

## Jefferson County Board of Commissioners Update December 2025

Commissioner Mark Schoenrock, Board Chairman

As the year 2025 comes to a close, your Jefferson County Board of Commissioners has been engaged serving the citizens of Jefferson County.

We continue our tradition of honoring a Jefferson County Veteran of the Month. Our September veteran of the month was Victor Miller, October veteran of the month was Rodney Schrock, November veteran of the month was Ron Kelly and December veteran of the month was Steve Kettelhut. 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 additional PWF road project reviews in this quarter. We are on track for bid letting summer 2026. We awarded the contract for the PWF bridge construction to JJK Construction in Ceresco Nebraska for \$887K. Construction will be starting soon and is expected to be completed by early summer 2026. We were successful in being awarded Nebraska bridge match funding for the bridge project in the amount of \$500K. We were successful in obtaining \$8.5M in federal funding for the project. The estimated total project cost is \$12.5M.

The county planning and zoning commission continues 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.

In September, we issued a statement in support of the UNL Community and Regional Planning program which was identified as a possible program for elimination. Due to our efforts, and the efforts of many others, the program will not be eliminated.

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.

The board hosted a successful county recognition dinner which was held Saturday evening November 15th at On The Bricks venue. The dinner was open to all county employees. A big thank you to the recognition dinner committee consisting of Mary Banahan, assessor; Kylie Rohr, deputy assessor; Danielle Schwab, commissioner and Heather Watson, attendance support for all of their work in creating a successful event. Recognition plaques were awarded on years of service divisible by 5. This year's recognition recipients were: **30 years** – Leroy Bast, treasurer; Jerry Zabokrtsky, assessor's office; **25 years** – Travis Arnold, maintenance; Rick Klaumann, highway dept.; Kenny Krause, highway dept.; **15 years** – Lucas Bennett, ambulance dept.; Steven McNitt, highway dept.; Mindi Summers, extension office; **10 years** – Julie Earhart, county attorney's office; Reid Horky, sheriff's dept.; Cat Lovgren, ambulance dept.;

Mark Schoenrock, commissioner; **5 years** – Amanda Schaefer, sheriff's dept.; Loni Schramm, county attorney's office; Judd Stewart, ambulance dept. and Jlee Yantz, treasurer's office.

The board hosted a successful county government day was held on November 13 at the courthouse. It was a great day for our rising generation to connect with and learn about their county government and its many functions serving our citizens every day. Over 100 students attended from Meridian, Tri-County, Fairbury and Diller-Odell schools.

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.

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. 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.

To address the political discord in our world, I issued the following statement at our October 7 board meeting:

In a world that can be dark, we all have the capacity to be points of light

Where there is discord, we will pursue discussion

Where there is accusation, we will pursue understanding

Where there is hate, we will pursue love

We will be the builders of understanding and tear down the walls of prejudice and anger

We can disagree, but not be disagreeable while standing strong for our principles

We are all daughters and sons of a loving God

We each were called for this time

Our board as your elected public servants will always be dedicated to ensure that we as a Jefferson County government team are striving 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. We will not be meeting on December 23<sup>rd</sup> but will be meeting on December 30<sup>th</sup>. As always, please contact any of us if you have questions or concerns. We are here to serve you.

As we prepare for Christmas, let us remember and reflect on the true source of government from Isaiah:

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

We wish you all a joyous Christmas and Happy New Year 2026!