

Observer Reports for the October Voter

Topeka City Council Meeting

August 19, 2025

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All city council members, including the mayor, were present in chambers of on zoom. Council member Duncan was late but present on zoom.

Council appointed Elizabeth Miller to the Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board. Council also appointed Kimberly Brown to the Civil Service Commission.

The agenda was routine and included approval of rezoning to develop the K-Mart North building into the Washburn Tech North campus. Council also approved Topeka SENT applying for state Reinvestment Housing Incentive District funds to build 42 single family homes in the SENT district.

The discussion of the proposed budget for 2026 continued. There was a great deal of discussion but no decisions on proposed relocation of fire stations. The discussion included a presentation by the public works department. The department director mentioned the department is reviewing options for adding EV vehicles to their fleet, including the new for new standard size automobiles for staff. They are also launching a project to identify alternative (to the Kansas River) water sources.

Public Comment:

There were no public comments.

Executive Session:

There was a need for an executive session to discuss matters related to cybersecurity.

Topeka City Council Meeting

September 2, 2025

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All members of the council, including the mayor, were present either in chambers or on zoom. Council member Ortiz appeared to be late joining on line.

The council reappointed Monique Vopat to the City of Topeka Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Advisory Council.

The council heard a presentation regarding the 2025 National Night Out Against Crime. This was the first-year city staff assumed responsibility for the program.

Public Comment:

This meeting was routine, although one item motivated a great deal of public comment after it was removed from the agenda and moved to the September 16, 2025 agenda. The agenda item was an action item to remove the special assessment penalties for non-payment from additional developers in the Lauren's Bay addition following the granting of this penalty forgiveness from Jim Klausman in the recent few months. The public testimony was regarding the favored status of developers, even those who do not follow through with their financial commitments to the city, regarding special tax abatements, penalty and back tax forgiveness. The public was very concerned for the lack of regard for regular citizens who may be struggling to pay such things as water bills following a 65% increase.

The public hearings will conclude on the budget and it will be on the agenda for adoption on September 16, 2025. The budget discussion tonight included the adding of additional code inspectors.

Executive Session:

There was no need for an executive session.

Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board Meeting

September 5, 2025

Observer: Vicki Arnett

A quorum was present with three guests, one on line.

The board was able to approve minutes from the past three meetings due to a quorum being present.

The board heard a presentation from a representative of ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability. They help local governments with climate and environmental resources such as budgeting for sustainability, purchasing resources from environmentally friendly businesses, self-assessment to prepare for and consult with about planning sustainability efforts in areas such as housing, office buildings and fleet management. They are a world-wide organization and provide opportunities for mayors to benefit from resources such as capital city sustainability coalitions throughout the country.

Board of County Commissioners Meeting

August 17, 2025

Paul Post, observer

No County Commission meeting was held this day since the Commission was completing the latest election canvass.

Board of County Commissioners Meeting

August 25, 2025

Elvera Johnson, observer

All 3 Commissioners Present

Routine consent agenda, voucher payments and correction orders were completed.

Public Works:

-KDOT is soliciting bids for two bridge replacements. KDOT pays over half of the cost and Shawnee County pays the rest.

-Two contracts related to Timber Ridge Subdivision were discussed. The developer is paying the cost, and the County is reviewing to make sure the

earthwork and storm sewer as well as the design and construction of streets meet County standards.

- Commissioners agreed to reject the single bid submitted for a culvert replacement on SE 37th St because it is unreasonably high. This will be revisited in the future.

- Commissioners approved changing the final cost of a contract with Bettis Asphalt & Construction for pavement replacement project on SE Croco Road and awarding a contract with the same company for a multi-culvert replacement project on SE Berryton Road.

Parks + Recreation:

- Commissioners approved an agreement with Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Land and Water Conservation Fund to build 2 cabins at Lake Shawnee Campgrounds and divide the cost 50/50.

- Commissioners also approved bids from 2 different suppliers for 2 different types of grass seed.

Corrections:

Approved the purchase of food service equipment and extended the food service contract with Aramark Correctional Food Services.

Solid Waste:

Commissioners approved a more comprehensive waste management technology system which will simplify the job for the workers.

Human Resources:

Commissioners approved a new Employer/Employee Benefits Cost schedule. It will increase the cost for both Employers and Employees. This has not been updated in 5 years.

Public Comment:

No public comment was offered.

Administrative Communications:

The Treasurer announced that today is Shawnee County's 170th birthday. She provided a brief history.

Brian Cole spoke about a peer support system at the jail, using recovering addicts to support folks dealing with addiction.

Jennifer Saur announced that on September 8 at 9:00 a.m. a revenue neutral public budget hearing will be conducted.

No Executive session was called.

Board of County Commissioners Meeting

September 8, 2025

Elvera Johnson, observer

All three commissioners were present.

The meeting began with New Business.

The Commission authorized a resolution to issue an estimated \$6,700,000.00 aggregate principal amount of Shawnee County taxable industrial revenue bonds (220 SE 6th LC Project Phase II). This does not affect taxpayers.

The Commission then held several Revenue Neutral Rate Public Hearings for budget year 2026.

Public Hearing #1

Consideration of a resolution authorizing a levy of property taxes that exceeds the revenue neutral rate of 46.211 mills. **There were many comments from citizens who objected to the resolution.** This was followed by explanations by Commissioners of: 1) What services have been increased, (mental health services for example), 2) What costs have increased (road repairs, salaries high enough to attract employees) and, 3) How state (and federal) cuts have resulted in leaving the county to pay more. **Some costs are required by the state to be paid by the county. Elections are an example.** They voted 3-0 to approve the resolution.

Public Hearing #2

Related to a small increase in mill levies for 2 sewer districts in the county. No public comments were offered and these resolutions were approved.

Public Hearing #3

Consideration of the entire County 2026 Proposed Budget. Information regarding line items was available. No public comment was offered. The actual vote on the budget was postponed until next week.

The consent agenda, voucher payments and correction orders were approved.

Parks and Recreation:

-Commissioners approved a bid to replace the ball fields sewer at Shawnee North. They will not have to use porta potties anymore.

-Approved contracts for concrete work and play equipment for the Play Land Sky Trail in Gage Park.

Public Works:

Approved the solicitation of bids for street construction in the Timber Ridge Subdivision.

Public Comment:

No further public comment was offered.

Administrative Communications:

Brian Cole from Corrections announced that a class of new employees is receiving intensive training this month.

Executive Session:

No Executive Session was called.

Board of County Commissioners Meeting

September 1, 2025

Paul Post, observer

No county commission meeting was held this day since it was the Labor Day holiday.

