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## Vargo: Riley County on pace with coronavirus funding process

Hailey Dixon [hdixon@themercury.com](mailto:hdixon@themercury.com)

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Riley County is as far along as most other Kansas counties in the process of assessing the money it will receive from the federal government to help in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

“We’re as far along as anyone is, besides Sedgwick and Johnson,” said Rich Vargo, county clerk.

Riley County is set to receive almost \$15 million from the federal government to help during the coronavirus outbreak. The state of Kansas collected \$1.25 billion from the federal government to distribute to Kansas counties.

The money is coming from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) Act. The funding must be used for coronavirus-related expenses and any unspent money will be returned to the government.

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Sedgwick and Johnson counties already received their coronavirus funding from the federal government. The federal government decided to directly give funding to counties with a population of more than 500,000 people.

Johnson County received about \$116 million, while Sedgwick County received about \$99 million. Vargo provided the update on the situation Thursday morning to the Riley County Commission.

“We’re moving along at a good pace,” he said.

Vargo said officials had a Zoom call Wednesday with Witt O’Brien’s, the consulting firm the county hired to help with assessing and distributing these funds. Witt O’Brien’s, based in Washington, D.C., is also assisting Sedgwick County.

“I think it was a good conference call,” Vargo said.

The Riley County government itself will not use all of the money it receives from the federal government ; it plans to distribute some of the money out to cities and other entities.

Vargo said other Kansas counties have reached out to Riley County for advice, and Vargo said he and Robison directed them to Witt O’Briens.

Vargo said he thinks hiring Witt O’Brien’s was a good choice for the county. The cost for hiring Witt O’Brien’s will not exceed \$150,000, officials said.

“It’ll be, in my opinion, \$150,000 well worth it,” Vargo said.

Also on Thursday, commissioners held interviews throughout the morning and early afternoon for the planning and development director. Commissioners did not have any other action items to discuss or act on during the meeting.

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