
OBSERVER REPORTS

SUBMITTED JUNE 2026

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Thank you to this month's Observers: Vicki Arnett, Elvera Johnson, and Paul Post

Topeka City Council Meeting

May 19, 2026

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All members of the city council, including the mayor, were present either in person or on zoom. The mayor read a proclamation recognizing National Public Works Week and all public works city employees and contractors.

The council appointed Angela Broxterman to the Downtown Business Improvement District Advisory Board. The council heard a presentation from Downtown Topeka Business Improvement District annual report. The DTI leadership was suddenly recently terminated. The acting leader, Jessica Moreno, did not openly address the issues but alluded to needing to revamp the district membership plan to move forward.

The agenda was mostly routine business and development. The council approved by a 8-2 vote, adding redesign of SE 29th at the Kansas Turnpike to accommodate a future exit to the turnpike in the area, to the 2027-2029 CIP plan and budget.

Several members of the public addressed the council speaking about a ¼ cent sales tax to support the Topeka Institute or East Topeka corridor or Eastern Topeka Development Corporation whose director is Curtis Pitts. No formal city action has been taken to move a sales tax increase to a public vote.

There was a need for an executive session.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Commission

May 19, 2026

Observer: Paul Post

The Intergovernmental Cooperation Council (ICC) met on Tuesday, May 19, 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.

While there is usually good attendances, it appears that some of the members do not attend on a regular basis. There is always a program, sometime followed by a few questions, and then the meeting is adjourned. The program for May was presented by the Be Filled of South Topeka community enrichment program, which works to meet the needs of residents primarily in the Montara Community. The program includes a weekly food pantry and a clothing assistance store. Be Filled was established in 2022, and since that time has provided essential food and clothing assistance to over 90,000 individuals. Except for the director and assistant director, all services are provided by volunteers, which now stands at 45 people. Be Filled also conducts annual school supply drives for children living in the area, as well as various fund-raising events throughout the year.

The ICC does not meet during the summer months, with meetings to resume in September.

Shawnee County Commission

May 21, 2026
Observer: Paul Post

Please click on the link below for the agenda archive.

Commission Agenda Website: <https://www.snco.us/commission/agendas.asp>

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

Feature evaluated	Yes	No	Comments
Did the meeting start on time?	X		
Reason for absent members?		X	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.

Discussion of Issues:

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

Remarks:

- A proposed lease agreement with Enterprise Fleet Management for the lease of pickup trucks for Parks and Recreation was tabled at the request of Commissioner Mayes to allow for an investigation as to whether leasing of electric vehicles would be cost-effective. The motion to approve the lease was tabled for a week. At the subsequent meeting, the commission voted to lease the vehicles as proposed and not to consider substituting all or some of the trucks with EVs.
- 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.

Shawnee County Commission

May 28, 2026

Observer: Elvera Johnson

All 3 commissioners present.

Meeting began with old business deferred from May 21, regarding the new lease agreement with Enterprise Fleet. The issue involved possible lease of electric rather than hybrid vehicles. They are not available right now, but will be in the near(?) future. Commissioners approved continuing the lease and thanked Tim Laurent for doing the research. They will continue leasing the hybrid vehicles.

Following routine business, Commissioners approved a contract for a year of maintenance on the body scanner system at the Adult Detention Center.

For the Health Department, Commissioners approved acceptance of the Kansas Department of Health grant with an equal match from Shawnee County for outreach, prevention and early intervention for children. They also approved a contract with Elizabeth Skinner for Pharmaceutical Consultation services.

For Parks + Recreation, they approved a contract for slide restorations at Midwest Health Aquatic Center, paid by Parks for All Foundation.

Commissioners selected Larry Stow to fill a vacant Clerk to the Mission Township Board position. No public comment was offered.

In Administrative Communications, an Elections Officer announced that Monday noon, June 1, would be the last day to file for a position. That is also the deadline to change party affiliation. They are requesting more election workers.

They are encouraging all voters, including those not affiliated with a party, to participate in August elections. That election will include a constitutional amendment regarding the state supreme court.

The County Treasurer announced that on the last work day of the month, the treasurer's office opens at 7:30 a.m. Appointments are encouraged.

An Executive Session was called to discuss non-elected personnel.

Topeka City Council Meeting

June 2, 2026

Observer: Vicki Arnett

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

Council members heard two presentations, an update on Polk-Quincy viaduct from the Kansas Department of Transportation and presentation from Topeka Police Department regarding the progress on the TPD/Astra Mobile Crisis response team.

The agenda was mostly routine although both council member Kell and Valdivia Alcala voted Non on matters of the Reinvestment Housing Incentive District at Windward Estates. Their principal reason regarding their no vote was concern the rental rate was too high to support tax incentives to the developer.

There was a need for an executive session to discuss pending litigation.

There were three people who spoke during public comments. One speaker was concerned for sidewalk construction where it wasn't wanted, concerns for the need to reform JEDO and a homeless person who consistently presents during public comment.

Shawnee County Commission

June 4, 2026
Observer: Paul Post

Please click on the link below for the agenda archive.

Commission Agenda Website: <https://www.snco.us/commission/agendas.asp>

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

Feature evaluated	Yes	No	Comments
Did the meeting start on time?	X		
Reason for absent members?		X	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.

Discussion of Issues:

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

Remarks:

- Issuance of industrial revenue bonds was approved in connection with Hotel Topeka renovations. Even though the hotel is owned by the city, the county agreed to issue the bonds to Endeavor Hospitality Investments, LLC, the proposed purchaser, in the amount of \$7 million. The county's interest in successful development of the hotel is connected to its ownership of the adjoining Maner Conference Center. Industrial revenue bonds are repaid by the entity receiving the bond proceeds and cannot become an obligation of the taxpayers.
- 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.

Topeka Sustainability Advisory Council

June 5, 2026

Observer: Vicki Arnett

Six members of the board were present.

Sam Raugewitz was appointed Secretary through December pending the next election.

There was some discussion regarding preparing for the Shawnee County Planning Commission and Shawnee County Commission regarding discussion of data centers. Full Circle plans to request the planning commission defer discussion and approval of their request for conditional use permit in order to address concerns expressed by the fire district and neighbors.

The committee discussed how to make use of their time with the mayor next month.

Topeka City Council Meeting

June 9, 2026

Observer: Vicki Arnett

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

The council made two appointments; Tamika Terry to the Topeka Metropolitan Transit Board and Luc Bensimon to the Topeka Human Relations Commission.

The council heard a presentation regarding the 2026 Kansas legislative session. There was some discussion of the lack of support from Senate leadership regarding the need for local oversight of housing authority housing and apartments.

The agenda was routine. The Utilities continued their presentation supporting water rate increases. No vote was taken. There were two public comments opposing water rate increases.

Four people made public comments regarding infrastructure, water rate increases, light pollution and JEDO practices.

There was a need for an executive session to discuss the evaluation of non-elected personnel.