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# OBSERVER REPORTS

SUBMITTED JULY 2026

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

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## Topeka City Council Meeting

June 16, 2026

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All members of the council were present either in person or on zoom. Deputy Mayor Hoferer presided in the absence of Mayor Duncan.

A proclamation was read announcing the Topeka Day of Play at the Kansas Children's Discovery Center. A proclamation was read announcing the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Community Resources Council.

The council approved the appointments of Nick Xidis and Stephen Smith to the Downtown Business Improvement District Advisory Board. Isabel Huckins was appointed to the Citizen's Advisory Board. Michaela Saunders was appointed to the Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board.

The council heard two presentations. The first presentation was a review of the Money Management International program. This program replaced the Topeka Housing and Credit Counseling program. Although they continue to serve the Topeka area, appointments are arranged through the website. There are no local phone numbers for contact.

The second presentation was a summary of the Homeless Encampment and Right of Way clean up. The presentation also summarized the homeless outreach effort.

The rest of the agenda was routine.

The council discussed proposed Affordable Housing Trust Fund recommendations. The trust fund board is recommending funding of the proposals submitted by SENT, Inc. which will create 229 affordable housing units.

The council discussed proposed utility rate increases.

Three people spoke during public comments on subjects such as opposition to proposed water rate increases, flooding in the Hi-Crest area. Two people spoke about the lack of transparency regarding JEDO.

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

## Shawnee County Commission

June 18, 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   |    | For the purpose of discussing issues relating to employee union negotiations <u>with</u> the Sheriff's Department. |
| Was there a public comment period? If so, who appeared and for what purpose? | X   |    | Dennis Bosley, who is a board member of LWVTSC, spoke about the observance on Men's Mental Health Week.            |

**Discussion of Issues:**

| <b>Issue:</b> | <b>Action taken:</b> | <b>Relevance to LWV<br/>Positions</b> | <b>Recommended<br/>Follow-up if any</b> |
|---------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| N/A           | 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.

## Shawnee County Commission

July 2, 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? | No – absence not explained. |
| 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  |                        |
| 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   |    | See below for details. |

**Discussion of Issues:**

| <b>Issue:</b> | <b>Action taken:</b> | <b>Relevance to LWV<br/>Positions</b> | <b>Recommended<br/>Follow-up if any</b> |
|---------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| N/A           | N/A                  | N/A                                   | N/A                                     |

**Remarks:**

- County Counselor Rick Eckert, speaking on the proposed Resolution R2026239 which would create an ordinance pertaining to data center development, stated that under the proposal the conditional use permitting process would be utilized for any such proposals, that no financial or tax incentives would be allowed, and that a filing fee of \$15,000 would be required. There would also be an escrow requirement for the developer to pay in advance for any anticipated expert fees concerning design, development, and construction, or any other planning costs included in the development.
- Public comment: Persons appearing were all stating their opposition to the proposed data center ordinance and the development of data centers. Speakers generally favored a moratorium of at least one year to study the issue. Megan Ryan, a Shawnee County homeowner, noted that section 4.1 of the proposed ordinance allowed for an "expedited process" for approval of any such center. She also stated that Go Topeka already had a project in the works known as "Deep Blue" about which there was no public information as the discussions with the developer were in secret (since then, the Topeka City Council has passed a one-year moratorium on any such development). Three other county residents also spoke on opposition: Amy Gillett, Annette Binsely, and Matthew Merrish.
- 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

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## Shawnee County Commission

July 9, 2026

Observer: Elvera Johnson

Two Commissioners present (Riphahn absent)

The 2026 Shawnee County Fair King and Queen made a presentation about the County Fair coming up July 23-July 26.

Consent agenda, voucher payments and correction orders were approved.

In Land Use & Development, a Public Hearing was held to discuss the conditional use of Property in Soldier Township for building a new fire station on NW Topeka Boulevard. No public comment was offered either positive or negative. Previously, letters had been sent to residents near the site, and no response was offered. The Public Hearing was closed and The Commission approved the Conditional Use zoning resolution.

For the Department of Corrections, the Commission approved a contract with Astra Mental Health & Recovery for care coordination services within the Adult Detention Center.

For the Treasurer, Commissioners approved the purchase of a new printer and a service and maintenance contract for this printer as well as the 3 existing printers. The Treasurer emphasized that their printers are busy all the time.

For Parks + Recreation, Commissioners approved a guaranteed Maximum Price of \$4,441,026.00 for the Gage Park Carousel Project. The funds will come from the Gage Park sales tax. Mr. Laurent presented some details about the project. It includes ground preparation, a new enclosed facility for the carousel that will be used all year. It will include a large lobby area with refreshments and tables as well as 2 party rooms. A 2<sup>nd</sup> mini train station will be added. There are plans to display the old engine as well as other historic features. A large parking area will be added.

In Public Comment, 5 individuals expressed their concerns about data centers. They had heard that an area near Monterra was being considered. There were concerns that there are 5 schools within 5 miles of that area and we would be "exploiting our children." Concerns about sound pollution, headaches, water consumption and increase of utility prices and taxes were mentioned.

Commissioners explained that there are no applications at this time. Each application will be considered and disapproved or approved on their own merits. Mr. Mays said that his children go to the schools mentioned. He lives here too. He would not want to approve something that harms the community. The Land Use & Development Chair said that they have certain procedures they follow in recommending for or against conditional use permits. They have no applications at this point on which to make a recommendation.

In Administrative Communications, an Election Office employee announced that July 14 is the last day to register to vote in the August 4 election. Early voting begins on August 20. The Fiscal officer announced that budget hearings begin next week.

No Executive Session was called.

## Shawnee County Commission

July 16, 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?                                                   |     |    | 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   |    | None of the television stations were present but there appeared to be a reporter taking notes. |
| 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   |    | See below.                                                                                     |

**Discussion of Issues:**

| <b>Issue:</b> | <b>Action taken:</b> | <b>Relevance to LWV<br/>Positions</b> | <b>Recommended<br/>Follow-up if any</b> |
|---------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| N/A           | N/A                  | N/A                                   | N/A                                     |

**Remarks:**

- The budget process has begun, with department heads presenting their proposed budgets to the commissions. A summary of those proposals is attached.
- Public comment on Data Centers: Persons appearing were again stating their opposition to the proposed ordinance and the development of data centers: Richard Johnson, without specifics, stated that the commissioners may have a conflict of interest concerning data center approval; Scott Henson noted the City Council's recent 10-0 vote in favor of a one-year moratorium; Mike Bradley also noted the city's moratorium, and stated that the county would be well-served to enact a similar stay, especially considering the three-mile zone around the city that requires city consent to development even though not within the city limits.
- Other public comments: Carol Marples spoke about the recent litigation involving the Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority which resulted in a \$1.8 million judgment and almost \$100,000.00 in attorney fees. Kendra Ambley spoke against the 4-minute comment limit that is imposed on speakers appear before the commission
- 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.

**2027 BUDGET WORKSHEET**

| CATEGORY/DEPARTMENT                      | 2025<br>FINAL<br>BUDGET | 2026<br>FINAL<br>BUDGET | 2027<br>BUDGET<br>REQUESTS | Department<br>Budget<br>Adjustments | 2027<br>WORKING<br>BUDGET | Dept Req<br>over 2026<br>%         |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>EST MILL LEVY</b>                     | <b>48.326</b>           | <b>48.917</b>           |                            |                                     |                           |                                    |
| <b>LAW ENFORCEMENT</b>                   |                         |                         |                            |                                     |                           |                                    |
| COUNSELOR                                | 909,115                 | 994,562                 | 1,035,107                  | (9,132)                             | 1,025,974                 | 4%                                 |
| COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS                    | 1,274,812               | 1,610,874               | 1,628,012                  |                                     | 1,628,012                 | 1%                                 |
| DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS                | 36,183,522              | 39,855,216              | 43,559,308                 |                                     | 43,559,308                | 9%                                 |
| DISTRICT ATTORNEY                        | 7,929,466               | 8,782,720               | 9,446,829                  |                                     | 9,446,829                 | 8%                                 |
| DISTRICT COURTS                          | 3,161,737               | 3,161,737               | 3,349,030                  |                                     | 3,349,030                 | 6%                                 |
| DRUG COURT                               | 15,000                  | 15,000                  | 15,000                     |                                     | 15,000                    | 0%                                 |
| EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT                     | 544,888                 | 661,734                 | 667,469                    |                                     | 667,469                   | 1%                                 |
| SAFE STREETS                             | 20,000                  | 20,000                  | 20,000                     |                                     | 20,000                    | 0%                                 |
| SHERIFF                                  | 24,418,119              | 26,540,589              | 28,338,082                 |                                     | 28,338,082                | 7%                                 |
| <b>TOTAL - LAW ENFORCEMENT</b>           | <b>74,456,659</b>       | <b>81,642,432</b>       | <b>88,058,837</b>          |                                     | <b>88,049,704</b>         | <b>8%</b>                          |
| <b>RECREATION</b>                        |                         |                         |                            |                                     |                           |                                    |
| SVEC - OPERATING                         | 1,418,312               | 1,461,865               | 1,693,821                  |                                     | 1,693,821                 | 16%                                |
| SVEC - OWNER BLDG EXP                    | 100,000                 | 150,000                 | 150,000                    |                                     | 150,000                   | 0%                                 |
| FAIR ASSOCIATION                         | 108,000                 | 102,600                 | 113,000                    |                                     | 113,000                   | 10%                                |
| PARKS + RECREATION                       | 18,730,247              | 19,211,896              | 19,874,638                 |                                     | 19,874,638                | 3%                                 |
| <b>TOTAL - RECREATION</b>                | <b>20,356,559</b>       | <b>20,926,361</b>       | <b>21,831,459</b>          |                                     | <b>21,831,459</b>         | <b>4%</b>                          |
| <b>PUBLIC WORKS</b>                      |                         |                         |                            |                                     |                           |                                    |
| APPRAISER                                | 2,426,951               | 2,426,496               | 2,626,391                  | (86,066)                            | 2,540,325                 | 8%                                 |
| NOXIOUS WEEDS                            | 425,159                 | 455,674                 | 714,377                    |                                     | 714,377                   | 57%                                |
| LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT                 | 923,605                 | 963,730                 | 998,336                    |                                     | 998,336                   | 4%                                 |
| PUBLIC WORKS                             | 10,306,628              | 10,306,628              | 11,204,477                 |                                     | 11,204,477                | 9%                                 |
| REGISTER OF DEEDS                        | 351,882                 | 383,354                 | 398,269                    |                                     | 398,269                   | 4%                                 |
| <b>TOTAL - PUBLIC WORKS</b>              | <b>14,434,225</b>       | <b>14,535,882</b>       | <b>15,941,849</b>          |                                     | <b>15,855,784</b>         | <b>10%</b>                         |
| <b>PUBLIC HEALTH</b>                     |                         |                         |                            |                                     |                           |                                    |
| AMBULANCE                                | 380,000                 | 420,000                 | 418,120                    |                                     | 418,120                   | 0%                                 |
| ANIMAL SHELTER                           | 148,344                 | 151,806                 | 153,666                    |                                     | 153,666                   | 1%                                 |
| COMMUNITY RESOURCES                      | 40,000                  | 40,000                  | 40,000                     |                                     | 40,000                    | 0%                                 |
| CONSERVATION DISTRICT                    | 57,000                  | 57,000                  | 85,523                     |                                     | 85,523                    | 50%                                |
| CORONER                                  | 674,133                 | 707,840                 | 743,232                    |                                     | 743,232                   | 5%                                 |
| HEALTH DEPARTMENT                        | 2,835,683               | 3,126,569               | 3,353,000                  |                                     | 3,353,000                 | 7%                                 |
| HEALTHACCESS                             | 100,000                 | 110,000                 | 110,000                    |                                     | 110,000                   | 0%                                 |
| EXTENSION COUNCIL                        | 640,900                 | 654,550                 | 668,500                    |                                     | 668,500                   | 2%                                 |
| MENTAL HEALTH                            | 2,750,000               | 2,800,000               | 3,441,000                  |                                     | 3,441,000                 | 23%                                |
| (One-Time ASTRA Merger Funding)          |                         | 200,000                 | -                          |                                     | -                         |                                    |
| INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY - TARC           | 1,059,951               | 1,059,951               | 1,091,749                  |                                     | 1,091,749                 | 3%                                 |
| SERVICE PROGRAMS FOR THE ELDERLY         | 773,764                 | 773,764                 | 791,000                    |                                     | 791,000                   | 2%                                 |
| SOCIAL SERVICE GRANTS                    | 258,500                 | 258,500                 | 265,800                    |                                     | 265,800                   | 3%                                 |
| <b>TOTAL - PUBLIC HEALTH</b>             | <b>9,718,275</b>        | <b>10,359,980</b>       | <b>11,161,590</b>          |                                     | <b>11,161,590</b>         | <b>8%</b>                          |
| <b>ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES</b>           |                         |                         |                            |                                     |                           |                                    |
| GENERAL EXPENSES                         | 5,230,413               | 5,151,248               | 5,333,257                  |                                     | 5,333,257                 | 4%                                 |
| CONTINGENCY                              | 1,000,000               | 1,000,000               | 1,000,000                  |                                     | 1,000,000                 | 0%                                 |
| CAPITAL OUTLAY                           | 2,187,880               | 2,500,000               | 2,500,000                  |                                     | 2,500,000                 | 0%                                 |
| AUDIT FINANCE                            | 658,429                 | 709,915                 | 738,892                    |                                     | 738,892                   | 4%                                 |
| BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS            | 597,442                 | 643,477                 | 657,625                    |                                     | 657,625                   | 2%                                 |
| COUNTY CLERK                             | 1,056,921               | 1,030,684               | 1,105,965                  |                                     | 1,105,965                 | 7%                                 |
| ELECTIONS                                | 1,795,375               | 2,312,195               | 1,932,362                  |                                     | 1,932,362                 | 8%                                 |
| FACILITIES MANAGEMENT                    | 1,358,396               | 1,389,966               | 1,702,778                  |                                     | 1,702,778                 | 23%                                |
| HUMAN RESOURCES                          | 698,813                 | 726,778                 | 693,549                    |                                     | 693,549                   | -5%                                |
| INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY                   | 4,615,015               | 5,150,936               | 5,326,163                  |                                     | 5,326,163                 | 3%                                 |
| TREASURER                                | 726,052                 | 730,958                 | 783,434                    |                                     | 783,434                   | 7%                                 |
| <b>TOTAL - ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES</b>   | <b>19,924,736</b>       | <b>21,346,157</b>       | <b>21,774,026</b>          |                                     | <b>21,774,026</b>         | <b>2%</b>                          |
| <b>DEBT SERVICE</b>                      | <b>7,084,885</b>        | <b>6,856,154</b>        | <b>6,856,154</b>           |                                     | <b>6,856,154</b>          | <b>0%</b>                          |
| <b>SPECIAL LIABILITY FUND</b>            | <b>100,000</b>          | <b>100,000</b>          | <b>100,000</b>             |                                     | <b>100,000</b>            | <b>0%</b>                          |
| <b>Uncategorized Reduction in Budget</b> |                         |                         |                            |                                     |                           |                                    |
| <b>TOTAL BUDGET less reserves</b>        | <b>146,075,339</b>      | <b>155,766,965</b>      | <b>165,723,915</b>         | <b>(95,198)</b>                     | <b>165,628,717</b>        | <b>6%</b>                          |
| <b>USE OF RESERVES</b>                   | <b>(500,000)</b>        | <b>(4,098,000)</b>      |                            |                                     |                           | <b>**9% When Reserves Included</b> |