



Office of
Mary Jo Spino
Clerk of the County Legislature

Jackson County Missouri

JOURNAL

Jackson County Courthouse
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County Legislature

*DaRon McGee (4th) Chairman,
Donna Peyton (2nd AL) Vice Chairman,
Jalen Anderson (1st AL), Megan L. Marshall (3rd AL),
Manuel Abarca IV (1st), Venessa Huskey (2nd),
Charlie Franklin (3rd), Jeanie Lauer (5th)
Sean E. Smith (6th)*

Thursday, May 15, 2025

10:00 AM

Sixteenth Regular Meeting

K.C. Legislative Assembly Area, Kansas City, Missouri

DaRon McGee, Chairman, called the meeting of the Jackson County Legislature to order.

1 ROLL CALL

Present 8 - DaRon McGee, Donna Peyton, Jalen Anderson, Megan L. Marshall,
Manuel Abarca IV, Charlie Franklin, Jeanie Lauer and Sean E.
Smith

Excused 1 - Venessa Huskey

2 THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Recited.

3 APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

A motion was made by Sean E. Smith, seconded by Jalen Anderson to approve the journal of the previous meeting held on May 14, 2025. The motion passed by a voice vote.

4 HEARINGS

Beverly Newman, Court Administrator for the 16th Judicial Circuit, was present to explain the impact on the courts of having no budget. She introduced Judge Jennifer Phillips with Family Court, Judge Dale Youngs, Chairman of the Budget and Audit Committee for the Courts and Zachary Smith, Counsel for the Court. She said Kevin Harrell, Presiding Judge is in Jefferson City, Missouri attending a meeting.

Ms. Newman said the court budget is controlled by Section 50.640 RSMo. She said the budget was submitted consistent with the requirement of State statute and the Jackson County Charter. She noted that there is an interdependence not only in the county but other service providers as well. It has been and will be the court's practice to manage their resources very conservatively. The courts are constantly and consistently assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of how they use their appropriated funds. The Court has continued to operate under the 2024 budget as directed.

She wanted to talk about the new decision items that have been impacted by the delay. The 2025 critical and necessary items presented in the budget are delayed and relate to critical safety concerns. There is an issue with the entry point for judicial officers and staff at the Eastern Jackson County Courthouse. The budget request included two full time employees to add to the civil process department. As a result of losing an employee last year and after a risk assessment was completed, the court has been advised they need to have two employees present at each eviction and other high risk circumstances. Regarding civil process vehicles, there is concern when they are in high risk circumstances because currently employees use their own vehicles.

Donna Peyton, County Legislator, interrupted to ask if security issues should only be discussed in closed session. Bryan Covinsky, County Counselor, said if specific security issues are discussed it would require a closed session. Ms. Peyton disagreed because risks and how to alleviate risks were being discussed but she yielded to the County Counselor's advice.

Beverly Newman said if there are any questions regarding how the court would implement any safety issues discussed today, a closed session would be necessary.

She said Family Court has an entry point and sally port issue. She is managing increased specific threats on a regular basis which are critical and need to be addressed as soon as possible. The threats are against judicial officers and staff.

Another critical item is transitioning the office of Guardian ad Litem to the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program. This transition is part of the 2025 budget. Other critical items not included in the 2024 budget include cyber security, family court services and program expansions including meeting medical needs of youth in the custody of the court, the ongoing deferred maintenance challenges that exist in our buildings from HVAC to plumbing issues and updates/upgrades of equipment. As we all know the purchasing process is lengthy, so it will be a challenge to get the items in the 2025 budget through the process. Contracts are expired for such services as having law enforcement available for visitation exchanges and supervision that occurs in the Family Court Resource Center. With regards to merit increases, she has met with staff to discuss updated court policies and during discussions, staff have shared their concerns about layoffs and programming decisions due to funding issues. Ms. Newman said they are very appreciative of the commitment to resolve the dispute and address the critical concerns and needs of the court.

Sean E. Smith, County Legislator, asked if the court's purchases need to be presented to the County Legislature for approval. Beverly Newman said yes.

Mr. Smith said the County Legislature adopted the 2025 budget, the County Executive vetoed it but he has not presented a new appropriation ordinance to the County Legislature. He asked what guidance the courts have been using to determine whether or not they can spend funds. Ms. Newman said guidance has been received through verbal communication with County finance officers.

Manuel Abarca IV, County Legislator, asked about the County's responsibility to maintain the downtown courthouse or any county buildings. Beverly Newman said it is the County's burden to maintain the facilities.

Sean E. Smith, County Legislator, said there was discussion yesterday regarding consequences for spending based on the 2024 budget but using it for items listed in the 2025 budget. Ms. Newman said they want to cooperate with the County Executive and County Legislature as they work through the issues. She said the courts are having internal discussions regarding what to do regarding these critical issues and how to move forward but no decisions have been made.

Sean E. Smith encouraged Ms. Newman to listen to the recording of the legislative meeting held yesterday. He said there is a level of arbitrariness in the guidance that departments have been given, and there are no clear consequences if staff spend appropriations or act contrary to the guidance. He is surprised that the guidance is only verbal, he thought it would be written, clear and consistent. Some departments are being more severely limited on spending than other departments especially when it relates to safety. By contrast, he said the County Executive has hosted lunches for several staff and public events for park volunteers with steak dinners, which is shocking.

Caleb Clifford, Chief of Staff, said the Administration has never provided any guidance to the Prosecuting Attorney's office that limited their ability to do their work and have never told them they can or cannot do something. If they have questions. The Administration has referred them to the County Counselor's office. The Administration has also not told the Courts they cannot spend anything that the County Executive's office is spending.

Manuel Abarca IV, County Legislator, said the County Executive's office has the authority to rectify a lot of these issues and is choosing instead to allow certain departments to do celebrations. The County Executive has not proactively tried to solve these issues. The County Legislature is still waiting

for a budget book and budget amendment from the County Executive. He said the County Executive is still not in the room and is too cowardly to enter the legislative chambers but instead watches the meeting from his office.

Charlie Franklin, County Legislator, said he believes everyone is working as fast as they can with a few limitations. He does not think tomorrow is possible but they hope to have a budget ordinance soon.

Sean E. Smith asked if the County Legislature will receive a budget book consistent with the ordinance that has accurate actuals from prior years. Mr. Franklin said it is possible but more likely that we will have the original budget book with amendments.

DaRon McGee thanked Ms. Newman for participating in the legislative meeting.

5 COMMUNICATIONS WITH AND REPORTS OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

None.

6 PERFECTION OF PROPOSED ORDINANCES AND REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

None.

7 FINAL PASSAGE OF PROPOSED ORDINANCES

None.

8 RESOLUTIONS IN COMMITTEE

None.

9 CONSENT AGENDA

None.

10 INTRODUCTION OF PROPOSED ORDINANCES AND ASSIGNMENT TO COMMITTEE

Chairman McGee said the County Legislature is awaiting a budget ordinance from the County Executive.

11 INTRODUCTION OF PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS AND ASSIGNMENT TO COMMITTEE

None.

12 COUNTY EXECUTIVE ORDERS

None.

13 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

14 NEW BUSINESS

None.

15 ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Jalen Anderson, seconded by Donna Peyton, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed by a voice vote.

Meeting adjourned until Friday, May 16, 2025 at 10:00 A.M. at the Jackson County Courthouse, 415 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri, 2nd Floor, Legislative Assembly Area.