

Jackson County, Missouri

Commissioners
Howard Lotven, Chairman
Mary Shannon
Jacquelyn Eidson
Mike Yonke
Brent Herrick
Holmes Osborne
Karen Baker



Jackson County Courthouse
415 E. 12th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64106
(816)881-3670

Ethics, Human Relations, and Citizen Complaints Commission

Agenda

First Regular Meeting

Thursday, January 15, 2026, at 5:15 p.m.

Jackson County Courthouse, 415 E 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64106
2nd Floor Legislative Assembly Area

1. Call to Order

Howard Lotven, Chairman, called the first regular meeting of the Ethics, Human Relations, and Citizen Complaints Commission to order at 5:15p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present 3 – Howard Lotven, Mary Shannon, Jacquelyn Eidson, Mike Yonke, Brent Herrick, Karen Baker

Absent 1 – Holmes Osborne

Excused – NONE

3. Introduction of OEHRCC Staff and Members of the Public

Present 3 – OEHRCC Staff Director Chris Crawford, Complaint Officer Alexandria Gold-Barnes, Administrative Assistant Lisa Kinney

Present 2 – Jackson County Employees – County Executive Phil LeVota, Chief of Staff Theresa Garza

4. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mary Shannon, seconded by Brent Herrick to approve the seventh regular meeting minutes. The motion passed with a voice vote.

5. Director's Report

New Commissioners

The commission is now fully appointed with seven members for the first time since 2021. The county executive recognized the importance and urgency of maintaining independent oversight and worked as quickly as the process allows us to get new members appointed. In addition to the new members, the county executive reappointed previous members to new terms. The full commission now includes:

Howard Lotven, Chairman – reappointed Mary Shannon – reappointed Jacqueline Eidson – reappointed Mike Yonke Brent Herrick Holmes Osborne Karen Baker

The executive order making these appointments is attached for reference. After the executive order was received by the legislature, they had 15 days to reject any appointments they disagreed with. They chose not to reject the appointments, and they are now fully in effect.

At an upcoming commission meeting, we will conduct commissioner training and orientation. This will include a deeper dive into the sections of county code and the county charter that governs the commission, its duties, responsibilities, and powers.

- Information on the training and orientation will be sent out at a future time to the commissioners.

Collection Department

The collection department has been going through their busiest season of the year. There were some delays with physical tax bills being sent out to taxpayers due to some issues with the county's mass mailing provider, with some taxpayers not receiving their bills in the mail until mid-late December. All bills were available online at the beginning of November, but many taxpayers have a difficult time navigating the online portal or simply prefer to view and pay a paper statement. This delay caused an increase in complaints/feedback from citizens regarding their tax bills, with many claiming they were prepared to pay but didn't know what amount they owed. The collection department, and our office, were available to help taxpayers with questions, and the county executive established a new hotline with the sole purpose of answering taxpayers' questions, but these additional steps proved to be an inconvenience for many taxpayers. To provide some more time and additional relief, the county executive extended the deadline to pay without penalty to the end of January.

In addition to the billing/ mailing issue, the collection department has been busy implementing the senior property tax credit program and the account credits created by the county executive's 15% cap on assessed value for 2023 and 2025. Both of these processes have created some issues for the department and caused some confusion among taxpayers.

Qualified seniors who have applied and been approved will have their tax bills frozen in the form of credits moving forward, but their property values could continue to increase. For example, if someone was approved for the senior property tax credit program in 2025, the amount they owed in the 2025 tax year will be the most they will ever have to pay unless they move or upgrade their property. However, the property will continue to be reassessed during each assessment cycle. Assuming the value of the property goes up,

the assessed value and tax amount would also go up, but the taxpayer would receive a credit for the difference between the new amount and the amount from the year the value was frozen, leading to no actual increase in the amount of taxes they owe.

In addition to the senior credit, the collection department is working through how to apply property tax credits created by the county executive's 15% cap. Taxpayers who paid more than a 15% increase in 2023, and/or more than an additional 15% increase in 2025, will receive credit on their account rather than a refund of the overpayment. For example, after calculating the 15% cap amounts, if it is determined that a taxpayer overpaid by \$500 in 2023, 24, and 25, for a total of \$1500, they will receive a \$1500 credit on their tax account, effectively reducing their tax liability by the amount they already overpaid. This amount may be spread over the next 2-3 years depending on how large the overpayment is.

There is no existing framework within the collection department's software system to automate these types of credits, so each one has to be manually reviewed and managed by an associate. Citizens have experienced increased frustration while the department navigates this process.

Assessment Department

The assessment department is entering its personal property declaration season, where citizens will be asked to declare any personal property, they own so the department can assess it for the upcoming tax year. This process generally creates a lot of confusion and generates complaints. Citizens receive postcards in the mail asking them to declare their property, but those unfamiliar with the process may think the postcards are junk mail or a scam. This leads to many postcards being thrown out and property declarations not being completed, which leads to the department not knowing about vehicles/property and not taxing it. This causes long lines and delays throughout the year at the assessment and collection offices because people need personal property tax receipts (or waivers) to renew their license plates, register their vehicles, etc. When they come to get their receipt, many realize they never declared their property and never paid their taxes, so they have to complete the declaration and pay their taxes, penalties, and fees at that time to get the receipt needed to take their vehicle to the license office for titling, registration, or renewal. This process causes a lot of frustration for citizens throughout the year. To combat this frustration, the county has increased their communications effort in recent years to improve awareness of the process.

Board of Equalization (BOE)

As of December, the BOE still had about 1800 unresolved 2025 residential appeals. The board is completing 150-160 of these appeals per week, but staff are looking for ways to significantly increase output. Some questions still remain about how the active BOE appeals and prior BOE decisions will be impacted by the county executive's 15% cap. We will provide additional update on that as soon as more information is available.

2025 Cases

In 2025, OEHRCC handled 239 formal complaints. This was an increase of almost 10% compared to 2024. The largest number of complaints were generated by the Jackson County Detention Center (JCDC), the collection department, and community or non-county-related issues. This number does not reflect all contact with the public and associates for the year, only those who wished to proceed with formal complaints. OEHRCC has many informal conversations, phone calls, meetings, etc. throughout the year where advice and direction are provided without formal complaints being filed. Summaries of each of the complaints from the year are attached, and a complete overview of the complaints, numbers, trends, etc. will be available soon; we are working to prepare the 2025 annual report for the commission's approval.

OEHRCC Updates

There are a couple of status updates on OEHRCC procedures. First, we have started preparing monthly reports to be provided to each department on the complaints they generated for the month. These outline the complaints, who within their department handled the response, and the outcome. This is a great way for us to stay on top of ongoing and pending complaints, and to provide a gentle reminder to departments that they may have complaints open and in need of response. It also opens the door for us to discuss trends with departments regarding what we're seeing monthly rather than just at the end of the year. We believe this will greatly enhance ongoing communication and problem solving with departments and will help the county be more proactive and less reactive.

Second, we are exploring the possibility of creating a new logo. We hope this may help identify our office and the commission as an independent entity and can help make us more visible internally and externally. Currently, the office uses the county seal on all documentation and publications.

- Mary Shannon asked if the new logo will be part of the greater community outreach efforts in 2026. Chris Crawford responded, stating Yes, because of the hold up in 2025 with budget approval that put a hold on a lot of the planned outreach and updates for the department. For 2026 the plan is to hold community forums, have a collaboration with County Outreach, and to try to have community office hours after typical county hours held within the community rather than the courthouse to meet people where and when they are to reach into the community.

A motion was made by Mary Shannon, seconded by Brent Herrick to approve the January Director's Report. The motion passed with a voice vote

6. Approval of Case Summaries

25198 Howard Lotven asked if the sheriff's office is investigating the detention center complaint in this file, and depending on the outcome, will there be availability for the inmate to file an appeal. Chris Crawford stated Yes, the sheriff's office investigating this complaint. The PREA process should offer an opportunity for appeal although that would not be handled by OERCC. If an inmate contacted the office unsatisfied with the results, we would reach out and ensure PREA was followed but would not open an appeal.

Cases were reviewed by commissioners independently, Complaint Officer Alexandra, went case by case requesting any questions. A motion was made by Mary Shannon, seconded by Brent Herrick to approve the Case summaries between 25190 and 25239. The motion passed with a voice vote

7. New Business

Complaint file 25203 will be added to February report for review and approval.

Some citizens call in or write in making complaints that are not county jurisdiction. We provide them with advice and guidance regarding their complaints, but these typically do not generate a file. If commissioners would like to review this information, we would be glad to share what we have.

Howard Lotven informed the commission of the location of the OEHRCC office on the 7th floor for commissioner awareness and if they decide they would like to visit they are more than welcome.

8. Unfinished Business

Updates on previously unapproved minutes, director's reports, case summaries, etc.

The previously unapproved meeting minutes, director's reports, case summaries, and other documents needing approval by vote will be sent out to the commissioners for review and approval in an upcoming commission meeting. Mary Shannon and Howard Lotven are curious to know the status of the tour of the new detention center. Chris Crawford informed the commission there is a plan in place to tour the detention center, there is a small conflict in the scheduling due to how the commissioners should be labeled during the tour to determine what kind of tour will be received. This is still in discussions and planning is still taking place.

Updates on complaints #25092, #25106, and #25107.

A report will be sent out to the commission to review and later voted on. These cases are still labeled as Open; they have been resolved but still open until the report passes by vote in the committee.

9. Public Comments

NONE

10. Adjournment

A motion was made by Mary Shannon, seconded by Brent Herrick to adjourn the first regular meeting of 2026. The motion passed with a voice vote