

## Jefferson County Commissioners Update August 2025

Commissioner Mark Schoenrock, Board Chairman

As we enter Fall 2025, your Jefferson County Board of Commissioners has been very busy serving the citizens of Jefferson County.

We continue our tradition of honoring a Jefferson County Veteran of the Month. Our June veteran of the month was Doug Preston, July veteran of the month was Valerie Snyder and August veteran of the month was Jay Hatfield. We are very grateful for our Jefferson County veterans and it is our honor to recognize them every month. Our veterans service officer Jim Carpenter performs a vital function offering comprehensive veterans services. If you know a veteran who has not been recognized, please contact any of us or Jim.

We have led two PWF road project reviews in this quarter. We are on track for bid letting summer 2026. We will be conducting bid letting for the bridge portion of the project in September and are hopeful that construction will start on that shortly thereafter. We were successful in getting Nebraska bridge match funding for the bridge project in the amount of \$550K. We were successful in obtaining \$8.5M in federal funding for the project. The estimated total project cost is \$12.5M.

After a public hearing, we completed a new one and six year road and bridge construction plan for 2025-2031. This plan identifies the priorities for road and bridge construction in the next year and six years for the county's 935 miles of roads and 405 bridges.

The county planning and zoning commission is reviewing the Jefferson County comprehensive plan and solar zoning regulations. These hearings are open to the public and we encourage your input.

Cybersecurity, automation and information technology continue to be necessary top priorities. It is absolutely essential for these activities to function correctly 24/7 and the board continues to take steps to do all we can to ensure that county services are there to serve our citizens around the clock without interruption.

Most of the board completed the 2025 county board workshop in Kearney. This is essential professional training to ensure we continue excellent service to our citizens.

The board completed an extensive hiring process and selected long time paramedic Greg Neemann to be the new ambulance director. We congratulate Greg and have total confidence he will do a great job leading the department and providing top quality advanced life support ambulance service to our fellow citizens 24/7. Jefferson County is privileged to be one of a very few rural Nebraska counties that have 24/7 ALS.

We continue our coordination with the Nebraska Public Service Commission, Nebraska broadband office, Senator Fischer and internet service providers to bring high speed internet to Jefferson County. We are working through new definitions by the US Department of Commerce with our goal to bring high speed broadband to county citizens. We recently celebrated the completion of the public/private partnership high speed internet project with Diode Technologies.

In July we commemorated the 249<sup>th</sup> birthday of our American republic. We are truly fortunate to live in these United States of America, our great state of Nebraska and our wonderful Jefferson County.

In August we had our fifth superboard meeting. Representatives from the county board, Fairbury city council and Fairbury superintendent and school board meet to discuss mutual challenges and solutions to those challenges. We rotate commissioners at this meeting.

Also in August, we highlighted all of the Jefferson County emergency support services at the National Night Out in the Fairbury city park. It was well attended by our fellow citizens and provided much essential information and knowledge of those services.

We recently attended briefings by the Nebraska Public Power District and Nebraska Department of Economic Development on nuclear small modular reactors siting study. SMRs will provide clean, reliable, affordable and safe energy to meet the ever increasing energy demands of Nebraska.

We attended the 2025 county budget workshop in York. The Nebraska Auditors Office conducted excellent training to keep us abreast of the many changes that impact county budgeting. We are in the middle of the 2025-2026 county budget process and we encourage our citizens to be engaged in that process. The budget is always a challenging process to be able to continue providing the same level of top quality service to our citizens and identify how that is going to be paid for. By far the biggest challenge facing us is to continue to provide top quality county services to our citizens in the most cost efficient manner possible. Our citizens do not want to see any of these essential services cut, and on the other hand do not want to pay more in taxes. We are working hard to address that challenge as a county board, as all of Nebraska county government, and working with Governor Pillen, the Legislature, and our federal congressional delegation. We remain committed to maintaining that same high level of service across all of county government, and working hard to find the most cost effective means to continue to provide those services, never forgetting that our revenues come from the hard work of our citizens.

We continue to periodically visit our town board meetings across the county to understand our citizens concerns and keep you informed of the many activities of county government.

I recently had the opportunity to represent Jefferson County at Governor Pillen's Agriculture and Economic Development Summit in Kearney. It was a great two days to represent Jefferson County and learn about workforce, agriculture and business and bioeconomy initiatives in Nebraska.

I also recently met with Neil Moseman, USDA Nebraska Rural Development Director, in Lincoln, to learn about opportunities for Jefferson County. We have invited him to come to a future board meeting in Fairbury so we can learn and connect more opportunities for our citizens.

An essential part of our board's duties involves representing Jefferson County citizens with the many other organizations that daily provide essential services to our citizens. In my case, I serve in leadership capacities for the Nebraska Association of County Officials, Six Regions One Nebraska economic development task force, Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging, Public Health Solutions district health board, and Blue Valley Community Action. Commissioner Schwab serves on Southeast Nebraska Development District, Region V Systems and Apace. Commissioner Dux serves on LB 840 committee and Twin Valley RC&D. Each of these organizations provide essential services to Jefferson County citizens and it is vital that Jefferson County has a place at the table and is ably represented in each. We are also integrally involved with the Legislature and Governor Pillen to best represent the interests of Jefferson County.

We are first and foremost public servants and share the common objective of understanding our citizens concerns, always being accessible to you, bringing the best county services to you in the most cost

efficient manner, and being transparent in all of our actions. As Abraham Lincoln stated long ago, we dedicate ourselves to the principle that this is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. We never forget that we are public servants, here to serve those who had the confidence in us to elect us to these positions.

We are very proud of our Jefferson County team, serving our fellow citizens 24/7. We have so many talented and dedicated Jefferson County team members who strive to serve the public daily with vital and essential services. Our board will always be dedicated to ensure that the resources are there to provide the best quality service to our fellow citizens.

The board is working hard on numerous other challenges that face the county and our citizens. The board meets every Tuesday at 9am, except for the fifth Tuesday. As always, please contact any of us if you have questions or concerns. We are here to serve you.