

Notes on the Greg Standard Retirement Matter

April D. Warden, Seward County Administrator

Source: scanned original, prepared by April D. Warden. The following is a verbatim, word-for-word transcription — no wording has been added, removed, or altered from the source document. Minor scan artifacts (e.g. stray marks) are not transcribed.

I was on vacation July 9-15, 2025. While on vacation my staff received a letter from KPERS stating that Seward County reached out to KPERS to ask if the Emergency Management Department Director position was eligible for KPERS or KP&F coverage. KPERS requested the County's position description to determine what membership would be appropriate under the law.

Rosa Conley, HR Generalist, contacted KPERS, as she was surprised by the letter and knew it was not Human Resources or Administration staff that made the phone call or provided a job description. She was told an employee of Seward County called and asked to remain anonymous.

On Thursday, July 24, 2025 I was advised that Commissioner Todd Stanton had a conversation with Sheriff Gene Ward requesting that criminal charges be filed against me for misappropriation of County funds and that Commission Stanton had contacted an attorney at KPERS after Fire Chief Andrew Barkley had contacted KPERS questioning Greg Standard's retirement and the position he held. Sheriff Ward explained to Commissioner Stanton that he could not just charge someone with criminal charges but did agree to speak with the attorney at KPERS who told him there was nothing criminal, but simply a clerical error that often happens when there is a question if someone should apply for KP&F or KPERS. Both Brock Theiner and Rosa Conley were present with me in my office while Sheriff Gene Ward was on speaker phone and explained the situation to us all.

Side Note — not part of the original document: *KPERS' statement that this was "nothing criminal, but a simple clerical error" addressed whether the County Administration's handling of Greg Standard's KPERS/KP&F enrollment was criminal — the conduct Commissioner Stanton had asked Sheriff Ward to charge Ms. Warden with. It was not a statement about Commissioner Stanton's own conduct in contacting KPERS. This exchange took place on July 24, 2025, before KPERS completed its review and later determined that Mr. Standard had properly earned his retirement benefits.*

Greg Standard reached out upon receiving his letter from KPERS and contacted them. Greg was told by KPERS that Seward County was contesting his retirement based on conversations with Seward County, and the job description sent, they had determined he was not eligible for KP&F. Greg was very upset, and understandably so, as he based his decision on retiring with what KPERS told him his final monthly

payment would be. They let Greg know there was an appeal process he could follow. Greg asked who from the County was contesting his retirement and I let him know it was not HR or Administration, and that we were working with KPERS to provide the documentation they were asking for to remedy the situation.

Juan also let me know that KPERS does an annual audit where they ask for job descriptions and look to verify such things as this. KPERS had never questioned Greg's eligibility for KP&F. Juan was completely baffled when we received notification.

I contacted Laurie McKinnon, General Counsel and Rhonda Shumway, Lead Employer Reporting Analyst with KPERS. I spoke with Rhonda first and she told me I really needed to talk with the Legal Department and she would have Laurie contact me. I had previously left a message for Laurie, but she had not called me back at the time.

Laurie let me know the anonymous caller was Commissioner Stanton. She told me she did not know if she was more embarrassed or angry that she made a change based on the conversation she had with Commissioner Stanton and the job description he provided to them. Laurie shared she has been with KPERS for 30 years and had never experienced anything like this. Laurie let me know she would be reaching out to Greg Standard and let him know his first retirement payment would be reduced until which time they can get this straightened out. Laurie was letting her staff know to stand down until they can review his job duties for all years, with descriptions and determine the percentage of time he spent on the different duties, etc.

I reached out to Greg Standard as well to let him know I was working on it and to share the details of my conversation with Laurie McKinnon, General Counsel for KPERS. Greg let me know he would be appealing the decision.

On July 28, 2025 I received a phone call from Representative Shannon Francis who had been contacted about this situation. Representative Francis let me know he had left messages at KPERS to find out the specifics of the situation, but was reaching out to me to find out what lead up to Greg's retirement benefits being reduced or changed.

Upon Sheriff Gene Ward sharing his information with me I requested a meeting with Fire Chief Barkley and Commissioner Todd Stanton. Commissioner Stanton let me know he was not available to meet until Tuesday, July 29, 2025. I requested that Brock Theiner, Chairman Scott Carr and Legal Counselor, Nathan Foreman be present with me for the meeting. Legal Counselor, Nathan Foreman, was not available to meet with us as he was due in court. Brock Theiner and Chairman Carr were present with me.

I first addressed the issue with Fire Chief Barkley letting him know about the letter we received, the anonymous caller to KPERS, and what his concern was with Greg Standard's retirement. Chief Barkley

responded with "oh so you think I am your anonymous caller". He wanted to know how his name was drug into this situation. I let him know Sheriff Gene Ward was told by Commissioner Stanton it started with him questioning Greg's retirement. Chief Barkley became very angry and told me he was going to stop me right there. Chief Barkley stated Commission Stanton reached out to him asking questions about Greg's retirement. Chief Barkley went on to say that he could see Greg Standard and [a second employee] on payroll so he questioned if they were getting KP&F. I asked how they were tied to Fire Payroll and was able to establish Andrew could see their names in Executime, our timekeeping system, but no where do they show up on his payroll. Chief Barkley stated "you mean to tell me he is retiring with KP&F benefits"? I reminded Chief Barkley, Greg Standard worked as the Assistant Fire Chief, took EMS calls as an AEMT, responded to HazMat Calls, and did storm tracking and disaster relief. I asked him if he bothered to share any of that information with Commissioner Stanton? I received no response from Chief Barkley. Commissioner Stanton responded by saying Greg did not take enough calls, as a percentage of time on his job, to receive KP&F benefits.

Chief Barkley then started in on how he and Greg have had issues for 10 years now and that he has complained of a hostile work environment and I would never address the issues with Greg. Chief Barkley stated the issues stem back to when Greg was in the work accident and broke his back, blaming Fire Chief Barkley for his broken back. I reminded Andrew that we had mediation over the incident in which he was referring to and I understood the issue had been resolved as a result of the mediation. I then reminded Chief Barkley, issues with Greg were addressed and Chief Barkley's only solution to the issue, that would have satisfied him, was for Greg Standard to be fired. I also reminded Chief Barkley, that while he wanted for Greg to "stay in his own lane" he was still concerned with Greg's whereabouts and what he was doing as a retiree of the County. Chief Barkley sent a text message to Brock Theiner stating "I told you he wasn't leaving". Chief Barkley was concerned that Greg still had a County radio and he was tracking Greg's whereabouts on the software. I let Andrew know Brock had informed him that Greg was still volunteering as an AEMT and also a storm tracker with the County and would be allowed to keep his County radio. Our volunteers and trained storm watchers carry County radios.

I then dismissed Chief Barkley from the meeting as I did not feel he needed to be involved with the discussion regarding Commission Stanton. I then let Commissioner Stanton know how shocked I was that he would go to the Sheriff to file criminal charges against me for misappropriation of County funds regarding Greg Standard's retirement. Commissioner Stanton replied "those words did not come out of my mouth. I think you better call Sheriff Ward and get him over here now." I let Commissioner Stanton know I would be happy to contact Sheriff Ward and I did so and asked Sheriff Ward to join our meeting.

Sheriff Ward came over to the Administration Building and joined our meeting. Sheriff Ward verified that Commissioner Stanton wanted to file criminal charges on me and Sheriff Ward told him they cannot just file criminal charges without knowing more about the situation and what had taken place. Sheriff Ward did agree to contact the KPERS attorney that Commissioner Stanton had previously contacted.

The KPERS attorney told Sheriff Ward that was nothing criminal in nature and often times there are clerical errors as people are not sure who qualifies for KPERS or KP&F. I was as equally shocked that Commissioner Stanton called KPERS regarding this situation without first consulting with me or the HR staff.

Side Note — not part of the original document: *This is the same KPERS attorney statement referenced in the Side Note on page 1 — it addressed whether the County Administration's handling of Greg Standard's enrollment was criminal, not Commissioner Stanton's own conduct in contacting KPERS.*

Once Sheriff Ward verified his conversation with Commissioner Stanton, I let Sheriff Ward know he was free to leave the meeting. Commissioner Stanton asked Sheriff Ward to stay as a witness for him in the meeting and pointed to myself, Brock and Commissioner Carr. Sheriff Ward was present for the remainder of the meeting.

I asked Commissioner Stanton why he felt he could not have a conversation with me regarding Greg Standard's retirement and allow me to answer any questions he had?

Commissioner Stanton stated he would not apologize for the way he handled the situation and if it were to happen again, he would handle it in the same manner. He went on to say if he feels there is someone committing a criminal act, he will always go to law enforcement and that as an individual commissioner he has that authority and he verified with Sheriff Ward and Sheriff Ward agreed if he suspected someone of committing a criminal act, he should come to law enforcement.

Brock Theiner asked Commissioner Stanton if he recalled contacting Brock after a Commission Meeting one evening to make sure everything was okay between them because he felt Brock was distant and didn't seem himself. Commissioner Stanton did recall that, and Brock asked him why he could come to him but not to me if he had a concern. Commissioner Stanton responded, again, he takes full accountability for the way he handled the KPERS situation and would not change the way he dealt with it.

I explained to Commissioner Stanton that by him handling the situation the way he did he has involved Chief Andrew Barkley, Sheriff Gene Ward, KPERS Analyst, KPERS Attorney, Rosa Conley, Juan Meza, Brock Theiner, myself, Greg Standard, John Ralston, Pam Johnson, Representative Shannon Francis, Commissioner Carr, and Nathan Foreman. Not to mention all the man hours and documentation that is having to be spent to remedy this situation. I also let him know he was messing with someone's livelihood and their retirement benefit for the 37 years they served with Seward County. Commissioner Stanton slammed his hands down on the table and told me, it is tax payers' dollars!

Commissioner Stanton then let us know he has a list of all employees who are receiving KP&F. I questioned Commissioner Stanton as to how he obtained the list, or who gave it to him, and he told me

he would not share that information with me. He told me people come to him in confidence and he would not break that confidentiality.

I have had a staff meeting with my HR and Administration staff; Rosa Conley, Juan Meza, and Hillary Franco. The staff was surprised as I was when receiving the KPERS letter, did not know how Commissioner Stanton obtained the job description except that Chief Barkley had asked for the Emergency Management Job Description in September of 2024 and Rosa provided it to him. No one in the department released any list of KP&F members.

I then questioned Commissioner Stanton regarding a text message he sent to Commissioner Sutherland-Abbott accusing me of giving out 4-digit raises to employees. I let Commissioner Stanton know any raises that I sign off on have the documentation attached to the Status Change Form or comments written in the Status portion of the form. This information consists of Commission Minutes, Grant documentation, or my authority within the Compensation Policy. Commissioner Stanton stated he couldn't believe with the state that the budget was in that I would be giving anyone a raise. I asked him with the offer letters we provide to individuals when they accept employment with us, they receive an increase after completing their orientation period. I asked Commissioner Stanton if he was asking me not to honor the offer we made to the employees. Commissioner Stanton questioned the raises that I gave to the Appraiser's Office and I reminded him that Angela Eichman, County Appraiser, is not replacing three employees, and the Commission agreed she could give increases to the remaining employees who would be taking on the additional duties. The Commissioners also explained to Angela, in the Budget Work Session, if she found the workload could not be distributed and handled by the remaining employees and there came a time in which she felt she needed to hire additional help, she would have to reduce the amount in which she is paying those employees now. At first, Commissioner Stanton said he was not aware of this and had not seen the information. Commissioner Carr reminded him that Angela presented the information in the Budget Work Session to all Commissioners, outlining the increases, and recapped the discussion of the meeting.

Commissioner Stanton, in his text to Commissioner Sutherland-Abbott, also indicated there was a lot more information that would be coming out when he goes public with what I have been doing. I asked Commissioner Stanton to please get everything out on the table that he had issues with me about. Commissioner Stanton then asked me if I had an extra 15 minutes that we could talk to one another in private. I told Commissioner Stanton I had 15 minutes, but I would not have a private conversation with him and anything he wished to share with me I would like said in front of Brock Theiner, Commissioner Carr, and Sheriff Gene Ward.

Commissioner Stanton claimed that I have denied putting items on the agenda that he has requested be put on the agenda. I told him I did not recall ever denying any items being placed on the agenda. I asked him what those items were. Commissioner Stanton stated he could not recall; he would have to

go back through his e-mails and he would let me know. I have not heard anything further from him on this matter.

Commissioner Stanton then stated I am setting the County up for a huge liability with our EMS staff not being fit for duty to provide EMS services. He stated it will only take one death for the County to go broke, and in fact he felt there had already been a death. I asked Commissioner Stanton what he felt the solution was. I reminded him we are already 4 staff members down, had another one out with emergency gall bladder surgery, and another employee who was mowing their personal yard and rolled their lawnmower while mowing on a slope and injured themselves. This put us down 6 employees and that our Director was covering shifts and on call himself and solicited help from our Health Department Director, Brie Greeson, so that he could get some rest and refresh before going back out. I asked him if he was suggesting we just shut the EMS Service down for our community?

I explained we also have a workforce issue and I do not believe we are paying enough to recruit EMS employees when they are required to have a degree to be a paramedic and we are only paying \$15.00 to \$16.00 an hour. We cover 24-hour shifts, plus they are required to take on-call. Commissioner Stanton informed me I use the excuse of workforce too often and that I need to learn to reorganize and come up with alternatives. He felt another department could take over EMS; I asked him if he meant Fire Chief Barkley? His response was we could also contract out the service to John Antrim's team who takes transports for SWMC. Commissioner Carr asked him if he knew the cost of contracting out the service and felt that would be even a bigger hit to the budget.

Commissioner Stanton went on to say he has brought these concerns to me before and he knows the Fire Department and City of Liberal has as well. I informed Commissioner Stanton that I had a meeting with Chief Kelly Kirk and EMS Director, John Ralston, after a Communications Meeting to discuss the concerns at hand which were identified to me as lift assist and firefighters being asked to return to the ambulance to retrieve additional items the EMTs or Paramedics are in need of. I felt after the meeting the issues had been resolved and protocols had been put in place based on the conversations. I had not received additional complaints since. Commissioner Stanton's response was that I had not notified him of my conversation or that the meeting had taken place. I apologized to Commissioner Stanton and stated as the County Administrator and the duties I am to fulfill, I try to include such things in my Friday reports, but it is difficult to document each and every task I complete on a daily basis throughout the week and that is what I feel they hired and entrust me to take care of is the day-to-day business of the County.

Commissioner Stanton then implied the budget deficit is because of me. I repeated what I thought he said to be sure I understood, so I asked him if he was blaming the budget issues on me? I reminded him I am not a Commissioner and do not get to vote or make any final decisions on the budget. The budget is the duty and responsibility of the Commission. I explained that I can provide research, make suggestions and recommendations, offer advice, but at the end of the day, the Board of County

Commissioners makes the decision on the budget. Commissioner Stanton then asked me, so you are saying I am responsible for the budget? I reiterated I said "you guys" meaning the whole Board of County Commissioners and he stated he missed the part where I said "you guys". There were several other remarks made where he implied the budget deficit was due to me. I asked several times if he was blaming the budget on me?

Brock Theiner then addressed an issue he had. In my absence, while on vacation, Brock was asked to sign purchase orders. Brock felt uneasy about signing a mileage reimbursement request for Commissioner Stanton. Brock did some research and pulled the AG Opinion where it is up to Board of County Commissioners if they will pay mileage expenses. Commissioner Stanton's response was "well you can expect me at a lot less meetings if I am not going to be reimbursed for my mileage when I have to drive 68 miles round trip for meetings". I explained to Commissioner Stanton when he travels from his home to Liberal when opening his business here on Wednesday, Thursday, and Fridays; he would already be traveling here and should not charge the County. Brock also told him he felt when he travels in for board meetings, such as the Planning & Zoning meeting he attended, when he is not the Commission Board liaison, he should not be turning in mileage. Later that day, after the meeting, Commissioner Stanton sent Brock an e-mail requesting the AG opinion in its entirety.

Commissioner Carr shared with Commissioner Stanton he has no authority as an individual Commissioner and that he should have involved the entire Commission with his concerns and he could have even asked for an Executive Session. Commissioner Stanton stated he read in the KAC Commission Deskbook, that if he felt something was happening criminally, he had the authority to act as an individual Commissioner. None of us in the meeting recall that being in the Deskbook, but did not have that resource in front of us at the time.

Brock asked me several times before we concluded the meeting if I was okay with everything. I stated if everything Commissioner Stanton had issues with was brought forward today in the meeting, I was fine. Commissioner Stanton brought nothing else forward. We concluded the meeting. As Commissioner Carr and Commissioner Stanton were going down the stairs to leave, Commissioner Stanton turned around and stated, "I have some other things I want to discuss with you, but they can wait until the end of this week or first part of next week". This was very frustrating to me, as he was asked to bring everything forward and apparently had not. However, I have not had Commissioner Stanton bring any other issues to me.

On August 1, 2025, Laurie McKinnon, General Counsel with KPERS, wanted to let me know she had a couple of phone conversations with Greg and good discussion about his service. Thus far, she felt that 2006-2016 is likely KP&F service as he had two positions that likely met the statutory standard and then 2020 and 2021 for the work he did with COVID. She also told me she knew she originally told me the position should be nearly all going out on calls, but she had been looking into the federal definition of

“public safety officer” and how EMS-style positions are handled in small communities and certainly his duties dealing with weather-related disasters apply as well.

On August 4, 2025, I sent Laurie a letter letting her know Greg Standard started with the County on March 22, 1988 as a volunteer firefighter. On July 25, 1990 he also became a part-time EMS employee. On August 17, 1999 Greg was hired as a full-time Emergency Management Director and Assistant Rural Fire Chief. Greg remained in this position until which time he sustained a job-related injury preventing him from fighting fires and was moved to the Emergency Management Director as of February 16, 2016. As the Emergency Management Director, Greg still took EMS calls as an Advanced EMT where he provided on the scene emergency medical care and provided the first steps of medical care to injured persons. In addition, Greg was also a Hazmat Technician where he was responsible for identifying, handling, managing, and disposing of hazardous materials safely and in accordance with regulations. He responded to emergencies, conducted risk assessments, and ensured proper containment and cleanup of hazardous substances. Lastly, Greg was responsible for our Storm Tracking Team and Training. He was responsible for responding, tracking, analyzing, and using the data to predict the path, intensity, and potential impact of severe weather events. He communicated warnings to the public and relevant authorities to help people prepare and respond to dangerous conditions. Greg responded not only in Seward County but as mutual aid to surrounding counties. Due to our location in Southwest Kansas, he responded in the Oklahoma and Texas panhandles as well for mutual aid.

In 2020 and 2021 Greg handled the COVID protocol and set-up of testing site. His duties during this time were vast from managing the Emergency Operations Center, Testing Site, Transitional Housing, Organizing and obtaining PPE for County agencies, Nursing Homes, Hospital, Health Clinics, etc. I cannot begin to list all that was involved in this endeavor under Greg's leadership.

On August 4, 2025, Laurie reached out again and let me know when she made the first determination of KPERS versus KP&F service, she had no idea Greg held down two positions for many years. She stated we all just want Greg to get the service he earned and that's the duty KPERS owes to him.

On August 12, 2025 Laurie asked for job descriptions in relation to Greg's positions. In Greg's personnel file, Charlotte Hill, former Payroll and Benefits Coordinator, had sent over job descriptions for the positions he filled and I sent the updated job descriptions as they had changed throughout the years. I also let Laurie know Greg had reached out to myself, and other Commissioners, understanding that the County was still contesting his retirement. I let Laurie know I was not aware of anyone in the County that is still contesting his retirement. I also let her know Commissioner Todd Stanton was not acting on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners (as I understood he indicated) and has no authority as an individual commissioner to contest the retirement of a County employee. Commissioner Stanton has also shared he has a list of each employee that is covered under KP&F with the County, and he did not obtain that information from Seward County Administration or Human Resources. I asked Laurie if she could tell us if he completed an open records request through KPERS/KP&F to obtain this information? I

am also concerned that Commissioner Stanton is not a designated agent on our account and am not sure why issues about Seward County employees and their retirement coverage were discussed with him based on his conversation with staff there. I wanted Laurie to know I was not pointing fingers or trying to be controversial, but there is a lot about this situation that has raised concerns.

Laurie responded and thanked me. It was her understanding from the very beginning that Commissioner Stanton was operating on behalf of the County. When she received the information from Commissioner Stanton it was her job to review, and based on the job description he sent, she determined from there if it was KPERS or KP&F. She knew they only had a few weeks to work on Mr. Standard's retirement as he had applied to retire on July 1, and she went forward with the information she had to "correct" the membership. Laurie went on to say "we work with many other people other than designated agents at KPERS-affiliated employers. By the time something gets to the legal department, we're usually dealing with the head of the agency or at the very least, their human resources and executive team on various matters. My error was not contacting you, specifically, to make sure KPERS was moving in the right direction. I take full responsibility for that. But it's common for someone in Mr. Stanton's position to contact us on these kinds of matters. I would not have thought he was acting on his own; that never occurred to me. I apologize to you all and most of all, Mr. Standard. One note - when Mr. Stanton told me to contact Ms. Conley, I figured at that time it was known in the office what was going on given her role in HR. Again, so much I didn't know and I'm sorry. We certainly learned a lesson here, too, but in 30 years of working as KPERS' legal counsel, this has never happened to me."

April D. Warden
County Administrator