



COUNTY OF LEAVENWORTH

From the desk of Commissioner Mike Stieben

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Even in a Pandemic County Business moves forward-

By : Mike Stieben Leavenworth County Commissioner District #5

By reading the newspaper or social media one might be led to believe that the only recent issue facing Leavenworth County government has been community masking mandates. This is certainly not the case although that has been a major issue. In fact, the mask issue has generated a great number of phone calls, letters, emails, and social media posts and personal comments. I thought it was important that I bring you up to date on the some of the latest happenings in county government.

Masks-

Leavenworth County has decided to opt-out of the governor's Executive Order mandating masks. This is not a new position for the Commission as the County had already voted to not make mask use a mandate and we were simply re-affirming that position in the most recent vote. The governor apparently re-issued the Executive Order as a political move to see how many additional counties would comply with her Executive Order. My position has always been that I support all of the health department recommendations for the mitigation of Covid-19. This includes handwashing, sanitary practices, focus on at-risk populations, and mask wearing where social distancing cannot be maintained. I do not believe that this is an issue that should involve law enforcement or mandates. We need to pull together as a community and each take personal responsibility to do the right thing by following mitigation recommendations.

County Road 1-

During the past year I have conducted two town hall meetings addressing the issue of the proposed wholesale re-zoning of the county road one corridor which encompasses almost 9000 acres south of Tonganoxie. Development of the corridor, which includes the turnpike entrances, major road improvements, and the expansion of the Tonganoxie Business Park has cost county taxpayers over 20 million dollars. The Commission has lifted the moratorium on development along the corridor and now is considering zoning. I conducted a survey in addition to the meetings and from my responses most residents of the Fifth Commission District oppose the large rezone but a majority would support a more limited approach that would re-zone only near the turn-pike entrance and north of Hemphill Road to the industrial park just south of Tonganoxie. I will offer this more modest rezone as an alternative but I will not be supporting the larger rezone proposed. I was also supportive of \$1.2 million in county funds being dedicated to utility improvements to the industrial park as proposed by the city of Tonganoxie.

Roads-

Leavenworth County made an application for, and was awarded the highest grant award amount of \$900,000 under the Kansas Cost Share Program of the Kansas Department of Transportation, for road improvements on 158th Street (CR#2) between K32 and Kansas Avenue. These improvements include turn lanes, shoulders, and road surface improvements. This will be a direct benefit to southern Leavenworth County and should improve road safety in that area.

Completion of the Dust Abatement road phases 1-7 was achieved this year, under pave in place, many miles of road were asphalted.

The Commission has conducted several work sessions to identify and prioritize future road improvement projects and goals, some of these include, improvement of 158th st., CR30 improvements, additional asphalt phases, and projects to fill pavement gaps.

I plan to write an entire article about road improvements in the future.

Building Codes-

After the Linwood Tornado some residents had trouble obtaining the full replacement costs of their properties up to code because insurance companies balked at having to replace previously build structures up to code when the county had no codes at all. A committee was appointed to recommend basic building codes that will impute liability on contractors if they do not follow construction codes in the future on new construction. The codes are basic only and will not include a Johnson County style bureaucracy for enforcement.

Comprehensive Plan-

After months of effort and many delays due to Covid-19 the County has adopted the new Comprehensive Land Use Plan. This plan replaces the 2008 plan and will be a guide to land use in the future. Focus of the plan is to encourage development near existing infrastructure, water and sewer lines, and where services are available. I will write more on this topic in a future article to address specific issues involved in development of the plan.

I always would like to hear from you if there are specific issues or concerns that I can help you with. Please do not hesitate to call me at 913-775-2772

Mike Stieben
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