation, Sept. 15, 2016
Johnson County Courthouse: a look back
Law enforcement and courts in Johnson County

By GERALD HAY

Law and order came to Johnson County before Kansas reached statehood.

Soon after Kansas became a territory (the stage before becoming a state) in 1854, Johnson County was created on Aug. 25, 1855, as one of the first 33 counties in the territory. The Johnson County Sheriff’s Office was born at that same time, and it served and protected with the first two sheriffs named during turbulent times in the region.

In his 1992 article “Let’s Talk about Sheriff’N,” late Johnson County Sheriff Deputy Herbert E. Shuey reported that the first two territorial sheriffs — Ben Johnson and Isaac Parish — were “selected” during the so-called “Bogus Legislature.” It was considered by many to be illegitimate representation, because nearly 5,000 pro-slavery Missouri “border ruffians” fraudulently voted in the Kansas Territory elections.

The cloud of illegitimacy lifted in 1857 when Pat Cosgrove was appointed to be the first territorial sheriff by Territorial Governor Robert J. Walker. He was elected sheriff the following year.

According to current Johnson County Sheriff Frank Denning, major concerns of early sheriffs included “maintaining the county’s portions of the Oregon, California and Santa Fe Trails, investigating cattle theft, and keeping peace between abolitionist and pro-slavery efforts” from 1854 to 1861.

The first territorial courts were organized in 1855, with three judicial districts in the Kansas Territory. Johnson County was in the third district along with Miami, Linn, Bourbon, Cherokee, Neosho, Allen, Anderson and Franklin counties.

Constitution established court system in 1859

With the ratification of the Kansas Constitution on Oct. 4, 1859, the state’s court system was officially established including the Kansas Supreme Court and five judicial districts. Johnson County was then part of the fourth district along with Douglas, Miami, Franklin, Anderson, Linn, Bourbon and Allen counties. Each judicial district was headed by a district judge, a probate judge and justices of the peace.

In 1859, the first Johnson County Courthouse, located on the second floor of the Harry Case Building, was opened in downtown Olathe. The lingering dispute over slavery in the U.S. Congress delayed approval of Kansas statehood until Jan. 29, 1861.

Handwritten records denote times when horse, cattle, mule and even chicken stealing were crimes that required trials. Divorce papers often detailed marital affairs as reasons for filing. Cases involving failure to pay debts, damage to property (unlawful burning of the prairie), land ownership disputes and proceedings to settle a paternity question (awarding $600 in damages to the mother) were not uncommon.

Criminal trials of the time involved robbery, burglary, rape, embezzlement and public intoxication. The theft of four stands of bees was tried as grand larceny, resulting in a $60 fine. The killing of a bull garnered a $58.15 fine (including court costs).

There were a few murders as well. In 1879 Mary Bonesteet was tried for killing her two daughters by poisoning them with morphine. Just two years later, Enoch Kearley was convicted for first degree murder for killing a man with three gunshots.

Tenth Judicial District created in 1869

The Tenth Judicial District was created in 1869 with First District Judge Hiram Stevens who assumed the bench in 1870. The district included Johnson County along with Miami and Wyandotte, both of which are now in other judicial districts. Currently, the Tenth Judicial District only includes Johnson County.

In 1892, Johnson County opened its second courthouse — a three-story, red brick “Temple of Justice” with a four-sided clock tower — in downtown Olathe. Olathe historian Jim French noted in a Johnson County Star article (Sept. 9, 1987) that the old Romanesque courthouse was the first public building in Kansas to have electric lights.

Aside from traditional legal activities, in the 1930s the courthouse (as described by French) attracted “marriages in the thousands” continued on page 17
Public safety sales tax question on Nov. 8 ballot
Voters to decide future of county courthouse and coroner facility

By LORI SAND

PSST! — You may have heard that the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) is asking voters to decide on a 10-year, 1/4-cent public safety sales tax to fund the construction of a new county courthouse and coroner facility. The question will be the last item on the ballot for the Nov. 8 General Election.

If the new public safety sales tax is approved, a new Johnson County courthouse will be constructed directly north of the current location on Santa Fe, at 100 N. Kansas Ave. in Olathe. The site of the current building will be converted to a public green space. The new facility will house 28 courtrooms (compared to the current 23 courtrooms) with the ability to expand to 36. The cost is $182 million and will position the county to meet its judicial needs for the next 75 years. In addition, the 1/4-cent, 10-year public safety sales tax would generate $19 million to construct a county coroner facility that would be located just south of the Johnson County Criminalistics Laboratory at 11890 S. Sunset Dr. in Olathe. All cost estimates are calculated in today’s dollars.

The courthouse

To many, courts are the bedrock of American democracy. Over the past five years, 48 percent of Johnson County residents have visited the courthouse for many reasons, including jury duty, adoptions, marriages, divorces, traffic tickets and appearances in civil and criminal courts.

The timeline on page 12 illustrates how the Johnson County Courthouse has changed over the past 64 years in order to accommodate the county’s growing population. The courthouse is now fully occupied by the courts and the district attorney’s office. Over the past decades, the county has conducted numerous studies of the courthouse facility and judicial operations to develop options for the use and functionality of the building, while continuing to address its aging condition and overcrowding. The courthouse now serves a population of more than 580,000 Johnson County residents — projected to continue growing by nearly 10,000 people each year.

Studies over the years have highlighted a number of issues with the current courthouse that must be addressed. Key issues of concern are safety and security for those visiting the courthouse, modifications needed to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and significant repair and maintenance costs.

Based on results of these studies and feedback from citizen groups and professionals, the BOCC concluded that construction of a new courthouse is a better option than continued use of the existing building. Cost estimates indicate that it will cost more ($216 million rather than $182 million) to renovate and expand the existing courthouse.

An additional $34 million would be needed for the expansion and renovation of the existing facility. Renovations of the existing courthouse would take much longer to complete since the building is occupied and must remain operational — making the project more costly. Plus, it would cost an estimated $155 million more for operations, maintenance, interest and other costs for the existing facility over the next 20 years, compared to building, operating and other costs for a new courthouse facility. This cost difference helped inform the BOCC as it proposed a new courthouse over continued use of the current building.

Concerns with the current courthouse

Safety and security

Layout of the building does not allow sufficient separation of various parties involved in court actions, including inmates and criminal defendants from victims, witnesses and jurors in the courthouse hallways.

“Based on the current configuration of the courthouse, it is difficult to keep defendants, jurors, victims and witnesses apart. This leads to unsafe encounters between these groups,” District Attorney Steve Howe said. “This is never more evident than when family members of a murder victim come face to face with the accused killer. Remodeling the current building will not solve this problem.”

Accessibility and ADA compliance

None of the 23 courtrooms are fully ADA compliant and only three are minimally accessible. Many doorways are narrow and it is a tight fit for a wheelchair to get through. The antiquated wheelchair lift in the lobby breaks down regularly, and it is in full view, putting the individual using it on display.
Aging structure and crowded conditions
The building's aging structure presents numerous challenges, and costly repairs are needed to maintain the facility for daily use. In the past, those remedial repairs have cost millions of dollars.

Client and attorney meetings are typically conducted in the crowded hallways due to a lack of private meeting space, and no secured waiting areas are available for victims to limit contact with the accused while in the courthouse. The courtrooms become easily overcrowded and are not designed to use modern technology to effectively conduct court cases.

“Many times, attorneys must haul projectors, speakers, screens and other equipment into court in order to present and discuss evidence,” District Attorney Howe says. “But even more troubling are the jurors and witnesses who have told me that they were very concerned about being in such close quarters with accused persons.”

The coroner facility
The public safety sales tax would also fund the construction of a coroner facility in Johnson County — something the county currently does not own. The county coroner oversees autopsies in a pay-for-use facility in Wyandotte County, but it does not have on-site toxicology services. Johnson County is presently required to outsource toxicology services which causes delays in receiving results. The facility in Wyandotte County is not accredited which means it isn’t held to external standards for quality. This lack of accreditation can have a negative effect on both criminal investigations and public health issues. You can read more about the proposed coroner facility on page 8.

The 1/4-cent, 10-year public safety sales tax
The proposed 10-year public safety sales tax would add 25 cents to every $100 spent on purchases in Johnson County. Because it is a sales tax, approximately 22 percent of tax proceeds would be paid by non-residents who make retail purchases in the county. In addition, state statute requires a portion of the public safety sales tax collected to be shared with all the cities located in Johnson County, to be used for needs such as police, fire, street repair and storm water projects.

Public tours of the current courthouse are available through the beginning of November. Tours are scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 18, and Tuesday, Nov. 1, with presentation times at 5 and 6 p.m. Please call 913-715-3300 to RSVP for a courthouse tour if you would like to participate. If you require special accommodations to attend either of these tours, please call 913-715-0725 at least 48 hours in advance.

One recent tour participant gained valuable insight into the facility’s issues.

“My husband and I took the tour of the courthouse and it opened our eyes. Hearing that our courthouse isn’t ADA compliant really hurts my heart. As a disabled person, I sympathize with those who need wheelchair access or push buttons to open doors,” Susan Hunsinger said.

“I can’t believe the state of the courthouse in Johnson County. Watching the videos, reading and seeking all the information regarding costs to build or renovate and where those funds come from and for how long is a necessity for the citizens of Johnson County.”

A proposed courthouse would be located just north of the current facility in downtown Olathe and would have 28 courtrooms, with the ability to expand to 36 and meet the county’s judicial needs for the next 75 years.

Watch a short video, learn more about the public safety sales tax, the proposed courthouse and coroner facility online at JoCoPublicSafety.org
Coroner facility would be Johnson County’s first

By ERIC SCHULTZ

The irony was hard to miss.

Dr. Robert Prosser stood in the lobby of Johnson County’s state-of-the-art crime lab to discuss a coroner office that doesn’t even have a Johnson County home. Prosser, the county’s coroner, hopes that will all change soon.

“In order to take full advantage of 24-hour, seven-days-a-week, 21st-century forensic science, we need our own coroner facility,” he said.

Johnson County voters will decide Nov. 8 on a new 1/4-cent public safety sales tax that, if approved, would end in 10 years. Part of the revenue from the public safety sales tax would fund the construction of a new coroner facility. The project’s estimated cost is $19 million.

Many county leaders believe it is time to build a coroner facility in Johnson County. Prosser, for one, does not think the current way of doing things is sustainable.

“Doing autopsies for forensic work has changed a lot in the 21st century,” he said.

Johnson County autopsies are not performed in the county. The county government pays a private company for use of its facility in Wyandotte County.

When suspicious deaths occur, Prosser contracts with forensic pathologists to do the autopsies at the facility in Kansas City, Kansas.

Prosser believes the investigation of deaths in Johnson County should be done at a facility in the county that is controlled by the county. He says it’s critical that the work be done in a place designed to meet established, professional standards. According to Prosser, the only place like that in the immediate area is in Missouri, and is not available to Kansas coroners.

“Johnson County could do better death investigations with its own facility,” Prosser said.

According to Prosser, a coroner facility located in Johnson County benefits families and their departed loved ones. A coroner facility in the county would provide a place for family members to view their loved ones and allow law enforcement to complete death investigations more quickly. A Johnson County facility would also allow and law enforcement to conduct necessary, modern forensic investigations.

“"In order to take advantage of 24-hour, seven-days-a-week, 21st-century forensic science, we need our own coroner facility,” says Dr. Robert Prosser, Johnson County’s coroner.

Prosser believes the county will inevitably need to do more autopsies as its population inches closer and closer to 1 million. In recent years, his office has been averaging close to 300 autopsies annually. He also takes note of Johnson County’s proximity to other densely populated counties and the potential for spillover crime.

Prosser’s other reasons for supporting a new facility have to do with taking advantage of advances in the field.

“A lot of this — that you see on shows like ‘Crime Scene Investigators’ — isn’t fantasy, it’s reality, right now,” he said.

Key evidence in many court cases is molecular and microscopic. Successful prosecutions often hinge on the ability of investigators to gather trace DNA material from skin cells on a body, as well as dust and residual chemicals. Prosser says that building a new facility that has special air handling to prevent cross-contamination is the only way to preserve such evidence.

Collecting this type of evidence without special air handling opens up the potential for contamination. Once evidence is
contaminated, it cannot be analyzed at a crime lab or used in court. This means Johnson County would be unable to take full advantage of its crime lab, according to Prosser.

The ability to collect this kind of data in a new facility would allow public health officials to react quickly in trying to head off a public health crisis. If Johnson County were ever confronted with an Ebola outbreak or anthrax attack, autopsies would be crucial at the earliest possible stage to identify the threat and prevent spreading of disease or contamination. These autopsies would require the same type of air-isolated room crime investigations require and that the current facility lacks.

“If we could accurately identify a public health emergency early, we could save lives,” Prosser said.

If a new facility were built, it would be located near the Criminalistics Laboratory located at 11890 S. Sunset Dr. in Olathe.

Prosser hopes the community chooses to make the investment. “We do not currently have a facility that is designed to take full advantage of modern forensic science,” he said.

For more information on the proposed coroner facility and public safety sales tax that would also fund a new courthouse, visit JoCoPublicSafety.org.
Making “cents” of your sales tax

Sales tax for purchases made in Johnson County (and some online purchases) varies by city and ranges from 7.725 to 9.725 percent.

A proposed public safety improvement will go before voters on the Nov. 8 ballot with funding through a 1/4-cent, 10-year public safety sales tax.

Here’s a glance at what sales taxes look like right now in our community...

### State of Kansas

**6.5¢**
per $1 spent

The lion’s share of the sales tax paid goes to the state of Kansas. Currently, it taxes the sale of goods at 6.5 percent, translating to 6.5 cents per $1 in goods purchased.

### Johnson County

**1.225¢**
per $1 spent

Johnson County currently has a total of 1.225 percent sales tax on local purchases, translating to 1.225 cent per $1, which includes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.125</td>
<td>0.125 percent that goes to the Education Research Triangle that supports higher education at K-State Olathe, KU Edwards Campus and the KU Clinical Research Center.</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1 percent to support stormwater utilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.25 percent public safety sales tax (levied in 1995) that funds projects specifically related to public safety purposes. The county keeps about 62.88 percent of the proceeds and, by state mandate, the remaining funds are shared with cities in the county.</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.25 percent public safety sales tax II (levied in 2009) that funds several county facilities including the Youth and Family Services Center, the Criminalistics Lab and renovation of the Olathe Adult Detention Center. About 62.88 percent of funds are retained by the county and the remaining funds are shared with cities in the county.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50 percent local sales tax generates revenue for the county’s general fund and local cities in the county. The county retains 25.76 percent of tax proceeds. By state statute, the remaining funds are shared with cities in the county. To find your city’s share, visit the state’s ratio publication at ksrevenue.org/pdf/0716localratios.pdf. This ratio is updated every six months based on population and taxes levied.</td>
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### Local Cities

**up to 2.0¢**
per $1 spent

There are 20 cities in our county, and city sales tax rates vary by jurisdiction. Two cities, Lake Quivira and Mission Woods, don’t have a city sales tax. The other cities generally range from 1 to 2 percent — or 1 to 2 cents per $1 spent — with an average (of cities in our county) of 1.72 percent. Visit the state of Kansas sales tax publication at ksrevenue.org/pdf/pub17001016.pdf find your city sales tax rate.

### Local Tax Districts

**varies**

Local jurisdictions can also enact special taxing districts, designated by city-level, community and a range of addresses. A list of special districts across the state of Kansas, including those in the county, is available online at ksrevenue.org/pdf/pub17001016.pdf.
How does a 1/4-cent public safety sales tax affect you?

The proposed public safety sales tax would add 25 cents for each $100 spent on purchases in Johnson County. Here are a few examples of how the 1/4-cent public safety sales tax would impact purchases:

- A $20 t-shirt would add 5¢
- A $400 TV would add $1
- An $898 refrigerator would add $2.25

In addition:
- Estimates show that 22 percent of the public safety sales tax would be paid by non-residents.
- Cities in the county will receive a portion of the public safety sales tax proceeds, as required by state statute.
- This public safety sales tax would end in 10 years.

Who would pay the public safety sales tax?

According to estimates, non-county residents would pay an estimated 22 percent of the public safety sales tax.

Living fully today.
And tomorrow.

Some things in life don’t change no matter what your age. We all want a sense of purpose and belonging and a chance to keep the life and friends we have made along the way. We can help, with services from senior housing to memory care assisted living to post-acute rehabilitation.

To learn more about our community in Olathe, visit cedarlakevillagekc.org.

All faiths or beliefs are welcome. 16-G0443
In 1952, phase one of the current courthouse in Olathe is completed. The original facility is planned and designed to house all of the county government and includes its jail.

— image courtesy of The Kansas City Star

Phase two of the current courthouse facility is completed.

— image taken in 1956

A third wing addition is created on the north end of the courthouse facility, adding three new courtrooms.

An eight-story building addition is completed on the east side of the courthouse, adding one probate, one juvenile and four magistrate courtrooms along with shell space.

Two courtrooms are added.

Remodel of the courthouse is completed. Legal and county administrator move out of the courthouse building to leased space.

* 2015 U.S. Census Bureau population data, most current data reported.
1988
County jail moves out of the courthouse and into a new building.

1989
County completes remodel of the courthouse including the addition of courtrooms.

1990
population: 357,309
Adult probation moves out of the courthouse facility into a leased space.

1992
The Board of County Commissioners moves out of the courthouse facility into the new county administration building.

1996
Courthouse facility undergoes a remodel that adds three courtrooms and one magistrate courtroom.

1997
Courthouse facility undergoes a remodel. The county proposes a new county courthouse facility to meet the county’s judicial needs for the next 75 years.

2000
population: 454,644
Courthouse facility undergoes a remodel.

2003
Courthouse facility undergoes a remodel.

2008
County Sheriff’s property room moves out of the courthouse and into the Sheriff’s Operations facility. The courthouse also goes paperless, making a storage room available as a courtroom.

2009
The Sheriff’s dispatch in the courthouse is converted to a back up when the county’s communication center opens.

2010
population: 545,696
Sheriff’s warrant department moves out of the courthouse facility.

2012
Courthouse undergoes a remodel. The Sheriff’s Office, administration, court trustee, fiscal and civil services move out of courthouse and into annex facility.

2013
Sheriff’s warrant department moves out of the courthouse facility.

2014
Courthouse undergoes a remodel.

2016
population: 580,159*
About 400,000 people use the county courthouse annually. The county proposes a new county courthouse facility to meet the county’s judicial needs for the next 75 years.
Lesser-known court services

By LORI SAND

What do you think when someone says he or she is going to the county courthouse?

A person could be going to the county courthouse for a variety of reasons such as an adoption, marriage, divorce or traffic court. The Johnson County Courthouse also offers a variety of services likely unknown to many people.

“In some cases, the public perception of the courthouse is that you only go there if someone is in trouble,” said Katherine Stocks, Johnson County Court Administrator. “But we go beyond legal disputes. We provide low-cost or free services that help individuals get their lives back on track.”

District Court Help Center

The District Court Help Center is a place where people unrepresented by an attorney can get assistance for many common court cases, including court information, necessary legal forms and a better understanding of court procedures.

“The Help Center continues to grow with more than 500 in-person visitors each month, plus many more who contact us online and by phone,” Judge Keven O’Grady says.

Judge O’Grady was appointed by the chief judge to establish and oversee Help Center operations and he works directly with the staff. O’Grady also serves as the center’s liaison to the judges and is responsible for many community outreach activities.

The Help Center can assist with a wide variety of topics, including applicable common legal forms (divorce, parenting plan modifications, medical reimbursement, adult name change and more), case docket information, landlord-tenant disputes, filing paperwork, setting court dates, paperwork review, free and low-cost court services. The center’s mission is to provide a fair, free, independent and open court.

Help Center staff are not lawyers and cannot provide legal advice or counsel. The center is located on the first floor of the county courthouse or services can be accessed online at courts.jocogov.org.

Johnson County District Court Trustee

The Johnson County District Court Trustee’s office is responsible for the enforcement of all Johnson County child support orders — more than 17,000 orders. The trustee is empowered to pursue all civil remedies, such as wage garnishments, or the establishment and enforcement of support payments. The fees charged by the Johnson County District Court Trustee continue to be among the lowest in Kansas.

Domestic Court Services

Many times, the domestic section of court services provides court-ordered assistance in family matters, including family assessments, higher ground, mediation and parenting programs.

- **Family assessments**, often referred to as “home studies” or “child custody evaluations,” are written assessments made by Court Service Officers that provide information to district court judges regarding the best interest of children.

- **Higher Ground** is a skill-based parent education program for high-conflict families that teach how ongoing conflict between parents and repeated court involvement hurts children; how to develop a child- and future-focused mindset and set realistic expectations as separated parents; how to respect each other’s differences and communicate effectively; and methods to defuse conflict, manage emotions and make mutual decisions for the benefit of the children.

- **Mediation and conciliation** are resources for separated or divorced parents who are assisted by an impartial third-party in children-focused decision making.
Parents Forever is a required two-hour class for parents filing new divorce or paternity actions. This program informs parents about the impact of a changing family on children; helps parents develop a parenting plan; provides information about resources that help parents and children; and provides information on what to expect if court involvement is necessary.

The Supervised Exchange Program allows parents to create safe exchanges for their children with benefits that include shared parenting time, reduced stress for parents and children, security, and neutral third-party documentation.

Supervised visitation is a 12-week program that provides a consistent opportunity for children and parents to have safe, supportive contact in a structured setting. The program includes: ensuring children’s safety, while addressing the court’s need for objective information; offering a supportive, educational component along with a conciliation component to create goals; providing trained volunteers for family support; and facilitating visits that focus on the best interests of the children.

More information can be found at courts.jocogov.org.

Veterans Treatment Court

In 2015, Johnson County introduced a new program known as the Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) with a mission to identify veterans in the criminal justice system and, when eligible, get them into needed treatment and court supervision as alternatives to incarceration.

VTC offers two alternatives to jail time — a probation track or a diversion track — through the Johnson County District Attorney’s Office. These programs allow eligible military veterans to voluntarily participate in a 12- to 18-month program of frequent court appearances, drug and alcohol testing, treatment options, recovery support meetings and a mentoring program with a fellow veteran.

More information about VTC is available online at courts.jocogov.org/cs_vtc.aspx.

The Veterans Treatment Court, pictured above, is designed to help participants live in the community as responsible and productive citizens.

We are looking for HEALTHY ADULTS

Johnson County Clin-Trials (JCCT) is looking for healthy adults ages 18-80, to participate in a research study.

Qualified participants may receive up to $2,000 for time and travel.

(913) 825-4400
WWW.JCCT.COM

WEB EXTRA Take a look at more courthouse services at jocogov.org/jocomag online.
Get acquainted with the Board of County Commissioners

The legislative powers of Johnson County Government are vested in a seven-member Board of County Commissioners that exercises its authority to ensure the general health, safety and welfare of the public. The board has been given exclusive powers to enact, amend and repeal local legislation, to levy taxes and to make appropriations, to adopt budgets, and to make appointments to certain offices, boards and commissions.

The board comprises an at-large Chairman and one representative from each of the six districts within Johnson County. Find more information online at jocogov.org.

Chairman Ed Eilert
Office: 715-0500

James “Jim” P. Allen
Second district
Office: 715-0432

Steven “Steve” C. Klika
Vice chair and third district
Office: 715-0433

John Toplikar
Sixth district
Office: 715-0436

Michael Ashcraft
Fifth district
Office: 715-0435

Ronald “Ron” Shaffer
First district
Office: 715-0431

Jason Osterhaus
Fourth district
Office: 715-0434

Steven “Steve” C. Klika
Vice chair and third district
Office: 715-0433
that were performed in what was called the “Cupid’s Parlor” of the probate judge’s chambers, where couples eloped from Missouri and eastern Kansas.

Love still fills many a moment at the courthouse. In 2015, the clerk’s office issued 2,981 marriage licenses in Johnson County.

**Current courthouse opened in 1952**

Construction of the current courthouse, the third in the county’s history, began in 1951. The old “Temple of Justice” was demolished after the courthouse was completed in 1952.

The first murder trial in the courthouse occurred in mid-November 1952, about a month after the building’s dedication. The case involved Merle William Martin in the shooting death of Deputy Sheriff Willard Carver, the first member of the sheriff’s office to be killed in the line of duty. Among the 57 criminals executed by the state since 1853, Martin is the only Johnson County killer hanged for his crimes. No state executions have occurred since 1965.

**Current activity at the county courthouse**

Although few, if any, cases today involve the theft of horses, cattle, mules, or even bees and chickens, the courthouse remains a busy place. The Tenth Judicial District resolves more than 44,000 cases every year, including approximately 1,700 probate cases, 10,000 contract disputes, 1,000 property issues, 300 adoptions and 3,000 family law cases.

The courthouse now houses 19 district courts and four magistrate courts in a Kansas court system with 31 judicial districts and 163 district court judges. The county courthouse’s many resources serve about 400,000 users annually.

The county’s third courthouse opened in 1952 to a population of 62,783. Now, with a county population that exceeds 580,000, the Tenth Judicial District resolves more than 44,000 cases each year, including the following:

1,700 probate cases
10,000 contract disputes
3,000 family law cases
1,000 property issues
300 adoptions

approximate numbers based on 2015 services

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**Ditch the bag!**

**Mulching your leaves can help your lawn and save time**

**Recycle your lawn.** When done properly, mulch mowing your leaves and grass clippings can save you from bagging your yard waste and adds nutrients back into your soil.

**Tips for success —**

- Ditch the bag, mow over your leaves and leave your grass clippings on the lawn.
- Mow your lawn frequently and with up to one inch of fallen leaves at a time.
- By mulch mowing during the fall, you can incorporate up to six inches of leaves into your lawn without concern.

“**My yard looks great, and I can spend more time watching football this weekend!”**

For more information on reducing yard waste and composting, call us at 913-715-6936, follow us on Facebook and Twitter @JoCoRecycles or visit us online at jocogov.org.
A courthouse for all ages and abilities

By GERALD HAY

The Johnson County Courthouse attracts, protects and serves local senior adults in many important ways.

Built during the final years of the Truman administration and in the middle of the Korean War conflict, the existing county courthouse in downtown Olathe houses the Tenth Judicial District of Kansas, serving all of Johnson County.

Each year, approximately 400,000 people visit the courthouse, including tens of thousands of senior adults who come into contact with the court system. They may be victims or witnesses in elder abuse investigations; persons involved in criminal or civil trials or hearings; or participants in probate, guardianship, or conservatorship cases.

They may be observing a court proceeding, celebrating the expansion of their families through adoptions, getting a marriage license, and in some instances, even having a judge marry them.

Slightly more than 4,900 people were called to jury duty last year, including 1,391 who were 60 and older. That’s 28 percent of the potential jury pool. The oldest juror was 90.

The courthouse, completed in 1952, can be challenging for many senior adults, especially those with disabilities, according to District Attorney Steve Howe. “Entrance into the courthouse does not meet ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements and standards. If you have any physical disability, it’s a challenge to get into the courthouse,” he said.

The main entrance, located on the south side of the facility, is not at ground level, but enters on the second floor. To get to the entrance, visitors must climb two flights of stairs — six steps outside, nine steps inside — before reaching the security screening area staffed by Johnson County Sheriff’s deputies.

There are two options at the entrance for visitors with limited mobility. A U-shaped ramp, with a challenging incline and 90-degree turns, is available to bypass the outside steps. A chair lift is installed inside the entrance to help move disabled visitors, especially those using wheelchairs, to the top of the interior flight of steps. The lift system is often down for repairs, sometimes for weeks, while awaiting parts. The only other option is to make special arrangements to enter through a limited-access Sheriff’s Office entrance on another side of the building.

“The lift is pretty onerous to get on and off, and it’s not very private,” Howe said.

Once people make it beyond the steps and inside the courthouse, other hurdles await. While some individuals with disabilities and mobility impairments are able to take part in various court processes and activities without difficulty, others are not as fortunate. The courthouse provides accommodations, as needed, for individuals who have special ADA needs in its courtrooms and restrooms.

“Nothing about this building is set up to handle individuals who have any type of disability,” Howe said.

Other issues include increased building maintenance, aging infrastructure and lack of modern technology, such as an audible system, as needed, for hearing-impaired court participants and jurors.

Another primary concern is safety and security for courthouse workers, visitors and participants, including witnesses and victims of all ages, in trials and other court proceedings. Criminal defendants and inmates that are in Sheriff’s custody are taken from the jail to the courthouse on a regular basis for various court activities. Although inmates walk with their hands in chains and are escorted by deputies, they share the same hallways used by the public.

Howe admits the courthouse does not have “safe rooms,” but tries to provide “buffer spaces” where victims can wait separately from the person who has abused them or has been charged with a crime. He adds that it remains a very real possibility that a victim...
will come face to face with the defendant in the hallway, the
elevator or outside the courtroom.

On Nov. 8, as part of the General Election ballot, Johnson County
voters will be asked to approve a public safety sales tax to fund
construction of a proposed county courthouse and coroner
facility. The ballot language will read:

*Shall the Board of County Commissioners of Johnson County,
Kansas, for public safety projects, adopt and impose an
additional one-fourth (1/4) of one-cent countywide retailers’
sales tax in Johnson County, Kansas, to be levied from
and after April 1, 2017, for a period of ten (10) years, ending
on March 31, 2027, with the revenue from that tax to be
distributed as required by law to the county and to the cities
in Johnson County, and the county share to be used to fund
the costs of construction and operation of public safety
projects, including the construction of a courthouse building
and a coroner facility, together with the costs to demolish
the existing courthouse, and for the costs of programs and
facilities related to those projects, including the courts,
administration of justice, and District Attorney?*

If approved, the public safety sales tax would cost the consumer
one nickel more on a $20 retail purchase in the county.

With the funding, if authorized by voters, the county plans to
construct a new 28-courtroom courthouse, costing approximately
$182 million, just north of the existing courthouse on Santa Fe and
Cherry Street in Olathe. The public safety sales tax would also
fund the building of a coroner facility, at an estimated
cost of $19 million, near the county’s Criminalistics
Laboratory at 119th Street and Ridgeview Road in Olathe.

The proposed courthouse is expected to serve Johnson
County’s judicial needs for the next 75 years as the county’s
population continues to grow by about 10,000 residents per
year. Johnson County does not have its own coroner facility at this
time. All autopsies for the county currently are done at a private
facility in Kansas City, Kansas, that the county pays to use.

If the public safety sales tax is not approved, the estimated cost to
renovate the existing courthouse, construct a four-story addition
to ease overcrowding and address future court needs, and make
modest improvements to security/safety/ADA/technology issues
is approximately $216 million. Renovation and adding on to the
existing building would take approximately 13 years because much
of the construction work would need to be done after hours
since the courthouse needs to remain functional. Without the
public safety sales tax, a coroner facility would not be built.

More information about the existing courthouse, the proposed
courthouse and coroner facility, and the public safety sales tax is
available online at JoCoPublicSafety.org.

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**Keep leaves out of streets and gutters**

*By DENNIS PATTON*

Dealing with fall leaves is a fact. But
no single method for removal fits all. Leaves that blow into the streets
reach bodies of water, breakdown and
release harmful nutrients that degrade
water quality. But these same nutrients
are good for your lawn. There are op-
tions when dealing with leaves. Choose
the strategy that works best for you.

**Mulch Mowing**  The best option is
mulch mowing — chopping the leaves
which filter down into the grass where
they compost and provide nutrients. It
requires more frequent mowing. Mow
based on leaf depth, not grass height.
Research proves a total of six inches of
leaves can be returned to the lawn in one
season. But not all at once. It could take
six mows at an inch of leaves each to
reach the six-inch maximum.

**Garden Mulch**  Shredded leaves are an
excellent mulching material. They
provide all the benefits of bark mulch
and are free. Simply mow
up the leaves and spread
them around the landscape
beds. It looks great, keeps
the leaves out of the waste
stream, and saves you
money.

**Compost**  Leaves can be added to the
compost pile then returned as compost
to improve the soil. Proper composting
requires work to keep the pile active.

**Bagging**  When all else fails, leaves
can be raked into paper bags and sent to
be recycled at the landfill. This should
be considered a last resort. Bagging
requires more energy on your part, as
well as the trash hauler. But this option
is superior to letting them blow into the
streets and end up in our water supply.

Remember, when dealing with leaves
the goal is to keep them at home. Do not
rake or blow them into the streets. Keep
them out of our water supply. They have
a negative effect. Let’s do our part for
clean water, our most precious resource.

For more healthy yard tips visit johnson.
k-state.edu or call 913-715-7000.

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**PAID ADVERTISEMENT**
Families are made at the courthouse

By GERALD HAY

District Court Judge Kathleen Sloan enjoys handling children’s cases at the Johnson County Courthouse. Adoptions are the best part of her job. When people in adoption cases leave her courtroom on the sixth floor, a family is made.

In the dozen years since she was appointed a district court judge to the Tenth Judicial District, she has approved and watched 785 new families walk out of her courtroom. By the start of autumn, Judge Sloan has authorized 63 adoptions so far this year.

Adoptions in her courtroom are positive endings to often negative situations where children are removed from parents for sometimes heartbreaking reasons and given new homes and new starts. And love.

“They come in happy and leave happier,” Judge Sloan said with a smile. “A judge doesn’t get to do that often.”

In the past decade, more than 2,100 adoptions have occurred at the courthouse in downtown Olathe. There were 296 adoptions last year. Each case offers its unique set of circumstances, from grandparents adopting grandchildren, to foster couples adopting their foster children, to private adoptions arranged through attorneys and so on. The common denominator for the parties involved is that they want to be together as a family.

Adoption hearings in her courtroom are generally brief, averaging approximately 15 minutes, and informal, allowing pictures to be taken while the process unfolds as petitions are granted and the lives of children are changed forever. The milestones usually attract witnesses, ranging from a handful to a roomful of well-wishers in the courtroom gallery.

Adopted brothers double a family

Guided by their strong faith, Adrien and Cynthia Lewis recently doubled the size of their family by adopting three brothers ages 8, 5 and 3. The couple has been foster parenting the brothers for two years, leading to their decision to adopt all of them. The Lewis family nest includes three other children ages 28, 14, and 13.

The couple met while both worked in pharmaceutical sales. Adrien now works with Global Orphan Project as director of CarePortal. The Global Orphan Project is a global orphan care and orphan prevention ministry with headquarters in Parkville, Missouri.

Adopting the three brothers wasn’t a hard decision for them. It was an obvious decision.

“This is what God wants us to do,” Adrien said. “This is what we’re supposed to do.” His wife agreed, adding, “We are just following God’s will.”

The hearing involving the Lewises was attended by a small crowd of 19, including family members, co-workers and friends who observed the proceeding, took pictures and shared a prayer in a show of support.

Adopted son completes a family

In another hearing before Judge Sloan, Mark and Stacy Hazlett adopted their 3-year-old son who has been a part of their family since birth.

“We brought him home from the hospital as a newborn,” Mark said. Over the past nine years, the Hazletts have been foster parents to more than 120 foster children, ranging from newborns to teens with placements ranging from one night to a few years. The couple also has two birth children ages 18 and 17.

The 3-year-old boy, who explored the courtroom in stocking feet during the hearing, was the couple’s first adoption of a foster child. The process took about two years to complete.

“He’s has been our son since the day he was born,” Stacy said. “We’ve been his parents. As much as we have bonded and loved him, he has bonded and loved us. There was no doubt in our minds to ever not make him a part of our family should the opportunity arise. We couldn’t imagine our lives without him. He completes our family.”

The hearing for the Hazletts was attended by about 30 on-lookers who filled the seats of the courtroom. Their witnesses included family members, friends and three of the five foster children, ages 11 months to 5 years old, currently in the household.

And when it’s all done, the judge tells the children they are part of their new family, and offers smiles and congratulations from the bench. Afterward, the judge often joins adoption families for pictures, permitting them to take group photos or selfies at the bench.

“There’s nothing better than an adoption,” Judge Sloan said. That’s the happy part of her job as a district court judge.
Children in need of care

Judge Sloan’s other duties involve Child in Need of Care (CINC) cases. That’s when a judge must determine if the child is “in need of care,” meaning that the child is without proper care or supervision, has been abused or neglected, is truant, has violated the law, or other statutory reasons for intervention. CINC youths range from newborns to 17-year-olds.

If the court finds the child to be a CINC, the judge has the authority to make corrective orders for the child and family. The court can order the child and parents to obtain counseling or treatment, place the child in the custody of another relative or in state custody with a foster family, or terminate parental rights.

In 2015, the Johnson County District Attorney’s Office filed 527 CINC cases. Some children stay within the family circle. Others enter the state foster care system.

The Kansas Department for Children and Families (KDCF) oversees the state foster care system. At the end of June, the state had 1,183 children in need of adoption, including 104 children, at an average age of 8 years old, in Johnson County.

From July 1, 2015, to June 30, 2016, the state placed 3,952 children in out-of-home placement, including 312 children in Johnson County. Physical abuse was the top reason for removal of the children, locally and statewide, followed by lack of supervision and substance abuse by parents.

According to KDCF, more than half of children who go into foster care return to their birth families. For children who are available for adoption, many are adopted by a relative (48 percent) or their foster parents (also 48 percent).

The state requires a home study that is like an investigation. It includes background checks, fingerprinting, financial means verification, as well as personal discussions about their childhood, family relationships and parenting styles with the couples or individuals wanting to adopt. Homes are also checked to ensure they meet size and safety regulations.

Homes and hearts remain open

The three brothers were the third set of foster children for the Lewises since they became foster parents more than four years ago. One set was reunited with their parents. The other was adopted by their grandmother.

As foster parents for the brothers over the past two years, the couple has grown accustomed to two teens and three younger siblings as part of daily, normal family life.

For now, five children living at home are enough.

“Our van only fits seven,” Adrien Lewis said and laughed, adding, “If God wants us to have more kids, our home is open.”

Stacy Hazlett agreed.

“We will continue to open our home and hearts to more foster children, and should it become possible, we would adopt more,” she said.

Each of the four boys in the two adoptions left the courtroom with a small stuffed animal and a book from a special collection started a decade ago by Judge Sloan. The program encourages children, being adopted or determined to be CINC, to select an age-appropriate book and a stuffed animal as positive gifts from their experience in court that help to brighten their day, spirits and life in general.

Judge Sloan signs and gives adopted children “Oh, the Places You’ll Go!” by Dr. Seuss with a personal note, wishing them “All the Best” and “Happy Adoption Day!”

In the hallway outside the courtroom, activities include more pictures, more hugs and additional congratulations from family members and friends.

Holding one sibling and trying to keep tabs on the other two roaming brothers, Cynthia Lewis admits the newly adoptive boys have been a handful at times. “It’s a good full,” she said.

The four sons of the two couples shared a common ending after the adoption hearings. They left the courtroom and courthouse happy. Happier with their new last names, and happiest with their forever families. 🌟
THREE Questions for employees who work in the Johnson County Courthouse

By AMANDA KELLER

Diana Hall, trial court coordinator, has been employed with the District Court for 24 years. Her primary responsibilities include the supervision, administration and coordination of the criminal, juvenile and traffic departments of the Clerk of the District Court.

What is your favorite thing about the work you do?
We regularly help individuals who are unfamiliar with the court system. Often, the people we serve are encountering stressful situations and it’s a rewarding challenge to help them get through the judicial process.

What’s it like to work in the courthouse?
Work here is very exciting. I love the diversity of people that come through our doors. We see people from all walks of life and it’s rewarding to be a part of it all.

What, if anything, has surprised you about working in the courthouse?
Despite the inherent formality of the court system, it is also, in a certain sense, an emotional place. You see people going through the full range of human emotions and experiences.

Diana Hall
Trial Court Coordinator

Michael Hennecke is a foreign language coordinator/interpreter who has provided interpretation and translation services for the Johnson County Court system for more than 11 years.

What is your favorite thing about the work you do?
I enjoy serving the public in an interesting way. I find it rewarding to help people to understand and be understood by removing the language barrier.

What’s the biggest challenge you face?
Every year we need interpreters for more than 30 different languages. At times, this can be a challenge to coordinate.

What, if anything, has surprised you about working in the courthouse?
Despite the inherent formality of the court system, it is also, in a certain sense, an emotional place. You see people going through the full range of human emotions and experiences.

Michael Hennecke
Foreign Language Coordinator/Interpreter

Sherry Adams has worked for the court system for 15 years. She currently serves as a trial court clerk III in the courthouse help center, where her primary responsibilities are to provide unrepresented litigants with the information and forms necessary to accomplish what they need.

What is the biggest challenge you face in the work you do?
The biggest challenge in my job is to always try to have a calming effect on the individuals coming into the Help Center, as many are in a crisis situation.

What, if anything, has surprised you about working in the courthouse?
It has been such a learning experience. Every situation and daily challenge is never the same.

What one thing would you change about working in the courthouse if you could?
If I could fix one thing in my experience of working in the courthouse it would be to try to help people to understand that everyone has issues and problems. What is important is how you handle them.

Sherry Adams
Trial Court Clerk III
10 Things about the proposed county courthouse and coroner facility

1. They’re on the ballot
Advancement of the proposed courthouse and coroner facility is subject to county voters’ approval on the Nov. 8 General Election ballot. If approved, a 1/4-cent, 10-year public safety sales tax would fund the building of these facilities.

2. Separate paths for the public and inmates/criminal defendants
The diagram above shows that a new courthouse would create separate circulation paths in the building for inmates or criminal defendants (green area), instead of the current configuration where they share corridors with jurors, victims and the general public.

3. County can prioritize
A Johnson County coroner facility would allow the county to prioritize autopsies. Currently, the county does not have its own facility; it pays to use a facility in Wyandotte County.

4. Meet the county’s judicial needs for the next 75 years
The proposed courthouse anticipates the judicial needs of our county for the next 75 years — to keep pace with the county’s growth rate of 10,000 new residents per year.

5. Use of modern science
At its own coroner facility, the county would be able to include an on-site toxicology lab instead of outsourcing. This would reduce waiting times for data and make full use of 21st century science and analysis. The data-reporting system associated with this process would likely decrease waiting time for local officials, families and loved ones.

6. Reconfigure and use modern technology
The proposed courthouse would increase the number of courtrooms from 23 to 28 — with room to expand its capacity to 36 courtrooms. At the same time, it would enable installation of modern courtroom technology to aid in the presentation of information during court proceedings.

7. Industry compliance
The proposed coroner facility would be designed to meet anticipated accreditation standards for coroner facilities.

8. Accessible facility
The proposed courthouse would be fully compliant with the Americans with Disability Act, allowing accessibility for all ages and abilities. Currently, none of the 23 courtrooms are fully ADA compliant.

9. Security built into design
The proposed courthouse would be built at a set-back distance from surrounding streets — a security feature.

10. What happens if not approved by voters?
If voters do not approve the public safety sales tax, the county will not build a coroner facility and costly changes will still be needed at the current courthouse.

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