

## Observer Reports for April Voter

### **SHAWNEE COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING: FEBRUARY 15, 2024**

Observer: Paul Post (pacmanpost@icloud.com)

Chair Kevin Cook	Present?	Yes
Commissioner Bill Riphan	Present?	Yes
Commissioner Aaron Mayes	Present?	Yes

Please click on the link below for the agenda archive.

Commission Agenda Website: <https://www.snco.us/commission/agendas.asp>

Feature evaluated	Yes	No	Comments
Did the meeting start on time?	X		
Reason for absent members?			N/A
Was the agenda available at the meeting?	X		
Were any non-agenda items discussed?		X	
Did it appear that any agenda items were discussed prior to the meeting?		X	
Were there any amendments to the agenda?		X	
Were members courteous to each other and the public?	X		
Were media representatives present?	X		
Did any member recuse?		X	
Was there an executive session? If so, for what reason and what length?		X	
Was there a public comment period? If so who appeared and for what purpose	X		Henry McClure, local real estate agent and developer. See page two for details.

**Discussion of Issues:**

<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Action taken:</b>	<b>Relevance to LWV Positions</b>	<b>Recommended Follow-up if any</b>
Resolution No. 2024-16	Increasing juror pay from \$10.00 to \$20.00 per day plus round-trip mileage to and from the Shawnee County Courthouse, effective January 1, 2024.	Is this pay sufficient?	What is the League's position, if any, on juror pay?
Resolution No. 2024-15	Authorizing the issuance of an estimated \$7,500,00.00 aggregate principal amount of Shawnee County, KS, taxable industrial revenue bonds (EIG Wanamaker, LLC Project).	Does the League have any position on the issue of industrial revenue bonds for economic development?	If no position, should there be?

Remarks: Other matters were considered by the Commission, which did not have particular relevance to any LWV of Topeka-Shawnee County concerns or issues.

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Public comment detail: Henry McClure, local real estate agent and developer, appeared to again comment about the Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO) receiving 37.39 per cent of the tax money allocated for

economic development as the JEDO overhead. He argued that this money should be reallocated for local economic development to include infrastructure expenditures such as sewer lines on new construction. McClure claimed that JEDO currently will not allocate such funds to local developers. McClure appeared at a previous meeting in January, and complained that the Greater Topeka Partnership was marketing land in an industrial development park, using a Kansas City based commercial real estate sales company, rather than a local Shawnee County firm.

## **Shawnee County Commission**

**January 22, 2024**

**Observer: Elvera Johnson**

Unfinished business:

The Commission heard a 2nd reading of changes to the Home Rule Resolution HR-2024-1, updating the purchasing Policy. The first change clarified that concessions include drinks; this may be alcoholic beverages for some locations/ events. The second change clarifies the procedure for purchasing real estate.

Consent agenda:

Voucher payments and correction orders were approved.

John Landon, Noxious Weed Department:

Discussed the required reports to the state regarding the eradication progress and the management plan. Discussion related to the listing of honeysuckle and Bradford pear trees. A product is available that is effective in controlling honeysuckle, but it also harms good trees such as oaks. Many farmers are purchasing the product to control honeysuckle. Bradford pear trees are no longer being sold. So far there is no plan to begin chopping down people's pear trees. There could be a need to treat honeysuckle along trails at some time.

Parks and Recreation:

Reported progress on the Family Park expansion project. The guaranteed maximum price is \$3,866,369. It has been approved. Pickleball players were present and they are happy with the plan.

Commissioners approved execution of a contract with Racquet and Paddle to manage the Kossover Tennis Complex.

Approved a contract for the purchase of aquatic chemicals. Pools are scheduled to open on May 25, and they will need lifeguards.

Information technology: Commissioners approved purchase of some personal computers. They also approved renewal of some security agreements. Sheriff's Department: Approved a 6-year contract for drones, to be paid over a six-year period. The 10-unit fleet will be upgraded as needed by the manufacturer.

Public Works: Agreed to a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan, called Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A). The county received a demonstration grant to implement this. Commissioners also approved a final change order to change the cost. The project cost was less than the bid.

Corrections: Commissioners approved a contract with Metro Pure Water to provide filtered water to drink.

Commissioners acknowledge the resignation of Gilda Singleton from the Topeka Township Board and Shawnee Heights Township Board. Anyone who wishes to apply for the position is asked to apply by March 8.

Commissioners also agreed to cancel the March 25 Commission meeting, as they will be meeting as the County Board of Canvassers following the March 19 election.

No public comment was offered.

Administrative communication: Mr Nichols announced that on March 4 a weather spotter training will be offered at 7:00 p.m. at Washburn University. A statewide tornado drill will be held on March 6.

Elections: Commissioner Howell talked about the presidential preference election on March 19. Early voting at the Election Office goes from March 4 to March 15, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. A half day of voting is available March 18, closing at noon. You can either vote on the Democrat or Republican ballot. If you are unaffiliated, you can choose a party and register when you vote.

Tim Laurent announced that Lake Shawnee will be stocked with trout at 1 p.m. on February 23. The lake will be closed to fishing until February 28 and will reopen on February 29 at 6 a.m.

An Executive session was called to consult with an attorney and to discuss the acquisition of land.

**Shawnee County Commission**  
**February 29, 2024**  
**Observer: Elvera Johnson**

All 3 Commissioners present

Consent agenda and voucher payments approved.

Facilities Management: Received authorization to replace an emergency door at the Courthouse to increase security. The door is so old that they can't get parts anymore.

Stormont Vail Events Center: Received approval to replace the out-dated air handling equipment at Heritage Hall. A broader remodeling is going on at Heritage Hall. The Events Center is authorized to replace 3 variable frequency drives for the chilled water plant. They have outlived their expected life span.

Solid Waste: Authorized to pay annual dues to the Lake Region Solid Waste Authority.

Parks and Recreation: Contracting with a design group to explore options for the building of a Grange Hall at Old Prairie Town. It could be used as a location for events such as weddings. The next step is to find options and cost for each.

Information Technology: Received approval to reclassify an Application Developer III to a Business Analyst.

Public comment: Offered by a citizen who shows up periodically. He expressed frustration that he can't find out how to qualify for economic development funds. He believes economic development funds are being wasted.

Brian Cole announced his deputy director, Eve Kendel is retiring after 34 years. Half of those years were as deputy director. Eve and Brian have high professional regard for each other. Commissioners also expressed appreciation for her service. They said she worked as a public servant, with a commitment to improve the community.

Administrative services: A mammography clinic will be at Evergy Plaza April 10 and October 3. Citizens were encouraged to check the website for available county employment opportunities.

Emergency Management talked about a state-wide tornado drill on Wednesday.

No executive session was called.

## SHAWNEE COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING: MARCH 7, 2024

Observer: Paul Post (pacmanpost@icloud.com)

Chair Kevin Cook	Present?	Yes
Commissioner Bill Riphan	Present?	Yes
Commissioner Aaron Mayes	Present?	Yes

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Were media representatives present?	X		
Did any member recuse?		X	
Was there an executive session? If so, for what reason and what length?	X		Executive session regarding contract negotiations with the Fraternal Order of The Police. Which entity FOP represented was not stated.
Was there a public comment period? If so who appeared and for what purpose	X		Citizen Ashley Florez regarding inconsistent inspection standards for septic systems that she had experienced in home remodeling.

**Discussion of Issues:**

<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Action taken:</b>	<b>Relevance to LWV Positions</b>	<b>Recommended Follow-up if any</b>
Consent agenda	Approved without discussion.	None	N/A
Voucher payments approved	\$5,648,782.55 approved.	Included \$562,913 for courthouse renovation which is now 70% complete.	N/A
Resolution 2024-17	Authorizing filing of 259 tax foreclosure petitions for unpaid real estate taxes.	What is the trend concerning tax foreclosures?	Is a trend report readily available? If not, should it be?

Remarks: Other matters were considered by the Commission, which did not have particular relevance to any LWV of Topeka-Shawnee County concerns or issues.

Commission meeting agendas are available online both before and after the meeting at the link shown above. There currently does not appear to be any written minutes of the meeting available.

**Shawnee County Commission**  
**March 14, 2024**  
**Observer: Elvera Johnson**

All three commissioners were present.

The meeting began with a report from the Mayor's Task Force against Domestic Violence. It included data about the prevalence of domestic violence in Shawnee County. The presenter said that one of the purposes of collecting data is to raise awareness regarding the problem.

Human Resources:

Presented a rather complicated resolution establishing an Idle Vacant Position Policy. It outlined a policy for dealing with positions that have remained vacant for a year or more. Commissioners had some questions regarding interpretation. The presenter said that if a department head has a question or comment about a vacant position, they can call Human Resources.

Noxious Weed Department: Received approval to award a bid for weed management chemicals.

Parks and Recreation: Received approval to reclassify a part-time custodial position to a park maintenance worker. The county will then discontinue a contracted worker who has been doing some of the mowing at the campground.

Commissioners approved a contract for parking lot renovations at Dornwood Park.

The Commission canceled the July 18 BCC meeting, as all Commissioners plan to be out of town for a convention.

Public Input: A citizen talked about a recent trail runners' event on Shawnee County Trails. He thanked the Commission for the well maintained trails.

Emergency Management: Reported on tornado warnings yesterday evening. The policy is for every siren to be activated even if the warning is for a different part of the county.

Parks and Recreation: Mentioned a long time employee who died unexpectedly yesterday.

Commissioners called an Executive session to discuss employee negotiations.



**Topeka City Council Meeting**  
**February 20, 2024**  
**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All council members were present, including the mayor except council member Hoeferer, either in chambers or on zoom. Council member Banks was late.

The invocation was given by Deputy Mayor Dobler who asked of a moment of silence in honor of the victims of the Kansas City Super Bowl victory parade shooting.

The council approved the appointment of Carol Roberts and Michaela Kerls to the Topeka Human Relations Commission and Kevin Siek to the Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board.

The council heard a presentation and annual update from the Human Relations Commission regarding their progress and plans.

The council approved the 2024-2026 WPC Labor Agreement (United Workers of Environmental Trades of Topeka).

Public comments were received from a homeless person concerned the city planned a removal of the tent city between the Kansas Ave. and Topeka Blvd. bridge. A retired developer also spoke about how Topeka needed to change to provide more transparency and support of people.

During council announcements the city manager announced the emergency management services task force has been formed with Deputy Mayor Dobler and council member Banks serving on the committee. Council member Valdivia Alcala reported her concerns for the lack of transparency regarding development at Billard airport and the closure of Tammy's restaurant despite public input.

There was a need for an executive session to discuss applications for city manager.

**Intergovernmental Cooperation Council:** No report received

**Topeka City Planning Commission:** No report received

**Shawnee County Planning Commission:** No report received

**USD #345:** No report received

**USD #437:** No report received

**USD #501:** No report received