

Jefferson County Commissioners Update May 2025

Commissioner Mark Schoenrock, Board Chairman

As we enter summer 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 March veteran of the month was Roger Garton of Diller, April veteran of the month was John Chaput of Fairbury and May veteran of the month was Roger Roskilly of Fairbury. 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.

It was our privilege to support Jefferson Community Health and Life's request for congressional funding for the purchase of an MRI machine to serve our citizens.

We are working closely with our diversion director, Peggy Galloway and School Attendance support director Heather Watson to serve our citizens and families.

In March we hosted in Diller the PWF road project coordination meeting with representatives from all of the PWF project management team. The project is currently in environmental review due to federal funding. We continue to lead the effort to get this project to construction as soon as possible and are cautiously optimistic we can get out for bids in summer 2026. We were successful in getting the bridge between highway 103 and Gage County line broken out separately so we will be able to start construction on that sooner. We were also successful in getting 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 cost is \$12.5M.

We declared a state of emergency from the March wind and snow storm which made the county and other providers eligible for further financial assistance to recover from the storm.

I had the privilege to represent Jefferson County at the County Board Chair workshop in Kearney. It is always a very good learning experience to how we can better serve our citizens.

We continue our coordination with the Nebraska Public Service Commission, Nebraska broadband office and internet service providers to bring high speed internet to Jefferson County. We are on target to have close to or at 100% of the county with high speed broadband within the year.

In April we had our third 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.

Our ambulance director Jeff Klaumann retired. We are very thankful for Jeff's dedicated service to the citizens of Jefferson County and are currently going through the process to replace him. Our ambulance service is very important to the citizens of Jefferson County.

In April we commemorated the birthday of the American founder and patriot for whom our county is named, Thomas Jefferson.

We also received the final United States Economic Development Administration payment for our new Endicott road. The road was paid for nearly 90% by grants, and Endicott and Jefferson County paid the remaining 10%. We also completed the new Steele City road which was paid for by TC Energy after the Keystone pipeline spill. The county negotiated this agreement with TC Energy and only paid for new culverts, railing and engineering.

We represented Jefferson County at the two day Upstream event in Fairbury. We thank Judge Bauer for this process which will better coordinate and integrate all of the services which serve Jefferson County children and families.

The county is in the process to review and acquire Microsoft software continuation, computers and internet service. Jefferson County, like our citizens and businesses, runs on automation and we must keep up with all of the advances as they occur. We are grateful to our IT professionals to keep us up and running and safe from the many threats which attack our systems daily in order for us to provide top quality service to our citizens.

We also 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. The 2025-2026 county budget process will begin shortly and we encourage our citizens to be engaged in that process.

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.

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 citizens.

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 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. In my case, I serve in leadership capacities for the Nebraska Association of County Officials, 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.

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.