

Observer Reports

June 2023

USD 345 Board Meeting

April 10, 2023

Observer: Christine Huntsman

The Seaman School Board met April 10, 2023, and all members were present.

After numerous student/staff recognitions for awards, the Superintendent gave his remarks, followed by President Caudill. Their remarks acknowledged Frank Henderson for his work as the NASB President. A strong public education system is the key to greatness...what we are doing ... long term student success is at the center... In 2000 about 10% students were on “free/reduced” school lunch, currently it is at 31% so we need to provide more services than in the past. Caudill had a short video of Frank’s year “in a nutshell.” More on this conference later.

The Consent agenda was approved.

Under Discussion the Director’s reports were given. Highlights are a new 6th grade career fair April 28, summer maintenance projects.

8D was a discussion on the NSBA Conference. Member Adams had three comments: 1. great way to spend time and have fellowship with others as they are prohibited by law in doing so most of the year. 2. What is coming to tech is AI-it was huge this conference, and 3. Jenna Bush’s speech. All sessions were very good, so board can learn to become “good stewards” of all aspects.

President Michelle Caudill liked hearing Jenna Bush, the “Siri” creator, learning about how teachers can tell if essay was written by AI or the student. She acknowledged Frank Henderson’s work. Seaman Board Member and NSBA President Frank Henderson shared his journey from a locally elected board member and how he learned about serving in this role from KASB and NSBA. The district has been attending since Dr. Hurn and this is what has allowed Seaman to become a much better district and earn many KSDE awards – all nuggets of information gleaned over the years has been the outcome of attending these conferences.

Note: The minutes of the December 12, 2022, meeting are brief, however there was much discussion on “why do all board members attend”? The minutes reflect NO motion on this, however this observer heard that any board member who wanted to attend could and should. The four board members who attended were Frank Henderson, James Adams, Christy Weiler and Michelle Caudill. Mr. Brad Willson, superintendent, also attended.

The district will hold the budget hearing May 8 at 6 PM with the monthly meeting following that. Location is the board room at the district office.

The board went into executive session for the purpose of negotiations. The board came out of this session and went into a second executive session on personnel. This was extended by proper motion and vote. Upon return to open session, no action was taken and the meeting was adjourned.

USD 345 Board Meeting

May 8, 2023

Observer: Chris Huntsman

The Seaman Board of Education met May 8 at 6 PM for a rehearing on the budget. The regular meeting began around 6:15 and all members were present.

The meeting followed the agenda and moved fast. The superintendent recognized the work of educators as last week was Teacher Appreciation Week. He expounded on how important the job of a teacher was.

The republished budget was approved by vote.

After the report of the Directors, the Board voted to go into the 1st of 4 executive sessions. Negotiations was the topic in the first executive session. The second executive session began about 7 and was about personnel. The third session was for the preliminary discussion of acquisition of real property. The fourth executive session was from 7:38-7:50. It centered on issues affecting a student.

After reconvening in open session, President Caudill made a motion to approve the graduation waivers as presented. It was seconded and passed. The meeting was adjourned.

USD 437 Board Meeting

May 1, 2023

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 approved:

- The meeting agenda as amended (to removed action items regarding middle school boundaries and filling a vacancy on the Board)
- Items on the consent agenda
- Appointment of the Board Clerk and Deputy Clerks

- Addition of an Early Childhood School Psychologist and an Early Childhood Speech-Language Pathologist for the upcoming school year
- A motion to go into executive session at 7:40 PM for 30 minutes, until 8:10 PM, to discuss personnel pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of matters related to non-elected personnel, the budget pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of matters related to employer-employee negotiations, and students pursuant to the KOMA exception for discussion of actions adversely or favorably affecting a student.
- After the executive session, modification of an appointed appeal officer's report

The Board discussed:

- The middle school girl's wrestling program
- A request for additional staff for the Early Childhood Education Program

The Board received:

- An administrator report about upcoming groundbreaking ceremonies
- Communication about 2023 graduation ceremony and staff appreciation week

The meeting adjourned at 8:13 PM.

**USD 501 Board Meeting
Thursday, April 20, 2023
Observer: Janet Cathcart**

Public Meeting started at 6:30pm
All board members present.

Motion to adopt the agenda moving item 21.1 to #7 on agenda

Motion by Melanie Stuart-Campbell, second by Lisa Schmitt.

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

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

School Highlights Recognition of Kansas State Department of Education Kansas Teacher of the Year. This is the second consecutive year Topeka Public Schools has had a regional winner, Pamela Muñoz of McCarter Elementary serving as a 2023 Finalist. Also recognized Delacruz and elementary nominee, Allen Lake of McEachron Elementary, who also serves as a Consulting Teacher on Special Education.

Proclamation of National School Library Month April 2023

Proclamation for Autism Acceptance Month April 2023

Public Comment- No public comment

Disposition of Business by Consent

Action Item 21.1 to #7 Board Climate Survey Discussed at April 6, 2023

Motion to move to approve development of a Board Climate Survey with Kansas Association of School Boards. Intense discussion over this survey.

Motion by Keith Tatum, second by Richard Bonebrake.

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Melanie Stuart-Campbell, Richard Bonebrake, Lisa Schmitt, Keith Tatum

Nay: Sue Bolley, Lalo Munoz, Randall Schumacher

Business by Consent- rest of the items

Approved as presented

Motion by Keith Tatum, second by Randall Schumacher.

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Sue Bolley, Lalo Munoz, Richard Bonebrake, Lisa Schmitt, Randall Schumacher, Keith Tatum

Not Present at Vote: Melanie Stuart-Campbell

Superintendent's Report

Strategic Plan-College Prep Academy Report-Mrs. Foster

The College Prep Academy founded by Dr. Anderson was opened as a strategy focused on equity and providing equitable access and resources to students in East Topeka. The College Prep was also an initiative used to increase academics, it expanded options for parents within the district and it was focused on increasing graduation rates under the Student Learning and College Readiness goals in the strategic plan. The first 7th grade class will graduate in 2023 and the College Prep Academy has retained the majority of students in Topeka.

Discussion

Draft 2023-2024 Board of Education Meeting Schedule will be an action item for next meeting.

Request approval to Publish Hearing Notice Amending the 2022-23 General Fund, At-Risk K-12 and KPERS Budget(s) presented by Mr. Menke.

This agenda item grants permission to publish the Notice of Hearing Amending the 2022-2023 Budget in the Topeka Metro News, and allows for the hearing to be held on our regularly scheduled May 04, 2023 meeting, at 6:00 P.M.

Action Item

Approval to Publish Hearing Notice Amending the 2022-23 General Fund, At-Risk K-12 and KPERS Budget

Approve request to publish Hearing Notice Amending the 2022-2023 Budget as presented

Motion by Keith Tatum, second by Lalo Munoz.

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Sue Bolley, Lalo Munoz, Richard Bonebrake, Lisa Schmitt, Randall Schumacher, Keith Tatum

Not Present at Vote: Melanie Stuart-Campbell

Mr. Robbins reported on the free lunch plan for the district and update on the new health insurance premiums.

Board Member Comments

USD 501 Board Meeting

May 4, 2023

Observer: Annie Tietze

There was an announcement of a public hearing to listen to, and answer, objections of taxpayers relating to proposed amended use of funds. It is affected by the number of students qualifying for free lunch. The KPERS fund amendment affected by increase in salary due to COVID duties. The proposed budget amendments have no impact on the Mill levy.

- Alexis Brosa is the March Senior of the Month. She is from Topeka High.
- Carter Cool is the May Senior of the Month. He is from Topeka West.
- The Teacher Appreciation Week Proclamation was read.
- Donations were noted for the Topeka West High School Media Center Improvement Project from the Topeka West Alumni Association and Foundations and from the TWHS Westside Pride PTO.
- A donation was given from Western Hills Church to go towards overdue lunch fees for McCarter students.
- A donation from Palmer Law Group of Topeka was given to support the Ross Kindergarten Art Show.

A donation from Topeka Common Ground to Rhonda Gadino, a teacher at Jardine Elementary. She provides after school gardening enrichment.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting

March 16, 2023

Observer: Paul Post

Commissioners present: Riphahn, Cook.

Commissioners absent: Mayes.

Consent agenda was approved.

Public Works:

Purchase of solar-powered compact variable message signs using Sourcewell, a government purchasing cooperative. Funds will come from Public Works Special Machinery Fund. Amount will be determined after bids are received from Sourcewell.

Approval of exchange of federal highway funds in the amount of \$744,367.88 for state transportation funds in the amount of \$669,931.09. This is 90% of the federal funds. There are “no strings attached” to the state funds compared to the federal funds. This is under the Federal Aid Fund Exchange Master Agreement. There was no discussion of what the “strings” were that were attached by using federal funds.

Solid Waste:

A three-year contract was entered into with Waste Management for single-stream and commercial recycling services. The contract will provide for a “processing fee” of \$149 for each load, as WM incurs a loss - a negative \$80 for what is recouped by sales of recyclables.

There is now a \$3.50 per month fee for all Shawnee County recycling customers, with the ability to “opt out” of the recycling service. Approximately 4,100 customers opted out, which is equal to about 10 per cent of the total customers.

Human Resources: A contract was approved with Valeo Behavioral Health Care to provide drug and alcohol testing on evenings and weekends at the cost of \$50 per screening. The current provider is unable to provide the service on evenings and weekends.

Planning Department: A new position was authorized in the reclassification of an Administrative Assistant to a Planning and Development Coordinator with a salary of \$80,605.16. Approval was also given to elimination of an Office Assistant II position, replaced by a Planning Specialist position with a salary of \$55,453.42. The Administrative Assistant position was vacant.

Commission: Steven Porubsky was appointed to fill the open position of Menoken Township Clerk.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting

April 6, 2023

Observer: Paul Post

Commissioners present: Riphahn, Mayes.

Commissioners absent: Cook.

Commission:

Redistricting map and rebalancing per 2020 census. The proposed changes were as follows: Pawnee (43) from District 3 to District 2; Sherwood (92) from District 3 to District 1; South Sherwood (93) from District 1 to District 3; and Sunflower (86) from District 1 to District

The resulting populations would be as follows: District 1 – 59,450; District 2 – 58,487; and District 3 – 65,972. There was discussion about precincts that had no population at all, such as one that had been drawn to be only a city street, or one that was supposed to within the banks of the river. Election Commissioner Howell spoke, not in favor of the change, but not strongly opposing it either. Because Commissioner Cook was absent, the issue was tabled until April 13.

Consent agenda was approved.

Vouchers approved: Total of \$3,941,380.00. There were no questions or concerns, and the vouchers were approved.

Public Works:

A major rebuild of Nottingham Road was discussed. Pavement was to be reworked, but no amenities are to be added such as walking trails or other features. This was approved by the Commission.

Auburn Road – a 2025 reconstruction is planned at the intersection with 29th Street, which will include a round-about and improved access to the proposed new Auburn Washburn middle school located north of 29th Street. Cook, Flatt, and Strobel engineering firm will provide design services. Auburn-Washburn School District will pay \$500,000 towards the round-about, and 100 per cent of the access to the new school off of 29th Street. This was approved by the Commission.

Health Department: request for new security cameras was approved by the Commission in the amount of \$80,760

Executive session of approximately 40 minutes. When reconvened the chair reported that no action was taken during the session.

The meeting was adjourned.

**Shawnee County Commission Meeting
April 24, 2023
Observer: Susan Quinn**

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

Today's work session was devoted to reviewing two annual reports. One was from Valeo. The other one was from the Family Service and Guidance Center (FSGC). Bill Persinger started with Valeo's annual report.

In 2022, Valeo had a budget of just under twenty-four million dollars. Seventy-five percent of their budget was for salaries. They will have a 1-hour fundraising breakfast on May 5. In November they will hold their main fundraiser a big annual gala.

Valeo has a partnership called the Mobile Access partnership. The partnership is about 2 years old. To date it has served 1,270 distinct individuals, many of whom are homeless and unsheltered. The Mobile Access partnership gives people the ability to get the things that they need, like a shower, the ability to get their clothes laundered or charge their cell phone, things that are hard to do when you're living on the street. They will start their third year in May this year. It is a traveling mobile van that has a schedule that is published and is available in church parking lots throughout town.

Another partnership Valeo has is with the Shawnee County Intersection Coalition. It is about 2 years old. It started when the Shawnee County Commissioners approved a resolution to become a Stepping Up County that led our county to being an innovator status as one of about a dozen or so counties in Kansas. The focus of this program is to help people prevent incarceration and to help people as they leave jail to provide services that they need so that they do not re-enter the justice system. Bill talked about his goal of having a mental health center at the county jail that can serve as a reintegration of services as people re-enter the community so that they do not reoffend.

Valeo is looking forward to hopefully being certified as CCBHC Medicaid facility in July this year. With the certification, they would get additional funds from Medicaid for following patients more closely. Bill Persinger said that he would like to expand their services so that they follow people who have needed help and keep them on track with their treatments. This will allow them to reengage with people so that they don't fall into crisis again. That's the hope.

Kathy Mosier presented the annual report for the Family Service and Guidance Center. She started with statistics:

- FSGC prevented the need for psychiatric hospitalization for youth 75% of the time, which is well above the state average.
- They have added a substance use treatment program. They became a licensed agency for youth, so now they do both mental health and substance abuse for children.
- They have a tobacco cessation specialist for things like vaping and smoking addiction.
- And they have their popular Happy Bear program to prevent abuse by going into elementary schools and providing education on sexual abuse and all abuse.

- They have been partnering with schools by providing 4,000 teachers in Shawnee County outreach materials about how FSGC's programs can help their students with behavioral health needs.
- They have a program called "suicide, talk about it and save a life" led by high school students who gather and talk about what they know and what they see to help prevent suicide.
- They added three new mental health first aid instructors to educate our community on how we can provide first aid to someone who is needing help to prevent suicide.
- They have a DEI committee that participated in the Racial Equity Collaborative Symposium at the University of Kansas. Then the DEI committee provided valuable training to all FSGC staff on cultural bias to help staff be more sensitive to these issues so that they can serve all members of their community more effectively.
- They partnered with area universities to offer 15 internships this year.
- They offered wellness and self-care events for their health care staff.
- They had 259 staff members in 2022 to serve over 4,000 kids.
- Seventy-one percent of their clients and families live at or near the poverty line and they see about six new clients per day.

Commissioner Cook asked about finances and staff. Kathy said we are losing staff because of not expanding Medicaid in Kansas. Especially our four neighboring states, Nebraska, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Colorado have all expanded Medicaid. Missouri has CCBHC across their state, so they can pay more. We are losing staff to these neighboring states.

One of the things they have been doing to address the cost of keeping kids healthy is they have been going into Topeka schools to help reach the children who need their services earlier. The hope is the earlier they intervene in a child's mental health needs, the less costly it will be in addition to preventing more serious mental health outcomes. This program grew tremendously in 2022 from 2021 and has been very successful. In 2022, they had nine school-based clinicians up from four school-based clinicians in 2021 due to the success of the program in 2021. In 2022 they were able to reach 371 more children and teens that were not already engaged in services by being in the schools. The schools have reported that students with attendance issues served by FSGC had a 58% improvement. Problematic behaviors improved by 69% and academic performance improved by 58%. Four schools were added in 2023. They have a lot more hoping to get on this fall.

During public comment, Kurt Neihaus, Director of Public Works, stated that Monday, May 8th they will be closing Northwest 66th Street between Topeka Boulevard and Indian Creek Road for a bridge replacement Project. Also, Nelson Castellan, Ambulance Compliance Officer announced that the nurse navigation pilot program will be kicking off April 25th.

**Shawnee County Commission
May 8, 2023 working session
Observer: Susan Quinn**

Commissioners Riphahn and Mays were present. Commissioner Cook missed just over half of the meeting but was present for the second half.

Tim Laurent gave an update on Gage Park Improvement Authority.

December 20, 2022, meeting was held where the elected leadership and adopted bylaws. The following officers were selected:

Chairperson: Fred Patton
Vice chairperson: Jim Martin
Secretary/treasurer: Tami Cortez

The Gage Park Improvement Authority hasn't yet begun to develop a master plan, but that is the first thing that they will do. Initially, a lot of the discussion revolved around how they would be collecting the sales tax revenue and keeping it safe. That appears to be ready to go according to Fred Patton.

No public comments were made today. The commissioners went into an executive session from 10 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. to conduct department head reviews. The meeting was adjourned.

No actions were taken as this was an informational discussion and the meeting was adjourned.

**Shawnee County Commission Meeting
May 11, 2023
Observer: Elvera Johnson**

All 3 Commissioners Present

In unfinished business, Commissioners spent a considerable amount of time discussing execution of a contract to resurface a playground in Chesney Park. This had initially been discussed a week ago. The resurfacing would cost \$20,000 more than they normally spend on playgrounds but would reportedly last longer because the contractor uses a concrete base rather than gravel. The Commission could not reach consensus. They requested that additional options be explored. Decision tabled for 2 weeks.

For Human Resources, Commissioners approved a contract with Teamsters for pay increases for secretaries, Corrections workers, Health Department workers, and Parks and Recreation employees who are union members. They anticipate that retention of employees will improve.

For Corrections, they approved travel to Ohio to inspect a specialized mental health detention facility and program. This will be funded by the National Stepping-Up Program. They anticipate at some point other corrections employees will come to Topeka to observe what our corrections facilities do for folks with mental illness, as Shawnee County is “at the cutting edge” of mental health care in correctional facilities.

For Public Works, they approved a contract for heavy maintenance on Nottingham Road between SW 33rd and SW 37th. This will require closing the road starting in June and going into August. Mr. Niehaus explained that road maintenance costs much more than it did 2 years ago.

For the County Counselor, the Commission approved a resolution to adopt policies and procedures for property tax relief for homesteads affected by disasters.

There was no public comment offered. In administrative communications, Brian Cole announced that this is National Corrections Employee Week. They are honoring their employees with a meal. Brian also announced that the parking lot for the jail will be closed for repair for 3 weeks. Commissioner Cook announced that the Courthouse is being renovated, but the courts continue to function. He expressed appreciation. Commissioner Riphahn announced that there will be no Work Session on Monday the 15th.

Commissioners called an executive session of over 2 hours to meet with Teamsters, to review performance of non-elected employees and to meet with an attorney.

Topeka City Council Meeting

April 11, 2023

Observer: Vicki Arnett

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

There were technical issues, including no broadcast on Ch. 4 Government Access.

The council appointed Joseph Ledbetter to the Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority. The council appointed Ronald Mullins to the Board of Electrical Appeals and Justine Greve to the Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board.

The council heard presentations on the annual update of the Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board. The Advisory Board reported they continue to have one open vacant slot on the board. Their work this year has been focused on collaborating with businesses and economic development. They were recently assigned city communications staff to place information on Ch. 4 and social media. In the next year they plan more outreach to NIAs.

The Shawnee County Department of Corrections presented information to the council. Bryan Cole spoke about two valuable initiatives of the DOC. They are planning to build a mental health facility within the jail and they have initiated a program with Larned State Security Hospital to develop a program to restore inmates to competency to stand trial.

The council heard a report from the city manager about the recent City of Topeka's Homelessness Summit. There was much discussion with the council regarding building a low barrier shelter such as the one in Colorado Springs. The council recommended the appointment of a core team to work on the initiatives of the summit. The council also recommended engaging with a consultant to develop a low barrier shelter combined with increased affordable housing.

The council passed 8-1 with Council member Emerson abstaining, to transfer 2022 reserved funds to specific purposes to avoid additional bonding. The purposes include bike plans, economic development funds, design fee funds, affordable housing trust fund, land bank and general use.

The council passed 8-1 with Council member Valdivia Alcala voting no, to increase water utility rates. There was one public comment in opposition prior to the vote.

In non-action items, the council heard a proposal from Council member Duncan regarding the pilot of a Land Bank program. The Land Bank may be used to plan the reutilization of abandoned, tax-foreclosed or underutilized properties.

During public comments, one member of the public spoke in opposition to the increase in water rates and one member of Topeka JUMP reminded the council of the meeting May 1 in Lee Arena.

Announcements included announcing clean up days in Topeka, Gage Blvd. is single lane each way but open, a reminder about the April 18 state Holocaust Remembrance Day. On Earth Day, volunteers will work on the Oakland Mural and the Oakland Community Garden. There is a new South Topeka entry sign in place. Council member Naeger announced she will not be seeking re-election.

There was a need for an executive session to discuss employer/employee relations with one or more unions.

Shawnee County Commission Meeting

April 17, 2023

Observer: Susan Quinn

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

Today's agenda was to cover the Shawnee County extension office's quarterly report.

The report was very familiar to me. During our Voter Services team meeting on Tuesday, April 18, Candis Meerpohl was our guest presenter. She covered some of the same material for the commissioners, although, our voter services team got a much more thorough report from Candis. For example, she went into the history of the Shawnee County extension office and all extension offices across the United States during our team meeting.

Shawnee County extension office tries to ensure that they are serving people whose demographics reflect that of the overall demographics of Shawnee County. They do this through QR codes and electronic poll surveys. The data that they gather about the person's demographics are voluntarily reported by the participants themselves.

Over the past quarter the extension agents have been busy with 4-H's club days, the tax assistance program called VITA, educational programs targeted for agricultural producers. The master gardeners have been a busy group preparing for their annual fundraising sale which will happen on May 6 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Ag Hall at the Expo Center.

The commissioners talked a bit about funding which about half comes directly from Shawnee County Commissioners budget. Commissioner Cook asked how the facilities are holding up. Candis said they are doing well. They have six extension agents in Shawnee County.

No actions were taken as this was an informational discussion. No administrative or public comments were made today, and the meeting was adjourned.

Topeka City Council Meeting

April 18, 2023

Observer: Vicki Arnett

Council member Naeger was absent. All other council members were present either in chambers or on zoom.

No announcement was made; however, this meeting was not broadcast on Ch. 4, Government Access.

The mayor read a proclamation recognizing April 22 as Earth Day entitled, We are the Keepers an Earth Day celebration.

The council appointed Elizabeth Post and Elizabeth Dobler to the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library Board of Trustees. The council appointed William Horn to the NOTO Business Improvement District Advisory Board.

The council heard a presentation from the Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority. The board has been focused on economic development since state law recently passed

which allows the authority to increase their bonding ability. The anticipate raising the bonding limit to 10 million. The MTAA also plans to replace the terminal at Billard Airport and to replace the fuel farm at Forbes.

The council passed a resolution moving the repair schedule up on Topeka Blvd. between 15th to 21st. The council passed a resolution to advance repairs to NE Curtis St. between Kansas Ave. to NE Monroe due to planned expansion of a grain elevator.

The council passed a resolution to rezone areas south of 6th St. and south of Governor's Place to allow for expansion of a building.

The council passed an ordinance allowing for rezoning of property on the south side of US 24 Hwy. and west of Vail Ave. to allow for the development of light industrial or commercial land use.

The council passed an ordinance allowing for rezoning of property in the 500 block of SE Alkire St. al allow for the construction of duplexes. This is in keeping with the East Topeka North NIA plans.

The council passed an ordinance annexing SE 21st and SE Cedarwood Drive to allow for the expansion of a landscaping business occupying the adjacent property.

The council passed an ordinance rezoning property at 3530 SE 21st and SE Cyprus Drive and 21st St. to allow for the expansion of a business.

In non-action items the council discussed proposed 2024-2033 Capital Improvement Plans and 2024-2026 Capital Improvement Budget. This process will continue through June in the budget preparation process. The focus of much discussion was understanding the impact of inflation.

During public comments, one person spoke about digital equity issues in Topeka.

Announcements included praising the work done for Tulips at Twilight at Old Prairie Town, Fiesta food sales started April 23, the Golden Gloves contest in KC had three Topeka winners, free shredding days upcoming, concern was expressed for fighting in schools, discussion of digital availability publicly and the attendance at the Holocaust Remembrance Day.

The meeting was adjourned due to no executive session needed.

Topeka City Council Meeting

May 2, 2023

Observer: Vicki Arnett

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

The council heard a presentation about the Shawnee County Nurse Navigation Program. This program is associated with 911 emergency dispatch. When 911 is dialed, the dispatch asks a protocol of questions to assess acuity of the call. This is an effort to direct the caller away from unnecessary ambulance transport. Ambulance dispatch times remain the same as before the program.

The council passed by a vote of 7-3 a resolution to set a public hearing to consider establishing a community improvement district at SW 32nd Terrace and SW Topeka Blvd. Council members Duncan, Kell and Valdivia Alcalá voted no.

The council passed by a vote of 9-1 a resolution setting a public hearing to consider the adoption of a tax increment financing project plan for SW 32nd Terrace and SW Topeka Blvd. Council member Valdivia Alcalá voted no.

The council voted to return the ordinance zoning change to allow for the development of duplexes and four-plexes on property located east of NW Rochester Rd and 300 ft south of Walnut Lane. The vote was 8-2 with Ortiz and Valdivia Alcalá voting no.

The council discussed the proposed Topeka Land Bank Pilot Program. The discussion included recommendations to allow for 5 voting members from city council district appointments on the Bd. Of Trustees. The city manager will have some authority with the board in respect to using the Housing master plan as a guide for development. The council also discussed focusing on non-profit development efforts for both home ownership and rental rehab rather than private development of residences for rental.

The council discussed the 2024-2033 Capital Improvement Plan and 2024-2026 Capital Improvement Budget. The council heard an update about specific street projects and when repair/replace is planned.

One member of the public spoke during public comments in opposition to the development east of Rochester Rd.

Announcements included an open house will be held regarding the Polk/Quincy viaduct reconstruction, Menninger Tower development is moving forward, Council member Duncan will meet the public Sat. at Fairlawn Plaza Mall, the Small Business awards luncheon took place today, the statue dedication is Fri. at Everygy Plaza, Fiesta food sales continue at Our Lady of Guadalupe, concern was expressed for the racist graffiti in Oakland, the historic North Topeka West NIA is planning a community garden, May 15 through Aug 15, kids ride TMTA buses free, the Youth Employment Program is now taking applications, NFL draft financial impact on Topeka and Manhattan, as school ends watch out for kids in traffic, the mayor received a gift of an apple tree and the council meetings return to city council chambers next week.

There was no need for an executive session.

Topeka City Council Meeting

May 9, 2023

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All city council members were present, including the mayor, either in chambers or online, except council member Valdivia Alcala. Council member Hoferer arrived late.

The council recognized a moment of silence to mourn the recent gun violence in the country.

The council approved rezoning of 1404 SW 17th St to allow the expansion of a business. The council approved the rezoning of 1921 SE Indiana for use by Topeka Independent Living Resource Center.

The council approved ordinance changes which amend the flood plain regulations in compliance with state requirements allowing the city and residents to receive discounts on flood insurance. The council also approved the adoption of a Title VI policy to be in federal compliance to apply for grants. The city ordinance against discrimination is more comprehensive than this required federal regulation.

The council discussed the proposed Topeka Land Bank Pilot program. Council members recognized changes in the proposal which they support.

The council discussed the proposed 2024-2033 Capital Improvement Plan and 2024-2026 Capital Improvement Budget. The council discussed the revenue requirements of the half-cent sales tax and the list of amended street repair. Of interest to me was concern expressed about the cost of 12th Street and the inability financially to do similar projects in the same manner. The council heard about the proposed utility repairs.

There were two public comments concerning support of the April 20 half marathon and concern from a developer regarding sending his proposal back to the planning commission.

Council announcements included another request by council member Duncan to hear a presentation from the county appraiser's office, recognition of the lifeline luncheon at Salvation Army, the ribbon cutting at the Menninger family pocket park, the Mariachi statute at Every Plaza, Brown v. Bd. Celebration May 17 and Sat. May 13, congratulations to all graduates, TMTA buses are now free for kids as of Mon., May is military recognition month, be sure to recycle and Happy Mother's Day.

There was a need for executive session to discuss matters of attorney client privilege regarding possible legal action. This was about a settlement with a fire dept. employee.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Council

April 18, 2023

Observer: Susan Quinn

Meeting held in Washburn Memorial Union, Vogel Room.

Present:

- Mike Strohschein, Washburn Institute of Technology Dean
- Brad Willson, Seaman Schools Superintendent
- Frank Henderson, Seaman Schools Board of Education
- Tim Hallacy, Shawnee Heights Schools Superintendent
- Brad Womack, Silver Lake Schools Superintendent
- Tiffany Fisher, Silver Lake Schools Board of Education
- 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
- Carleen Lister, Topeka Public Schools Administration
- Sue Bolley, Topeka Public Schools Board of Education
- Jim Edwards, Topeka Public Schools Lobbyist
- Cynthia Holthaus, Washburn University Special Assistant to the President
- Stephen Wade, Topeka City Manager
- Bill Riphahn, Shawnee County Commissioner
- Marie Pyko, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library

Meeting was an update on Washburn Tech. The presentation was given by Dr. Mike Strohschein, Dean, Washburn Institute of Technology. The presentation was thorough starting with the history of Washburn Tech and ending with the future of Washburn Tech.

Washburn Institute of Technology started in 1941 and has changed several times over the years to what it is today. Currently there are six sites, and a 7th site is planned soon. They have a Huntoon campus, a Tech East, a Cosmetology school, programs at Fort Riley, programs at the Kansas juvenile correctional facility and programs at the Topeka correctional facility. Soon they plan to have classes at Brewster Place for nursing.

Washburn Tech offers 35 technical certificates and associate degrees. In April 2023, Washburn Tech received the NCCER post-secondary program of the year from the Buildup Kansas Initiative through AGC of Kansas. This is a nationally recognized award.

Washburn Tech has more than 1,600 students with just about 1,000 full-time students enrolled. Some of their programs have wait lists to get enrolled. 80% of their students

are under 25 years old. Most of their students are male but 41% are female and another 6% are an undisclosed gender.

Dean Strohschein said that Washburn Tech is "college done your way". More than 50 companies have customized trainings at Washburn Tech. Their curriculum changes to meet the needs of industry often.

One of their newer initiatives is building a 30,000 square foot manufacturing institute and training center. They have secured \$1.86 million seed money with a one-for-one match required. The total budget for the new facility is \$8-10 million. Another new initiative is an institute for health care excellence which will house all healthcare professions but EMTs in one central location. They are really looking forward to that. Currently their health care programs are scattered about the different campuses.

Of the six sites that they currently have, two are in correctional facilities: One is at the Kansas juvenile correctional facility and the other is at the Topeka correctional facility which has female inmates only. More than 50% of the students at Kansas juvenile correctional facility are enrolled with Washburn Tech for about 120 students. They have opportunities to learn either carpentry, welding, or electrical. Currently they are reviewing two additional programs: plumbing/HVAC and culinary.

Dean Strohschein said that they have an excellent employment placement with about 94% employment after graduation.

Next month, the ICC will meet on May 16 in the Vogel Room at the Washburn University Memorial Union. Currently, the plan is a program presented by the Mayor of Topeka.

Are you wondering who the ICC is? The ICC includes the following Shawnee County governmental entities:

- Unified School Districts (Seaman, Auburn-Washburn, Shawnee Heights, Silver Lake, Topeka)
- City of Topeka
- Shawnee County
- Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority
- Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority
- Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library
- Washburn University

The group meets at Washburn University eight times a year on the third Tuesday of the month at 7:20 a.m. The chair of the council rotates among the various members for a calendar year at a time.

Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board

May 5, 2023

Observer: Vicki Arnett

The board watched and discussed a video made by City Attorney Amanda Stanley regarding the Kansas Open Meetings Act. The board then discussed how they would comply with KOMA and work on committees to address issues. They plan to form committees of 3 members. They also will have a google drive which they are able to share since no decisions are made. The board was advised to watch the budget hearings and prepare to testify in support of a request to develop one dedicated city staff to sustainability issues. A community garden is going in at WU.