

**2021 JOHNSON COUNTY CHARTER COMMISSION**

**PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION TO BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Submitted by: [REDACTED]

Date: November 1, 2021

Description of proposed recommendation:

To urge the Board of County Commissioners to adopt a process for meaningful consideration of Rev. Thomas Johnson as the namesake of Johnson County.

Purpose and reason for proposed recommendation: (Please see attached Resolution / Information)

In 1855, Johnson County Kansas was named after the Rev. Thomas Johnson, a slave owner and leader in the “Bogus Legislature” that sought to install slavery in Bleeding Kansas. The next year, in 1856, Rev. Johnson purchased an enslaved fifteen-year-old person, Martha, “for life and free from all claim.” These acts of Rev. Johnson do not embody the values, ideals, and love of freedom of the people of Johnson County. Other communities with problematic eponyms, such as Johnson County, Iowa, have chosen new namesakes or otherwise engaged in a thoughtful process to address the issue. Given that the Charter Commission convenes but once a decade, we should not wait to urge the consideration of Reverend Johnson’s place in our county’s legacy.

Charter Sections/County Departments or Agencies Affected:

It affects the county at large, as a community.

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**For Commission Use Only:**

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Date of Initial Consideration: \_\_\_\_\_

Vote to Advance to Full Consideration (requires 9 “yes” votes to advance):

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Full Consideration: \_\_\_\_\_

Vote on Full Consideration (requires 13 “yes” votes required to present recommendation):

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_

[Proposed] Resolution of the 2021 Johnson County Kansas Charter Commission

WHEREAS, in 1855, Johnson County Kansas was named after the Rev. Thomas Johnson, a slaveowner and leader in the “Bogus Legislature” that sought to install slavery in Bleeding Kansas, and who purchased an enslaved fifteen-year-old person, Martha, “for life and free from all claims” in 1856; and

WHEREAS, these acts of Rev. Johnson do not embody the values, ideals, and love of freedom of the people of Johnson County; and

WHEREAS, other communities with problematic eponyms, such as Johnson County, Iowa, have chosen new namesakes or otherwise engaged in a thoughtful process to address this aspect of their local history.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that 2021 Charter Commission of Johnson County, Kansas urges the Johnson County Board of Commissioners to adopt a process for meaningful consideration of this aspect of our county’s heritage.

## Information regarding Rev. Thomas Johnson

*"In November 1830, the Rev. Thomas Johnson was an early migrant to our region as a Methodist Missionary. In October 1839, he established the Shawnee Methodist Mission and Indian Manual Labor School for both education and religious purposes. Johnson County is named for the Reverend Johnson."*

Excerpt from 2020 sign erected at the entrance of the Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center by The Native Sons and Daughters of Greater Kansas City and Citizens of Johnson County, Kansas.

June 18, 2020 story on the Shawnee Indian Mission website, "Thomas Johnson."

<https://shawneeindianmission.org/thomas-johnson/>

Oct. 14, 2019 blog post, "The Murder of Thomas Johnson: Johnson County's Controversial Namesake," by the Johnson County Library. <https://jocohistory.wordpress.com/2019/10/14/the-murder-of-thomas-johnson-johnson-countys-controversial-namesake/>

March 31, 2018 blog post, "Pious Preacher or Radical Hypocrite? The Reverend Thomas Johnson," by Diane Euston on the New Santa Fe Trailer website.

<https://newsantafetrailer.blogspot.com/2018/03/96-normal-0-false-false-false-en-us-x.html>

Feb. 5, 2015 news story, "Meet the Controversial Man Who Gave Johnson County Its Name," by Suzanne Hogan of KCUR Radio. <https://www.kcur.org/community/2015-02-05/meet-the-controversial-man-who-gave-johnson-county-its-name>

Jan. 1, 2014 book, "Thomas Johnson's Story and the History of Fairway, Kansas," by Joe H. Vaughan.

May 26, 1856 Bill of Sale to Thomas Johnson for Martha, a 15-year-old enslaved person, on KU Territorial Kansas Online website:

[https://territorialkansasonline.ku.edu/index.php?SCREEN=view\\_image&document\\_id=102891&file\\_name=k304456](https://territorialkansasonline.ku.edu/index.php?SCREEN=view_image&document_id=102891&file_name=k304456)

## Information regarding Johnson County, Iowa's Change of Namesake

June 25, 2021 article, "'Names carry power': Johnson County is now named for a different Johnson," by Emma McClatchey in the Little Village (Iowa City / Cedar Rapids News).

<https://littlevillagemag.com/lulu-merle-johnson-county-name-change/>

**2021 JOHNSON COUNTY CHARTER COMMISSION**

**PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION TO BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Submitted by: [REDACTED] \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 11-1-2021

Description of proposed recommendation:

Continued effort to move forward on consolidation of rural fire districts in Johnson County.

Purpose and reason for proposed recommendation:

Achieve standardization of service for JOCO residents by contractually utilizing major fire departments (Lenexa, Olathe and Overland Park) in the county. Maintain personnel and taxing authority under the governance of the BOCC for the NW Consolidated area.

Charter Sections/County Departments or Agencies Affected:

Fire Districts

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Date of Full Consideration: \_\_\_\_\_

Vote on Full Consideration (requires 13 “yes” votes required to present recommendation):

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_

**2021 JOHNSON COUNTY CHARTER COMMISSION**

**PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION TO BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Submitted by: [REDACTED]

Date: 11-1-2021

Description of proposed recommendation:

Reorganize Sub-Commissions not currently under the direct control of the Elected County Commissioners and the Charter Commission to a structure that is.

Purpose and reason for proposed recommendation:

As we learned about the many sub commissions that exist in the county, a pattern of concerns arose:

1. We were told by Chairman Eilert that many Sub-Commissions were out of scope for the Charter Commission. NOTHING shall be out of scope of the Charter Commission. If it is part of the local JoCo Government, it shall be within the scope of the Charter Commission and directly accountable to ALL the elected County Commissioners.
2. There are redundancies in the commissions in the form of overhead support and actual operations. For example, there is a separate “Park Ranger” patrol set up that should be managed by the Sherriff’s department. The many Commissions create an overlap in employees and county assets.
3. With all the many commissions, it is natural for each Commission’s goal to increase budgets/spending. Our focus shall be redirected to one of efficiencies, not of extravagant spending.

Charter Sections/County Departments or Agencies Affected:

All Commissions not equally accountable to each elected County Commissioner and considered Out-of-Scope of the Charter Commission.

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