

## Observer Reports for the May Voter

### **Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board**

**May 3, 2024**

**Vicki Arnett, Observer**

The board had five members present either in person or on zoom. Three members were absent. The meeting had three observers. This is the first time since the pandemic the city set up a zoom meeting for this meeting.

The board heard a report from Brent Curtis, Environmental Education and Enforcement Coordinator for the City of Salina Public Works:

- The position in Salina is a regular staff position which grew out of the need to send in automated refugee trucks and provide public education to assure compliance.
- This position is a part of the CIP budget.
- The position assists with tree survey, attempting to establish a city-wide composting and zero waste reduction efforts.
- The recycling effort is not curb side like Topeka but rather drop off.
- The community manages the local recycling center and sells recyclable material mostly to Wichita facilities.
- Many of the efforts are mandated by KDHE.
- His plans for the future include school education through a cooperation with EPA Region 7 office.
- Through questions, it was learned that Salina has a community wide alert system and that the position also helps with river clean up and plastic reduction activities.

**USD 345 SEAMAN SCHOOL BOARD MEETING  
APRIL 13, 2024**

Patti Bishop, Observer [pattibishop908@gmail.com](mailto:pattibishop908@gmail.com)  
 School Website <https://www.seamanschools.org/>  
 Under Board Docs

**Superintendent** Mr. Brad Wilson

**School Board Members**

President Michelle Caudill

Dianna Brodine

Donna McGinity

Kyle McNorton

Chris Travis

Christi Weiler

Braden Werner

<b>Featured Evaluated</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Did the meeting start on time?	x		
Was the agenda available	x		
Were any items not on agenda discussed?		x	
Did it appear that agenda items were discussed ahead of time?		x	
Were there any items amended?	X		Policy revision was moved to action item. Patron objections to materials and curriculum
Were members courteous to each other and the public?	x		
Were media members present?		x	
Did any members recuse?		x	
Was there an executive session and for what reason? How long?	x		Negotiations for 10 minutes

Was there a public comment period? If so who appeared?	x		MASS Resistance Group This group talked about vulgar materials and LGBT
Was this group relevance to LWV?	x		<a href="http://kslegislature.org">Kansas MassResistance Statement for SB 12 - kslegislature.org</a>

## **USD # 501 Topeka School Board Meeting**

**May 2, 2024**

**Annie Tietze, Observer**

Student of the Month – Caleb Annan NooNoo is Senior of the Month. He is from Topeka West High School and is the Valedictorian of the class of 2024.

Donations – Several groups have donated to the TPS Community Cupboard, the Topeka Community Foundation, Highland Park High School, Dutch Brothers Coffee and the WU-EU Can Drive

Pillar 3 and 5 -These goals are highly effective staff and school climate and equity. Recognized this year are: Heather Appenfeller, Mallory Bryan, Kimberly Buchanan, Juliana Chavez, Salvador Cruz, Tonya Foster, Nancy Fowler, Nicole Johnson, Tammy King, Ardith Lucky, Cheryl McPherson, Michelle Meredith, Ronald Morehead, Jamie Olliso, Jerry Overstreet, Guadalupe Perez, Paula Reilly, Tammie Robinson, Dawn Romero, Christine Streff, and Jacqueline Tipton.

## Shawnee County Commission Meeting: April 4, 2024

Observer: Paul Post

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		Three-part executive session for the stated purposes of (1) employer-employee negotiations with the Fraternal Order of the Police; (2) attorney-client privilege discussions regarding the opioid settlement, and (3) discussing personnel matters for a non-elected employee. Total time of 2 hours anticipated for all three

Was there a public comment period? If so who appeared and for what purpose	X		Henry McClure again voicing his ongoing complaints about the economic development contractor, Go Topeka.
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**Discussion of Issues:**

<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Action taken:</b>	<b>Relevance to LWV Positions</b>	<b>Recommended Follow-up if any</b>
The Kansas Children’s Discovery Center, located in Gage Park, is scheduled to expand its building, with an anticipated doubling of the size of the museum to 30,000 square feet. Along with new square footage, the building will feature such new exhibits as a new climbing wall for children, three learning laboratory classrooms and a new multimedia gallery. The laboratory classrooms will also provide the opportunity for out-of-school child care for children.	Approval by the Commission was necessary, since the Children’s Discovery Center is located in Gage Park, which is owned by the County. The expansion is funded by the new Gage Park tax which was approved by the taxpayers in 2022.	N/A.	N/A

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 Meeting: April 18, 2024

Observer: Paul Post

Chair Kevin Cook	Present?	Yes
Commissioner Bill Riphan	Present?	Yes
Commissioner Aaron Mayes	Present?	No

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?		Yes	Mayes was attending the Kansas County Commissions Associations meeting.
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		A 40 minute executive session to discuss measures that pertained to security measures that protected a public body or entity.
Was there a public comment period? If so who appeared and for what purpose?		X	.

**Discussion of Issues:**

**Issue:**

**Action taken:**

**Relevance to LWV**

**Recommended**

		<b>Positions</b>	<b>Follow-up if any</b>
Public notice of Planning Commission hearing to determine whether industrial scale solar panels should be banned in Shawnee County and whether there should be a moratorium on wind development.	No action by the Commission, but required public notice given of the Planning Commission meeting to be held at the Great Overland Station on May 13, 2024 at 6:00 pm.	LWV's position is to oppose the proposed ban.	Attendance at the May 13 meeting either in person or via Zoom.

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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## **Shawnee County Commission**

**April 25, 2024**

**Elvera Johnson, Observer**

All 3 Commissioners present

Commissioners approved consent agenda, voucher payments and correction orders.

Health Department:

Approved a contract with the Kansas Health Department for blood testing to detect TB infection. The occurrence is stable, not frequent.

Parks and Recreation:

Authorized filling a vacant position.

Public Works:

-Approved a contract with the water line district to relocate the water line where a roundabout needs to be installed to access Auburn Washbur middle school complex. -Deferred action until May 9 for the filling of 3 idle vacant positions in Public Works. They wish to do more research.

Solid Waste: Approved the purchase of more solid waste containers.

The Commission acknowledged the resignation of a Menoken Township Trustee who is moving out of the township. They will accept applications until May 9.

No public comment was offered.

Administrative communications:

Emergency Management said that storms are anticipated this weekend.

Public Works: Announced that work on NW 78th street between Jennings Rd and hwy 75 will begin Monday. The road will be closed.

A number of events were announced happening this weekend.

Volunteer Jim George was recognized for organizing other volunteers to repair and repaint the animals in animal land in Gage Park.

Executive Session was called to discuss acquisition of real property; consult with an attorney, and evaluate non elected department heads.

**Shawnee County Commission**

**May 9, 2024**  
**Elvera Johnson, Observer**

All 3 Commissioners present

Unfinished business:

Public Works:

Requested a reinstatement of 3 idle vacant positions. After several minutes of conversation regarding the logistics of this, a decision was made that this would be denied now, as it would be more beneficial and not too complicated to reinstate the positions at a later date.

-A second reading was discussed regarding a Home Rule Resolution related to the Stormont Vails Events Center.

-A representative from the County Fair planner shared his concern regarding whether they would be allowed to serve food during the fair. The Commissioners explained that the rule regarding concessions could be waived for the Fair. The Resolution was approved.

-A Second Reading of the Home Rule Resolution regarding the Shawnee County Code was held. The resolution was approved, as it eliminated some obsolete sections and included links online, making cross-referencing easier.

Register of Deeds:

The Commission approved a request to reinstate an idle vacant position, giving it a more descriptive title-Electronic Archiving Specialist. The hope is to attract applicants. The position has been vacant due to lack of applications.

Commissioners approved a request from Public Works to repair the parking lot pavement around Manor Conference Center.

Information Technology:

Authorized the annual renewal and upgrade to the finance enterprise system.

Corrections:

-Approved renewal of a 3-year maintenance contract for the agency HVAC systems.  
-Authorized an amendment to the Correctional Healthcare agreement to increase dental services.

Election Office:

Agreed to a request for an invoice to pay the expenses for the cost of the presidential preference primary. The plan is to request payment from the Secretary of State.

Commission acknowledged that Chuck Gatewood is resigning from the Monmouth Township Board Trustee position. The Commission will be accepting applications through May 23rd.

No public comment was offered.

County Treasurer:

Reminded folks that it is time to pay property taxes.

Planning:

Announced that a public hearing will be held on May 13 at Great Overland Station regarding a request to ban solar and wind energy in Shawnee County.

Public Works:

Announced that a public hearing will be held on May 30 regarding the construction of a roundabout at Auburn Road and 29th St.

Health Department:

Announced that on Wednesday morning there will be a discussion of County ranking at the Public Library.

Facilities Management:

Made an announcement regarding a staff parking lot north of 6th and east of Monroe.

Executive Session was called to consult with an attorney regarding working with a union and about acquisition of real property.

## SHAWNEE COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING: MAY 16, 2024

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Observer: Paul Post

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

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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		See notes below.

**Discussion of Issues:**

<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Action taken:</b>	<b>Relevance to LWV Positions</b>	<b>Recommended Follow-up if any</b>
Public hearing on industrial wind and solar bans.	Although not on today's agenda, the Planning Commission met on May 13, 2024, and recommended a moratorium on wind a solar development. This will be taken up by the County Commission on June 3 13, 2024 at 9:00 am.	LWV's position is to oppose the proposed ban.	Attendance at the June 13 meeting.

**Public Comment:**

1. Corrine King from Auburn appeared and stated her opposition to industrial wind and solar energy development. She presented additional petitions signed county residents, with a total of 1189 opposing solar and 1208 opposing wind.
2. Henry McClure appeared to argue that the \$3.5 million given to the Greater Topeka Partnership for economic development should be cut or eliminated altogether. Mr. McClure appears at almost every meeting to voice similar concerns.

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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## **Topeka City Council Meeting**

**April 16, 2024**

**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

The mayor was absent and deputy mayor Christina Valdivia Alcala presided. All council members were present.

The deputy mayor presented a proclamation of National Drug Endangered Children Awareness Day and National Therapy Animal Day. The council also recognized the retirement of Ronaldo Davis the city staff TV producer.

The council heard the annual update of the ADA Advisory Council. Of note, there were 23 complaints made by the general public. There was no public information presented regarding the outcome of the investigation of these complaints.

The council approved the 2025-2034 CIP and 2025-2027 CIB as amended. Council member Duncan moved to include TPAC in the budget. This amendment was approved 8-1 with council member Hiller voting no. The motion was also made to pull the recommended funding for Hotel Topeka by council member Banks. This motion failed 4 to 5 with council members Banks, Miller, Valdivia Alcala and Ortiz voting yes. There was one person who spoke during public comment on this item and recommended a different budget plan.

The council approved the issuance of revenue bonds to complete the water, water pollution and storm water utility system improvements in the CIB.

There were five people who spoke during public comment about funding the Land Bank, funding the housing trust fund through appointments to the board, thanking council for support of TPAC, public invitation by JUMP to the annual assembly and the 21st and Adams development.

Council member comments during administrative discussion included thanking TPAC, Friends of the Zoo Lego exhibit, the Topeka Way to Work summer internships with the city starting soon, JUMP support for housing trust fund, the utilities department public education efforts, Topeka license plates unveiled and public discussion of the Violence Intervention Coalition. An executive session was held for the purpose of discussion of an individual employee. No action was taken.

## **Topeka City Council Meeting May 7, 2024**

**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All council members were present either in chambers or on zoom. Mayor Padilla was absent and Deputy Mayor Valdivia Alcalá presided.

A proclamation was read declaring May 11 as Letter Carriers' Food Drive Day.

The council heard a presentation from the Downtown Business Improvement District director. The presenter did report the downtown district as well as NOTO are moving in the direction away from retail and toward entertainment as planned.

The council heard a presentation by the Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority (TMTA). Routes are being run hourly rather than every 30 minutes. The ridership is about 70% of what it was in 2018. They plan to outsource (privatize) the para transit program. They are purchasing 3 EV buses this year as well as replacing 4 diesel buses. It was reported there are some production issues with purchasing EV buses. They will require updates to diesel buses in the future. They continue to be challenged with employee shortages and aging buses. Council member Miller asked about buses to Montara. There are no current plans. Council member Duncan asked about a city fleet garage which included TMTA since both were facing the need to update the garages. The council approved a resolution to publish and submit to the Kansas Secretary of Commerce an application for a Reinvestment Housing Incentive District known as Meiers Place and Sherwood Professional Park. Council members Valdivia Alcalá and Duncan voted no on the Sherwood Professional Park due to resident's concerns.

The council approved a resolution to advance an application to the Kansas Department of Transportation to implement the priorities of the Topeka Bikeways Master Plan. Council approved a CIP project to reconstruct the NE Curtis Flyoff. Council approved a CIP project to reconstruct SE 29th St. from Adams St. to California St. Council approved an Information Technology infrastructure request to replace the network switch system. The council approved additional funds to the Topeka Hotel to replace an AC chiller to provide air conditioning. The council approved a loan agreement from the state revolving fund to improved water pollution control.

During public comments the Tennessee Town NIA spoke requesting an update to their DREAMS project requests. A member of the public was concerned about the lack of crisis response to a public suicide attempt. Another member of the public spoke about concerns for the direction of JEDO.

Announcements included Mary 15 to June 2 is seat belt check so slow down and buckle up. Thanks to emergency management during the storms. Reminder of the need to form a committee to review the form of government in 2025. A request was made to review the parks agreement. A request for an update on the ARPA funding projects status was made. There was a need for an executive session to discuss the city manager candidates.

## **Topeka City Council Meeting May 14, 2024**

**Observer: Vicki Arnett**

All council members, including the mayor, were present either in chambers or on zoom. The council appointed DeAna Morrison to the NOTO Business Improvement District Advisory Board and LWVTSC member Jim Edwards to the City of Topeka Citizens Advisory Council. The council heard a presentation from the NOTO Business Improvement District 2025 Program of Services. The district continues to struggle with businesses paying dues to the program. This has created the need to only install new trash cans and to plan repair to an archway as the only projects for 2025.

The council approved the contract with city manager Dr. Richard Perez. Several comments were made directly to Dr. Perez by council members such as council member Hiller stating Topeka is not a troubled city. Council member Ortiz stated it is a hell of a contract repeatedly. Council members also welcomed him and he identified his willingness to help them with their vision. One council member indicated at first, they did not support him but then he won them over. The council approved an increase in the street repair contract to Sherwood Park due to increased interest paid on bonding authority. The council also approved an amendment to the retaliatory eviction ordinance which clarifies language. Two landlords testified in opposition.

The council held a discussion of the need to change the residency requirements for the city trade boards. Due to the strict requirement to live in the city limits, and the special knowledge required of trades boards, public works is requesting to change the requirement to live, work or own a business in Topeka.

Four people spoke during public comments. One expressed thanks for the opportunities provided by the 1/2 marathon event at Evergy. A resident complained because she has been cited by code enforcement due to non-repair of a side walk. The Tennessee Town NIA reported they had finally heard about the status of their DREAMS application to repair a basketball court, how the pipes burst at the Colored Women's Club and the water bill is over \$1,000. A resident complained that code enforcement confiscated his property.

Council announcements included Brown v. Board anniversary events, mowing volunteers needed, a public hearing scheduled regarding road construction on Topeka Blvd. between 21st and 29th, thanks to the interim city manager for his leadership during the hiring process, Council member Miller is featuring Habitat for Humanity as his non-profit for May/June, solar lights installed west of 6th and Fairlawn, thanking the public works dept. academy and thanks to city staff for support during the city manager hiring process.

There was a need for an executive session to discuss issues of multiple litigation with the city.



# LMV of Topeka-Shawnee County Observer Report

SHAWNEE COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING: MAY 2, 2024

Observer: Paul Post

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

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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		A 40 minute executive session to discuss ongoing negotiations with county employee labor union.
Was there a public comment period? If so who appeared and for what purpose?	X		See notes below.

**Discussion of Issues:**  
**Issue: Action taken: Relevance to LWV Recommended**

**Positions Follow-up if any** Second Public notice of Planning Commission hearing to determine whether industrial scale solar panels should be banned in Shawnee County and whether there should be a moratorium on wind development.

No action by the Commission, but required public notice given of the Planning Commission meeting to be held at the Great Overland Station on May 13, 2024 at 6:00 pm.

LWV's position is to oppose the proposed ban.

Attendance at the May 13 meeting either in person or via Zoom.

Public Comment:

1. Ginger Barr from Auburn appeared and stated her opposition to industrial wind and solar energy development. She presented a petition signed by 1089 county residents opposing solar and 1108 opposing wind. She will also be presenting the same petitions to the Planning Commission at its May 13, 2024 meeting.
2. Henry McClure appeared to discuss the upcoming meeting of the Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO). He observed that none of his projects had ever received JEDO approval and the \$3.5 million given to the Greater Topeka Partnership for economic development should be cut or eliminated altogether.

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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