

# April 2023 Observer Reports

## USD 437 Board Meeting

Feb 20, 2023

Observer: Mary Galligan (via livestream recording)

5 members present (one via phone) at the start of the meeting; two members subsequently arrived

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

The USD 437 School Board unanimously approved:

- The meeting agenda
- Items on the consent agenda
- A motion to approve new resources for HS government teachers as discussed at prior meeting
- A motion to approve proceeding with a capital outlay project for the HS science classroom as discussed at this meeting
- A motion to go into executive session at 7:10 PM for 45 minutes, until 7:55 PM, to discuss students pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of actions adversely or favorably affecting a student, personnel matters pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of matters related to non-elected personnel, and the budget pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of employer-employee negotiations
- A motion to go into executive session at 7:57 PM for 10 minutes until 8:07 PM to discuss personnel matters pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of matters related to non-elected personnel
- After the second executive session, a motion approving the service of an investigating officer and an appeal officer from the KASB legal team for two board policy (KN) complaints; and a motion to accept the appointed appeal officer's report and conclusions

The Board received:

- An Owner's Representative report regarding ongoing construction projects: bid process; WRMS status; WRHS multipurpose space update; Supply chain update; and Overview of next steps
- Administrator reports on the suicide prevention program; Therapy dog update; Board policy updates

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:10 PM.

**USD 437 Board Meeting**  
**March 6, 2023**  
**Observer: Mary Galligan (via livestream)**

7 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 approved:

- The meeting agenda
- Items on the consent agenda
- The 2022 Financial Audit
- The Guaranteed Maximum Price Amendment for construction at the high school
- The master budget for the high school construction project
- Board policy updates as presented at the Feb 20 meeting
- A motion to go into executive session at 6:56 PM for 60 minutes, until 7:56 PM, to discuss personnel matters pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of matters related to non-elected personnel and the budget pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of employer-employee negotiations

The Board discussed:

- The 2022 Financial Audit
- The Guaranteed Maximum Price Amendment for construction at the high school
- The master budget for the high school construction project
- Board policy updates – compliance and technical in nature
- The list of administrators expected to renew contracts for next year (noting four vacancies expected)

The Board received communication regarding the Washburn Public Schools Foundation breakfast scheduled for April 27.

The meeting adjourned at 7:56 PM.

**USD 501 Board Meeting**  
**February 16, 2023**  
**Observer: Janet Cathcart**

All board members present.

School Highlights

CTE Career Pathways Highlight-Mr. Dustin Dick read the proclamation for National Career and Education Month. Discussed the various programs and the successes and enrollment numbers.

National Merit Student Highlight-Sara Schafer gifted coordinator at Topeka High School. She presented the two merit scholars from THS. Kushal Mamilapallil and Mathew Hubka are the National Merit Students. Both would like to go into robotics and/or computer engineering.

Public Comment- no public comment

Disposition of Business by Consent  
All approved.

Superintendent's Report

Continue discussion on TCALC Board Members Work Session-30 Minutes-College and Career Readiness

Action Items- Approval of Proposed Policy Changes

Motion by Lalo Munoz, second by Melanie Stuart-Campbell.

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Sue Bolley, Lalo Munoz, Melanie Stuart-Campbell, Richard Bonebrake, Lisa Schmitt, Randall Schumacher, Keith Tatum

Committee Reports/Updates

- Bonebrake- Health and Wellness Committee-working on employees using the Smartshopper app to find providers and have employees see their doctor more regularly for checkups. Finance committee did not meet due to rescheduling.
- Shoemaker- Personnel Committee discussed vacancies and potential reclassification to streamline some positions.
- Tatum - Finance committee was rescheduled. No other updates.
- Schmitt - also discussed Health and Wellness Committee
- Munoz - no updates on meetings
- Stuart-Campbell - Sheldon Headstart Committee meeting.
- Bolley - Retreat date and times. March 23 for retreat date at Burnett Center

Board Member Comments

- Stuart-Campbell - add discussion item to next board meeting for study abroad.
- Munoz - Parent-teacher conferences went well and liked the new format. Helped at concession during basketball tournament. Streets around Scott Dual Language School will be repaired beginning this summer and ending into the fall school year. Much needed improvement for the area.
- Schmitt - made her comments in committee
- Tatum - Robinson Middle School event program on Black History month.
- Schumacher appreciate our school staff
- Bonebrake - absentee rate is 8.9% he discussed the impact on state compensation for school funding. Bolley asked Bonebrake if he would be willing to discuss with our Kansas legislature. He agreed.

- Bolley - High school theatre/musical season is on. We also purchased new football helmets.

Meeting adjourned at 8:07pm

### **Shawnee County Commission Meeting**

**February 6, 2023**

**Observer: Susan Quinn**

All three County Commissioners were present at today's working session. The only topic was a review of the Stormont Vail Events Center given by Kellen Seitz of the [Oak View Group](#) (aka OVG).

The remodel is just about completely done, other than a few draperies that are still on order. They are now planning new events for 2023. Among the potential events: three country shows, two rock shows, two pop shows, and two professional sporting events.

Food selections will be changing. Based on focus group feedback, they are working to bring in fresh fruits and vegetables, fresher salads and sandwiches and generally a more diverse variety of foods than your usual concession stands of fried foods, hot dogs and hamburgers. Although Mr. Seitz did say that hot dogs and hamburgers would also be available along with french fries. All the food vending would be done by the OVG, some of which would be traveling employees. The percentage of local employees vs non-local was not discussed. Seitz mentioned was that the food managers are all traveling managers for the food vending.

They are still working on diversifying the types of events offered. Seitz specifically talked about working toward a Hispanic event, but nothing has been finalized yet.

Commissioner Cook asked about whether Shawnee County should consider subsidizing ticket prices to get bigger names events to come into the event center. Nothing other than the comment came of that discussion.

No public comments were made today and the meeting was adjourned.

### **Shawnee County Commission Meeting**

**February 20, 2023**

**Observer: Susan Quinn**

All three County Commissioners were present at today's working session. Two topics were discussed today: Historic Jayhawk Theater and Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

The Jayhawk Theater has a way to go before it will be fully renovated. They basically wanted to give an update for the commissioners on where they are in getting the updates done and what is left to be done before full renovation is complete.

In a nutshell, their basement floods whenever they have significant rainwater. This issue will only get worse the longer it is unattended. Right now, the cost to repair the foundation is \$5 million.

The rest of the renovation would be an additional \$15 million, so a total of \$20 million for final restoration. Ultimately there was a lot of discussion about why this would be great for Topeka to have a historic theater and why it is needed. Although they asked for support, this is a work session so nothing was decided. Commissioner Mays expressed his support for their project and that they "would have to find a way" to support or fund the projects.

As for the EMS, the biggest change is going to be moving away from the current model to a nurse triage model. The nurse triage model should save the county work and money not going on runs that are not true emergencies. And hopefully it will give better service to people who call 911.

They plan to talk more about the EMS contract during the next official commission meeting.

No public comments were made today and the meeting was adjourned.

## **Shawnee County Commission Meeting**

**February 23, 2023**

**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All three commissioners were present.

The commission approved the request by Emergency Management to purchase software to implement the Nurse Navigation Program with CrewForce. This is software to support the nurse navigation program which will support changes to the Shawnee County dispatch system.

Also approved for Emergency Management was a resolution recommended by the Ambulance Compliance Officers for planning for EMS system post pandemic.

The commission approved the appointment of Brittney Laughlin to the Solid Waste Management Committee.

The commission approved the annual renewal of tax receipt software for Information technology dept.

There were no public comments. The commission announced on March 13, the work session will be in Gage Park so they can ride the new mini-train.

## **Shawnee County Commission Meeting**

**March 2, 2023**

**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All three commissioners were present.

The commission approved three bids for Public Works dept. for street repair material. All three contracts reflect an increase of more than the rate of inflation. One vendor was the only bidder in that category.

The commission approved the purchase of a golf course mower for Parks + Rec.

The commission approved the receipt of funds from KDHE to the Shawnee Co. Health Dept. for mosquito surveillance.

The commission approved the request of Information Technology dept. to support infrastructure and applications projects with a contractor. Also approved was the three-year renewal of the contract to support county office phone lines.

The commission approved the request of the Election Office to create a new position of Assistant Election Manager.

The commission approved cancelling the April 27 meeting to attend the Kansas County Commissioner's Meeting.

There were no public comments.

Administrative comments included Health Dept. nominations are open for the public health champion award, Shawnee County Dept. of Corrections was reaccredited by three national organizations. The Juvenile Detention Center is rated in the top 1% in the nation. Teresa Fisher is receiving a local health leadership award, announcing Judge Pickering was elevated to appeals court leaving a vacancy. The nominating commission will begin meeting soon. These vacancies may take until this summer to fill. Shawnee County has a relatively "new" bench. Sat. is the monthly Sat. household hazardous waste drop off; the county connections newsletter is posted. The commission reminded the public that March 13 will be an off-site work session at Gage Park. The county counselor thanked dept. heads for getting contracts to his office for review in a timely manner.

There was no need for an executive session.

## **Shawnee County Commission Meeting**

**March 6, 2023**

**Observer: Susan Quinn**

All three County Commissioners were present at today's working session.

### Property Appraisals

Every property owner in the county should have gotten an appraisal notice on their property by March 1. Every property in the county is required to be inspected every 6 years. The county appraisers are required to appraise every property every year. Overall, there was over 12% increase in property valuations this year. However, that does not equate to higher taxes.

Property tax relief programs include:

- Homestead property tax refund of up to \$700. Those eligible would own and occupy their homestead with a total household income of less than \$37,750 and be 55 or older for the entire year, or disabled or blind the entire year, or dependent child under 18.
- SAFESR property tax refund for low-income seniors is up to 75% of property taxes paid. Eligibility will be Kansas homeowners of 65 years or older the entire year with household incomes of less than \$22,000.
- New for 2022, is the seniors and disabled veterans refund of an increase in tax. Eligibility would be household incomes of less than \$50,000 and at least 65 years old or a disabled veteran with a base year appraised value of \$350,000 or less.

People can find out more information from the taxpayer assistance center at the Kansas Department of Revenue, 785-368-8222 or the Shawnee County clerk at the courthouse, 785-251-4155.

### Health Department Grants

Child Care Licensing Grants. We have 309 licensed providers for childcare in the county. It costs over \$350,000 to license all these providers each year. A KDHE grant allows them to cover a portion that cost, roughly \$150,000.

Chronic Disease Risk Reduction Grants address chronic disease risk reduction through evidence-based strategies that impact tobacco use, physical activity, and nutrition. The total program costs are just shy of \$100,000 and the grant funds cover about 75% of that. One of the things they have implemented with these funds is having smoke-free apartments and neighborhood conversations about becoming tobacco-free. Several years ago, they were able to kick start the Topeka Farmers market with this program.

Other grants included in the review were for emergency preparedness, family planning, and maternal and child health. These grants were pretty routinely requested and received year after year.

No further administrative comments or announcements were made. No public comment was made, and the meeting was adjourned.

## **Shawnee County Commission Meeting**

**March 9, 2023**

**Observer: Elvera Johnson**

All 3 Commissioners present

Commissioners approved the following

### For County Clerk

New business: Sommerset Cafe has a new owner so a new license is needed.

### For Parks and Rec

Held a public hearing to approve the design and build approach for the Family Park at SW 21<sup>st</sup> and Urish. Notice had been published required amount of time; authorized a bid for deck removal and replacement at Lake Shawnee Shelter #3; authorized a contract with Silverbackks to provide meals for youth at some community centers; authorized execution of a contract for aquatic chemicals; authorized application for a grant for renovations of the old stone Bath House that could be rented out for special events; authorized Lake Shawnee Campground improvements and improvements at Old Prairie Town; authorized use of Great Overland Station by the Christian Chamber of Commerce for family activities, fees to be paid to Parks + Rec.

### For Facilities Management

Authorized a contract that decreased the cost for Courthouse renovation.

### For Human Resources

Authorized a contract with a union. A career fair will happen on March 16 at the Health Department. This is for positions in all county departments

### For Public Works

Authorized execution of a contract for design and construction of street and sewer facilities for a Subdivision. This had been initially approved by commission in January of 2023.

### For the Weed Department

Approved award of weed management chemicals to 3 different providers so that they can purchase a small amount at a time; cost has gone down; approved the annual noxious weed eradication report. Rental sprayers are available.



### For Solid Waste

Approved the annual solid waste management plan.

### For Health Department

Authorized them to apply to the State Health Department for grants.

No public Comment was offered. Upcoming events were announced. An Executive Session was called for consultation with an attorney.

## **Topeka City Council Meeting**

**February 21, 2023**

**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

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

The mayor recognized from Topeka Police Chief James Freel in honor of his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The council appointed Jay Van Blaricum to the Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board and Carrie Hagemann to the Americans with Disabilities Act Advisory Council.

The council heard a presentation of the 2022 fourth quarter budget/expenditure report. This will be voted on in April during the discussion on the affordable housing trust fund.

The council approved a resolution approving the publication in the Metro news and for submission to the Kansas Secretary of Commerce an application to create a Rural Housing Incentive District.

The council approved an amendment to the FOP labor agreement. The amendment will increase wages and revise residency requirements when ratified by the FOP.

There were no public comments and no need for an executive session.

## **Topeka City Council Meeting**

**March 7, 2023**

**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All members of the council, including the mayor, were present either in chambers or on zoom.

The council appointed Rachel Hawkinson-Penny to the Civil Service Commission.

The only non-action item on the agenda was discussion of the proposed utility/water rates. The current proposal lowers the percent of increase proposed in December from

9 % to about 6.2% for a household average. Public hearings are still available to participate in prior to the vote.

There was one public comment regarding free government issued phones and problems connecting.

Announcements included recognition of International Women's Day, tax day approaching, discussion requested by Council member Duncan regarding excess guest tax funds, several new businesses in district 8 and extensive discussion of property taxes and recent valuations. Duncan proposes a discussion with the county appraiser and a presentation to the council, questions regarding the need to change state law and a reminder of the Homestead state program and a possible proposal to eliminate the local tax on those who qualified for the Homestead program. An announcement about a public meeting regarding the closure of Gage to replace a water main from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> for 6 months will be March 23 at Kay's Garden at the zoo. Discussion included there is lots happening in Topeka including Black history month, women's history month, Omni Circle space opening, Women's Forum, GTP, THS and HPHS recognition, HPHS Boys and Girls Basketball teams going to state and discussion of HB 2430 criminalizing homelessness.

There was a need for an executive session to discuss with the city attorney a single contract matter.

## **Topeka City Council Meeting**

**March 14, 2023**

**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All members of the council were present, including the mayor, either in person or on zoom except Council members Emmerson and Hoferer.

The council heard the annual update presentation from the Topeka Metro Transit Authority. Several changes are taking place and will be cost neutral in the budget. The TMTA provides for 2 each way, Metro on Demand in the SE portion of the city. The service is limited to the designated area. The service is being considered for expansion. The city will soon have 3 electric buses. Driver and staff shortages continue.

The council approved the application for Kansas Rural Housing Incentive District Act funds to support incentives as requested by a developer. Council member Valdivia Alcalá voted no. She was concerned about the city offering incentives without seeing results.

The council approved an amendment to the CIP and CIB budgets which will increase the number of mill and overlay projects funded in 2023 with the half cent sales tax.

The council approved a resolution to adopt the public infrastructure committee's recommended 2024 citywide half cent sales tax and ARPA projects.

The council approved a resolution to amend the zoo license and management agreement to implement the Gage Park Improvement Authority sales tax increase on April 1.

The council continued the discussion of the proposed water utility rates.

There was no public comment. Announcements included staying alert to possible winter weather, Council member Duncan is running for reelection, TPD program on a podcast on Duncan's website and their outreach efforts on crisis resolution and the homeless, enjoy St. Patrick's Day, the mowing season is beginning and the Improving our culture program is looking for volunteers, concern was expressed about the chronic homelessness problem in Oakland, several members rode the new Gage Park mini-train, HPHS boys placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in state and WRHS girls placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in basketball, NIAs are appreciated and there are lots of Topeka activities, the Blarney Breakfast is Sat. at 7 a.m. at Blind Tiger, the parade is at noon and VITA is doing taxes until April 15.

There was no need for an executive session.

## **Intergovernmental Cooperation Council Meeting**

**February 21, 2023**

**Observer: Susan Quinn**

Meeting held in Washburn Memorial Union, Vogel Room.

Present:

- Tim Hallacy, Shawnee Heights Schools Superintendent
- Tiffany Anderson, Topeka Public Schools Superintendent
- Larry Robbins, Topeka Public Schools Deputy Superintendent of Operations
- Aarion Gray, Topeka Public Schools Director of Instructional Services & Communications
- Brad Willson, Seaman Schools Superintendent
- Scott McWilliams, Auburn Washburn Schools Superintendent
- Brad Womack, Silver Lake Schools Superintendent
- Cynthia Holthaus, Washburn University Special Assistant to the President
- Mike Padilla, City of Topeka Mayor
- Melissa Masoner, American Citizenship Project
- Representative Fred Patton
- Senator Brenda Dietrich
- Representative Tobias Schlingensiepen
- Dr. Richard Bonebrake, Topeka Public Schools Board of Education
- Eric Deitcher, Shawnee Heights Schools Board of Education
- Tiffany Fisher, Silver Lake Schools Board of Education
- Jim Edwards, Topeka Public Schools Lobbyist

- Mayor Mike Padilla

Today's meeting featured members of the legislature from the Shawnee County delegation. Several interesting topics were covered including the following:

Anderson noted 23% of the Topeka 501 student population is considered special education. So this was a topic of conversation because of funding levels for special education. It has not been fully funded for several years. I was surprised to learn that, so I ask if the other school systems present also experienced this high level of special education students. Everyone nodded their head yes. McWilliams said it's not unusual that one and five of our students are special education needs and if we include gifted then we have one in four.

Upon this discussion, Representative Fred Patton said that it would be great if special education parents were to contact the legislators so that they could weigh in on the need for more funding for special education. Superintendent Brad Willson noted that likely the parents of special ed students are not disappointed in the level of care that they are getting in the schools because they take care of those students one way or another. Frequently they must pull funds from other students to fully serve the special ed students. Superintendent Willson didn't believe that parents would think about advocating for more funding when their students' needs are being met.

Representative Tobias Schlingensiepen said that he would like to see more parents engage with the legislators so that the legislators know what is important to those parents. For example, the voucher program is very popular among the Senate and House leadership. If it is not popular with our parents, they're not really letting the legislators know that.

There was a lot more discussion about how to engage parents with the legislative process so that they can understand what is happening at the Capitol. Along these same lines, Superintendent Womack said that he had attended a conference where the superintendents in Fort Worth, Texas partnered with the clergy in the Baptist Churches to rally up support among parents against the voucher programs hitting their public schools. Superintendent Womack said that effort was very successful and they will not be getting voucher programs in Texas. Superintendent Womack encouraged us to think outside the box for who we could partner with to make sure that the legislature understands what parents and the larger community really want from public schools.

There was quite a bit of lament over a bill introduced in the statehouse to 1) pay school board members and 2) allow candidates to declare parties in non-partisan school board races. Sue Bolley said that most board members are in it to help schools' function better, not to get paid. Everyone agreed that the introduction of partisan races would be detrimental to our public-school boards. They thought that it would mean more influence by business groups into our schools instead of being influenced by parents who care about the education their students receive.

They talked briefly about whether or not the school year might get extended because there is a bill floating around to do such. Senator Dietrich didn't think that would pass.

The next meeting will be held on April 18th as they will not meet during spring break.

## **Topeka City Planning Commission**

**February 20, 2023**

**Observer: Gretchen Glue**

The Committee spent the majority of the evening reviewing PUD 22/05, which had been returned to them by the Council to review changes. Applicant is OneGas, Inc to change the zoning at 501 SW Gage to light industrial. Werner presented for staff. Applicant also presented. (apologies for not catching names as streaming audio isn't clear and names weren't always shown in the video). Applicant wants to unify equipment that must be relocated due to the Polk-Quincy viaduct project. Discussion focused on addition of 7,000 Sq. Ft maintenance building on plans which hadn't been noted on previous submission and the light pollution. Lighting attached inside the fence, above structure doorways, and pole lights are to be reduced based on the discussion between Applicant and staff.

Public testimony from six neighbors (or their representative) focused on noise, runoff, lighting, impact on the value of their residences, and the increased traffic with large commercial vehicles near a high school that doesn't use buses so has a high number of young drivers. One neighbor asked why this location when there are industrial parks purchased with tax money with spaces available. (no reply/answer to that Q)

A motion was made & seconded to amend the lighting plans. No discussion. Vote: Approving 7, no opposition. A second motion to not recommend project to governing body with 3 Yes, 3 No, 1 abstaining = no majority and staff attorney explaining this means it failed to gain approval, would go to governing body with a deny request recommendation.

Mission Ridge Subdivision – platting request, preliminary and final report. Area is 41<sup>st</sup> and Wanamaker Rd. The subdivision was originally platted to have commercial businesses on the west edge, abutting Wanamaker Rd. Those were never occupied and they are asking to change to residential plats. The infrastructure exists. Staff recommends. Q asking if traffic study had been done; staff said none was required, this would lower the intensity being residential (instead of original study for commercial). Cook, Flat and Stroebel (representing applicant) the replat request is tied to the rezoning request (also on agenda). Committee asked if the replat includes low/middle-income housing since a study showed Topeka needs those homes. Applicant said no it didn't.

Public testimony – neighbor in adjoining area who likes the green space in current portion of development, prefers single homes over multi-occupant homes for the volume of traffic due to difficulty getting on Wanamaker. Asked that sidewalks be required in the residential area. Staff replied the sidewalks are required. Applicant added they'd see that sidewalks were included throughout subdivision.  
No further discussion. Motion and second to approve, unanimous vote to approve.

Mission Ranch LLC – rezoning (tied to above) Staff noted it is going from commercial zoning to Mixed use and residential with duplexes. Applicant explained these will be “higher end” duplexes with 2400 – 2500 sq ft and the subdivision has an HOA. No public testimony. Motion and second, unanimous vote to approve.

Bear Creek Acres Trust – 24 A near Urish Rd., a zoning request. Was originally proposed for residential and request is to go from R1-R3 back to Rural Residential district. Staff recommends. Bartlett and West representing owners – plans are for residential small nursery, small farm animals. During a neighborhood residential meeting the community is supportive of the change. No public testimony or discussion. Motion and second, unanimous vote to approve.

Communications from staff: there is potential for five zoning cases during the March meeting if they remain on schedule.  
Recess for Attorney-Client discussion re: OneGas application. Five Minutes. No Action taken.

Discussion regarding the progress of filling staff vacancies. The temporary planning director replied they are still working on staffing.

Adjourned: 7:46pm