

Observer Report

Board of County Commissioners: 12/8/25

All 3 Commissioners Present

Elvera Johnson, observer

Following the routine Consent Agenda, Voucher and Correction orders approval, the Commission moved on to new business.

A Public Hearing was opened to consider a major Planned Unit Development change, presented by the Planning Department. The unit was first established in 2010 and was used by one business. A number of restrictions were in place, making further development of property difficult. The Planning Department recommended reconfiguring the property into 3 additional lots and replacing regional sewer service with an onsite wastewater system. *No public comment was offered during the hearing.* The hearing was closed and the recommended changes approved.

Facilities management: Commissioners approved the request to reject all bids for the Courthouse restroom updates and to start over. They also approved payment for emergency boiler pump repairs and updated which has been completed. 70% of this is funded by the Maner HVAC fund and the rest by 2025 contingency funds.

Court Administration: Granted approval of a contract which provides increased cyber security.

Audit Finance: Asked for approval for several 2026 small item capital outlay payments. The definition of small outlay is less than \$50,000. Payments were approved to Parks & Recreation, Emergency Management, Stormont Vail Event Center and Elections.

The Commission approved Aaron Mays to be the voting delegate to the annual Kansas Association of Counties Conference to begin on December 9. Rich Eckert will be the alternate. Because of this conference, the Thursday work session will be canceled.

No public comment or administrative communication was offered.

No Executive Session was called

Observer Report

Board of County Commissioners Meeting: 12-29-2025

All 3 Commissioners present

Elvera Johnson, observer

Routine items were quickly approved: Consent agenda, voucher payments, correction orders, approval of a cereal malt beverage license to Glory Days Pizza 4745 NW Hunters Ridge Circle.

The commissioners agreed to establish a Process Automation Project Fund for the County Clerk's office and transfer the remaining 2025 funds to this fund.

Audit Finance: Commissioners approved transfer of the balance of the 2025 contingency Fund to the Election Office Electronic Poll Books project.

Public Works: Commissioners approved a contract with Finney & Turnipseed of Topeka to provide professional design services for a bridge re-decking and repainting project on NW Maple Hill Road over the Kansas River. I

Public Input: In response to a citizen's question, Mr. Niehaus explained that by state statute, Shawnee County is in charge of the bridge. The bridge does border on 2 other counties, but Shawnee County is responsible for it. One other county is paying some of the cost. This is not a total replacement, but a re-decking. Thus, safety improvements would be difficult to address.

Facilities Management: Commissioners approved transferring remaining 2025 funds to 3 project funds: Vehicle leases, Building keys upgrades, and Courthouse renovations.

Parks + Recreation: Commissioners approved transferring remaining 2025 funds to a fund for the Boswell Park project.

Department of Corrections: Commissioners approved use of unexpended 2025 funds for off-site medical expenditures.

County Counselor: Commissioners approved the 2nd reading of the Home Rule Resolution 2025-4 that repeals and replaces select portions of the Open Burning Code.

Human Resources: Commissioners approved the transfer of \$5,000 from the 2025 budget to the wellness fund.

Court Administration: Commissioners approved the design, purchase and installation of audio video technology. It seems expensive because of the shape of the room. It is not square, having an offset section.

Information Technology: The Commission approved the transfer of unused 2025 funds to a fund to replace computers that are outdated and IT retirement Fund. They also approved the annual renewal of the Cisco SmartNet support for network switches and for DNA licenses and approved the renewal of the Microsoft Exchange Online services contract.

County Treasurer: Approved the purchase of a new vendor that makes it possible for customers to use debit cards to pay taxes.

No Public Comment was offered.

No Executive Session was called.

1-12-26 BOCC

All 3 Commissioners Present

Elvera Johnson, Observer

The first item of business was organizing for 2026. Commissioner **Riphahn** was elected Chair. Commissioner **Cook** was elected Vice-Chair.

Cook was appointed to:

Stormont Vail Events Center Advisory Board

Health Access Board

Chamber Board

Greater Topeka Leadership Chairs Council

Momentum 2027

Riphahn was appointed to:

Metropolitan Topeka Planning Organization,

Visit Topeka

COT Riverfront Advisory Board

Mays was appointed to:

Go Topeka Board

Shawnee County Security Council

State of Kansas Labor Workforce Development Committee

Intergovernmental Council

Regular Commission Meetings were moved to Thursdays (Work sessions will be on Mondays.)

Metro News will continue as the official County newspaper.

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

Public Hearings were held for 2 Conditional Use Permits for the **Planning Department**. The first was establishing a Maternity Home in a building at The Villages, 7220 SW 10th. The only public comment was from the CEO of the Villages. The second Hearing was regarding a Home Plus Care Facility on property located at 738 NE 43rd Street. It will provide Assisted Living for up to 8 residents. The owner of the property spoke about her commitment to this project. The Planning committee recommended approval and the Commissioners approved both resolutions following the public hearings.

For **Public Works**, Commissioners approved a request to solicit construction bids for a bridge replacement on NE Calhoun Bluff Road and approved a contract to provide professional design and construction engineering services for a bridge replacement on NW 78th Street. They approved a bid for white and yellow traffic line paint. They approved a bid for glass beads for reflectivity in

traffic line paint. They approved bids for aluminized and galvanized metal culverts and end sections.

Information Technology received approval to renew the software contract.

The Election Office received approval to destroy ballots and envelopes per state law.

The **Counselor's Office** presented a First Reading regarding the agreement between Boswel Park and Central Park Track and Football properties and the use of certain gymnasiums by USD 501.

Stormont Vail Events Center received approval for an expansion and upgrade to the Wi-Fi infrastructure and for the replacement of Landon Arena and Exhibition Hall portable chairs. This had been discussed during budget discussions.

No public comment was offered.

In administrative communications, Public Works announced that the Berryton Road project is soon getting off the ground.

Planning announced that they are meeting this evening to discuss Solar regulations for the county. This issue will be presented to the BOCC in February.

The Sheriff announced that they have worked with the Topeka Police Department and District Attorney to apply for a grant and have received a \$5 million grant. This will be used to improve the 911 call system.

There was no need for an Executive Session.

League of Women Voters of Topeka-Shawnee County Observer Report

Shawnee County Commission Meeting: January 5, 2026

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	
Were members courteous to each other and the public?	X		
Were media representatives present?	X		
Did any members 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:

- 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.

Observer Report

January 21

Intergovernmental Cooperation Council (ICC)

Submitted by Paul Post

The Intergovernmental Cooperation Council (ICC) met on Tuesday, January 21, 2026, at 7:20 a.m. at the Vogel Room at the Washburn University Student Union. The ICC consists of representatives from the following local entities: Unified School Districts (Seaman, Auburn-Washburn, Shawnee Heights, Silver Lake, Topeka), City of Topeka, Shawnee County, Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority, Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, and Washburn University.

Hosting of the meeting rotates annually among the members, with the host for 2026 being Mayor Spencer Duncan, representing the City. Meetings are monthly, on the third Tuesday. The stated purpose of the ICC is to promote cooperation between and share information among these entities.

The speaker for the January meeting was Molly Howey, selected last summer as the chief executive officer of the Greater Topeka Partnership. Ms. Howey explained that GTP is an umbrella organization for the Topeka Chamber of Commerce, Go Topeka which promotes local development, Visit Topeka which is the local visitors' bureau, and Downtown Topeka, Inc. She talked about how each of these organizations work together to promote and better Topeka and Shawnee County.

January 2026 Observer Reports

Topeka City Council Meeting

December 9, 2025

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All members of the council, including the mayor, were present in chambers or on zoom, except council member Valdivia Alcala.

The council made multiple board appointments and heard a presentation from Visit Topeka.

The meeting was routine with multiple renewals of tax increment financing districts, community improvement districts and end of the year budget revision, updates. Approval was provided to the new TIF and CID for South Topeka Blvd., I-470 and Kansas Ave. area due to blight.

Public comments included accumulation of trash at Lou Douglas owned properties, police shootings, violence concerns, fraudulent contracting and the condition of rental properties including council member Hiller.

There was no need for an executive session.

Topeka City Council Meeting

December 16, 2025

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All members of the council, including the mayor, were present in chambers or on zoom, except council member Valdivia Alcala. It was later learned the council member Valdivia Alcala will be on medical leave until mid-February.

The council and members of the public, recognized the work of mayor, Michael Padilla, Brett Kell, deputy mayor and Neil Dobler, who did not seek re-election. Mayor Padilla is retiring, Brett Kell remains on council but is leaving the office of deputy mayor.

The council approved the appointment of Kelly Magerkurth to the Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board and Michaela Saunders to the Topeka Metropolitan Transit Board. De'McGee was appointed to the Human Relations Commission. The council approved the appointment of members to the Topeka Land Bank Board of Trustees.

The council heard a presentation on affordable housing trust fund. The housing authority and assistant city manager are recommending funding be sought through a sales tax initiative. No action is presented.

The action agenda included planning department considerations as well as adoption of the 2024 international Property Maintenance code.

Public comment was made about housing issues, concern for tax incentive districts and the sales tax discussion.

There was no need for an executive session.

Topeka City Council Meeting

January 6, 2026

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All members of the council were present either in person or on zoom, except council member Valdivia Alcala.

The meeting was primarily ceremonial. Mayor elect Duncan was sworn in as were newly elected council member Bradberry. Re-elected members Hiller, Ortiz, Kell and Hoferer were also sworn in. Council member Hoferer was elected deputy mayor.

Council district 8 position is now vacant with the swearing in of Mayor Duncan. A timeline was approved for filling the slot by the council.

Several members of the public spoke wishing the newly elected council good wishes, concerns for housing in Topeka, concerns for police violence and concerns for contractors performing hydrant and water main repairs.

On the council agenda for Jan. 13, is striking Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging from the city code.

There was no need for an executive session.

Topeka City Council Meeting

January 13, 2026

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All members of the council were present, including the mayor, either in person or on zoom. Council member Valdivia Alcala is on medical leave and council district 8 is open.

The agenda was routine with the council deciding on the code structure for fees paid to the city. The council passed an ordinance, requiring several votes to pass the proposed 2026 fee schedule, voting to zero out the fee for burning. There was one public comment regarding valuing affordability.

There was a need for executive session to discuss matters of attorney client privilege.

Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board Meeting

December 5, 2025

Observer: Vicki Arnett

The board approved minutes from the past two meetings. They did have a quorum.

This was primarily a working meeting to prepare the application for a consultant to assist the board in achieving goals.