

# **October 2020 Observer Reports**

## **USD 345 Board Meeting**

**August 10, 2020**

**Observer: Chris Huntsman**

All members were present. I attended virtually as did 304 others. The meeting was 2.5 hours and is still up on YouTube. The documents are on the school board website on detailed agenda.

Dates: August 12 new staff report for duty, August 17 virtual convocation for all staff-on duty in their own buildings, the Board will tour buildings (a Seaman tradition) as teachers prepare and work in their classrooms. August 27 is the first day for students, either hybrid, or family remote choice.

There was no public comment. During Business by Consent, Keith Griffin recognized a donation by Jill Hiegert for face shields (\$1200).

There were resignations accepted from certified staff and classified staff, and new hires approved.

Staff reviewed the R2R (Ready to Reopen) plan. As this is a moving document, there is a FAQ section on the website. The head nurse explained compliance with the CDC and KSDE and how the district would handle situations. Board member Keith Griffin asked pointed questions about the HVAC and air return in “isolation rooms” and because each building is different regarding air circulation (some newer, some older equipment) this is a hard question and there were a lot of silences. Building and Grounds staff will find it challenging to separate clean air, a bare minimum for clearing a room is 24 hours, and cover cold air returns with plastic. P. 52 of the document explains district stance in trying to meet the CDC requirements within their budget.

Professional Development had the PD Committee of 35 meet for determining staff development and working in the classroom for the 8 days prior to instruction. For Family Remote Choice the numbers show there is to be 1 class per grade in elementary, and in MS usual “teams” will logically work, and high school most electives will be held.

In the Hybrid Plan, after multiple surveys and enrollments for parents/students, discussion surrounded the 80 students who need supervision 3 days a week. That will have a cost on a sliding scale. Staff children will be covered by the district: Both using Boys and Girls Club. Karl McNorton asked why “free” for staff’s children, and others have to pay? Dr. Nobel answered by we need the staff working and since many other employers provide daycare/ etc. for employees, it was the responsibility of USD 345 as an employer to make it so staff with children could work/teach others’ children.

McNorton also said his daughter did not get the emails to enroll his grandchildren in Boys and Girls Club.

About 40 families have no internet, so the district is providing 50 ATT Hotspots, cost is \$20 per month to families on full pay lunch, \$10 reduced, and FREE for FREE lunch families.

Cytek was awarded the bid for 30 Kiosk scanners (to take temps) at various entry points. There will also be hand held scanners.

October 1 is the date/ goal to be back full on-site, except remote choice will be on a semester basis only.

There were two voice votes that passed 6-1. The first, Keith Griffin opposed because in the parent transportation handbook it gave the fees for preschool transportation costs and he has opposed this from the start. The second, Karl McNorton Action item D. Seaman Middle School two semester requirement for computer science class was waived for this school year only to equal out staffing for both remote and hybrid learning. His main concern was why if we will be all in the buildings by Oct 1. He has been vocal to have all learning on-site.

The board went into two executive sessions, one for negotiations, and one for personnel and came back in and made a motion to approve Medical Waiver and it passed. Meeting adjourned.

### **USD 345 Board Meeting**

**August 17, 2020**

**Observer: Chris Huntsman**

The Board held a special meeting August 17, 2020 at noon to approve the published budget.

### **USD 437 Special Board Meeting**

**August 17, 2020**

**Observer: Mary Galligan (via livestream)**

Seven members present

Meeting open to in-person public attendance and live-streamed; recording available at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRwJNAoewdq4ZWBf4sYYZ5w>

The USD 437 School Board:

1. Held the public hearing on the FY 2020-2021 budget
2. Approved the following unanimously:

- Meeting Agenda
- Business by consent
- FY2020-2021 budget
- Appointment of Board Clerk
- Executive Session Motion: To go into Executive Session for 30 minutes, from 8:23 PM until 8:53 PM, to discuss
  - the budget under the KOMA exception related to employer-employee negotiations
  - personnel matters under the KOMA exception for issues related to non-elected personnel, and
  - students under the KOMA exception for matters relating to actions adversely or favorably affecting a student
- Subsequent to Executive Session, approval of 3 motions: 1) to release a teacher from her contract; 2) to hire an elementary school teacher; and 3) approving certain student transfer requests.

3. Received administrative reports related to planning for SY 2020-2021

4. Discussed

- interviews for preparation of a master facility plan
- new Education Campus Ambassador program

Meeting adjourned 8:54 PM

### **USD 437 Board Meeting**

**September 8, 2020**

**Observer: Mary Galligan (via livestream)**

Seven members present

Meeting open to in-person public attendance and live-streamed; recording available on district YouTube [channel](#).

The USD 437 School Board:

1. Approved the following unanimously:

- Meeting Agenda
- Business by consent
- Contracting with a master facility planning partner
- Creating a Campus Ambassador program
- Purchase of books for the IB English students
- A supervised remote learning fee of \$10/student/day
- The 2020-2021 Negotiated Agreement

- A Motion to go into Executive Session for 38 minutes, from 7:32 PM until 8:10 PM, to discuss
  - KOMA exception relating to non-elected personnel, and
  - KOMA exception for matters relating to actions adversely or favorably affecting a student
- Subsequent to Executive Session, approval of 5 motions: 1) a 2.6% increase in pay for classified staff; 2) salary increases for district-wide support staff, including Physical Therapist and Interpreters; 3) salary increases for district-wide administrators, supervisors, and coordinators as discussed in executive session; 4) salary increases for building-level administrators as discussed in executive session; and 5) certain student transfer requests.

## 2. Received

- Administrative reports related to planning for SY 2020-2021
- Communication regarding designation as 2020 Best-In-State employer by by Forbes and Statista Inc.

## 3. Discussed

- Purchase of books for the IB English students
- Establishment of a supervised remote learning fee

Meeting adjourned 8:13 PM

## **USD 501 Board Meeting Thursday, August 20, 2020 Observer: Janet Cathcart**

via Facebook Live Board Meeting Event  
All Board Members Present

Consent agenda items passed unanimously.

Consent agenda item 10.1 Personnel Report voted on separately so that Mr. Munoz could recuse himself since he has a family member that is a district employee. It passed unanimously.

Public Comments no public comment on the 2021 Budget.

## Superintendent's Report

Safety and Health Protocols under COVID 19

Dr. Pezzino from Shawnee County Health Department spoke to the board on the county's new COVID score card to help Shawnee County School Districts make decisions on keeping schools either in on line learning phase or moving to opening

schools and also for starting athletic programs. Dr. Cooley long time Topeka pediatrician has been consulting with Dr. Pezzino to help advise school administrators.

#### Action Items

Student Athletics- Athletic Director Mr. Colin Cathey explained the athletic program for middle and high school. Middle school is moving from a competitive format to an intramural format. No games or contests will take place, just working on skill development. For high school working on a school combine so that student athletes can be filmed for college submissions. Tentative start to program is September 14th but they will reevaluate the situation on September 3rd.

#### Board Member Comments

Several board members commented on the current situation.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:21

#### **USD 501 Board Meeting**

**Sept. 3, 2020**

**Observer: Annie Tietze**

The consent agenda issues and highlights took little time. There were two lengthy discussions:

Plans for the first day of school and other days. Attendance will be taken daily including virtual class days. Those not in attendance will be contacted immediately. Each day for elementary will have at least 1.5 hours of direct virtual instructions as well as homework, activities, videos etc. to amount to 360 minutes a day.

Much time was spent on deciding about football. The request by the three high school coaches is to play each other in Sept. then other schools after that. There will be limited spectators and games will be broadcast. When not actually on the field playing, players will social distance. There were many more issues discussed with questions from the Board. Two plans were submitted and the Board will vote at the next board meeting.

#### **Shawnee County Commission Meeting**

**August 20, 2020**

**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All commissioners were present.

The agenda was routine and involved multiple decisions regarding CARES Act funding to various agencies. The commission approved Facilities Maintenance bid to upgrade

HVAC systems to eliminate airborne pathogens at the courthouse, North Annex and the Elections Office. The commission approved the Department of Corrections bid to renovate the HVAC operation within the medical area of the adult detention center to make the full area negative air-flow to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure. DOC was also approved to contract to renovate 16 modular locations in the adult detention center to make individual space available for remote visits and/or court hearings/meetings.

The Shawnee County Health Department requested to use grant funds for staff payroll, to purchase fit testing machines for PPE and to provide food and lodging to individuals who are isolated or quarantined and have no safe options. Information Technology Department was approved to use CARES Act funding to accelerate the purchase of equipment such as software, tablets and data to support remote work, increase teleconferencing capabilities and improve social distancing. The COVID-19 Response Team was authorized to purchase billboards and a bus wrap for one year that encourages washing hands, social distancing and wearing a mask.

Only one member of the public spoke during public comment. She spoke about the violations of her liberties by government during COVID-19, the city of Topeka's effort to "defund and take away the weapons of the police" and demanded the commission tell her when this would all end.

The Shawnee County Health Department announced they have developed a text message system to alert members of the public to sign up for messages regarding COVID-19.

Commissioner Riphahn announced that the meeting on Mon. August 24 would take place at the Great Overland Station to allow for more people to be present safely.

An executive session was announced to discuss the acquisition of property involving the Great Overland Station project and purchase.

### **Shawnee County Commission Meeting (met at Great Overland Station)**

**Thursday, August 27, 2020**

**Observer: Elvera Johnson**

All three commissioners present.

Linda Ochs, Health Department, gave a presentation explaining contact tracing. Representatives from Bio Defense Network, the company contracted to do the tracing, were on speaker phone to share some details of their work. When a person tests positive for COVID-19, the Network personnel call the individual (a 60-80 minute call) to gather information and find out who they have been in close contact with. These people are in turn called to ask them to quarantine themselves for 2 weeks to avoid exposing someone else. They are not necessarily tested. A negative test could turn positive later in the quarantine period. Only about 50% of the people contacted know how they got

the disease. The importance of tracing is that people carrying the virus may be pre symptomatic or asymptomatic. If not quarantined, they will spread the disease to others. Commissioners approved a bid to renovate the County Commission Office area to make space for new personnel who need office space. This may happen in the next couple of months.

They approved filling a vacant Emergency Preparedness and Community Outreach position for Public Health. They approved a Corrections contract with Halley Counseling Services for juvenile offenders. They approved some new cell phones for Solid Waste; They approved the addition of virtual mental health services for county employees. They approved replacement software for three traffic signals. They approved hiring of a candidate for Election Technical Manager. They approved an agreement for a Disc Golf tournament.

A county employee announced some upcoming fundraisers for United Way. A Sheriff's office communications person announced they are seeking applications for dispatchers. No executive session was called.

**Shawnee County Commission Meeting**  
**Sept. 3, 2020**  
**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All commissioners were present.

A presentation was made by Linda Ochs, Dennis Cooley and Chris Tuck regarding the support provided to school districts in Shawnee County by the COVID 19 emergency management team. Dr. Cooley testified about how hard the school districts have been working to protect students, teachers and staff and reopen safely. Commissioner Cook reminded the public to avoid mass gatherings, wash hands and wear a mask due to concerns with Labor Day weekend.

Most of the agenda was routine. One action item was deferred until Sept. 10 for more information. The item was questioned by Commissioner Cook to execute a two-year contract with one D.J. in town to perform at events for Parks and Recreation.

Public Works introduced a request for qualifications to determine the future of a bridge over Tecumseh Creek on SE Laurel Road. The request passed unanimously.

Facilities Maintenance Department requested a "request for pricing" for upgrades to the existing fire alarm system at Maner conference Center. During discussion, the commissioners amended the request to include all of the Stormont Vail Events Center since the fire alarm system in the entire complex of buildings is 30 years old. The fire alarm system audio at Maner Conference Center has failed.

Human Resources requested a .05% increase to employee contributions to the 2021 health benefit plan year. Retired county employees pay 125% of the cost of the benefit plan until they are eligible for Medicare.

Sept. 24 meeting is cancelled.

Sept. is Emergency Preparedness Month. People were reminded to review preparedness plans for all disasters.

An executive session was held to discuss matters of attorney client privilege involving Parks and Recreation. No action is planned.

### **Shawnee County Commission Meeting**

**Sept. 8, 2020**

**Observer: Elvera Johnson**

All three commissioners present.

Commissioners approved an ongoing contract for DJ services for Parks and Recreation. They approved a request for quotations for Solid Waste to purchase additional commercial containers to accommodate new customers. They approved a request by the Health Department to create and fill two infectious disease medical assistant positions to continue to respond to the COVID pandemic. They also approved the Health Department purchasing additional testers to ensure that the masks used by first responders and others are adequate. They approved the Public Works department to purchase a supervisor's truck. They approved a contract extension for a maintenance company to clean courtrooms more frequently. They approved a contract for wireless data for Parks and Recreation staff to use their laptops more efficiently. They approved a renewal of licenses for virus protection software for Information Technology.

Commissioner Riphahn reminded the public to complete the census information. Commissioner Mays reminded everyone of the need for blood donors.

No executive session was called.

### **Topeka City Council Meeting**

**August 18, 2020**

**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All council members and mayor were present.

I was honored to accept the Mayoral Proclamation recognizing the League of Women Voters Topeka Shawnee County on Women's Equality Day August 26, 2020.

Several appointments were made to the Americans with Disabilities Act Advisory Council, Board of Mechanical Appeals, Downtown Business Improvement District



Advisory Board and Washburn University Board of Regents (City Council District 3 appointment).

The council approved unanimously the 2021 Social Services Grants allocation. The city contracted this year with the Greater Topeka United Way to administer the request for grant process. United Way will also manage the grants throughout the year. All council members were positive about this new process.

The council amended and approved the Small Business Grant Program funded by Community Development Block Grants through the CARES Act. The amendment allowed businesses of sole proprietorship with one employee, the owner, working remotely without a physical business location, to apply for grant funds. The grants will focus on women and minority owned businesses.

During public comment one Kansas legislative candidate spoke and was critical of the council for efforts to promote minority members of the community through participation in a program in Washington D.C. to attend the anniversary of March on Washington. Since she spoke of the individual by name, she was reprimanded by the council for divisiveness and a point of order.

The council discussed the League of Women Voters Topeka Shawnee County car parade for voter awareness and census participation on August 26.

The council discussed the considerations and agenda for next week's special session on policing in Topeka.

### **Topeka City Council Meeting**

**August 25, 2020**

**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All city council members, including the Mayor were present, either in person or virtually.

The council's only agenda was to receive public comment on proposals under consideration to reform the police department. Considerations include, amending the municipal code to ban chokeholds and no knock warrants. Both are current police department policy. The council is also considering changing the role and oversight responsibilities of the current police department ombudsman to either a police auditor or citizen review council.

63 people testified and presented a variety of opinions.

### **Topeka City Council Meeting**

**Sept. 1, 2020**

**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All council members were present in the chambers.

The agenda was routine. Our league member, Angel Zimmerman was reappointed to the Downtown Business Improvement District Advisory Board.

During council member announcements, many encouraged people to visit Kay's Garden at the Topeka Zoo. Councilwoman Valdivia Alcalá was very concerned with the lack of transparency to the council by the city manager's office about the use of force complaint recently made by a citizen. She again requested the introduction of an ordinance that would establish a citizen review board.

During public comments two citizens who were homeless requested assistance from the Topeka Housing Authority. There were also many questions about the recent changes to the plumbing codes. Ron Gish with Back the Blue testified to the need for a strong use of force policy and the dangers of a citizen review board.

An executive session was held to discuss matters involving attorney client privilege.

## **Topeka City Council Meeting**

**Sept. 8, 2020**

**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All council members were present. The council heard a presentation regarding the status of Topeka's response rate to the 2020 census. We continue to be below our 2010 response rate. The council continues to support full participation in the census through their advertising campaigns. The mayor thanked the league for our support through car parades to increase the census count.

The consent agenda passed unanimously and was routine.

An ordinance was introduced to place a lien on property for failure to pay utility bills. The total amount of collection exceeds 350,000. Twenty- two outstanding bills are from individuals and are in amounts of 250.00 or less. Councilman Duncan requested an amendment to remove the action against property owners with less than 250.00 due to the financial difficulties presented by COVID community wide. The amendment failed. The ordinance passed 9-1 with Councilman Duncan voting no.

Two members of the public spoke during public comments. One person spoke against a proposed ordinance banning chokeholds.

Councilwoman Valdivia Alcalá announced she had filed an ethics complaint against city manager Brent Trout. She had previously announced this intention due to the failure of the city manager to inform the council of the excessive use of force complaint filed against a police officer.

During announcements, city manager Brent Trout announced that Chief Bill Cochran will be retiring Jan. 1, 2021.

The council did recess to executive session to discuss matters of attorney client privilege relating to contracts. No action is expected.