
OBSERVER REPORTS

SUBMITTED SEPTEMBER 2026

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*Thank you to this month's Observers: Elvera Johnson and Paul Post
Observer Corps Coordinator: Meredith Willard*

Shawnee County Commission

August 20, 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		
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:

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

Remarks:

- Public comment: Jeffrey Kuzbell, president of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Topeka, showed up with Molly Howey, President of the Greater Topeka. Jeff was there to talk about data centers and how he supported them. He described how his former hometown of McLean Virginia had embraced data centers, with a large one, perhaps more, being built, and all the wonderful results that accrued from its presence there, including better schools and streets and a happy workforce. Ms. Howey did not speak but signaled to the commission that Mr. Kuzbell wanted to comment even though he hadn't signed up to do so. The more interesting part was Bill Riphan's response, wherein he profusely thanked Mr. Kuzbell and stated that it was "good to hear from the other side." He mentioned that other people appearing to comment during prior meetings were essentially spouting nonsense from the Internet and had not done appropriate research. Having been at several of those meetings, I can say that the citizens who showed up were very knowledgeable, and had prepared to present their arguments in a coherent fashion. The further interesting fact is that on every occasion for these commentators at prior meetings, they were cut off immediately upon the expiration of the four-minute time limit for speakers. At this meeting, the clock ran down, but Mr. Riphan continued to allow Mr. Kuzbell to give his spiel.
- The public hearing on the 2027 budget is set for September 3 at 9:00 a.m.
- 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

August 27, 2026

Observer: Elvera Johnson

All 3 commissioners were present.

Commissioner Riphahn read a proclamation recognizing the importance of breastfeeding for the health of infants and mothers. Breast milk is recommended as the only nutrition for the first 6 months and encouraged as a supplement for the first 2 years. Members of the Community Breastfeeding Coalition posed for a photo with Commissioners.

Following approval of the consent agenda and voucher payments, Corrections requested and received approval for an amendment to the Smart Communications Services Agreement. The amendment extends the agreement for 5 years and makes modifications to comply with new FCC rules. This includes having prisoners at risk for medical emergencies or suicide, wearing anklets or bracelets to improve monitoring.

Public Works had 4 requests that were approved. The first was a contract for de-icing salt. The next was a contract for design and construction engineering relating to concrete pavement and sidewalk replacement at the Adult Detention Center. Next was a final change order to reflect as Bid versus as Constructed for a repair project to the North Annex's east parking lot. The 4th was also a final change order reflecting as bid versus as constructed for a bridge replacement on NE Calhoun Bluff Road. The last 2 items reflected a lower cost than estimated.

Facilities Management received approval for a request for Proposal for services to replace flooring at J.P. Lewis Health Department. Commissioners approved a Contract with Key Staffing to hire temp staff for custodial services as needed. They approved repair of flood damage at the 707 Admin building.

Commissioners approved the 2026 First Responder Grant Awards.

For Parks+ Recreation, Commissioners approved a bid for the design services of the Cypress Ridge Clubhouse. The present building is hardly usable. Funding will be nearly ½ funded through private foundations.

In Public Comment, a candidate for County Commission stated that golf is not a priority. He said we need to find a way not to increase taxes.

In administrative communication, Audit and Finance shared a reminder that September 3 is a Revenue neutral hearing as well as a Proposed budget hearing. Commissioner Cook said that the proposed budget is available to look at and the public is free to share their comments prior to the hearing too.

A county employee announced that a scavenger hunt to benefit Doorstep will be held September 4 to October 9. A \$10 donation is suggested for each team.

The Health Department is accepting nominations for a group or individual that promotes community health.

Public Works Director announced that he had attempted to find the materials he usually uses for maintaining roads. They were not available. He reluctantly purchased trap rock as a last resort. There have been complaints that the rock flies and chips their windshields. The only suggestion he has is to slow down to protect your car and your neighbors'.

Corrections shared that 200 people showed up for the Grand Opening of the Behavioral Health Units. Other facilities are interested and are observing. Congressman Schmidt and Senator Moran are looking for grants to help cover costs.

An Executive Session was called to consult with an attorney regarding litigation.