

Participants

- **Kenneth Crawford** – Independent researcher and doctoral candidate, *Integrity of the Game vs Economic Impact* project.
- **Thereasa Cody** – Local GOP volunteer and precinct organizer.
- **Patricia Carter** – Secretary, *Pottawatomie County Election Board* (serving since 2021).

Purpose and Context

This meeting served as an **informational and educational training session** between community researchers and the Election Board to:

1. Clarify **precinct operations, voter data systems, and election security** procedures in Pottawatomie County.
2. Review **voter registration integrity, new state laws**, and data usage policies.
3. Connect these operational insights to **Kenneth Crawford’s statewide civic transparency project and doctoral study**, which integrates election, board, and municipal data to improve local accountability.

Key Discussion Points

1. Precinct Organization and Election Staffing

- Each precinct operates with a **three-member board**: one Republican, one Democrat, and one Independent/Libertarian to ensure balance.
- Many precincts lack active **precinct chairs**; Carter encouraged both parties to strengthen local leadership.
- **Precinct officials** (inspectors, judges, clerks) are trained in spring of election years.
- Volunteers who question election integrity are often encouraged to serve as officials—first-hand experience is the best education.

2. Election Board Structure and Oversight

- The County Election Board includes:
 - **Patricia Carter**, Secretary (administrative lead)
 - **Nick Dingus**, Republican Board Member
 - **Doris Norton**, Democratic Board Member
- Duties include **logic and accuracy testing, absentee ballot verification, and certification of results**.
- Public observers may attend ballot tests and certification nights but may not interfere with official work.
- **Ballot custody** is secured by dual-key control shared between the Sheriff’s Office and the Board.

3. Voter Registration Data and System Integrity

- Oklahoma's **Election Data Warehouse (EDW)** contains all 77 county files.
- Each voter is assigned a **unique voter ID**; data now follows the individual between counties.
- **Asterisks ()**** in voter history** indicate restricted data—methods such as absentee ballots may be withheld by statute.
- **Restricted records** (judges, law enforcement, election staff) conceal addresses or birthdates for security; these can appear as “age 125” placeholders.
- Historical gaps exist for registrations prior to the 2010 system upgrade, explaining missing legacy data.

4. New State Law on Data Access (Effective Nov 1 2025)

- Only the following may request EDW voter data:
 1. Oklahoma residents who are registered voters,
 2. Declared candidates for office, or
 3. Recognized party representatives.
- A signed **Permission and Use Form** is required annually; commercial or marketing use is prohibited.
- This ensures transparency for legitimate civic purposes while protecting voters from misuse of personal data.

5. Municipal Governance and Ward Structures

- **Charter Cities** (Shawnee, Tecumseh, Bethel Acres, Johnson) – file *and* elect by ward.
- **Non-charter Towns** (McLoud, Asher, Maud) – file by ward but elect at large, due to small populations.
- McLoud would have to petition the state to change its government form to ward elections.
- Shawnee remains the **only municipality in Pottawatomie County electing entirely by ward**, explaining differing database entries (“City of Shawnee at Large” vs. “City of Shawnee Ward 4”).

6. Civic Education and Outreach

- Carter regularly presents to schools and civic groups on:
 - The **importance of local elections** (illustrated by Mod's 13-vote election).
 - **Absentee ballot security** and chain-of-custody.
 - **Election machine testing** and bipartisan safeguards.
- She confirmed willingness to partner with GOP and community groups for **precinct-level voter education workshops**.
- Kenneth Crawford and Thereasa Cody proposed **flowcharts and visual aids** to clarify voter processes for the public.

7. Integration with Kenneth Crawford's Research

- Kenneth demonstrated his **AppSheet civic database** integrating all 77 county voter files with municipal and board data.
- The project maps interconnections between **public boards, nonprofits, and appointed officials**, supporting his doctoral analysis of **transparency and economic impact**.
- The Election Board confirmed his use complies with state law, provided it remains non-commercial and educational.

8. Campaign Finance and Ethics Oversight

- The **Oklahoma Ethics Commission** now directly manages all financial disclosures statewide.
- Candidates must file a **Statement of Organization** upon raising or spending \$1,000 +, followed by **quarterly reports**.
- Officeholders must file **annual financial disclosure summaries** to document potential conflicts of interest.
- The Ethics Commission has increased enforcement, with fines issued for non-compliance across the state.

9. Security Procedures and Election Integrity

- Oklahoma maintains a **uniform statewide voting system**—same machines, forms, and procedures in every county.
- **Absentee Ballots:**
 - Verified via ID and signature checks.
 - Stored in **triple-locked vaults** accessible only to Carter, Dingus, and Norton.
 - Counted in bipartisan board meetings before certification.
- **No ballots or tabulators are connected to the internet.**
- The Sheriff's Department maintains legal custody of all voted ballots until official certification or court contest.

10. Broader Civic and Legislative Discussion

- Kenneth detailed his findings on **Shawnee city governance**, federal Instrument-of-Transfer land, and regional sales-tax records to illustrate transparency gaps.
- Carter provided clarification on **how local tax ballots are drafted** and **how vague school bond language** can mislead voters—contrasting it with detailed county tax questions that specify revenue percentages.
- Discussion extended to **tribal matching funds, school utility payments, and the need for clear accountability** in county education taxes.

11. Outcomes and Recommendations

1. **Produce educational flowcharts** of precinct hierarchy, board responsibilities, and election safeguards.
2. **Host precinct-level voter workshops** co-led by Carter and bipartisan board members (Nick Dingus & Doris Norton).
3. **Integrate voter data transparency modules** into the *Integrity vs Economic Impact* civic education platform.
4. **Follow up with the Oklahoma Ethics Commission** for guidance on dual office holding and campaign filing.
5. **Develop a public-facing landing page** summarizing these verified election procedures for BaseballHeaven.net's civic section.

12. Conclusion

This meeting underscored that **Oklahoma's election system is one of the most transparent and secure in the nation**, supported by uniform procedures, bipartisan oversight, and strict data governance. The collaboration between **Patricia Carter**, **Kenneth Crawford**, and **Thereasa Cody** demonstrated how civic researchers, party organizers, and election officials can work together to **educate voters, strengthen trust, and document local democratic integrity** for future generations.

Pottawatomie Election Board Training and Civic Transparency

3 sources

The sources document an informational training session held by the Pottawatomie County Election Board with an independent researcher and a GOP volunteer focused on election integrity and civic transparency. The discussion details the county's election structure, including the bipartisan precinct organization, the three-member Election Board's duties, and rigorous ballot security protocols like triple-locked vaults and dual-key custody. A significant portion of the meeting addresses voter registration data from the state's Election Data Warehouse, clarifying the use of restricted records and a new state law mandating that data requests meet strict criteria prohibiting commercial use. Finally, the sources cover broader civic issues, contrasting vague municipal tax questions with detailed county measures and exploring the researcher's work on local governance accountability in Shawnee.

Briefing: Pottawatomie County Election Board & Civic Integrity Initiatives

Executive Summary

This document synthesizes the key findings from an informational training session involving the Pottawatomie County Election Board, an independent researcher, and a local GOP organizer. The meeting provided a comprehensive overview of Oklahoma's election security protocols, voter data management, and the intersection of these processes with local civic engagement and municipal governance.

The central conclusion is that Oklahoma's election system, as implemented in Pottawatomie County, is built on a foundation of uniform statewide procedures, robust bipartisan oversight, and layered security measures. Detailed explanations confirmed that protocols for absentee ballot processing, ballot chain-of-custody, and voting machine testing are designed to be transparent and secure. Anomalies identified in the state's voter data warehouse, such as voters listed with an age of 125, were clarified as data placeholders for restricted records or legacy registrations lacking birthdates, not as indicators of irregularities.

A significant theme that emerged was the critical gap in public understanding of both election mechanics and complex local governance issues, particularly in the City of Shawnee. The discussion detailed extensive research into municipal accountability, including the management of federal lands, historical

Pottawatomie County Election Board Informational Training – November 10, 2025

sales tax revenue, and the composition of advisory boards. The session culminated in a collaborative commitment to enhance public education through the development of clear informational materials and precinct-level workshops aimed at increasing voter knowledge and participation.

I. Election Administration and Board Structure

The meeting clarified the roles, composition, and operational distinctions within the county's election administration framework.

County Election Board Composition: The Pottawatomie County Election Board is a three-member, bipartisan body responsible for overseeing all county elections.

- **Secretary:** Patricia Carter
- **Republican Board Member:** Nick Dingus
- **Democratic Board Member:** Doris Norton

The board's duties include conducting logic and accuracy testing of voting machines, verifying and processing absentee ballots in public meetings, supervising election night procedures, and certifying final election results.

Precinct Staffing and Bipartisan Mandate: To ensure balance and integrity at the polling place, each precinct is managed by a board consisting of at least two representatives from the two largest political parties.

- A typical precinct board includes one Republican, one Democrat, and a third person who can be an Independent, a Libertarian, or from another party.
- The county currently has a surplus of Republican precinct officials and actively recruits Democrats to maintain the legally required balance.

Election Officials vs. Party Chairs: A crucial distinction was made between official election workers and political party representatives.

- **Precinct Officials:** These are paid workers (inspectors, judges, clerks) trained and employed by the County Election Board. The Board encourages citizens who question election integrity to serve as officials, stating that "first-hand experience is the best education."
- **Precinct Chairs:** These are volunteer positions within the political party structure (e.g., GOP, Democratic Party). They are not election board employees but serve as party organizers. Party chairs for both major parties are notified and invited to observe all public ballot testing.

II. Election Integrity and Security Protocols

Patricia Carter provided a detailed breakdown of the multi-layered security measures that govern the entire election process, emphasizing that Oklahoma uses a uniform system with the same procedures, forms, and machines in all 77 counties.

Ballot Testing and Observation:

- Before every election, the Board conducts public "live ballot testing" where hundreds of test ballots are run through every machine to ensure accuracy.
- The chairs of the two largest political parties are formally invited to observe this process.
- The public is welcome to observe election night check-in procedures and the final certification, though they may not interfere with official work.

Absentee Ballot Processing and Security: The absentee voting process is governed by a strict, verifiable chain of custody.

1. **Verification:** Applications are verified against Social Security or driver's license numbers and signatures.
2. **Storage:** Returned ballots are immediately date-stamped and placed in a vault inside a lock box with three separate locks. The Secretary, Republican member, and Democratic member each hold one of the three unique keys, meaning no single person can access the ballots.
3. **Processing:** The box is opened only during a public board meeting. The outer envelope is compared to the inner affidavit. The affidavit is then checked for a voter's printed name, signature, and a matching notary date and seal. Ballots from rejected affidavits are not counted.
4. **Secrecy:** To maintain voter privacy, affidavits are separated from sealed ballot envelopes before the ballots themselves are opened and counted, making it impossible to connect a specific ballot to a specific voter.

Ballot Chain of Custody:

- Physical ballots are under the legal custody of the Sheriff's Office.
- On election night, deputies take custody of ballots as inspectors return from precincts.
- All voted ballots are secured in a vault, inside a secondary closet with two locks. The Election Board holds one key, and the Sheriff's Office holds the other.
- Ballots cannot be accessed again unless a contest is filed, at which point the sheriff delivers them to the court.

System Security:

- Voting machines and tabulation systems are never connected to the internet.
- Transmission of results to the state is conducted through a secure, private network, not the public internet.

III. Voter Registration Data Management

A significant portion of the discussion focused on analyzing and understanding the data provided by the Oklahoma Election Data Warehouse (EDW).

Data Integrity and Maintenance:

- Every voter in Oklahoma is assigned a unique, non-duplicated ID number that follows them if they move between counties, ensuring their voting history remains consolidated.
- The entire Pottawatomie County voter file (approximately 43,000 voters) undergoes a full audit during odd-numbered years, where every physical registration is compared against the digital record for accuracy.
- A **Confirmation Mailing Process** is used to maintain the accuracy of the voter rolls. Voters who miss two consecutive general elections are mailed a confirmation card. Failure to respond or vote results in the voter being moved to "inactive" status. They are returned to "active" status simply by voting or updating their registration.

Explanation of Data Anomalies:

- **"Age 125" Voters:** This is a data placeholder, not an indication of an impossibly old voter. It appears for two primary reasons:
 1. **Restricted Records:** Certain individuals (e.g., judges, law enforcement, election board members like Nick Dingus) can have their records restricted for security. The system may default the birthdate, causing the age to appear as 125.
 2. **Legacy Registrations:** Voter registrations filed before birthdates were a required field are "grandfathered in." Individuals who registered decades ago and have not updated their form may not have a birthdate on file, resulting in the same placeholder.
- **Asterisks in Voter History:** An asterisk (**) in the "method" column of a voter's history indicates that the method of voting (e.g., absentee, in-person) cannot be publicly released for that specific election, per state law. It does not mean the person did not vote.
- **"Return Undeliverable":** This status is applied to a voter's record if any first-class mailing from the election board (like a Voter ID card or confirmation mailing) is returned by the post office.

New State Law on Data Access (Effective Nov 1, 2025): Access to the EDW is now restricted. An individual must fill out a permission form and be one of the following:

1. A bona fide resident of Oklahoma and a registered voter.
2. A candidate for office in Oklahoma.
3. An official representative of a recognized political party. The data cannot be used for commercial marketing purposes.

IV. Municipal Governance and Civic Accountability

Researcher Kenneth Crawford's work provided a case study on gaps in civic transparency, focusing on the City of Shawnee.

Structures of Local Government:

- **Charter Cities (Shawnee, Tecumseh, Bethel):** Have more autonomy. Shawnee is the only municipality in the county that operates on a "file by ward, elect by ward" system.
- **Non-Charter Towns (McLoud, Maud):** Follow state municipality laws. They "file by ward but elect at large" because their populations are too small to sustain ward-only elections.

Case Study: Shawnee Governance Issues: Crawford detailed his multi-year research into Shawnee's municipal operations, which began after the city failed to secure a fence around a tornado-damaged Lions Club ballfield, posing a public safety risk. His findings included:

- **Federal Land Management:** The city operates 365 acres of federal land, including the airport, under a 1947 executive order. The order requires leases and sales to be at fair market value to benefit constituents. Crawford cited sales to OBU and the Little Theater, as well as leases held by current council members, as being potentially below market value.
- **Sales Tax and the Regional Park:** He presented evidence from city minutes showing that citizens passed a sales tax in the early 2000s to build a regional park. He alleges that leadership later denied the tax's passage after changing the project's designation in the minutes and allowing the tax to sunset, shifting over \$48 million into the general fund without building the park.
- **Advisory Boards:** Research revealed that several members of key advisory boards, such as the Airport Advisory Board, do not reside in Pottawatomie County, and one may be registered to vote in California.
- **Barriers to Information:** Crawford stated that his open records requests to the city have been met with prohibitive retainer fees, such as a demand for \$12,000 to begin research.

V. Campaign Finance and Ethics Oversight

The discussion clarified the updated process for ethics and campaign finance reporting, which is now centralized at the state level.

- **Jurisdiction:** The Oklahoma Ethics Commission directly manages all financial disclosures for state, county, and municipal candidates. County election boards no longer serve as filing locations.
- **Filing Requirements:**
 - A candidate must file a **Statement of Organization** upon raising or spending **\$1,000 or more**.
 - Quarterly reports detailing expenditures and contributions are required thereafter.
 - Elected officeholders must file an annual **Financial Disclosure Summary** to report any potential conflicts of interest.
- **Enforcement:** The new leadership at the Ethics Commission has significantly increased enforcement, launching audits and issuing substantial fines for non-compliance across the state.

VI. Voter Education and Engagement Initiatives

A primary outcome of the meeting was a shared goal to improve public knowledge and trust through education.

- **The Need for Education:** Carter emphasized the public's lack of civic knowledge, citing that many voters are unaware that State House members are elected every two years or of the immense impact of local elections. She shared a stark example: an election in Maud was decided by a single vote, with only 13 of the city's 468 active voters participating.
- **Proposed Initiatives:**
 1. **Develop Educational Materials:** Create and distribute flowcharts and other visual aids to explain the precinct hierarchy, election board responsibilities, and the stages of the voting process.
 2. **Conduct Precinct-Level Workshops:** The Board expressed willingness to partner with community and party groups to conduct non-partisan voter education workshops at the local precinct level.
 3. **Integrate with Civic Projects:** The voter data and procedural information will be used to enhance Crawford's civic transparency database and educational platform.

