

**CITY OF HARPER, KANSAS
COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, APRIL 27, 2026 6:30 P.M.
CITY HALL – 201 W. MAIN ST.
KENNETH LEU, MAYOR**

Council met in regular session with Mayor Leu in chair.

Eric Barker	<i>Present</i>	Pat Kerschen	<i>Present</i>	Doug Murphy	<i>Present</i>
Jeff Capps	<i>Present</i>	Kenneth Leu	<i>Present</i>	Brande Voegelé	<i>Present</i>

Pledge of Allegiance & Invocation

Motion by Pat Kerschen second by Doug Murphy to remove Agenda Items 6 and 7 (water rates and sewer rates for RVs) from the regular agenda and reschedule them as the sole items for a special meeting. Motion carried 5 – 1, with Councilman Barker voting no.

Admin/Clerk Cooperrider administered the oath of office to Elliott Irvin as Council Member for the City of Harper, Kansas. Councilmember Irvin signed the oath form and was welcomed by the mayor and council.

The mayor to call for nominations of President of Council.

Nomination 1: Brande Voegelé, nominated by Councilman Barker.

Nomination 2: Pat Kerschen, nominated by Councilman Murphy.

There were no further nominations.

Motion by Eric Barker second by Brande Voegelé to elect Brande Voegelé as the President of Council. Yea – Barker, Irvin, Voegelé; Nay – Capps, Kerschen, Murphy. Mayor Leu cast the tie-breaking vote in favor. Motion carried 4 – 3.

Motion by Doug Murphy second by Pat Kerschen to have Councilman Irvin fill the vacant positions on the Finance, City Facilities and Economic/Industrial Development Committees. Motion carried 6- 0, Councilman Irvin abstained.

Governing Body determined no adjustments were necessary to the special Fire Communications Committee (400/800). Mayor Leu will continue to serve with Councilman Murphy.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes of the April 13, 2026 Council Meeting.

Minutes of the April 23, 2026 Special Council Meeting.

Appropriation Ordinance No. 20260427

March Municipal Court Publication Report

Treasurer's Quarterly Report

Motion by Eric Barker second by Jeff Capps to approve the consent agenda. Motion carried 6- 0.

Public Comment: Ali Weisheit, 1303 Central St., informed the governing body that on or around Sunday, April 19th, a neighboring property spilled gasoline near their garage and did not clean it up. She described a strong gasoline odor lasting approximately four days, affecting her family including young children. She expressed concern about the adequacy of the city's response and sought clarification on applicable ordinances.

Chief Burns responded, explaining that the existing nuisance ordinance addressing spills on public property (streets, alleys, city property) does not extend authority to compel cleanup of spills on private property. He noted that an odor-based nuisance complaint would require the standard abatement process, which would be impractical given that the odor had dissipated by the time any order could be served. He acknowledged that Officer Duhon had asked the neighbor to clean it up voluntarily, but had no legal authority to compel compliance. Mayor Leu, in his capacity as Emergency Manager, noted the quantity appeared to be less than one gallon and therefore was not reportable under KDHE hazardous materials thresholds.

Mrs. Weisheit also described a monarch butterfly waystation garden she was constructing on her property, noting that a portion may fall within the public right-of-way on Central Avenue. She asked whether she could install a temporary barrier to protect the garden.

Staff explained that the right-of-way on the 1300 block of Central Avenue is 100 feet wide (approximately 50 feet from centerline), and that obstructing public right-of-way requires governing body approval. Mayor Leu suggested Mrs. Weisheit prepare a drawing of the proposed garden and barrier, submit it to the City Administrator, and staff would advise whether it could be accommodated within the right-of-way regulations.

Department Reports:

Police: Chief Burns reported that the past two weeks had been quiet with no major incidents.

Fire: Chief Flores noted continued work on the department policy manual and that all required reports are in progress.

Public Works: A new 6-inch water main is being installed from Ash Street to Pine Street, replacing a prior 2-inch line and extending to Central Street. Approximately one-half block of work remained as of the meeting date. The pool is full and preparations are proceeding more successfully than the prior year. Piping appears to be holding well. Electrical trench work was completed for Sycamore Street lights. Wheatland Electric installed 3 metal light poles obtained from their Great Bend yard. The city's cost is limited to ongoing monthly usage charges of approximately \$12 per month. A press motor blockage caused an overload at the wastewater treatment plant, which was resolved by city staff. Grading had been delayed pending rain. Staff began watering dirt roads to allow grading to proceed.

Council Action/Deliberations:

The structure at 607 East Main Street has been the subject of condemnation proceedings initiated in August 2025. Property owner Chris Tucker addressed the council. He stated that he and his wife Megan Shannon (the owner of record) were unaware the property had been condemned and placed on the demolition list, as all notifications had been sent to an outdated PO Box in Cheney, Kansas that had not been active for seven years. The current address on file with the county treasurer was correct, but for whatever reason the title work that was performed on the property reflected the old address. The discrepancy has since been corrected with the City Administrator. Council discussion reflected consensus in favor of allowing the sale to proceed, with the expectation that a new owner would be given a reasonable but defined timeline to demonstrate progress on repairs. Council requested a resolution be drafted for the next council meeting to rescind the demolition order while leaving the condemnation in place. Staff will notify the demolition contractor that the contract is being pulled.

Motion by Doug Murphy second by Brande Vogele to issue an Order of Violation to the owner of 909 Walnut for violation of Chapter 28 Article 2 Section 28-19. Motion carried 6- 0.

Motion by Doug Murphy second by Pat Kerschen to issue an Order of Violation to the owner of 1222 Oak St. for violation of Chapter 28 Article 2 Section 28-19. Motion carried 6- 0.

Council set May 18, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers for the special meeting to review the previously completed water and sewer utility rate analysis. Beth Warren, KMU, who had performed the analysis, will be in attendance to provide background and explanation of the determination.

Motion by Brande Vogele second by Eli Irvin to contribute \$1,000 towards the Liberty at the Lake: 250th Celebration hosted by Harper County HEART to be paid from the General – Community Development Fund. Motion carried 6- 0.

Motion by Eric Barker second by Jeff Capps to approve the appointments as submitted by the Mayor. Yea – Vogele, Murphy, Kerschen, Irvin, Capps, Barker; Nay – 0; Motion carried 6 -0.

City Attorney -----	Phil Unruh	Emergency Management Director	Ken Leu
Enforcing Officer -----	Tom Burns	Floodplain Administrator -----	Mike Alldritt
Freedom of Information Officer	Tiffany Cooperrider	Municipal Judge -----	Elaine Esparza
Zoning Administrator -----	IBTS		

Committee Reports:

Councilman Kerschen reported no recent activity but noted plans to schedule a meeting with Councilmember Irvin to begin reviewing the budget for the upcoming year, with water rates as a component of that discussion.

The personnel committee reported that recruitment advertising for a permanent Chief of Police is being prepared, as Chief Burns is scheduled to retire on December 31st. Councilman Murphy noted plans to attend the KLETC seminar "Gold Shield" on May 18th no cost, focused on recruitment and selection of police chiefs, to assist in the hiring process.

There was discussion regarding the operation of the Harper Municipal Airport and funding for continued upkeep. General consensus indicated the airport board would need to come to the next budget cycle prepared to justify a mill levy or demonstrate self-sufficiency.

Admin. Report: Staff was assisting the planning commission on a proposed amendment to permit accessory dwelling units in R-1 Single-Family districts. A benefit meeting was held with staff for transition from FCMI to EZ MERP. Admin. shared recommendations from the employment law institute that included developing an AI (artificial intelligence) policy for the workplace, citing AI glasses as an example that could document and record confidential data, compromising the security of personal information held by the City. The annual exemption for Cox Machine had been filed. An application had been filed for an expansion at Misak Auto. The City's server had experienced a failed drive, staff was working on cost comparison of replacing the drive versus the 7-year-old server that was nearing its end of life. A site meeting was held at the waterway on Williams' property with Chris Hoskinson, Harper County Natural Conservation Services, and property owners Shawn and Skyler Williams. Potential solutions were identified for the bridge and future waterway maintenance. Admin. had drafted an administrative search warrant template that was under review by Attorney David Waters who worked with the League of Kansas Municipalities in developing the Municipal Nuisance guidebook. Once he returned his comments with any corrections, it would receive final review from the city attorney. An inspection date was being coordinated with SCKEDD and the Land Bank to create a scope of work for 606 E. Main St. as a potential project. The Rural Opportunity Zones were no longer being supported by the state legislature, but current participants will have their programs honored. Harper had one participant that would require funding for the remainder of their program. Admin. Cooperrider would be attending the annual Infrastructure Summit hosted by state agencies that participated in the Infrastructure Hub. They provided guidance and education on federal grants, and then will attend the Kansas City/County Management conference.

Old Business: Council revisited the issue of replacing pool area lighting with LED fixtures to reduce insect attraction. With the bucket truck not safely operating, it was suggested that public works rent a lift from the local hardware store. Councilman Capps will forward the lighting information to staff for ordering to test out one pole. The bucket truck's hydraulic system was further discussed. Councilman Capps believed that the hydraulic issue could be resolved. Staff will obtain quotes and pursue repair.

The City-wide Cleanup was brought up for discussion. The history of prior efforts and associated expenses were shared. Prior councils had eliminated the event noting that almost everything that was put out on curbs during the clean up could be picked up by the trash haulers as a part of the regular trash service. It was also shared that the Harper County Free Dump Days would be May 13-16th.

New Business: Admin. Cooperrider introduced a request to hire a second seasonal employee to work with the water/wastewater departments to assist in routine maintenance and upkeep so the department could continue to tackle the larger water and sewer main repairs. Consensus of Council was to begin advertising for additional seasonal help.

Notices/Communications: Information was shared on the annual Kansas 811 meeting, the Anthony Farmer's COOP annual meeting and the Blue Cross Blue Shield Board of Directors meeting.

Motion by Brande Vogeles second by Eric Barker to adjourn. Motion carried 6- 0.

Tiffany M. Cooperrider CMC, CPM
City Administrator/Clerk