

LWVTSC Observer Reports

Voter December 2021

USD 345 Board Meeting

October 11, 2021

Observer: Chris Huntsman

This is a continuation observer report from a 3 hr. meeting Oct. 11. Following the rename committee report, during public comment, 9 people were given 6 minutes each (President Griffin had doubled the 3 minutes making sure everyone was given the opportunity to speak). Topics ranged from COVID issues and data, CRT, school boards are just government overreach, keep the Seaman name petition collected by a patron with 2800 signatures.

The Administration previously recommended the district use a program called Panarama. Patrons commented it is invasive into student privacy. As I understand this program, not only is it a grading program, it can include emotional, social and mental growth learning activities which is what patrons feel is “overreach”. This is an internal data base so teachers, counselors, etc. have access to the total student picture, which might help everyone see the student as a complete person when issues arise-to best help the student achieve. This has a yearly per pupil cost. Dr. Nobel during Superintendent’s comments compared it to “My Chart” that Stormont Vail and KUMC use for patient records. Panarama is bound to student privacy.

Next came the Fall Athletic Director Report, Safe Return to School Report, Teaching and Learning Report, a Proposed 2022-23 calendar, a report from Special Services, the budget report. All have support documents posted online.

The three-hour meeting concluded with several Executive Sessions talking about student information and negotiations. The meeting adjourned with NO action taken.

USD 345 Special Board Meeting

October 25, 2021

Observer: Chris Huntsman

This meeting was set up as a way for the board to ask the rename committee members questions. Eight of the nine committee members attended. The community could also submit questions/opinions on a form on the web page. There would be no audience participation. It began at 6PM and ended just after 8:30PM.

Each committee member could ask 3 community members to join them, making about 45 people in the discussion that was facilitated by Ed O'Malley and Tina Kahn from the Kansas Leadership Center.

The goal of the evening was to understand the report and prepare for the renaming decision. The room was set up with 9 round tables, with approx. 5-6 participants at each, with name tents. A board member, committee member and several community members were at each. Half way everyone except board members changed tables. The audience sat around the parameter of the room.

The conversation focused on the Executive Summary of the committee, and it was broken into "parts". KLC gave a lead question for discussion in small groups to discuss for 5-7 minutes. Participants shared to the audience reflections/feelings/concerns from their small group conversations. They spoke into mics so those online could hear. The small group discussions centered on "A bit of context" p. 3-4, The Committee and its work p. 4, History p. 5-10, Surveys p. 11-13, and lastly "things to consider" p. 14-15.

The youth voice came out loud and strong during the survey section. One student was on the committee, and 3-4 others were scattered at different tables. It was reported that students "voted" to name the school after Fred Seaman 100 years ago. They felt they had NO VOICE at this time. The survey and red couch conversations were mostly during the summer when students are not thinking about school. Only 4.5% of surveys were student responses. Students expressed how sad they were that there was no push for their feelings and perspectives. Only 160 students answered the survey (1200 enrolled in HS). Students said their voices were ignored, inclusion was promoted, they should fire teachers who promote inclusion, we need more information on monetary issue/tax increase, one committee member spoke for the students, the students asked to not attack the victims, the name change and the bullying are two separate issues. The students asked for more input before a decision is made. The committee defended not asking students saying privacy issues prevented them from doing so, parental involvement, etc. Only one committee member expressed disappointment that students were not asked. Another committee member stated "on the survey, the text boxes were so full of information it was hard to compile" and then the privacy/parental issue.

The last KLC small group topic was things to consider. Is there a 3rd option? Can we find common ground? They referenced the upcoming school board election as "we should know where board members stand before we vote." Two candidates on the ballot who are challenging incumbents have publicly stated they want to "keep the name."

Current Board members were given a minute on closing comments. Most said our mission statement guides our work, our job is to listen and not make an individual decision public until the board publicly discusses and then votes. The mission statement, and the vote on what is best for the community cannot focus on one specific issue. President Griffin said "he would not share his opinion" at this time.

USD 437 Board Meeting

October 18, 2021

Observer: Mary Galligan (via livestream)

5 members present

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

The USD 437 School Board:

- Received public comment regarding protective masks
- Received administrator reports regarding bond financing of the Master Facility Plan, new quarantine guidance and Test to Learn/Test to Play, and water damage to the HS gym floor.
- Approved unanimously:
 - Meeting agenda
 - Consent agenda items
 - Motion to go into Executive Session at 8:30 PM for 15 minutes to discuss students pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of actions adversely or favorably affecting a student and to discuss personnel matters pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of matters related to non-elected personnel.
 - Subsequent to Executive Session:
 - Motions to release two staff members from their contracts

Adjourned at 8:46 PM.

USD 437 Board Meeting

Nov. 1, 2021

Observer: Mary Galligan (via livestream)

6 members present

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

The USD 437 School Board:

- Received public comment regarding protective masks
- Received administrator reports regarding 2022 bond election, COVID illness mitigation strategies, WRHS cheerleaders' participation in national competition .
- Approved unanimously:
 - Meeting agenda
 - Consent agenda items
 - Motion to go into Executive Session at 8:02 PM for 10 minutes to discuss students pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of actions

adversely or favorably affecting a student and to discuss personnel matters pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of matters related to non-elected personnel.

- Subsequent to Executive Session:
 - Motions to release two teachers from their contracts without penalties
 - Motions to allow students to attend remotely due to COVID and for a student to transfer as requested
- Approved 4-2
 - Motion that effectively immediately mask-wearing is no longer required in AW buildings except in connection with the Test to Learn protocol and that masks continue to be required on busses per federal requirements.

Adjourned at 8:14 PM.

USD 501 Board Meeting

Oct. 7, 2021

Observer: Annie Tietze

- Executive session with open meeting resuming at 6:00 p.m.
- Alejandro and Ariana Aldape, children of Landon Middle School assistant principal, led the pledge.
- October senior of the month is Jaquelyn Ortega of Highland Park HS.
- There was recognition and a proclamation read in recognition of the TPS principals for National Principals Month.
- Approval was given of the items of business by consent on behalf of the board which included the purchase of 1,600 secondary bus passes.
- Grants from Azura Credit Union, ESSER Grant to help with the needs of schools during COVID-19, Downtown Topeka Rotary, Topeka Community Foundation, Southwest Publishing and Mailing, and Megan Waltner of Armstrong Flute were presented.
- Preliminary enrollment numbers were presented

USD 501 Board Meeting

October 21, 2021 via YouTube

Observer: Janet Cathcart

All Board Members Present

School Highlights

Custodian Appreciation Day, October 2, 2021-Highlight on Art Jefferson, the longest serving custodian in the district. He has worked 28 years as a custodian for the district.

He has been a painter, locksmith and carpenter/construction worker for the district as well as keeping the buildings clean. He said, "As a custodian you can take pride in your work."

National Physical Therapy Month-There are two physical therapists and two physical therapy assistants. They serve students who have congenital disabilities. They have helped find adaptive swings for playgrounds. On average they see eight to nine students. They are mostly in the preschools but do go to other schools.

National Audiology Awareness Month- Proclamation read by Dr. Angelica Pearson. Dr. Pearson is the only audiologist for the district. She works very closely with nursing services and early intervention.

Public Comment
No public comment

Business by Consent- Approved by all

Superintendent Update
COVID 19 Update - Dr. Anderson reported that our first booster clinic was a success. The clinic gave shots to 439 individuals. Kansas State Department of Health and Environment helped with the clinic and will also be partnering with the district for flu clinics.

Ms. Kopp, 501's attorney, discussed the questions the board had at a previous meeting regarding vaccine mandates.

College and Career Readiness and County Job Fair - All districts in Shawnee County were invited to 501's job fair. Dr. Murrell and Jessica Johnston from TCALC discussed the turnout of the job fair. It was great to be back in person for it.

Native American Land Acknowledgment discussion for the board. A Land Acknowledgment is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory you reside on, and a way of honoring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. It is important to understand the long- standing history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history. Land acknowledgments do not exist in a past tense, or historical context: colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation. It is also worth noting that acknowledging the land is Indigenous protocol. The board agreed to have this as an action item next meeting.

Board Member comments

Mr. Munoz reported that he is meeting with all the school's principals. He wants to get to know them and see how school is going for the students.

Mrs. Bolley gave a shout out to several organizations and students.

Dr. Mickelson thanked Advisor's Excel and congratulations to Dr. Anderson for being appointed to the SPARK, The Strengthening People and Revitalizing Kansas (SPARK) Taskforce Executive Committee by Governor Kelly.

Meeting adjourned-7:40pm

USD 501 Board Meeting

Nov. 4, 2021

Observer: Annie Tietze

- Senior of the month – Elijah Brooks of Topeka West High School
- Recognition of Rob Hayes, Asst. Principal at Topeka High School. He won the Wichita Marathon and won National Age Group Record.
- There was a proclamation recognizing Native American Heritage Month.
- There was a discussion of COVID in athletics. Also discussed was vaccination of elementary students planned at Meadows for all students.
- The District Citizens Advisory Council study topics for 2021-2022 were given.
- There will be public notice for 2 weeks in the newspaper about closure of Stout Elementary School

Shawnee County Commission Meeting

October 11, 2021

Observer: Susan Quinn

3 Commissioners present

Today's meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The usual very brief consent agenda consisting of minutes from August 2021 meetings, a significant voucher payment review of over \$824,000, and a nondescript correction orders review were considered and passed in record time.

Today was planning day and kicked off with three items of consideration from the Planning Department represented by Randy Anderson. The first was a rezoning of 20 acres owned by The Villages, Inc. on the west side of SW Urish Road, immediately NW of I-70 in Mission Township from residential "RR-1" to planned unit development "PUD". The Villages intends to build a 22,000 square foot building for administrative offices and classrooms. The Villages is a non-profit 501(c)3 which operates seven group homes for youth in need of care or unaccompanied minors needing a home. Five of the homes are

in the Topeka area and two are in Lawrence. The Commissioners held a brief public hearing during the meeting. The Villages' building consultant was present to answer questions, but received none. No one spoke in favor or opposition to the request. The other two items for consideration were more housekeeping items to ensure the county is compliant with requirements and that existing structures remain correctly zoned.

Parks and Rec asked if they could solicit bids for janitorial services because they aren't able to keep intermittent employees for those services.

Betty Greiner gave an update on revenues and expenses for 2021. Vast majority of revenue is from property taxes. Nearly half of the expenses are for Law Enforcement. Another roughly 15% are from Recreation, 12% from Administrative Services and 10% from Debt. Public Works and Public Health make up the remaining with roughly 8 and 9% each.

Ted Ensley Day was announced for this weekend. Stormont-Vail Events center has a number of entertainment items announced. Flu vaccines are available through the health department with an appointment.

Executive session was not needed and the meeting was adjourned.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting

October 14, 2021

Observer: Elvera Johnson

All 3 Commissioners present.

In routine business the commission approved a bid for removal of abandoned BNSF rail lines and replacement of pavement on S. Topeka Blvd. Weather permitting, this will be started and completed within the next month, with one lane of traffic open in each direction during the entire project. They approved a request for bids to design and build to renovate the 707 SE Quincy property and the subsequent vacated spaces in the existing Courthouse. They approved a contract to extend the agreement to paint the pool basin at Midwest Health Aquatic Center until spring. They approved an amendment to the contract with Stormont Vail Event Center Capital Expenditures account, for a digital highway marquee, in case the user fee fund is not sufficient. They anticipate user fees will be sufficient.

In administrative communications, the Health Department announced a free drive-through flu shot clinic next Wednesday from 4-6 at Hummer Sports Center. This is for uninsured adults. The County Counselor announced an online auction of 23 properties in a tax foreclosure sale. The sale will happen on Wednesday, October 27, from 9-3. Bidders must preregister with the County Counselor's office. Parks and Recreation announced a number of Halloween themed activities in coming weeks. Check out their website.

An Executive Session was announced to consult with the attorney on a private matter and to discuss non-elected personnel.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting
October 18, 2021
Observer: Susan Quinn

2 Commissioners present

Commissioners Riphahn and Cook were present. Commissioner Mays was away at another meeting.

Today was a plan-ahead day. Many of the items for approval were to solicit bids on vehicles well ahead of when needed because of the current wait due to supply chain issues throughout the United States.

Contracts with Wabaunsee and Osage Counties for registered dietician services to administer certain portions of those counties' Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) programs were authorized. These contracts are renewal agreements and completely funded by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. A registered dietician is required for WIC, and those counties have smaller health departments, so do not staff a registered dietician at this time.

Drive through flu shot clinic was announced for this Wednesday, Oct 20 at Hummer Sports Park for uninsured individuals 19 years of age and older. No appointment is needed.

The Parks and Rec department will be stocking Lake Shawnee with 7,000 pounds of trout on Oct 25 as a public and Facebook live event. The lake will be closed for fishing from Oct 25 to 31, reopening on Nov 1 for trout season.

Traffic on South Topeka Boulevard will be disrupted this week to remove the BNSF rail crossing. Be aware of construction this fall as you are driving around the city.

Shawnee County Election Commissioner, Andrew Howell announced that voting is open for those that would like to participate in in-person early voting at the election office both this week and next, Monday-Friday from 8 am to 6 pm, Oct 18-29. It will also be open 8 am to 12 noon on Monday, Nov 1.

Also announced by Andrew Howell was an opportunity for the public to witness the testing of voting equipment on Thursday, Oct 28 in preparation for the Nov 2 election. Commissioner Howell explained that in 2017, the Kansas Legislature required election offices to conduct an audit of every election. An audit will be conducted this year as required by reviewing paper ballots of a few randomly selected precincts after the election to make sure the electronic tallies match the paper ballots. The audits are planned to be streamed live on Facebook if possible. All audits conducted in the past have revealed no irregularities with the integrity of the elections in Shawnee County.

Executive session was not needed and the meeting was adjourned.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting

October 25, 2021

Observer: Susan Quinn

3 Commissioners present

The most eventful thing from today's session was the appointment of Lane Hemsley to the Mission Township Treasurer position. Hemsley has lived in Mission Township for the past 4 years and in the Topeka area for 20 years. He is an attorney and a former State Legislator.

The second most eventful thing on today's meeting agenda was that the Commissioners have extended Shawnee County's state of disaster emergency declaration until December 31, 2021.

Beyond that, other overtones in the meeting swirled around personnel shortages. Court Administration asked to reclassify a Court Technology Support Specialist position to a Court Technology Systems Administrator position, wage range from 12 to 17, mainly because they are very short staffed with all the additional technology needs they have experienced during the past year. They also have an emergency funding issue for some outdated software to record court proceedings as they are down to about one-half of their court reporter staff.

Public announcements included a reminder that winter is approaching, so prepare for that along with getting your annual flu shot if you would like to avoid this year's flu.

Executive session to discuss non-elected personnel issues was held and the meeting was adjourned.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting

October 28, 2021

Observer: Elvera Johnson

All three Commissioners were present.

Bill Persinger, Valeo Behavioral Health gave a quarterly report. There has been an increase in demand for service. They are expecting an increase in pay from Medicaid, as the system is moving to a pay at cost rather than below cost. Some fundraisers and grant requests are being planned.

The mobile service provider for unsheltered folks and others is going well. Partners include TRM, Stormont-Vail, Health Department, and churches. The shower vehicle will have to be paused for the winter unless someone offers a storage facility to keep the plumbing from freezing. The other aspects—meals, clothing, and clinics will definitely continue through the winter.

Valeo continues to work with Law Enforcement and Corrections to coordinate services for better outcomes for people experiencing mental illness.

In routine business: Corrections was given approval to solicit bids for clothing and supplies for inmates for 2022 and to increase the pay for intermittent corrections officers. Public works received approval to solicit bids for materials to be used to repair/maintain roads and culverts. Parks and Recreation received approval for a bid to purchase foods for concession stands and day camps and to purchase service for iPads to be used by field staff. Solid Waste received approval to fill an open position. The County Counselor received another change order approval for the Stormont Vail Events Center project. The project was completed below budget and ahead of schedule. Voters approved the project in 2014.

In administrative communications, Jim Crowl announced that the online auction went well. All 12 properties listed to sell because of unpaid taxes, were sold. The online sale option may be used again in the future. Parks and Recreation recognized 2 staff members who are resigning.

An executive session was announced to discuss non-elected personnel issues.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting

November 1, 2021

Observer: Susan Quinn

3 Commissioners present

Three departments spoke to the commissioners on requests for approving various spending items in their budgets including: Department of Corrections, Facilities Management, and Parks & Rec. Commissioners approved all requests.

Brian Cole with the Department of Corrections brought a contract with the U.S. Marshal's Service to house federal inmates at the Shawnee County Adult and Juvenile Detention Centers. He mentioned there would be three inmates at this time. Facilities management wanted approval for replacing a problematic sewer line at the election office. Parks & Rec asked for two contract amendment approvals, a request to send three employees to a conference in West Virginia next March, and personnel position changes to the management of the seven aquatic centers throughout Shawnee County. Commissioner Cook commented that this change would be turning one position recently vacated by a retirement into two positions to manage the aquatic centers.

During Administrative comments, Dusty Nichols with Emergency Management introduced a new planner Jake Henry. Andrew Howell, Shawnee County Election Commissioner reminded us all to get out and vote today or tomorrow. Theresa Fisher with the Health Department announced that they are administering all 3 types of COVID-19 boosters. They are also running a clinic at Kansas History Museum throughout November on Thursdays and Fridays for COVID-19 vaccinations. Stephany

Kulhman demonstrated where to find the November newsletter on the Commission website.

Executive session was not needed and the meeting was adjourned.

**Shawnee County Commission Meeting
November 4, 2021
Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All three commissioners were present.

Routine business included approval of the renewal of contracts with Foley equipment to service generators at the adult, juvenile detention and Corrections Annex, renewal of the contract with Corizons to provide physical and mental health services at the Adult and Juvenile Detention Centers. The Commission also approved a subscription with TimeKeeping Systems Inc. for the Guard1 Plus System to maintain/update licenses and update software and technical support for each handheld tracking device. The DOC also was approved to purchase 26 additional Guard 1 Inmate Tracking System devices.

Finance and Audit was approved to allocate 2022 Special Alcohol-Drug Program Funds to the Shawnee County Drug Court, PARS and Valeo.

The Shawnee County Health Department was approved to fill a vacant Registered Nurse position in the Maternal Child Health Outreach Program with funding from the KDHE Maternal Child Health Block Grant.

Parks + Recreation was approved to solicit bids to repair the Gage Park Mini-Train tracks.

The Shawnee County Information Technology Dept was authorized to enter into an agreement with Optiv to maintain and update the security of the firewall.

The Commission received recommendations about the proposed Capital Improvement Projects for the 2022 budget and concurrent recommendations from the SPARKS committee regarding American Rescue Plan funding. Many projects proposed for Capital Improvement Projects and Capital Outlay Funding may be considered for ARPA funding. The vote is expected Mon. Nov. 8, 2021. The recommendations of the SPARK committee are available at <https://www.snco.us/commission/>

During Administrative Communications the public was reminded that this weekend on Sat. Household Hazardous Waste site will be open. The facility will be closed Thurs. Nov. 11 for Veteran's Day. Solid Waste pick up schedules will also be impacted for the Veteran's Day holiday. The Treasurer's office stated that tax statements will be sent late next week. Commissioner Cook reminded the public that the Township Meeting will be tomorrow at Betis Sport's Complex. A new 4-H agent has been hired at the Extension Office.

There was no need for an Executive Session.

Topeka City Council Meeting
November 9, 2021
Observer: Vicki Arnett

All council members, including the mayor were present in person, with the exception of Councilwoman Valdivia Alcala. She attended via telephone due to technical difficulties with zoom. Later in the meeting she announced she was quarantining due to her husband testing positive for COVID-19.

The meeting was delayed until 6:43 p.m. due to technical issues. The mayor gave the invocation. The first item of business was to amend the agenda due to the late start time. The presentation of the 3rd quarter financial report, non-action items discussion of citizen advisory council, Topeka DREAMS Grant awardees, American Rescue Plan Act Funding were all deleted from tonight's agenda and will be advanced to a later date.

The council approved the update to the Valley Park Neighborhood Plan. The council approved a utilities contract amendment to add Design Services and Construction Manager at Risk selection, a new type of contract, for the North Topeka Nutrient Removal Project. The amendment allows for the contractor to assume risk for cost overrun. The redesign and construction of the water treatment plant is required by KDHE and EPA to meet water quality standards.

Non-action discussion item was information about issuing industrial revenue bonds to facilitate the acquisition and renovation of the former Topeka Holidome by Flywheel Fairlawn LLC for moderate priced "worker" housing.

The council heard a presentation and discussed the 2022 legislative priorities. The presentation included a focus on redistricting, the legislative races in 2022, how the federal infrastructure monies will be spent, Docking building renovation, KDHE lab possible relocation outside of Topeka, the Polk/Quincy viaduct reconstruction, taxes on for profit businesses which "compete" with non-profits and possible loss of revenue, health issues, mental health funding, child care funding, abandoned property and foreclosure proposals, regulation of firearms, mowing of the highway right of ways in Topeka and KNI remaining in Topeka. Councilman Duncan proposed the policy committee review the legislative priorities and bring recommendations of what to support and oppose prior to the city meeting with the Shawnee County legislative delegation on Dec. 10 at 9:30 a.m.

Two people spoke at public comments about the lack of transparency on the search for a new city manager and chief of police.

Council announcements included thanking veterans for their service, congratulations to all who ran for city council and mayor, recognition of Habitat for their new House to Home project and the public meeting of the four finalists for chief of police will take place Wed. Nov. 10 at 6 p.m. in the Holiday Bldg.

There was a need for executive session to discuss an individual employee personnel issue.