

Observer Reports

May 2021

USD 345 Board Meeting

March 15, 2021

Observer: Chris Huntsman

The Seaman USD 345 March 15 School Board meeting was held in the high school gym to allow for in-person community comments to the agenda item on “renaming the school.” The acoustics were not good and so it was hard for this observer to get everything remotely. The Board’s microphones worked fine, but the public microphone was not picking up speakers very well, in part because the public is not used to speaking into a mic and looking at the audience, which in this case was not front and center, but left and right. Board members were seated on the basketball floor, the podium for the public was centered between the board and the socially distanced audience in the bleachers and faced remote viewers. It was a difficult situation for sure.

President James Adams gave the introduction to public comments and each person had a 3- minute limit and many were cut off. About 23 people, not all patrons of the district, addressed the Board. Several addressed the money costs to “rebrand.” In general, the younger speakers support changing the name, while the older patrons/alumni do not. Many said you can change the name, but the real change is in our hearts and minds. Several faculty members spoke mainly saying listen to our kids, a custodian spoke commenting on racial slurs he has had to clean up.

The district is going to use the Kansas Leadership Center to facilitate a district advisory committee to gather data and represent the community. The 10 volunteers for this committee are all alumni of the district. They will report to the board. The board will make the decision and hope the result makes a stronger community.

Earlier in the agenda the board received their audit report and it was very difficult for me to hear that report for the above reasons. The main issue I gleaned from the audit was building activity accounts and a suggestion to have all checks require two signatures, which is a common issue for school buildings.

I reviewed all remaining documents from all departments, and seeing nothing out of the ordinary, I left the meeting after public comments. Documents and a YouTube are all online if members wish more information.

USD 437 Board Meeting

March 15, 2021

Observer: Mary Galligan (via livestream)

Seven members present and seated in ‘normal’ proximity to one another.

Meeting open to in-person public attendance and live-streamed on the District's YouTube [channel](#) where the recording is available.

The USD 437 School Board, approved the following unanimously:

- Meeting Agenda
- Consent agenda items
- Entering into a virtual school partnership with Greenbush
- A proposal to remodel/renovate two science classrooms at the high school
- A motion to go into Executive Session for 10 minutes, from 6:38 PM until 6:48 PM, to discuss personnel matters under the KOMA exception for discussion of matters relating to non-elected personnel.

The Board also:

- Received a report from the Superintendent regarding the first day of more extensive on-site attendance at the middle and high schools.

The meeting adjourned at 6:48 PM.

USD 437 Board Meeting

April 5, 2021

Observer: Mary Galligan (via livestream)

Seven members present

Meeting open to in-person public attendance and live-streamed on the District's YouTube [channel](#) where the recording is available.

The USD 437 School Board, approved the following unanimously:

- Meeting Agenda
- Consent agenda items
- A motion to go into Executive Session for 14 minutes, from 7:16 PM until 7:30 PM, to discuss personnel matters under the KOMA exception for discussion of matters relating to non-elected personnel and budget under the KOMA exception for discussion of matters related to employer-employee negotiations.

The Board also:

- Received administrator reports regarding the remainder of the school year and related activities, teaching and learning, and development of a master facility plan.

The meeting adjourned at 7:31 PM.

USD 501 Board Meeting
March 18, 2021 6pm via
501 YouTube Channel
Observer: Janet Cathcart

All Board Members Present.

School Highlights-Recognition of our state finalist basketball teams and coaches. D. Morrison congratulated the teams and also commended them for always wearing their masks and setting a good example to the community how TPS 501 was doing their part in helping stop the spread of the virus. Principal Morrissey introduced the Topeka High Girls basketball team and Principal Cathey introduced the Topeka West Boys basketball team.

Public Comment- Dr. Marius Paciono spoke in support of returning to in school learning for the rest of the year. He is a parent of a junior at Topeka High School and a physician in the community and he said he does not want to minimize the disease but believes that since our county numbers are trending down that it is a safe time to get children back in school.

Topeka High PTO/Site Council had a letter to the board also in support of returning to in school learning.

Business by Consent- Dr. Bonebrake asked for an explanation of cost for line item 14.3 Annual maintenance and renewal for wind turbine at Kanza Education and Science Park. Larry Robbins Deputy Superintendent of Operations and Rob Seitz General Director Central Services and Facilities Planning explained the annual costs and the energy discount the district gets from Evergy to Dr. Bonebrake. Dr. Mickelson suggested there might be a marketing opportunity at the site. Vote-unanimously passed.

Superintendent Update

Legislative Plan-Jennifer Crow gave an update on SB 235 Back to School Act sponsored by Senator Ty Masterson. It was defeated in the house by a vote of 55 yea to 69 nay. House Substitute for SB 63 was passed out of the House K-12 education committee and it is still requiring districts to have a back to school plan for this school year but only for the 2020-2021 school year. SB 235 was for this school year and all future school years but some legislatures did not like the lack of local control for districts to make up their own plans and questioned if other emergencies such as if a tornado struck how would it be able to be implemented.

Strategic plan

Focus has been on COVID. Dr. Anderson updated the board on fourth quarter plans for returning to in school learning. Two plans were presented to the board for middle school and high school students to return to in school learning. The districts' middle school and high school principals were consulted on how their buildings would apply both options and how their families and staff felt about returning to in person learning. Opinions among staff and families varied across buildings. The first plan was to continue a hybrid schedule but adding Wednesday to the days of in person learning. The second plan is for all students to return to in person learning on April 1, the beginning of the fourth quarter, with the option for those families who want to stay remote to stay remote. The board asked to hear from all the principals and some did say that even with the new three feet mitigation rule there are just some buildings that have classrooms that would not be able to meet the three feet mitigation guideline. Mrs. Stewart Campbell did ask about ventilation and Mr. Robbins said that the district is currently working on devices that will add another layer of protection on their ventilation systems but that they are only at 20% of the buildings and will need a few more months to get them on all the buildings. All classrooms do have the UV lights in the rooms.

The board agreed to plan two but Mr. Robbins said that they would not be able to provide transportation to all returning students due to the mitigation rules and the number of buses that they already have in their contract. Any student can still get a Topeka Metro bus pass to help h them get to school.

Auditor Update/strategic Plan Finance Report by BT & Co. The board received the final audit from Basic Financial Statements for Year Ended June 30, 2020. A senior representative from BT & Co. provided the board a summary report of the audit. The district passed 100% with no problems.

Meeting adjourned-8:38 p.m.

USD 501 Board Meeting

April 1, 2021

Observer: Annie Tietze

- * Senior of the month is De'Avion Emeson from HPHS
- * Two student heroes were noted. Bryson Driskell and Wesson Wagner were at work at Walmart when they saw a customer collapse. They called immediately for medical help.
- * This is School Library Month, National Autism Acceptance Month, and Para-professional day
 - There was consent for a contract for digital ticket sales at HP, TW, and TH.

- 501 will continue to partner with Seaman High to share coach and facilities for Girls sports
- Jennifer Crow presented an up-date on legislation. SB 267 is the Senate Budget; HB 2030 requires students to pass a Naturalization test to graduate (passed House 69 – 54 but the Senate hasn't voted yet).
-
- Publication of Notice of Public Hearing for the closure of Avondale West passed unanimously.

**USD 501 Board Meeting
April 15, 2021
Observer: Janet Cathcart**

All Board Members Present

School Highlights

Proclamation of The Week of the Young Child read by LaManda Broyle from Shaner Early Learning Academy.

Recognition of College Prep Academy Students for Panel Discussion Participation at NSBA's National Conference- College Prep Academy students, along with their teacher, Mrs. Foster, and school board member, Reverend John Williams, and Director of Certified Personnel and Equity, spent last Thursday afternoon speaking as a panel to attendees of the National School Board Association's National Conference. The students spoke to how local and national racial issues and disparities impact their educational experience, especially being scholars in the historical home of Brown vs. Topeka Public Schools Board of Education.

Public Comment- No public comment

Business by Consent- Passed unanimously

Superintendent Update

Seal of Bi-literacy- Ms. Regina Peszat, Kansas State Department of Education World Languages Program Consultant, presented on the Seal of Bi-literacy Program. Mrs.

Bolley asked if any consideration has been given to Indigenous languages. Ms. Peszat said that they have a committee that is looking into this.

Update on back to in person learning- Ms. Norman, principal from Chase had 54 students return and they are adding more daily. All the middle school principals are working with families to get kids what they need.

Action Item

High school course changes due to Washburn University College Academy for Young Scholars, Reverend Williams made a motion and Dr. Morrison seconded. Action passed unanimously.

Board Member Comments, Dr. Morrison thanked Ms. Peszat for the presentation and congratulated Dr. Mickelson for his award.

Mr. Munoz highlighted donations from Manning Music and Resers Foods to the district. He thanked them for their generosity. Pointed out the COVID indicator for the county went up to 7 and he just wanted to ask community to help keep the number down.

Mrs. Bolley congratulated Dr. Mickelson for his award. Also reminded everyone to enroll their students. Also acknowledged the Music excellence award and wanted to thank our board members who have really supported our music education.

Mrs. Stewart-Campbell also congratulated Dr. Mickelson and thanked him for his calm leadership in such a difficult time.

Reverend Williams shared some comments from the National School Board Association Conference

Meeting adjourned 7:20pm

Shawnee County Commission Meeting

March 8, 2021

Observer: Mary Jo Hobbs

Three Commissioners present

The meeting began with a report by Sherry Lundry of TARC on the 2020 Winter Wonderland Celebration of Lights. A record 16,800 cars drove through the display at Lake Shawnee bringing in over \$240,000, 90% of which will be used for services for adults and children with developmental disabilities. Sherry thanked the Parks + Recreation staff who helped with setup and takedown chores.

Commissioners approved a request from the health department to apply for Kansas Department of Health and Environment Aid-to Local grants for the State Fiscal Year 2022. The request includes 8 grants totaling \$1,139,840 for: childcare licensing, chronic

disease risk reduction, immunization action plan, maternal and child health, regional coordinator, family planning, and the communicable disease program.

In Administrative Communications, Dusty Nichols of the COVID-19 response team, informed commissioners that there would be no scorecard this week. He said the team would be issuing a new "Community Index" next week to replace the scorecard with additional information and updated terminology. Commissioner Cook noted that they would be reviewing the Health Order on Thursday since the resolution is set to expire on Friday.

There was no need for an executive session.

Shawnee County Commission

March 11, 2021

Observer: Elvera Johnson

All Commissioners Present

The meeting opened with a presentation by Stephany Kuhlman regarding fundraising efforts by County employees to benefit Project Topeka. \$6,454 was presented to Project Topeka to be used by food banks and other charities that feed the hungry.

Commissioners approved bids for Public Works to purchase road oil for road maintenance. They approved an application to KDHE for Covid funds to pay salaries for increased staffing for recovery efforts. For Parks and Recreation, they approved a contract with US Department of Agriculture to oil Canada goose eggs for population control. For Stormont Vail Events Center they approved a bid to purchase new horse stalls to replace the ones built in the 1980s. They approved a resolution (2021-14) for settling the impasse with solid waste employee union that was discussed two weeks ago. The resolution was not read; Commissioner Cook stated that the resolution considered the input of the union as well as the commissioners.

Considerable time was spent on comments by Commissioner Riphahn and other citizens concerned with continuing restrictions of Dr. Locke's recent health order, even though restrictions have been relaxed. There are now no restrictions on hours at bars and restaurants. Small groups can include 25 or more. Large indoor gatherings can be up to 500 or 75% capacity. Outdoor gatherings may be up to 1000. People shared opinions that we need to "look at all sides of science," "other states are opening up and we should too," "this is socialism," "this is a free country and I make my own decisions." Complaints are about continuing requirements regarding masks and social distancing.

Commissioners voted to change the requirement regarding wearing masks outside to a recommendation. Commissioner Mays made a motion to discontinue all restrictions when we move into phase 3 of the vaccine administration. This was voted down, as Commissioner Riphahn didn't want to wait that long and Commissioner Cook wanted an

opportunity to discuss the situation when we enter Phase 3. Commissioner Cook (Chair) made a commitment to introduce that discussion. Commissioners Mays and Riphahn stated that they will vote to remove all restrictions when that discussion comes up. Emergency Management and Dr. Locke said that they continually discuss appropriate health orders as the situation changes. Dr. Locke pointed out that we are not approaching herd immunity yet. Statistics show we are moving in the right direction.

Regarding vaccine, we are now receiving about 5,000 doses per week. It is estimated that 40,000 people have been vaccinated. We are now in phase 2B, with vaccine going to people in food processing and distribution, first responders, transportation, cashiers, clergy, higher education staff and government employees. Phase 3 will include people with preexisting medical conditions.

An executive session was called to discuss non-elected personnel and an attorney consult.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting

March 15, 2021

Observer: Mary Jo Hobbs

Three Commissioners present

The meeting began with a presentation by Glenda Washington of GO Topeka on the Business Continuity Grant Program. \$300,000 in CARES grants were awarded to 61 businesses. Owners were required to complete 4 hours of training on writing a business continuity plan to sustain themselves in emergencies and extended interruptions such as COVID-19. Participating businesses included restaurant, daycare, and light manufacturing. Topics of the training covered banking, insurance, homeland security, IT, supply chain impact, and plan of action.

Commissioners approved a contract for Parks + Recreation with Special Olympics for a 2021 "Solar Plunge" to be held at the Midwest Health Aquatic Center on May 15. Det. Kristi Powell of the Topeka Police Department said the total proceeds of the Law Enforcement Torch Run have been used for the "Polar Plunge" held the last 16 years at Lake Shawnee. This year COVID-19 prevented that event and so organizers decided on a warmer weather challenge. They hope having it in May at the Aquatic Center, might bring more participation and would also help people with mobility issues take part. The event will include a cornhole tournament and other opportunities for people to socialize.

There was a need for a 30-minute executive session. 15-minutes for preliminary talks on acquisition of real property, and 15-minutes for an item in the Health Department.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting
March 18, 2021
Observer: Vicki Arnett

All three commissioners were present.

Dr. Erin Locke, Shawnee County Health Officer and Dr. Dennis Cooley, Shawnee County Health Advisory Board presented the revised COVID 19 Score Card to the commission. Dr. Locke demonstrated how the revised score card more closely represents the health and infection in Shawnee County, while also following CDC guidelines. The CDC guidelines would indicate that 100 cases per 100,000 population per week is out of control spread. Under the new Shawnee County score card, 117 cases per week for our population is moderate spread. Shawnee County remains in moderate, although it would be out of control under the former score card and CDC guidelines. Dr. Locke also presented information about the efficacy of masks.

Public Works requested approval to contract for bid a new pedestrian stop light arrangement at 30th Terrace and Croco Rd. The Commission approved.

The Commission approved a request to fill a payroll clerk position in H.R.

Following much discussion among the Commissioners and hearing public comment, the Commission approved amending the health orders to make all orders recommendations with the exception of masks. The Commission will review the mask mandate ordinance on April 15.

During administrative communications, Shawnee County H.R. reported a mobile mammography would take place. The public may participate.

There was no need for executive session.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting
March 22, 2021
Observer: Mary Jo Hobbs

Three Commissioners present

The meeting began with a presentation by Reva Wywadis, Executive Director of Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas, on her agency's use of their CARES Act grant money. Child Care Aware gave over \$864,000 in direct grants to 230 childcare providers in the county. Fifty-eight providers took advantage of the professional development program, "Caring for the Caregiver; Sustaining Your Child Care Business," which was provided through part of the grant money. Twenty-four families received enhanced childcare referrals through the agency's grant. Wywadis said the grant had a positive impact on the availability of childcare in the county. She said that Child Care Aware showed a 40% closure rate in childcare providers nationally, but only a 9.4% in Shawnee County.

John Landon of the Noxious Weed Dept. gave a presentation about the Sensitive Crop Program they are developing. Landowners in Topeka and Shawnee County can register at the department's website any property where fruits, nuts, vegetables, vineyards, nurseries, greenhouses, and beehives, are present that might be harmed by herbicide spraying or drift. In this way, private and commercial sprayers will be able to access a map of these properties before spraying.

Commissioners acknowledged a KDOT grant for Parks + Recreation to be used to complete the Deer Creek Trail extension from Family Nature Park to Lake Shawnee. The county's portion of the grant will be almost a quarter of a million dollars for the ½ mile of trail including a bridge. Construction should start by June of 2022 and be completed by the end of the year.

Betty Greiner gave an overview of the 2020 fiscal year. All revenues were down for the year except the infusion of CARES Act funding. Expenditures were also down by over \$2,500,000, but Director Greiner said without the CRF funds the budget would have had a deficit of over \$3,000,000.

There was no need for an executive session.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting

March 25, 2021

Observer: Elvera Johnson

All three Commissioners present

This was a routine meeting. Contracts were renewed for metal detection equipment, uniform and mat services, and asphalt purchase. Approval was granted to post and fill a vacant position and to request bids for furniture and equipment and a new marquee sign for Stormont Vail Events Center.

The County Treasurer announced that they will soon begin accepting walk-ins for auto or real estate taxes. Folks who do make an appointment will receive priority.

An executive session was announced to discuss non-elected personnel and to consult with an attorney.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting

March 29, 2021

Observer: Mary Jo Hobbs

Three Commissioners present

The meeting was routine business with the commissioners approving a 2-month extension of the contract between Stormont Vail Health and the county to use Exhibition Hall on the campus of the Stormont Vail Events Center for COVID-19 vaccinations. Kellen Seitz said the use of the center for the public health effort has significantly affected other events previously scheduled for the space. He did assure the board that the site still plans to host the Shawnee County Fair, using Ag Hall, Heritage Hall, and Landon Arena on the 2nd and 3rd weekends of July.

The one item that took the most time was the review of the resolutions that make up emergency orders for the county. There was considerable discussion between counsellor Jim Crowl and the commissioners about the impact of SB40 section 12 on the county's liability since it calls for anyone filing suit with the court alleging that they are aggrieved because of a county requirement to wear a mask are guaranteed a hearing within 72 hours and a decision within 7 days. Commissioners concluded that doing away with the mandate would leave a void that would be filled by the probable order from Governor Kelly for face masks, so they ultimately voted 2-1 to keep an order mandating face masks but saying any individual, church, non-profit, or business may opt out if they so choose. Commissioner Cook was the dissenting vote. There were comments from the public during the discussions on the wording, most of them saying that it was confusing.

The commissioners agreed that it would be good to have input from county departments before renewing the remaining resolutions concerning face masks in county facilities. This discussion was tabled until Thursday's meeting.

There was no need for an executive session.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting

April 1, 2021

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All commissioners were present.

Unfinished business consisted of a review of the health order and Resolution No. 2021-20, adopting in part emergency order of the local health officer. The motion was made by Commissioner Mays to continue the mask mandate for the health department, Dept. of Corrections; allowing other departments to opt out of the mask mandate. Court services administrator reported that the Office of Judicial Administration would continue the mask mandate for the foreseeable future per Kansas Supreme Court order. Signs are posted on the walls and they will put pop up signs on the floor outside the court rooms. Stormont Vail events center Specter management has their own protocol; however, the event promoters will determine the course for that event. Specter also applies a risk management model regarding events. Gathering sizes will be recommendations and not mandates. Shawnee County Parks and Rec will become

recommendations not mandates. The dilution of the health order to recommendations with opt out of the mask mandate passed 2-1 with Commissioner Cook voting no.

Shawnee County Solid Waste requested permission to purchase 5 new trucks. The Election Office requested permission to bid delivery of election equipment and printing services for ballots. Andrew Howell discussed the complexity of a small local election stating there will be drainage district elections this year. Four or more candidates will trigger a primary election.

During administrative communications it was noted that the Congregational Church at 17th and Collins is a glass recycling resource for the county. Hazardous waste is open on Sat. which includes electronic recycling. Commissioner Riphahn announced he has been volunteering to prepare for Tulips at Twilight. He also announced he is working with a group to collaborate on a new trail in North Topeka from Great Overland Station to the redesigned weir.

There was no need for executive session.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting

April 5, 2021

Observer: Mary Jo Hobbs

Three Commissioners present

The meeting began with the commissioners having a first hearing and opportunity for public input on a resolution that would update the Floodplain Management Regulations to bring them into compliance with FEMA requirements.

Commissioners approved a Parks + Recreation contract with Topeka Civic Theatre and Academy for management of the Helen Hocker Center for Performing Arts for the remainder of 2021. Randy Luby with Parks + Rec. said TCT will be hosting 3 three-week theatre camps starting on June 3rd at Helen Hocker.

Commissioners gave permission for Parks + Recreation to apply for a KDOT grant to be used for Shunga Creek Trail renovations, including redesigning areas with bad elevations and poor visibility.

In Administrative Communications, Sheriff Hill gave a presentation about his officers' work with the Topeka Police Department and the Kansas Highway Patrol in stopping the flow of narcotics to the county. Director of Corrections, Brian Cole spoke briefly about the problem of reliable re-entry services for inmates with alcohol and drug addiction after incarceration and the good work of the Oxford Houses. He introduced Carol Denton from Fellowship Bible Church to speak for the 28-congregation membership of Topeka JUMP. Carol said the congregations had held home gatherings in the community to survey the concerns, and that the problem of staying sober after incarceration or treatment was most often cited. She said, after meeting with Director

Cole and with people at VA Hospital and Valeo, they decided that more Oxford Houses in the community would help. Members of Topeka JUMP will soon be visiting with each of the commissioners about supporting more Oxford Houses in the county. She cited a 1990's study that showed that the national average for sustained sobriety was 35% while Oxford Houses had a 69% rate. She said there were 18 Oxford Houses in Topeka, but they are all full. Funds are needed to pay for security deposits and first month's rent and furnishings for new Oxford Houses for recovering addicts. These houses are run by the residents who are responsible to pay rent, not use drugs or alcohol, and not cause disruptions in the house. Denton invited the board to attend the zoom Nehemiah Action Assembly on April 26 at 7pm where this project will be discussed.

There was a need for an executive session for 30 minutes to consult with the county counselor on issues of allocation of federal funding and on the Landon Trail. There was no need for further action.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting

April 8, 2021

Observer: Elvera Johnson

All commissioners were present.

The Commission approved bids for purchase of trash trucks; concrete and engineering services for repair of E 6th Street between Croco Road and Highway K4 ramp; contingency fund use for emergency repair of a fire main supply line at Juvenile Detention Center; funds for enhanced advertising and recruiting to fill vacant positions in Corrections; and authorization and execution of contract between Teamsters Local Union and the County.

Treasurer Mah reminded the public that the 2nd half of real estate taxes are due May 10.

Personnel called attention to the newsletter available on the County website.

The Tulip Festival runs from April 9-April 25. Tulips at Twilight is available each evening from 7-10 at Ward Mead Park. Special events will take place at Ensley Garden at Lake Shawnee on April 17.

No executive session was called.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting

April 15, 2021

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All commissioners were present.

The commission heard a presentation by Dr. Erin Locke, SNCO Health officer and Dr. Dennis Cooley, Senior Advisor to SNCO Health Officer about the COVID-19 variants present in Shawnee County and the case update for the week. The virus has become more prevalent in children as reflected in an increase in positive cases in children 18 and younger. Although the cases have decreased in older populations, this is a reflection of vaccination. The commission was reminded that children will not be eligible for vaccine any time soon due to clinical trials continuing. Dr. Cooley also reminded the commission of the diminished overall hospital capacity for pediatrics ICU patients. There are only three in the state. After hearing the presentation, the commission took no action to halt the end of the mask mandate, which goes into effect Fri. April 16.

Public works was authorized to contract for bridge repair over a tributary of the Wakarusa River. They were also authorized to dispose of eleven vehicles and miscellaneous equipment.

Department of Corrections was authorized to solicit bids for roof replacement at the Juvenile Detention Facility and the east addition of the Adult Detention Center.

Parks and Recreation was authorized to renew park maintenance contracts under five different contracts.

The commission acknowledged receipt of correspondence from Sheriff Hill regarding the purchase of four new drones. Commissioner Mays questioned privacy concerns. The Sheriff department responded by indicating the drones were only used in active investigations, including public safety or authorized arrests and therefore did not require a search warrant.

Four members of the public testified, including several family members from the same family, they were against masks, opposed to the Shawnee County Health Department scorecard and denied the virus existed.

Commissioner Mays congratulated a young woman who is one of the first Shawnee County residents to work toward Eagle Scout status. Commissioner Riphahn announced he has been volunteering at Old Prairie Town Tulips at Twilight.

The commission held an executive session for 15 minutes to discuss acquisition of real property.

Topeka City Council

March 16, 2021

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All members of the council were present. Mayor De La Isla left early due to illness. Deputy Mayor Padilla presided at that point.

The council heard a proclamation declaring Development Disabilities Awareness Month.

The council approved appointment of Angelique Brown to the Topeka Human Relations Commission, Kyle Mead to the Topeka Housing Authority Advisory Board and Leilani Grey to the Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board.

An amendment was made to the minutes of the previous council meeting.

The council approved funding agreed upon capital improvement projects at the Topeka Zoo with general obligation, refunding, bonds.

The council approved the agreed upon priorities for the 2022 City of Topeka budget.

The council approved an annexation in Shawnee Woods #2.

Non-action items included discussion of the all-night retailer's license ordinance and other out dated ordinances. The council also heard proposed updates to the city code regarding mandatory retirement and the proposed 2022-2031 capital improvement plan including 2022-2024 capital improvement budget. One public comment recommended the city use the same process as the county.

During announcements council members requested more information about when residential streets were to be swept. Council mentioned city board openings and asked people to volunteer. Many council members chipped money in to fund the Housing Trust Fund. Dobler and Lesser have filed for re-election. Councilwoman Valdivia Alcala announced the beginning of the Oakland Community Garden.

An executive session was held to discuss employer/employee relations. No action was expected.

Topeka City Council Meeting

April 6, 2021

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All council members, except Councilman Lesser, were present, including Mayor De La Isla, either via zoom or in person in the council chambers.

The council approved repeal of ordinances that require all night retailers to obtain a license to remain open between 12 a.m. and 6 a.m. The vote was unanimous.

The council defeated an ordinance amending sections of the code to incorporate mandatory retirement of fire fighters at 60 and police officers at 67. The ordinance was defeated 4-4.

The council deferred the appointment of Councilman Lesser to serve as the city council board member on the Friends of the Topeka Zoo board since he was not present.

The council approved 7-1, with Councilwoman Valdivia Alcala voting no, to approve the revision to the code to reflect the transition of management of the Topeka Zoo to Friends of the Topeka Zoo. This completes the transition.

Former Councilwoman Sandra Clear presented the work of the Fire Commission for discussion. The recommendation is to build a 13th fire station in district 9, keep station #1 and #11 open full time with staffing. The commission also addressed much needed maintenance, including noting that the ceiling fell in station #7 this date. After much discussion with recommendations to bring county and township fire departments into the discussion to provide mutual aid, the city manager will bring forward proposals following the completion of the current budget cycle.

Public comments were made by Topeka JUMP regarding recommending enhanced funding of Oxford House models to address addiction treatment needs.

James Jackson, newly hired Public Works director was introduced. Council members mentioned concerns for the COVID-19 variants and encouraged mask wearing and continued infection control measures and get vaccinated. Councilman Emmerson thanked the Mayor for sending work colleagues disabled child information about Topeka.

An executive session was held to discuss employer-employee negotiations.

Topeka City Council Meeting

April 13, 2021

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All council members were present, including Mayor De La Isla, either virtually or in council chambers.

Councilman Michael Lesser was elected to serve as the City Council representative on the board of Friends of Topeka Zoo.

The council approved a zoning change to allow for development of a self-storage facility at 535 NW Broad Street. The neighborhood members and planning commission approved the zoning change.

The council approved a policy and finance committee recommendation concerning adoption of future city building codes. This change is an attempt to municipal building codes up to date by the end of 2021.

The council heard from Topeka Police Department, which certifies alarm security certification performing criminal background checks and submitting to the nationally recognized testing certification organization. Due to changes in the name of the

nationally recognized testing organization, municipal code requires amendment to reflect this change. The proposed amendment will come before the body next meeting.

City manager discussed ordinance changes as a result of his reorganization of management structure. Several council members had concern about the future of NIAs, the SORT program and code enforcement complaints.

Mr. Joseph Ledbetter spoke during public comments. He was very concerned about lack of response to code violations in his neighborhood.

During announcements, city manager announced that EMTs are vaccinating homebound individuals. He also announced the city has 25 open positions at topeka.org. He reminded council that next week the CIP budget will be discussed.

Councilwoman Hiller announced that 98 people attended the kick off of Mosaic diversity and inclusion project.