

## Observer Reports

August 2022

### USD 345 Board Meeting

June 13, 2022

Observer: Chris Huntsman

All board members were present. Business as usual recognized students and Logan Elementary School for honors brought to the district.

President Henderson also recognized Dr. Noble at his last meeting. Henderson shared a few accomplishments – from a 6- page document of accomplishments of Dr. Noble’s over his six- year tenure with the district. Noble reflected on the profession of teaching. He is a third generation educator in his family. He has spent 30 years in education, 13 as a superintendent.

*“We are facing unprecedented challenges to public education-he is saddened that public education has become political. The partisanship that is entering our buildings, our meetings, our community is not what public education was ever meant to be about. Because of that, we are seeing teacher shortages, support staff shortages like we have never seen, increased levels of student absenteeism and other obstacles like never before. It is my hope that our ‘Seaman Strong’ community will come together and rise above hurtful rhetoric of misinformation and distortion of facts. The real truth is our teachers and our staff continue to push students to success,” Noble said.*

Noble reflected on two very challenging issues that have divided the community: The Pandemic and the Rename Process. He stated that alumni even back 30-40+ years knew there were rumors about Fred Seaman. He was proud of the process the then Board of Education took in coming to their Resolution.

This community has always rallied around each other and their schools, and he wishes the current board and Mr. Willson, the new superintendent, success.

Under President’s remarks, Henderson thanked Noble and looked forward to working with Willson.

The Consent Agenda was the next item and it took a few seconds and a second ask by Henderson for a motion. Caudill/Weiler moved and McGinty ask to pull item 7D Licensed Contracts for executive session. Amended motion passed.

#### Item 8 Discussion Items

1. Name the Elmont gym after Mark Simoneau, long serving educator in many capacities over the district and community; the Elmont Principal requested this as per board policy. No action was taken at this time.

2. Teaching and Learning, Handbooks, Curriculum and Special Services reports were presented; details online. Site council members for each building were listed, as well as their agendas for the school year.

At about 7:20, the board worked “Item 9 Action Items”. The Board voted and approved the lunch pricing and asphalt bid for North Fairview.

On HS Curriculum adoption, board Member McGinty had some questions. She stated we have great support from our families in this district. She looked at Social and Emotional Learning information in the district office, but did not see the digital forms and topics like bullying, suicide, mandatory reporting. She understands KSDE has these directives addressing SEL and asked “will all materials on this topic be on the website?” We need to be equitable and transparent –topics like “dream big” what does that all mean? That is issue for parents – what is involved here? Will the parents see enough information ahead of time? McGinty stated that videos are imbedded in curriculum and parents need to be able to see them. Board member McNorton asked for confirmation about the videos on the web site for parents. McGinty is also a teacher in another district and she emails parents a week ahead of time of the next lessons. Do teachers post on website lesson plans for the week or two weeks? McGinty referenced transparency BEFORE the lesson, not after, stating parents need it before. Board Member Caudill asked if students have videos on Schoology or is it just on teachers’ platform? Could that be done in 345? After about 10 minutes, President Henderson asked for any more discussion, then do we have a motion to approve the secondary curriculum as discussed last month? After a pause, Caudill moved and Weiler seconded and the motion was passed. Outgoing superintendent, Noble, suggested when teachers come back this discussion needs to involve them so all are on the same page. Ask staff to “help us identify the best way to do this.”

At 7:31 the board voted to move into executive session to discuss personnel and return at 7:40. At 7:50 the board returned and Weiler moved to approve 7D, McNorton seconded and the motion passed. The meeting was adjourned.

## **USD 437 Board Meeting**

**June 20, 2022**

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

4 members present; one member participated via phone

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

The USD 437 School Board:

- Received an administrator report regarding progress on the 2022 bond-funded projects and a report of various data describing the 2021-2022 school year.
- Discussed property and casualty insurance for the upcoming year and installation of the high school baseball and softball field lights
- Approved unanimously:
  - Meeting agenda
  - Consent agenda items
  - Installation of softball and baseball field lights
  - Elementary school handbook as previously presented
  - Motions to go into Executive Session: 1) at 7:28 PM for 20 minutes, until 7:48 PM, to discuss students pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of matters related to actions adversely or favorably affecting a student, personnel matters pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of non-elected personnel, and the budget pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of matters related to employer-employee negotiations; and 2) at 7:48 for 10 minutes, until 7:58 PM, to discuss the budget pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of matters related to employer-employee negotiations.
  - After executive session: 1) a motion to approve out of district transfers for the 2022-2023 school year; 2) a motion to release a teacher from her contract with no penalty; and 3) establishing the starting wage for the Parents as Teachers lead teacher at \$22/hour.

Adjourned at 7:49 PM.

**USD 437 Board Meeting**

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

**June 27, 2022**

4 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:

- Discussed: final budget transfers, a proposal to increase food service personnel wages, a recommendation to purchase Eureka Math 2 manipulatives, elementary Social Studies standards, and Spanish 1-4 resources.
- Approved unanimously:
  - Meeting agenda
  - Consent agenda items

- Final budget transfers as presented, increase of food service personnel wages as presented, and renewal of the property and casualty insurance policies as discussed at the previous meeting
- Motion to go into Executive Session at 6:51 PM for 5 minutes, until 6:56 PM, to discuss the budget pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of matters related to employer-employee negotiations. Note that two other executive sessions were listed on the agenda, but no motion was made to go into executive session for those purposes.

The sound on the livestream was not restored when the Board returned from executive session so any subsequent action was not audible.

Adjourned at 6:57 PM.

**USD 437 Board Meeting**  
**July 11, 2022**  
**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 unanimously took the following action:

- Approval of the meeting agenda
- Election of the Board President (Jacquie Lightcap) and Vice President and other required officers and officials including the Freedom of Information Officer (Dr. McWilliams) and records custodians (Board Clerk and building principals)
- Appointment of members of the following subcommittees of the Board: Budget, Capital Outlay, Strategic Accountability, Internal Audit, Personnel, Community Outreach, and Bond Facility Plan
- Adoption of a resolution setting the dates, time, and location of Board meetings for the 2022-2023 School Year
- Approval of the consent agenda items
- Spanish 1-4 resources as discussed at previous meeting
- Eureka Math 2 manipulatives as discussed at previous meeting
- Elementary Social Studies Standards as discussed at previous meeting
- Motion to go into Executive Session at 7:18 PM for 30 minutes, until 7:48 PM, to discuss students pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of matters relating to actions adversely or favorably affecting a student, personnel matters pursuant to the KOMA exception for non-elected personnel, and the budget pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of matters related to employer-employee negotiations.
- Subsequent to Executive Session:
  - Approval of out-district students transfers

- Release of two teachers from their contracts without penalty

Adjourned at 7:49PM.

**USD 501 Board Meeting  
July 7, 2022  
Observer: Annie Tietze**

All members were present except Melanie Stuart – Campbell

- The Board recessed to executive session for 30 minutes to discuss confidential personnel matters related to employee performance and claim resolution.
- Students Ainsley Schimmel and Maria Isaia were recognized for being in the top ten nationally at the National Educators Rising Conference. Both participated in the education pathway at TCALC.
- Washburn University Scholarship/Concurrent Enrollment Program tuition for 36 Highland Park High students who enrolled through Washburn University during the 2021 – 2022 school year was agreed to.
- A grant for disposable masks for students and staff for the 2022 – 2023 was announced.
- Approved was the Kansas Educational Risk Management Pool in the adding of student accident medical coverage.

**Topeka City Council Meeting  
June 21, 2022  
Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All city council members, including the mayor were present either in chambers or on line except Council member Valdivia Alcala. Council member Valdivia Alcala broke her foot yesterday and is awaiting further treatment.

The mayor recognized the work of Valeo Behavioral Health Care.

The council appointed Nicholas Xidis and Stephen Smith to the Downtown Business Improvement District Advisory Board, Luc Bensimon to the Topeka Human Relations Commission and Rodney Miller to the Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority.

The council heard the Utilities Department Quarterly Report and the Public Works Department Quarterly Report. The reports consisted primarily of updates to current construction projects.

The council heard a report from City Finance Director regarding considerations for the 2023 budget. Several council members expressed the desire to plan for a 1 mill levy

reduction. Other council members expressed the desire to hold the mil levy flat and devote excess revenue to paying down outstanding debt to address bond ratings. The budget must be completed by Oct. 1.

The council approved rezoning certain properties downtown to mixed-use district as recommended by the Downtown Master Plan.

Council also approved canceling meetings on August 2 and November 8, 2022 due to election days. Since multiple projects will be ongoing including the budget and hiring city manager, the council requested holding the final two Tues. in August open for special meetings.

The council held a discussion of the proposed increase to the prior authorization of Industrial Revenue Bonds to Flywheel Fairlawn LLC due to the need to demolish and rebuild 220-250 moderately priced apartments at 6<sup>th</sup> and Fairlawn.

One person spoke during public comments supporting the discussed reduction in mil levy.

Announcements included concern for public safety over the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend, safety precautions during the heat, recognition of June as Pride month and Topeka's improvement in LGBTQ welcoming indexes, Citizen's Police Academy applications are open, Washburn Rural thespians are participating in a national program this week, ARPA applications webinar is now on-line, Sunflower State games are in July in Topeka, Sunflower Music Festival is this week, Mexican Fiesta is July 14-16, 2022, Fire and Police academies are graduating classes this week, Momentum 2027 work has started and congratulations to Arab Shrine celebration of 100<sup>th</sup>.

**Topeka City Council Meeting  
July 5, 2022  
Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All city council members, including the mayor, were present, except Council member Naeger, either in chambers or on zoom.

The council meeting started with an announced executive session to discuss an economic development issue with attorney.

When the open meeting resumed, council approved the appointment of Beverly Hall to the Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority.

The council discussed options to address capital needs and rate adjustments to sustain the downtown parking system. The council did not take action on this item. The downtown parking is an enterprise fund. The fund level needed is to return parking

income to the 2019 level. The fund is used to maintain all four city owned garages and Kansas Ave. street/surface parking. The fund needs to generate 130.00 per garage stall and 33.00 per surface parking space due to inflation rate of 30% overall and increasing 5% per year in construction costs and supplies. There were two public comments.

The council also discussed the recommendations of the Police and Safety Committee. Concern was expressed that the independent police auditor is a contractor who is currently located out of state. The council has not heard a quarterly report from the auditor for many months. The council continues to consider an independent citizen review board with parameters of control, separate and independent from the governing body. Any community members interested in serving on a review board are encouraged to contact their city council member. There were six public comments.

Council announcements included pointing out the proposed city budget is posted on the website and includes a 1 mil decrease as a starting point. June is independent retailer's month. July 31, 2022 is ARPA grant application deadline. 2,000 people attended the SENT July 4 event. Music week in Topeka begins Fri. with Fiesta and later Country Stampede. Work continues on changing our culture property maintenance enhancement. League basketball camp begins this week and the mayor reminds everyone to check your registration and vote.

The council went into executive session to discuss an individual employee.

**Topeka City Council Meeting  
July 12, 2022  
Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All council members were present, including the mayor, either in person or virtually, except Council member Lesser.

The council approved the appointment of Joy Grimes to the Shawnee County Juvenile Corrections Advisory Board and Alexis Simmons to the Topeka Human Relations Commission.

The council heard a presentation by Impact Avenues, a housing support program that serves 200 families completely funded by Advisors Excel.

Action items included approval of the issuance of industrial revenue bonds to pay the costs of acquiring and demolishing the former Topeka Holidome and constructing, installing, furnishing and equipping a workforce rental housing development with approximately 220 units of multifamily housing at 605 SW Fairlawn. Also approved was changes in zoning on property located at 605 SW Fairlawn from multiple family dwelling to Planned Unit Development (PUD) multiple family residential and commercial,

allowing for the construction of two, two story apartment buildings and unspecified commercial use.

The council approved the notice to the county clerk that Topeka Metro Transit Authority is considering adopting a budget that exceeds the revenue neutral rate. Dr. Bearman, chair of the TMTA, stated this would assist with the expansion of service and fuel costs. The council also approved a notice to the county clerk that the City of Topeka is considering adopting a budget that exceeds the revenue neutral rate. It should be noted the budget discussion begins with a 1 mill reduction. The revenue threshold increases as a result of increased property assessment valuation.

The council approved the recommendation of the Public Infrastructure Committee to amend the resolution approving the 2023-2032 Capital Improvement Plan and Capital Improvement Budget in order to include potential projects throughout the redefined area of downtown and projects which have moved up from 2025 to 2023. The vote was 8 approved, council member Emerson abstained due to potential involvement with a project. The council approved the recommendation of the Public Infrastructure Committee to approve the 2023 Citywide Half-Cent Sales Tax projects.

Following much discussion and the public testimony of 8 individuals, 1 in favor and 6 opposed, the council approved 8-1 the special committee on Topeka Police Department regarding aspects of policy, recruitment, training, discipline and performance. Public testimony in favor was a support for police department overall. The 6 in opposition expressed the vagueness of the recommendations reflected support for the police and lax overall support for any citizen oversight, including the independent police auditor position. Many who spoke supported a citizen review panel. Council member Valdivia Alcala cast the no vote.

During public comments, two additional people spoke in opposition and anger at the council's vote over the committee recommendations adopted.

Administrative announcements included reminders about Fiesta and Stampeded starting this week, commenting on a good discussion and turn out for discussion of the police department, the public has until midnight to update/register to vote, the Falley's building in east Topeka is starting demolition, basketball camp continues this week and the LULAC mural is completed.

An executive session was announced to discuss the performance of an individual employee.

**Shawnee County Commission Meeting**  
**June 13, 2022**  
**Observer: Susan Quinn**

Today's meeting included 2 public hearings on solar farms and one on a major amendment to Aldersgate Village to allow up to 20 additional single-family residential dwelling units.

Aldersgate's amendment was passed easily. One of the two solar farms was sent back to the planning department for further modifications to the application. The other solar farm application was approved by the Commission as slightly amended for a review after one year by the Commission and that they would be subject to any future regulations should the county adopt regulations on solar farms.

The solar farm in Mission Township proposed for SW 45<sup>th</sup> & Auburn Road was sent back to the planning department mainly because of concerns from two neighbors and the Commissioners. They appeared to be worried about elevated ambient temperatures for the nearby neighbors. The solar farm was proposed to be fairly close to the road and thus to the neighboring homes.

For more information regarding the planning and development process to site large scale solar installations see the Kansas Sierra Club (partner with LWVK and LWVTSC) article on the development of standards in Douglas and Johnson Counties.  
<https://www.sierraclub.org/kansas/blog/2022/06/sierra-club-solar-siting-successes>

The solar farm in Menoken Township proposed for NW 35<sup>th</sup> & Leedy Road was approved. It was not opposed in the public hearing. It was also farther set back from any neighboring properties than was the Auburn road project.

Both solar farms would be constructed by Evergy in partnership with the FreeState Electric Cooperative. They would be the first solar farms in Shawnee County.

The consent agenda was passed and had a \$20,000 contract with FreeState Electric Cooperative to move a few overhead electric lines, poles and equipment for an emergency bridge replacement on SW 61st over Six-Mile Creek.

Curt Niehaus asked to purchase some limestone rock for Monmouth Township roads. Betty Greiner went over the May financials with nothing unusual to note.

No executive session was needed today so the meeting was adjourned.

## **Shawnee County Commission Meeting**

**June 23, 2022**

**Observer: Elvera Johnson**

All 3 Commissioners present.

The Commission approved 2 resolutions presented by Bond Counsel Bob Perry to issue Shawnee County, Kansas Taxable Industrial Revenue Bonds to a purchaser in Washington DC who bought the Whispering Pine Apartments and the Cascade Apartments and is renovating and improving them. They authorized Brian Cole from

Corrections to create and solicit bids for the repair of parking lots that are badly in need of repair. For Public Works, they approved a request to solicit bids to repair a section of Topeka Boulevard between city limits and South Topeka Blvd. Commissioner Mays commented that he had received citizen complaints about that area. They approved an emergency bridge replacement for a bridge on SE 61<sup>st</sup> over Six-Mile Creek. This was delayed earlier because of issues related to COVID. He explained that there is a 2-year assessment of all the bridges by an outside consulting engineer, and he follows their recommendations. Commissioners approved a request to reject bids and re-advertise for a pavement repair at Stormont-Vail Events Center service drive. He said that groups performing at the Events Center often move their equipment on site with heavy trucks, and this is hard on pavement. They also approved installation of new roofing on an equipment storage building.

A very brief time was allowed for public comment. There was none. In Administrative communications, Brian Cole spoke about the “Stepping Up” program that works to improve services to inmates who suffer from mental illness.

Miss Monhollan representing the Planning Commission spoke about a public hearing on CU22-02 regarding Solar Farms which will be held Monday, June 27, at 6 p.m. at the NW Annex located at 1515 NW Saline.

## **Shawnee County Commission Meeting**

**June 27, 2022**

**Observer: Susan Quinn**

Today’s meeting was very routine. The commissioners approved rates between the County and American Medical Response (AMR). They awarded a contract for the Transportation Alternative Project, Deer Creek Trail to Robinson Extension. Commissioner Cook noted that trail construction is very expensive. The Department of Corrections needed a new HVAC system replaced so asked to go out for bid for that project.

COVID vaccines for children 6 months and older are available now from the Shawnee County Health Department available via walk-in or appointment.

Spirit of Kansas has its 25<sup>th</sup> year this year. There will be skiing and a car show in addition to the fireworks. Also, Old Buff has been refurbished in Cushinberry Park. It is a historic statue of a Buffalo. A picture was shown and it looked very nice. There were several other improvements completed at Cushinberry Park including landscaping and a new basketball court.

Executive session was needed today for 20 minutes to discuss personnel pay of non-elected officials.

## **Shawnee County Commission Meeting**

**June 30, 2022**

**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All three commissioners were present.

The Department of Corrections requested approval of annual Memorandum of Understanding with One Heart Project Kansas, Kansas Children's Service League, Boys and Girls Club of Topeka and Heartland Regional Alcohol and Drug Assessment Center for probation, parole and intensive supervision programs. The request was approved unanimously.

The Commission approved a request to restructure salaries and positions in Parks + Rec. The salaries will be paid within current budget and will flatten the organizational structure. The Commission approved the appointment of Kathy Mosher to the Juvenile Corrections Advisory Board. The Commission also approved raises for all elected and appointed officials and department heads.

There was one public comment regarding the Berryton Project. Administrative announcements included the budget hearings will start Tues. July 5. They will be streamed and available for viewing. Mon. August 22, 2022 will be the public hearing on the budget at 5:30 p.m.

The July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday will change the holiday trash pick up schedule. Two new magistrate judges will be sworn in next week following interviews. Corporal Garner with the sheriff's department is retiring soon. There will not be a meeting Mon. July 4. Commissioner Riphahn commented on how much fun the BNSF train ride, sponsored with Greater Topeka Partnership, to Lawrence was.

There was a need for executive session to consult with the attorney regarding contractual obligations related to the remodel/construction at the new annex.

## **Shawnee County Commission Meeting**

**July 7, 2022**

**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All three commissioners were present.

The meeting started with the public hearing to reconsider a conditional use permit to allow construction of a solar farm at 45<sup>th</sup> and Auburn Rd. The planning commission, neighbors and Evergy modified the plans to include more distance from Auburn Rd., further from residences, closer to the substation and utility right of way, increased height of trees and fence, relocation of the entrance on the south side and a review in one year. Public comment was from Evergy whose spokesperson identified areas of

concern that need to be addressed for solar installations. These concerns include proximities and visibility, glare, heat islands and noise. The revised proposal addresses all concerns. Commissioner Riphahn commented that there is a need to set standards for solar and wind installations.

The commission approved the purchase of two outdoor warning sirens and for a vendor to assess the siren coverage and incorporating older sirens into the newer system.

The commission approved the reauthorization for services in the infant toddler program between the Health Department and TARC for one year. The commission also approved the lease of two vehicles for the Health Department. This authorization rescinds a previous approval and puts forward a new lease agreement.

There were no public comments.

Announcements included emergency management services during Country Stampede, the July Commission newsletter is posted on the website and includes the Parks and Recreation Get Out There program and Girls' State visit to the courthouse. DOC announced a gift of 25,000 to assist with release of women inmates.

There was no need for executive session.

**Shawnee County Commission**  
**July 14, 2022**  
**Observer: Elvera Johnson**

All commissioners present.

For the Health Department, Commissioners authorized the execution of a contract with United Way to serve as the fiscal agent for A Childhood Block Grant for the coming fiscal year. For Corrections, they approved use of contingency funds to pay for emergency repairs related to a waterline break under the Juvenile Detention Center. This will cover any costs not covered by insurance. For Parks and Recreation, they approved a rather complicated plan to lease some 2023 vehicles, should the 2022 lease request not come through. It is difficult to have orders filled right now and the order opening and closing time period is often under 8 hours.

Commissioners announced there will be a public hearing regarding the intent to exceed the revenue neutral rate for the 2023 budget. It is scheduled for August 22 at 5:30 p.m., in Room 511 of the Courthouse. Also, there will be a public hearing to consider the submission of a Sales Tax Ballot Question to fund recreational facilities in Gage Park. This hearing will be during the regular commission meeting on August 18. If approved by the Commission following the public hearing, the tax will be voted on by the public during the November election. If approved by the voters it would go into effect in January 2023. These 2 public hearings are required by state statute.

Public comment was briefly offered. No comments were made. In administrative communications, Dusty Nichols with emergency preparedness said that during the Country Stampede, the weather will be hot and little shelter is available. Stay hydrated. Curt Neihaus of public works announced that the Croco Road project is completed.

Election Commissioner Howell talked about the August 2 Primary and outlined the ways available to vote—early voting at the election office starting Monday, advance voting by mail any time before the election, or at your polling site on Election Day. If requesting a mail ballot, he encouraged voters to send it early. Commissioner Howell explained that every registered voter can vote on the constitutional amendment. Related to a question from Commissioner Cook, he said there are enough workers available, but they could use some trained back-up workers to replace workers who are not able to work on that day. Anyone 16 or older can work at a poll.

Commissioner Mays announced that three new businesses are expanding and utilizing incentives provided by JEDO. He also commented on the Country Stampede and the Fiesta.

An executive session was called regarding consultation with an attorney regarding courthouse renovation negotiations.