Kimball City Council
Regular Meeting
April 7, 2026

A City Council meeting was convened in open and public session at 5:00 p.m. on April 7, 2026, at the City Council Chambers, 223 S. Chestnut St. Council members present were, Jamie Murdoch, James Shields, Austin Garner, and Greg Robinson. Also, present was Mayor John Morrison, City Administrator Annette Brower, City Treasurer Jean Klassen, and City Clerk Paula Tarango. The public was represented at the meeting.

Notice of the meeting was given in advance by publication in the Western Nebraska Observer. Notice of the meeting was given to the members and a copy of their acknowledgement of receipt of notice and the agenda is on record at the office of the City Clerk. Availability of the agenda was communicated in advance notice and in the notice to the members. All proceedings hereafter shown were taken while the convened meeting was open to the attendance of the public except as otherwise indicated.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Morrison called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. On roll call the following votes were recorded: Aye: Robinson, Garner, Shields, Murdoch, and Morrison.

Morrison acknowledge the Open Meetings Act.

Motion by Robinson, seconded by Shields to approve the consent agenda items as presented which include the minutes from the previous meeting. The following votes were recorded: Aye: Robinson, Garner, Shields, and Murdoch. Nay: None. Absent: None. Motion carried.

Motion by Shields, seconded by Murdoch to approve the mayor's appointment of Charles Herman to the Airport Authority Board. The following votes were recorded: Aye: Robinson, Garner, Shields, and Murdoch. Nay: None. Absent: None. Motion carried.

Morrison conducted the third and final reading of Ordinance No. 848 (Contractor Registration) and read the title in full.

Motion by Robinson, seconded by Garner to approve the adoption of Ordinance # 848 (Contractor Registration). The following votes were recorded: Aye: Robinson, Garner, Shields, and Murdoch. Nay: None. Absent: None. Motion carried.

Morrison conducted a reading of Ordinance 850 (Series 2018 Bonds) and read the entire title in full.

Additional discussion on the Ordinance was held.

Scott Keene – Piper Sandler - Participated in presenting the explained that the purpose would not necessarily be to achieve interest rate savings, but rather to restructure the bond payments so they better align with landfill operations and the revenues generated by the system. When the bonds were issued in 2018, they were structured to fill payment gaps within the City's outstanding combined utility bonds, which resulted in an unusual debt service schedule. Over the past five years, the pay has been approximately $40,000 annually but beginning this year it will increase to around $100,000 and are projected to rise to approximately $150,000 within the next few years. This structure was originally designed to take advantage of older combined utility bonds that were scheduled to roll off, creating capacity for higher payments later. While the structure made sense at the time, it has proven to be less practical for the ongoing operations of an enterprise fund such as the landfill system. The discussion focused on the possibility of refinancing the debt to level out the payments and extend them over a longer period.

Jim Cederburg – Kimball Citizen and Board of Public Works Chair participated in the presentation and provided input regarding Ordinance No. 850. Mr. Cederburg expressed support for the ordinance, noting that while there are a few minor changes and details to address, he is otherwise in favor of its approval.

Board member Garner asked questions regarding utilities. It was noted that the proposed approach would help avoid significant rate increases and provide a more gradual adjustment over time. This method is considered more equitable for the public. It was further discussed that under a 10-year schedule, no major changes would be anticipated. The proposal reflects a structured approach, as presented by the Board of Public Works.

Motion by Murdoch, seconded by Garner to approve the adoption of Ordinance No. 850 (Series 2018 Bond) with the 10-year option, including the waiver of the three readings. The following votes were recorded: Aye: Robinson, Garner, Murdoch, and Robinson. Nay: None. Absent: None. Motion carried.

Mayor Morrison read the Arbor Proclamation to the board members and the public.

Motion by Robinson, seconded by Shields to approve the Arbor Day Proclamation recognizing Arbor Day as Friday, April 24, 2026. The following votes were recorded: Aye: Robinson, Garner, Shields, and Murdoch. Nay: None. Absent: None. Motion carried.

Morrison opened a discussion on consideration of fee waivers for vendors involved in the upcoming Farmer's Market at Gotte Park.

Annette Brower – City Administrator - Discussed the Farmers Market and the fee waiver. A Farmers Market planned to take place twice a month in Kimball from May through October at Gotte Park, a family-oriented location with Highway 30 exposure. The peddler/vendor permit application is typically used for food trucks; however, the city has not previously hosted a Farmers Market. After speaking with Commissioner Elysse Lukassen, Brower's recommendation to the Council would be to consider a fee waiver for the 2026 Farmers Market to help promote and establish this new initiative. Standard vendor fees are $10 per day, $25 per week, or $100 per year. Elysse has offered to provide advertising and outreach in lieu of these fees. Currently, six vendors are confirmed, with more than twelve expressing interest. This effort will help drive participation and community engagement.

Board Member Garner stated that anything he can do to help promote and support the effort would be beneficial and noted that he does not see any negative aspects to the proposal.

Mayor Morrison suggested that if the event proves successful, the location should be changed from the current site.

Robbie Dunkin – Kimball Citizen – added that Food trucks should still be charged a permit fee, board members and City Administrator agreed.

Morrison opened a discussion on the presentation of Kimball Victory Garden.

David Barton – Kimball Citizen - Community Garden Proposal
Thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak. He shared that he and his wife Leona have been long-time supporters of community initiatives. Previously, they lived in Wyoming, where they started and managed a community garden, providing over 5,000 lbs. of organic food to volunteers, food pantries, churches, and senior centers.

He explained that Kimball, like many rural retail communities, is a food desert, with much of its food coming from over 500 miles away. The goal of the proposed garden is to provide locally grown food at the neighborhood level, continuing a concept originating from World War I and World War II community gardens.

Barton outlined the plan:

- Volunteers will work in the garden, supported by donations of time, money, and in-kind items.
- They have received permission from Park Terrace, a location that has been a garden for several years.
- Liability insurance will be required.
- They plan to form an LLC and pursue 501(c)(3) nonprofit status.
- The Housing Authority site is 3,000 sq. ft.; they intend to use only 1,000 sq. ft. to ensure community engagement.
- The estimated setup cost is approximately $3,000, to be covered through donations.
- Walkways will be three feet wide to accommodate individuals using walkers or wheelchairs, prioritizing accessibility over intensive farming.

Barton read aloud a strong support letter from Dr. Bush.

Board member Robinson noted the idea is excellent and rare in that applicants ask for minimal funding. He suggested KENO funds might be a better avenue to cover costs, for example the water costs from the city that Barton had hoped to be waived.

Discussion also included potential composting and donor support. Discussion only; no action taken.

Carl Salazar – Senior Center Employee – In favor of this project as well.

Amber Sweetland, Library Director, noted that the food tower is a popular feature and is frequently visited by the public.

Board member Garner suggested reaching out to the high school to encourage student participation, noting that upcoming classes may align with the project.

Robbie Dunkin – Kimball Citizen – as a local tree business owner, stated that his company is willing to provide as many wood chips as needed for the project.

Board member Shields added that, as their neighbor, he can personally attest to their success and is a witness to their talent with gardening.

Morrison opened a discussion on action on K-9 Lucy.

Discussion regarding K-9 Lucy, currently back at Ragnar Defense:

Annette Brower – City Administrator - Noted there is interest in her purchase from a neighbor Police Department. Brower highlighted that any new handler would need to complete recertification with Lucy, who has performed exceptionally well in a short time and has already more than justified her cost. The Board discussed options for Lucy's future, including selling her as a narcotics dog or retaining her for department use. Murdoch stated that, after reviewing options, the best interest of Lucy would be to place her with a department that can actively use her. Brower noted that trained K-9s are valued similarly to used vehicles, based on training, narcotics tracking history, and age and suggested a value of $4,500 to $5,000 given Lucy's status, with $4,700 remaining on the partial loan.

Legal Counsel Turman added that K-9 Lucy successfully assisted in approximately 8 cases, with the most recent resulting in a $45,000 cash seizure, which will be forfeited to the county and state in accordance with Statute. This is a significant bust. She has done excellent work.

Motion by Garner, seconded by Murdoch to sell K-9 Lucy to another agency for the remaining balance of the loan. The following votes were recorded: Aye: Robinson, Garner, Shields, and Murdoch. Nay: None. Absent: None. Motion carried.

Morrison opened a discussion on approving the KENO funds request from Farmer's Day Committee – Amber Sweetland.

Amber Sweetland – Library Director – There will be a family dance at the end of April, which will include food, drinks, and music. Part of the KENO funds will cover deposits for children's activities, food, music, and other. Any funds raised during the event will go towards Farmer's Day activities, if applicable. The event will be held at the 4H building, and tickets are available for purchase at the library.

Motion by Murdoch, seconded by Shields to approve the KENO funds request from Farmer's Day Committee – Amber Sweetland in the amount of $2,000. The following votes were recorded: Aye: Robinson, Garner, Shields, and Murdoch. Nay: None. Absent: None. Motion carried.

Morrison opened a discussion on the new designs for the water tank project.

The water tank projects have already been approved and are scheduled to begin towards the end of May, with an expected timeline of 4 to 6 weeks. The budgeted amount includes complete tank rehabilitation, both inside and out.

The first two design options (City of Kimball logo and a longhorn) are included in the price. The company has suggested an antelope design, which would incur an additional cost. If a decision cannot be made today, we aim to finalize it by the end of April at the latest. As Robinson noted, part of the goal is to attract people to the community. The longhorn from a previous era might be worth considering. Board members also noted that the current Longhorn design is less clear and the nose/face area is a bit disfigured. The team will review some additional design options. A Facebook poll will be used to gather community input.

Reports –

Mayor Morrison – Reported on representing the City of Kimball at the Sentinel Town Hall, where discussions focused on proposed initiatives for the community. He noted that valuable input is being gathered, including recent participation from Senator Ricketts, county sheriffs, and county commissioners, all working to help identify community needs and next steps. The Mayor emphasized that progress is moving quickly and expressed optimism about upcoming developments. Morrison shared that much research has been done regarding Economic Development for Kimball and he will present it soon. He encouraged residents to stay informed and engaged, particularly during the budget process. He urged community members to attend budget meetings and participate in discussions, stating that even a small increase in public attendance would be beneficial.

Robinson – Council President - The Commissioners met today and are continuing to address numerous building-related issues associated with a 100-year-old facility at the old hospital. Attended the town hall the other night, which was very well attended. We gained additional information, and while we don't yet have the full picture, progress is being made. Also attended the Ports-to-Plains Alliance fly-in session in Washington, D.C. This effort focuses on developing an interstate corridor from Texas to Canada. It remains a challenging initiative, as the federal interstate system program effectively concluded in 1991 and has not received additional funding since that time.

The Alliance is made up of communities and states from Texas to North Dakota working together to advocate for federal support of these types of infrastructure

projects. If anyone would like more information, please let me know. There were 37 attendees who flew in from across multiple states. Kimball was one of the earliest participants in this effort, having joined in the 1990s, and we have remained engaged ever since. Commissioner Flores and I attended and found the sessions to be very informative. We also had the opportunity to connect with representatives from the offices of Senators Ricketts, Fischer, and Smith, and others.

James Shields – Council Board Member – There was no Planning Commission meeting, nothing else to report at this time.

Garner - Council Board Member - The public is invited to attend a candidate forum at the high school on April 29 at 7:00 p.m., where City Council Board candidates will answer questions and explain why they are running for council.

Murdoch – Council Board Member - School business is running as usual, working and planning summer projects.

Annette Brower – City Administrator - The power plant project is continuing to ramp up construction. Within the next two weeks, site grading and the fence punch list are expected to be completed. We have also reached out to Cooper regarding the potential purchase and recycling of some of our older generators, as parts for them are no longer manufactured. We are awaiting a response.

The wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) project has begun and is progressing quickly. Final phases are moving forward, and the engineer is back onsite. Monthly in-person meetings with contractors, engineers, and city staff will begin this Tuesday, the 14th, and will continue through project completion, anticipated in July 2026.

Work on water and sewer infrastructure at the Lighthouse development is ongoing. The water department has ordered the necessary parts and is nearing completion, including preparations for future water tapping.

At City Park, installation of a new fountain will begin soon. A big thank you to Positive Spaces and the Kimball Area Foundation for their support. Completion of playground tiles will also begin soon. LED lighting will be installed at the basketball courts to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

The electric department continues to manage a substantial workload. The State of Nebraska dam inspection concluded last month, including an eight-hour final meeting. Thank you to Board Member Shields and the Mayor for attending. The formal report is expected by the end of April. We have been working on a congressional directed

spending grant totaling $3.4 million for water and sewer line improvements throughout the community, addressing infrastructure. This effort is being coordinated through Senator Fischer's office, with separate components for water and sewer, targeting fiscal year 2027 funding.

A tornado siren grant application was submitted to FEMA and NEMA two weeks ago. This project would update three of our four sirens. The grant funds total $78,000. If we are granted this money, the installation will be completed internally by the electric department. We also submitted a tree grant—thank you to Board Member Garner and all who assisted. As part of this effort, we will sponsor the Village of Bushnell, which is very excited about new tree plantings.

Another grant application will be submitted soon under the (CC) federal program, which supports communities connected to defense-related projects. A liaison for the Panhandle is working directly with F.E. Warren Air Force Base, as well as federal and local partners. We are also pursuing a Safe Streets grant, which could help fund downtown sidewalk improvements and refurbishment. Will attend the upcoming Gering P.A.D.D. meeting regarding (CDBG) opportunities.

Our auditors are finalizing the annual audit, which is expected to be presented at either the next meeting or the following one. Lastly, Sentinel crews from out of state are expected to arrive in the coming weeks. As a result, there will likely be an increase in population in both the city and surrounding county.

Public Comment – none

Next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 21, 2026, at 5:00pm. There being no further business, motion by Shields, seconded by Robinson, to adjourn the meeting at 6:15 p.m. The following votes were recorded: Aye: Murdoch, Garner, Shields, and Robinson. Nay: None. Absent: None. Motion carried.

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John Morrison, Mayor City Clerk