

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 2, 2026

City of Kennett Names Melissa Combs as City Administrator

Experienced economic development leader to begin March 9

KENNETT, Mo. — The City of Kennett is pleased to announce the hiring of Melissa Combs as City Administrator. Combs will begin her new role on March 9, succeeding Interim City Administrator Steve Rasmussen.

Combs brings experience in economic development and public administration with more than a decade of experience in business recruitment, grant writing and administration, public private partnerships, and organizational leadership. Most recently, she served as Director of Economic Development for Dunklin County, Missouri, and has played a key role in recruiting major employers to the City of Kennett, including Acculevel, Cimtek Filtration, and Delta Peanut. These projects resulted in the creation of more than 100 new jobs and more than \$40 million in capital investment within the city. She has also successfully delivered nearly \$7 million in grants to Dunklin County.

Prior to her current work, Combs served as the Executive Director of the Kennett Chamber of Commerce. She also previously held management positions with Walmart Stores, Inc., where she gained experience in operations, personnel management, and held financial responsibility for annual forecasting, sales and expense budgets up to \$135 million.

Combs is a graduate of Arkansas State University, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Management, graduating cum laude. She is a Certified Economic Developer, credentialed through the Missouri Economic Development Council.

Kennett Mayor Jake Crafton expressed strong support for Combs' appointment.

"We are thrilled that Melissa will be joining the City of Kennett in this extremely important role," Mayor Crafton said. "Her proven ability to recruit and retain businesses is just as critical to Kennett's future as her ability to manage our city departments and budget. In addition to her strong leadership and commitment to public service, Melissa brings a demonstrated track record in economic development that will help us continue to grow. Last year Kennett secured more than \$400,000 in grant funding, and with her expertise, we look forward to continuing to bring non-taxpayer dollars into the city to strengthen infrastructure, improve services, and support new business investment as we build a more modern Kennett."

Kennett is currently developing its first comprehensive plan since 1973, a major milestone that will guide growth, infrastructure, land use, and community priorities for decades to come. City officials noted that Combs' arrival comes at an opportune time, allowing her to contribute her experience and perspective before the plan's completion later this year.

“Melissa is joining us at a critical moment,” Mayor Crafton added. “As we work toward completing our first comprehensive plan in more than 50 years, her experience in economic development and local government will be invaluable in helping shape Kennett’s long-term vision.”

Combs said she is honored to accept the position and looks forward to serving the community.

“I am excited and grateful for the opportunity to serve as City Administrator for the City of Kennett,” Combs said. “My background in local government administration and economic development, along with hands-on work with elected officials at the local, county, and state levels, reflects my commitment to public service. I value being active and visible in the community and believe effective leadership is built on accessibility, collaboration, and transparency. I look forward to working with the Mayor, City Council, city staff, and residents as we continue moving Kennett forward.”