

Observer Reports for the May Voter

Board of County Commissioners-4/10/25

Elvera Johnson, observer

All three commissioners present

Consent agenda, voucher payments and correction orders were quickly approved.

Facilities Management:

-The contract to replace the Courthouse roof was approved.

-A decision to reject all bid responses to replace the water softener and water heater at Maner Conference Center was accepted.

Public Works:

-Commissioners approved replacement of a bridge over a tributary to the Kansas River.

-They also approved reclassification of a mechanic position and an equipment operator position to adequately compensate the employees for the level of responsibility they have.

Parks and Recreation:

-Approved continuation of a bicycle education program and cycle repair service at the Central Park Community Center.

-They also approved a contract to use the TIPS purchasing cooperative for new windows in the administration building at Lake Shawnee.

The Commission voted to cancel the April 24 and May 15 work sessions due to scheduling conflicts.

Public Comments: Henry McClure who said he is running for Mayor and his friend Robert Williams brought up some concerns about following the laws and the difference between a commission and a committee.

Administrative Communications:

The administrator announced that on April 14 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. a mobile mammogram clinic will be at Everygy Plaza, 630 S Kansas. This is a public service and is free once per year. Recommendations are that everyone over 40 should receive a yearly mammogram.

Commissioners announced that Tulip Time is open at Ensley Garden and Old Prairie Town.

An Executive Session was called for discussion regarding non-elected personnel and to consult with an attorney.

SHAWNEE COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING: APRIL 3, 2025

Observer: Paul Post (pacmanpost@icloud.com)

Chair Aaron Mayes	Present?	Yes
Commissioner Bill Riphan	Present?	Yes
Commissioner Kevin Cook	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		On the consent agenda, there was the addition of a letter of support for Kansas Children's Service League and Child Abuse Prevention Day, April 14.

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 note above on Kansas Children’s Service League (amendments to agenda).

Discussion of Issues:

Issue:	Action taken:	Relevance to LWV Positions	Recommended Follow-up if any
See below	N/A	N/A	N/a

Remarks:

1. Commissioners approved multi-housing revenue bonds April 3 for a new development in Shawnee County. The commission had a public hearing and unanimously approved the intent to issue the bond in an amount not to exceed \$65 million. County bond counsel Bob Perry told the commissioners the proceeds of the revenue bond would be used to acquire, construct and improve the multi-family facility. The approval of the multi-housing revenue bonds will allow for a sales tax exemption for material supplies that would otherwise be subject to sales tax, Perry told county commissioners. The development will be located in the area of 11th and Quincy Street. The City Council previously approved this development.
2. Starting April 21, the Commission is going to move the action sessions to Monday at 9 am, and the work sessions to Thursday at 9:00 am. This is a reversal of the current schedule. There was really no explanation as to why this change is occurring.
3. 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. Currently there does not appear to be any written minutes of the meeting available.

Presentations: Health Department will have an open house on April 8, recognizing the 30th anniversary of Public Health Celebration.

Board of County Commissioners-3/27/25

Elvera Johnson, observer

All 3 Commissioners present

Approval of consent agenda, voucher payments and correction orders. The consent agenda included approval of a contract with CBS Integration for security system monitoring services for the County Election Office.

Bond Counsel:

-Commissioners opened a public hearing to consider approval of a resolution expressing the intent to issue taxable industrial revenue bonds and enter into a lease purchase agreement with Cedarhurst Real Estate to acquire, construct, install and equip an independent living facility near SW 17th and Urish.

No public comment offered. **Hearing closed and resolution approved.**

-A second Public Hearing was opened to consider a resolution expressing intent to issue taxable industrial revenue bonds to enter into a lease purchase agreement with AMD Partners to finance the acquisition of real estate near Lowe's big box store to construct improve and equip multifamily facilities.

The applicant offered comment. **Hearing closed and the resolution approved.**

Public Works:

-Commissioners authorized a contract for professional services related to a culvert replacement on SE 37th.

-They also approved a contract for use of State and Federal funds for replacing a bridge on NW Valencia Road over the Silver Lake Drainage Ditch.

Parks and Recreation:

Approved a contract to provide GPS units on the golf carts at the 3 county-operated golf courses.

Noxious Weed Department:

Approved the annual noxious weed eradication progress report.

Public Comment: No public comment was offered.

Director of Human Resources: Announced mammography services for employees.

No executive session was called

SHAWNEE COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING: MARCH 20, 2025

Observer: Paul Post (pacmanpost@icloud.com)

Chair Aaron Mayes	Present?	Yes
Commissioner Bill Riphan	Present?	Yes
Commissioner Kevin Cook	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?		X	
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	No one signed up to speak.

Discussion of Issues:

Issue:	Action taken:	Relevance to LWV Positions	Recommended Follow-up if any
See below	N/A	N/A	N/a

Remarks:

1. Commissioner Cook's absence was not explained.
2. Starting in April, the Commission is going to move the action sessions to Monday at 9 am, and the work sessions to Thursday at 9:00 am. This is a reversal of the current schedule. There was really no explanation as to why this change is occurring.
3. 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. Currently there does not appear to be any written minutes of the meeting available.

Presentations: None.

Topeka City Council Meeting-March 18, 2015

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All council members, including the mayor, were present either in chambers or on zoom. Council member Miller was late arriving on zoom. For an unknown reason he was unable to vote on any item.

The council appointed Justine Greve to the Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board.

The council heard a report from the Topeka Housing Authority. There are about 2,000 people on the waiting list for Section 8 housing in Topeka. The waiting list is closed.

The council approved a resolution renaming the Topeka Water Treatment Plant the Jack Alexander Water Treatment Plant in honor of the first black city water commissioner. His family thanked the council for their courage in conferring this honor.

Although the agenda was mostly routine, there was discussion about the adopted management of the appropriation for DREAMS projects in 2025.

There was also public testimony from JUMP questioning the proposed/now adopted, reforms to the Topeka Housing Trust Fund.

There was another public comment regarding the need to serve the community better with use of economic development funds targeted to quality of life issues.

There was much discussion of the proposed solutions to housing development Lauren's Bay. Council members Banks and Valdivia Alcala voted no on all items. Council member Duncan voted no on one item.

The council supports the movement of transient guest tax from the Eviel Knievel Museum to the Downtown Topeka Foundation Ice Rink. This will partially fund the beginning stages of the project.

There were two public comments one about the problem with overgrown trees and the other about problems with economic development.

There was no need for an executive session.

Topeka City Council Meeting-April 8, 2025

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All city council members, including the mayor, were present in city council chambers.

Prior to the start of the meeting, council members celebrated the installation of a crosswalk light at 15th and MacVicar. The community has been asking for this measure for many years.

The mayor made a proclamation regarding National Child Abuse Month presented to Kansas Children's Service League.

The council appointed Brett Martin to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Review Committee.

The council heard a presentation on Complete Streets, initiated in 2009 to help streets be safer for everyone.

The council also heard a presentation about the pot hole program.

The council meeting was routine.

During discussion of the proposed Capital Improvement Plan budget, it was mentioned that the county is collaborating with the city on a street project. The ½ cent sales tax for street improvement will expire in 2029.

Public comments:

-A request to renegotiate the Fraternal Order of Police contract to require payment of their own malpractice insurance through possible self-insurance.

-Comments regarding reviewing the functions of JEDO

-Opposition to the ordinance passed tonight on the Lauren's Bay development.

Council member Duncan spoke about the proposed Evergy rate increases, encouraging testimony to the KCC.

The Mayor spoke about the importance of voting in the city election.

Several council members spoke about three recent suicides of young adults.

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

Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board Meeting-April 4, 2025

Observer: Vicki Arnett

Five members of the board were present.

There are currently two vacancies.

This was a working meeting for discussion about the annual report to city council on April 15. No decisions were made or votes taken other than approval of minutes.

Topeka Citizen Government Review Committee-April 9, 2025

Observer: Vicki Arnett

Two members were absent.

The committee interviewed council member Marcus Miller, District 6. He felt comfortable on the council and was welcomed by the members and the mayor. He has enjoyed serving his district and intends to serve another term.

The committee heard from the Topeka League of Women Voters regarding recommendations regarding good government practices:

-The presentation supported the current form of government with recommendations regarding how the city and county could collaborate.

-The league recommended the city review the functions of council/mayor appointed boards such as JEDO.

-The league also recommended review of the redistricting ordinances to strengthen independent decision making.

-The league supported the recommendations of the Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board to include a staff member.

During committee discussion, the recommendation was made to review the need for a city auditor for both finance and performance and a discussion of if local elections should be partisan.

There was also some discussion of term limits for council members.