

**CITY OF HARPER, KANSAS
COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, MAY 11, 2026 6:30 P.M.
CITY HALL – 201 W. MAIN ST.
KENNETH LEU, MAYOR**

Council met in regular session with Mayor Leu in chair. Councilmembers present were Jeff Capps, Elliott Irvin, Patrick Kerschen, Doug Murphy, and Brande Vogele. Councilman Eric Barker was absent.

Pledge of Allegiance & Invocation

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes of the April 27, 2026 Council Meeting.

Appropriation Ordinance No. 20260511

Motion by Pat Kerschen second by Brande Vogele to approve the consent agenda. Motion carried 5- 0.

Public Comment: Marie Starks, on behalf of the Art Association, asked if the City was doing anything for the 250th 4th of July holiday. Currently there were no plans.

Department Reports:

Police: Sgt. Walter reported the department responding to couple hit and runs with one leading to a charge of duty to the driver, a couple of trespass warnings, a couple of agency assists, a welfare check. They also had 29 students graduate from the Harper PD DARE program.

Fire: Annual Fire Report included in packet.

Public Works: Water department had been working on preparing the pool and will evaluate concerns of a leak. Staff will need to meet with the Infrastructure Committee to evaluate options moving forward with the Williams Waterway once it is finished being cleared out. The 6th water line had been completed to Central St., but would be delaying further progress until after harvest. There was also a significant leak that required all of public works to participate in the repair. A deteriorated valve cap had broken off the end of a 4” main on East 8th St. Due to not being able to isolate the area of the leak, a fire plug had to be open to slow flow enough for a live repair. There were further issues at 210 W. 16th and the sewer main. It continues to back up, but what has been pulled out has been a significant amount of sand, which could indicate a collapse. Mayer Specialty Services will arrive Tuesday to televisc the line to determine the full scope of damage and assist in developing the most efficient and cost-effective path forward. Cemetery will be preparing for Memorial Day.

Council Action/Deliberations:

Mayor Leu presented an “Appreciation of Service” to former Mayor Eric Latta who served from January 2024-April 2026.

Afton Forred, Harper Library Director, was in attendance to share with Council the Library Board’s recommendations for appointments to the Harper Library Board. The two outgoing members, Joy Thetge and Jeri Jacobs had both served two consecutive terms, and by statute must sit off the board for a least one year. From a pool of 20 potential board members, the Library Board had narrowed their recommendation to Deanna Stevens and Karen Aldis.

Motion by Brande Vogele second by Pat Kerschen to approve the mayor’s appointment of Deanna Stevens and Karen Aldis to the Harper Library Board, both serving a 4-year term. Motion carried 5- 0.

Marie Starks, owner of 606 Washington St. was in attendance for a progress update on the repairs needed to remove the structure from the condemned list. She provided a list of repairs that had been made since the March 9, 2026 council meeting. Her efforts were being split between two houses. She was waiting for someone to finish taking down a tree. She was asked about the potential buyer that had been discussed at the previous meeting. She noted that since she wasn’t sure where she was going to live, she wasn’t ready to sell it quite yet. She also had someone coming to look at the windows and the siding. Council reviewed the original list of repairs to determine what remained to be done.

Motion by Doug Murphy second by Pat Kerschen to grant a 60-day extension with an inspection prior to the regular meeting following the extension (for repairs on 606 Washington). Motion carried 5 – 0.

It was clarified the inspection for 606 Washington would need to be complete before the July 13, 2026 regular council meeting.

Jeff Jacobs, owner of 704 Oak St., was in attendance to provide an update on the repairs of the condemned structure. He had made progress on the roof, and cleaned up some of the debris in the yard. Iris Faucett was also in attendance on his behalf. She shared that he was working as hard as he could on it because he didn't have any help or any money. He had the old roof torn off; the new sheeting put on but still needed to put on new shingles. He was waiting on a ride to empty another load of debris.

Motion by Doug Murphy second by Jeff Capps to grant a 30-day extension and status update at the regular meeting following the 30-day extension. Motion carried 5 – 0.

Motion by Jeff Capps second by Pat Kerschen to adopt Resolution No. 949-26 a resolution rescinding the order to remove or raze the structure located beginning 408.8' east of the NW Corner of Government Lot 7, East 50', South 230', West 50', North 230' to Point of Beginning less road rights-of-way in Section 06 of Township 32 Range 06 in Harper County, Kansas, commonly known and referred to as 607 E. Main St. Harper, Kansas, previously issued in Resolution No. 933-25, while maintaining the finding that the structure is unsafe and dangerous and providing notice of a hearing regarding the condemned status of the property. Motion carried 5- 0.

Motion by Doug Murphy second by Pat Kerschen to hire Scotty McCartney as a public works seasonal employee at a rate of \$15.00/hr. Motion carried 5- 0.

Motion by Doug Murphy second by Pat Kerschen to approve the mayor's appointment to the Harper Volunteer Fire Department as presented. Yea – Capps, Kerschen, Irvin, Murphy, Vogele; Nay – 0. Motion carried 5 – 0.

Calvin Flores	Fire Chief	Isitolo Kelemete	Kerry Williams
Gary Ummel, Jr.	Asst. Fire Chief	Mynor Diaz	Sergio Reyes
Scott Blubaugh	Asst. Fire Chief	Dylan Harshbarger	Raul Mancilla
Dean Hufford	Captain	Nick Snodgrass	Duke Christner
Jeff Green	Captain	Thomas Snodgrass	Pake Green
Melanie Miller	Lieutenant	William Ring	Andrew Kirkpatrick
Nick Blanchat	Lieutenant	Austin McRight	Jesus Reyes
Ray Bonner	Safety Officer	Angel Mendoza	

Fire Chief Flores provided the annual fire report. The proposed department "Standard Operating Guidelines" had been revised with the command staff's requested amendments. The revised version had been provided to the governing body for their review. He noted 74 runs for 2025, down approximately 20 from 2024. The report included status of equipment and vehicle report.

Motion by Eli Irvin second by Brande Vogele to approve the following board and commission appointments as submitted by Mayor. Yea – Vogele, Murphy, Irvin, Kerschen, Capps; Nay – 0; Motion carried 5 – 0.

Airport Board	Phil Unruh to complete a 1-year term.
	Bob Welch to complete a 3-year term.
Land Bank	Lonnie Teel to complete a 3-year term.
Planning Commission & BZA	Dustin Stansbury to complete a 3-year term.
Recreation Commission	Braden Francis to fulfill Ashley Hostetler's unexpired term (2029).
	Bret Misak to complete a 4-year term.
	Marla Wedman to complete a 4-year term.
Tree Board	Mike Alldritt to complete a 3-year term.

Motion by Brande Vogeles second by Eli Irvin to approve the additional carryover of 20 vacation hours for Stan Ryberg. Motion carried 5- 0.

Council reviewed a request for a home-based business from Joy Hufford for 2117 Oak St. A consent agreement was required of 75% of the property owners within 200' of the proposed location. The City of Harper owned 2106 Central Ave. (parking lot for t-ball fields) which was within the 200' radius.

Motion by Eli Irvin second by Doug Murphy to authorize the signing of the consent agreement for the special use permit application for 2117 Oak's home-based business. Motion carried 5 – 0.

Committee Reports: Finance Committee has started to meet in preparation for the 2027 budget. They welcomed suggestions from other councilmembers. Councilman Kerschen will be participating in the Finance and Budget webinar being hosted by the League of Kansas Municipalities.

Councilman Capps noted a lack of Infrastructure meetings. Administrator Cooperrider explained that, due to limited staff resources and ongoing projects, there had been limited need for additional meetings. Earlier in the year, the committee reviewed potential street projects pending the outcome of the Ash water main grant application. After learning in late March that the grant was not awarded, the committee determined Oak Street should move forward as the next proposed project. Administrator Cooperrider further explained that, in an effort to reduce engineering costs, she was left to prepare the request for proposals internally, with the intent that the committee would later evaluate project scope based on bid unit costs. She also noted the committee had previously met regarding the City Shop project, which was subsequently rebid with contractors provided six weeks to submit proposals. Councilman Capps stated that, following further evaluation of city streets, he no longer believed Oak Street should be the next priority project. Councilman Kerschen agreed that based off the areas he was familiar with Oak St. was in better condition than most. He would like to see what options were available for east/west streets. Mayor Leu also noted that it would be worth exploring a street project north of the highway.

The LED pool lights had been ordered and once received, public works would put on their work order list.

Administrator Cooperrider asked for consensus from the Personnel Committee to allow herself and the Water Foreman to conduct applicant interviews and potentially bring forward a recommendation the following week, with the possibility of holding a special meeting prior to the already scheduled May 18 special council meeting. They approved staff proceeding.

Councilman Murphy asked how many applications had been received for the Chief of Police position. To date, there had been two received.

Discussion was held regarding future Airport Committee and Airport Board coordination. Administrator Cooperrider suggested inviting members of the Airport Board to the next regular City Council meeting to facilitate discussion and allow the Governing Body to consider direction moving forward. Council expressed agreement with the approach and requested that invitations be extended to all Airport Board members to attend the next regular Council meeting. Councilman Capps recommended that the City property south of Greenline be put back to hay to save on public works mowing. Council agreed.

City Facility committee again reviewed the pool lights, they'll try one pole and see if it is effective before proceeding with the rest.

Parks and cemetery committee noted that both the park and cemetery are looking good.

Health and Welfare committee asked about rebidding abatements. Admin. Cooperrider shared that two contractors had contacted City Hall and were interested. She informed them once an RFP was prepared; she would contact them. Economic Development, staff would reach out to Prime Craftsman Homes to see how their pitch went with Patterson Health Center for the vacant area of the Harper Campus. Councilman Irvin expressed an interest in exploring downtown revitalization that possibly included housing.

Admin. Report: An update was provided for the US Bureau of Reclamation regional grant submitted for Advance Metering Inventory on behalf of the cities of Anthony and Harper. It had been paused by the Trump administration in early 2025. At the Infrastructure Summit it was learned that the pause was lifted and they intended to announce grant awards later in the spring. Kansas Municipal Utilities had come across a private grant opportunity for a very large water project. Katie Miller with KMU submitted an application combining projects from multiple agencies including Harper's 10" water main replacement. The first home in the Sycamore Development, 909 W. 17th St. was under contract. Staff had reached out to Klausmeyer regarding proceeding with construction of a third home, they had not

yet responded. Contracts had been executed for the demolition of 604 Oak St. and 1912 Pine St. but were waiting on the certificates of insurance before issuing the Notice to Proceed. Staff was working on obtaining two quotes for the hydraulic repair to the bucket truck in compliance with the City's procurement procedures. The street department had to shut down the use of the backhoe due to hearing knocking in the engine. It was being transported to Wichita for further evaluation as the service repairman was unable to diagnose on-site. In an emergency staff would have to rent one.

New Business: City Administrator reviewed with City Council the existing practice for employee recognition, every five years the employees were invited to City Council for recognition where they would receive a gift card in an amount equal to their years of service x \$10.00. There were a few employees coming up on a five-year increment and she requested guidance on how they would like to continue, noting that instead of gift cards it would be easier for tax purposes to add the gift to their paycheck.

Motion by Pat Kerschen second by Brande Vogele to continue the existing employee recognition program. Motion carried 5 – 0.

Councilman Irvin noted he was pleased with the invitation being extended to the airport board. He had some questions relating to the benefit the airport was to the city and what income was derived from it. He also noted that he would like to look into the city boundaries and consider properties that lie just beyond the city limits for potential annexation.

Admin. Cooperrider brought attention to the ongoing debate over the responsibility of the bridge north of the BNSF railroad on Central St. The bridge's condition continues to deteriorate. Repairs had been made at some point in the last 20 years, and not by the City which could indicate the railroad assuming responsibility. However, when a formal notice was sent to BNSF they took the position of it not being their responsibility. Council was going to have to consider all their options in the near future.

Motion by Brande Vogele second by Pat Kerschen to adjourn. Motion carried 5- 0.

Tiffany M. Cooperrider CMC, CPM
City Administrator/Clerk