

League of Women Voters of Topeka-Shawnee County Observer Report

SHAWNEE COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING: OCTOBER 6, 2025

Observer: Paul Post (pacmanpost@icloud.com)

Chair Aaron Mayes	Present?	Yes
Commissioner Bill Riphan	Present?	No – with absence not explained.
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?		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.

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. During the administrative communications section, Jake Fisher, the Assistant Election Commission, appeared and noted that voter registration closes October 14. He encouraged everyone not registered to get registered.
2. 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.

10-13-2025 BOCC

All 3 Commissioners present

Elvera Johnson observer

In unfinished business, the Commission reconsidered the bid for a Master Plan Update project for Shawnee County Parks and Recreation (deferred from the September 29 meeting). The Master Plan contract was adopted by a 2-1 vote. Mays was opposed.

Commissioners approved the consent agenda and voucher payments. There were no correction orders. They approved a resolution to authorize a cereal malt beverage license to Dillons Store # 37 on SW 29th.

For the Planning Department, they approved a resolution for a conditional use permit to construct an electrical substation on property adjacent to the Historical Museum in Mission Township. There will be a buffer berm to screen it from trails on museum property.

They considered a resolution to establish an RV Park and short-term cabin rental on property zoned Rural Agriculture on SE Woodring Road. There is an old youth camp there that a purchaser wants to develop. A public hearing was opened. Seven nearby property owners expressed their opposition. Their concerns related to who might be camping there and the poor condition of the road. The Commission referred the matter back to the planning department.

For Public works, Commissioners approved the purchase of 3 specialized trucks to be used in their work.

For the Appraiser, Commissioners approved a contract in conjunction with Douglas County, Jefferson County, City of Topeka and the city of Lawrence for the purchase of digital color orthophotography. The Shawnee County part of the cost will be \$19,385.

For Human Resources, the Commission approved a memorandum of understanding with the AFL-CIO Communications Workers of America. They need to be competitive in order to keep employees in the 911 call center. They agreed to a 12.13% wage increase.

For Information Technology, they approved the purchase of furniture.

For the Health Department they approved a contract renewal for electronic health records software.

For the County Counselor, they approved an RFQ for Lobbying Services, with emphasis on working with the federal government.

Commissioners canceled the November 6th work session because of the State of the Community report at that time.

In public comment, a community member thanked the Commission for working with the College Hill Neighborhood Association and the 501 School district in the upkeep of Boswell Park.

In Administrative Communications, Human Resources reminded employees about open enrollment for benefits this month. Election Office representative reminded voters that early voting in the Election Office begins on Monday, October 20. Now is the time to request a ballot if you prefer to vote by mail. Commissioners will be requested to meet as the Board of Election Canvassers on November 17.

No Executive Session was called.

Observer Reports

November 2025

Topeka City Council Meeting

September 16, 2025

Observer: Vicki Arnett

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

The mayor read a proclamation requested by El Centro, welcoming immigrants and refugees in Topeka and support of the enrichment of diversity.

The council passed an ordinance which amended the transient guest tax, allowing for an exception for Hotel Topeka TGT of 8%. It is proposed this will offset the use of tax dollars and allow for continued maintenance paid by guests at the hotel. Council member Valdivia Alcala votes no.

The council passed an ordinance which allows for the abatement of special assessments and penalties on developer Marney Properties located in Lauren's Bay. One member of the public spoke and pointed out that this action forgives 12 years of non-payment of taxes on property which continues to have lower water/utility bills than the rest of Topeka customers due to not being assessed the "readiness to serve" fees.

The council passed the 2026 Operating budget with a couple of amendments. Council restored funding to the Topeka Metro Transportation Authority and indicated support for starting a stream of funding for the Housing Trust Fund. For members of the public spoke.

Public comments included support for not using tax payer money to support housing rather, let the market take care of the issue, a request to stop hiring contractors and do the work with current employees and requests for ideas to create new revenue streams.

Topeka City Council Meeting

October 7, 2025

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All city council members, including the mayor, were present in chambers, except Council member Dobler.

The council approved the appointment of Valerie Peckham to the Topeka-Shawnee County Public Library Board of Trustees.

The council heard a presentation on the city Economic Social Demographic Site dashboards.

Of note on the consent agenda, the council approved a contract for the completion of a Title II Americans with Disabilities Act self-evaluation (contractor evaluation how the city is doing) and level II commercial energy audit. Funding is provided by KDHE Climate Pollution Reduction Grant program.

Most of the action items were routine with the exception of public testimony regarding the poor job the council and staff are doing regarding balancing the needs of ordinary citizens and developers. This was noted during discussion of a Reinvestment Housing Incentive District in the area of 45th and California. The council approved moving forward with the plan although the council has almost no information on which to base their vote or feasibility of the entire project.

The council moved the vote on the 2026-2035 capital improvement plan and 2026-2028 capital improvement budget to the Oct. 21 meeting.

There were two people who spoke during public comments. Remarks were regarding problems with economic development transparency and perceived disrespect on the part of assistant city manager by members of the public.

The Nov. 4 meeting is rescheduled to Nov. 5 and the Nov. 11 meeting is rescheduled to Nov. 12.

There was a need for an executive session to discuss cases in current litigation.

Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board

October 3, 2025

Observer: Vicki Arnett

A quorum was present both in person and on line. Nov. 15 is the next fix it work shop at Full Circle Sustainability. Two board members reported on a conversation with the Douglas County Sustainability coordinator regarding their experience working with ICLEI USA, a national consulting firm which supports government in sustainability programs. They helped Lawrence set measurable goals for city/county natural gas and fuel usage/emissions. ICLEI is a membership organization. There is also additional consultation available to capital cities. The city manager attended the meeting and heard the discussion and invited the board to meet with him to discuss the 3200.00 per year membership. The Sustainability coordinator is not in the 2026 budget as a paid city employee. ICLEI does have experience working with volunteer boards without an employee. Dr. Perez did mention one of his priorities for next year is to pilot city electric vehicles.