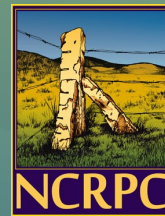


NCRPC NEWS

An update from the North Central Regional Planning Commission



ABOUT US

Our Mission

Advancing rural Kansas through comprehensive planning and development services.

Our Commitment

At the NCRPC, we are committed to giving our member Cities and Counties the best service possible. If you ever feel we are not putting our best foot forward, please reach out to Emily Benedick, Executive Director, at executivedirector@ncrpc.org or 785-738-2218. Your feedback is always welcome!

Contact Us

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Beloit, KS 67420 | 785-738-2218
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[facebook.com/ncrpcbeloit](https://www.facebook.com/ncrpcbeloit)

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Chair: Tom Claussen, *Mitchell County*

Vice Chair: Heather Hartman, *Mitchell County Community Development*

Secretary/Treasurer: Vicki Steffens, *Appointed Position*

Ellen Barber, *Marshall County Partnership for Growth*

Greg Bender, *Ellsworth County*

Craig Chamberlin, *Dickinson County*

Ron Copple, *Cloud County*

Rod Franz, *City of Salina*

Kelly Gourley, *Lincoln County Economic Development Foundation*

Luke Mahin, *Republic County Economic Development*

D.D. Malmberg, *Ottawa County*

Raleigh Ordoyne, *Washington County*

Keith Roe, *Jewell County*

Stacie Schmidt, *City of Ellsworth*

Hannah Stambaugh, *Saline County*

David Thurlow, *Clay County*

INCREASING RESILIENCY

REGION WORKING TO RECOVER FROM COVID-19 ECONOMIC IMPACTS

As the region continues to deal with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NCRPC has been working with many communities and organizations to assist with response and recovery.

A large factor in the continuing recovery efforts is an award the NCRPC received from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) in August 2020 to help coordinate a response to the pandemic's economic effects within the 12 counties the NCRPC serves. The EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance Grant will help support the work of a regional disaster recovery coordinator and provide technical assistance to the business and nonprofit sectors in North Central Kansas as part of an effort to boost the region's economy.

In November, a full-time Regional Economic Disaster Recovery Coordinator was hired (see page 2 for



BUSINESS & NONPROFIT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SURVEY

Results of a recently completed survey will be used to customize free training opportunities this year for entrepreneurs, businesses, and nonprofits in North Central Kansas.

an introduction) to help coordinate response and recovery.

To help determine the technical assistance that will be made available in 2021, a brief online survey was conducted. It ended January 15. Results are now being analyzed to customize training topics and tools that

(See **Recovery** on page 2)

ANNUAL REPORT

2020 A YEAR OF CHANGE, ADAPTABILITY, GROWTH AT NCRPC

Last year brought about a multitude of change in our work practices and communication. It also both challenged and solidified our commitment to serving North Central Kansas. The 2020 Annual Report contains some of the program highlights over the past year. We thank you for your support and look forward to working with you in 2021!



View the 2020 Annual Report:
ncrpc.org/about

NCRPC EXECUTIVE BOARD RECOGNITION

Our work would not be possible without the involvement of many who volunteer their time to serve on boards and committees of the NCRPC and its affiliate, NCKCN.

Since the NCRPC Executive Board has been meeting via Zoom for a number of months, in-person recognition of outgoing board members was not possible this year. However, we wish to extend a big thank you to the following individuals for their dedication to the organization and the region.

Karen Brumbaugh

Representative of Ottawa County since 2013

Brian Eilert

Board Sec./Treasurer since 2010 (appointed position)

Mark Fleming

Representative of Jewell County since 2017

Bill Garrison

Representative of Cloud County two different times since 2005

Kermit Rush

Representative of Ellsworth County since 2000

The group stepping away from the board this year have a combined 50 years of service with the NCRPC.

“We appreciate the important role these board members have had in the operations of the organization over the years,” Executive Director Emily Benedick said. “The NCRPC is fortunate to have strong advocates for North Central Kansas represented on its board both past and present.”

LaPolice Hired to Lead Regional Economic Recovery Efforts

We are pleased to announce that Becky LaPolice joined the NCRPC staff in November.

Becky serves as the Regional Economic Disaster

Recovery Coordinator, a new position that serves communities across NCRPC’s 12-county region to assist with economic recovery and develop resilience related to the COVID-19 economic crisis.

A native of North Central Kansas, Becky resides in Cloud County. She holds a Bachelor’s degree from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke and graduated Leadership Salina in 2018. Becky has served with the American Red Cross of Central and Western Kansas, deployed to Poland on an 11-month Service to the Armed Forces mission and most recently has been working remotely for the American Red Cross of the Pacific Islands Region.



Becky LaPolice

Recovery

(Continued from page 1)

will be most beneficial to businesses and nonprofits and increase the region’s resiliency going forward. A Request for Proposals from area consultants who can provide the needed expertise will then be prepared. Additional details will be announced once consultants are in place and schedules are finalized. It is anticipated that free trainings will begin in spring 2021 and go throughout the year.

The NCRPC also continues to partner with Technology Development Institute at Kansas State University to provide businesses and manufacturers in the region with the ability to apply for no cost engineering and business development assistance as part of the Innovation Stimulus Program. More information about the program is available at www.k-state.edu/tdi/. Funding for it is also made possible through the EDA CARES program.

Information and resources for the region will continue to be updated as needed at www.ncrpc.org/resources/covid-19.

MEET THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Vicki Steffens has been appointed as the new NCRPC Executive Board Secretary/Treasurer beginning in 2021. She succeeds Brian Eilert, who previously served in that position since 2010.

Vicki brings 39 years of banking experience to the position and is currently a personal banker with Central National Bank at its Beloit location. She graduated from Northwest Kansas Technical College and has completed additional mortgage education as well as training through the Kansas Bankers Association.



Vicki Steffens

In addition to her work, Vicki is very active in her community and has held a variety of leadership roles including with Zion

Lutheran Church, Beloit Rotary, Beloit Chamber and the local TOPS chapter. Vicki and her husband, Tom, share four grown children. She enjoys spending time with grandkids, reading, and traveling.

REMOTE WORKING

STAFF SHARE LEARNED BENEFITS, TIPS TO WORKING REMOTE

The NCRPC and affiliate NCKCN have practiced remote working for select staff for several years. That small group grew in spring 2020 when the office went nearly entirely remote for a

number of weeks. As was the case for many offices and organizations, the process of going remote on a large scale was a learning one.

When staff participated in a virtual meeting in December 2020 as part of the Kansas Beats the Virus Initiative, remote work rose to the top of the list for a group action project. The Kansas Leadership Center launched the initiative in partnership with the State of Kansas to encourage local solutions to help control the spread of COVID-19. Gretchin Staples facilitated the meeting in what ultimately resulted in a social media campaign to break remote work myths based on the personal experiences of staff with remote working.



“Having staff working remotely was not really new to us, but we never explored the remote option any further because it simply did not seem feasible given the nature of our work,” NCRPC Executive Director Emily Benedick said. “As a result of the pandemic, we were suddenly an entirely remote office overnight. As an organization, we learned a ton about the benefits of and tricks to working remote.”

The myth breaking and points of advice were shared on the NCRPC Facebook page in late December and early January. The series covered a wide range of topics including communication, accountability, technology and more. To view the tips, visit www.facebook.com/ncrpcbeloit.

HOME OWNERSHIP PROGRAM UPDATE

PILOT ASSISTED IN THE PURCHASE OF 25 HOMES IN 2020

Financial incentives offered through the NCK Home Ownership Program assisted in the purchase of 25 homes in the region last year.

The pilot program officially expanded to Ottawa and Republic counties in April 2020. It assisted eligible home buyers with down payment and closing cost assistance. The total value of the 25 homes was nearly \$3 million, with \$300,000 coming from the pilot program. There were 8 homes purchased with program assistance in Ottawa County and 11 homes purchased in Republic County.



Another 6 homes were located in counties where the NCK Home Ownership Pilot Program had launched previously.

The NCRPC administered the program offered by its housing non-profit, NCK Housing Opportunities, Inc. The non-profit serves Cloud,

(See **Home Ownership** on page 4)

NEWS BRIEFS

New Housing Director Named

Keegan Bailey was named NCRPC Housing Director in November. She succeeds Carol Torkelson in the position following her retirement.

“In her 40-year career with the NCRPC, Carol was an incredible asset to the organization and to the region,” Executive Director Emily Benedick said. “The NCRPC has been diligently working on succession planning knowing the tremendous gaps retirements, like Carol’s, leave in our organization. Keegan has been working with Carol as the Housing Assistant the past few years and she is ready to step into this role to lead our housing programs.”

Bailey has been with the organization since 2015 and previously served as Administrative Assistant and Housing Assistant. She also is the Home Ownership Program Coordinator.

Preservation Grants Available

A special grant opportunity for the preservation of historic properties in rural Kansas communities is available this year. The 2021 Kansas Rural Preservation Grant Program offers competitive grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000 for repair and rehabilitation projects. A minimum 10% match is required. Properties must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places individually or as a contributing property in a National Register-listed historic district.

Applications are due March 1. Visit www.kshs.org/p/kansas-rural-preservation/20430 to learn more.



North Central Regional Planning Commission

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Home Ownership

(Continued from page 3)

Ellsworth, Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Ottawa, Republic, and Saline counties. An award from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation of Logan, Kansas, assisted in the creation of the loan and grant pool. An award from the Every Hometown Economic Recovery Program provided the grant portion of the program for Ottawa County home buyers.

Program data indicate positive local impacts. In a survey of home buyers, 44% were first-time home buyers and 44% also took a job in the last 24 months with one-third of those reporting the program incentive was a factor in their job decision. In addition, 43% were under 30 years of age.

“With the expansion of the pilot program to Ottawa and Republic



counties, we continued to see strong interest from individuals with local ties to the region with 62% of homebuyers reporting that they graduated from a school in the NCRPC 12-county service area,” Home Ownership Program Manager Debra Peters said. “We were also encouraged by the high percentage of young buyers accessing the program and staking roots in the region.”

A similar home ownership pilot program is underway in Dickinson County. Additional pilot programs have been completed in the City of Marysville and

Cloud, Ellsworth, Lincoln and Mitchell counties. Future plans include the expansion of pilot home ownership programs in each of the remaining counties in the NCRPC 12-county service area, pending the availability of funding. Results of the pilot programs will be used to develop a permanent regional home ownership program. Visit www.ncrpc.org/services/homeownership to learn more.