LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF TOPEKA-SHAWNEE COUNTY

OBSERVER REPORTS

SUBMITTED OCTOBER 2026

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

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF TOPEKA-SHAWNEE COUNTY

Shawnee County Commission

September 24, 2026

Observer: Elvera Johnson

All Commissioners present.

The meeting began with routine opening business.

Following this, Solid Waste received approval to seek bids for the purchase of various pieces of motorized equipment.

Commissioners acknowledged receipt of a new vehicle lease contract for the District Attorney's office.

Parks + Recreation received approval to execute a contract for shelter construction at the Playland area of Gage Park. Commissioners approved change orders for the cost of a new electrical panel conduit and wiring for the path lights at Playland; a drinking fountain at Playland; new overhead doors at the Gage maintenance compound; and road and parking lot repairs at Gage Park. For Lake Shawnee Campgrounds, Commissioners approved increased cost of cabin construction; construction workers were informed that a fire repression system is required.

For Human Resources, Commissioners approved a new contract for eye care benefits for employees. They agreed to reject the bid for Occupational Health, as requested by Human Resources. Human Resources wants to look at other options.

For the Health Department, the Commission agreed to the inclusion of a breastfeeding peer counselor program with WIC. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment providers funds to Shawnee County for use in Shawnee, Osage and Wabaunsee Counties. Commissioners also approved renewal of the contract with the Kansas Office of Early Childhood for licensing inspections of providers. The State provides some funding as well as licensing inspections.

For Corrections, the Commission approved a contract with the City of Topeka to obtain 50 parking spaces in a lot at 400 SE 8th for employee parking.

For the Election Office, Commissioners agreed to the provision of two electors to be present for destruction (shredding) of 2024 ballots.

For the County Counselor office, Commissioners approved property tax relief to 2 home owners. For the Treasurer's office, the Commission approved the increase of Motor Vehicle transactions fees to $7.

Continued

For Public Works, the Commission approved the solicitation of bids for purchase of capital equipment. They also agreed to the extension of the northern limit of the 30 MPH speed zone in Berryton. Commissioners also approved the disposal of miscellaneous tools and equipment.

In Public Comment, 4 individuals shared their concerns about data centers. Included in the concerns were the noise and air pollution; decrease in property value; excessive use of water and electricity; lies from the applicant, (Compass).

In Administrative communication:
Parks + Rec announced that Playland will officially open at 5:30 today. They also commented that a Ribbon Cutting occurred recently at Boswell, a neighborhood park.

The Health Department announced that Mobile Mammography will be at the City Hall Parking lot on October 12. Also, they are inviting public comment regarding community health until October 7.

No Executive Session was called.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF TOPEKA-SHAWNEE COUNTY

Shawnee County Commission

October 1, 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		Attorney consultation concerning another body or agency.This information may not be sufficient to comply with the Open Meetings Act. See below.
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:

- Data center concerns continued to dominate public comment. Mike Dreiling reviewed the history of development in the Montara area, noting that 15 years ago a light industrial area was zoned surrounding Montara as a compromise with the Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO) which wanted heavy industrial zoning. Mr. Dreiling stated that the development of a proposed data center in this area would be beyond light industrial standards. Noise pollution would be a key problem, although he stated that there would be other potential violations of the light industrial zoning agreement.
- Maria Campbell stated that from her review of other data center developments, counties where they were located realized no long-term economic benefit.
- Amy Joy noted that Loudoun County, Virginia had the highest concentration of data centers in the nation, but that the computer equipment inside of the buildings is taxed there, which she claimed is not the case concerning Kansas proposals. She discussed three types of emissions from data centers: Scope 1 being from the facility, itself; Scope 2 being from any generating plant which powers the data center; and Scope 3 being upstream and downstream consequences, or "passing the buck," where water or power consumed resulted in shortages and/or increased rates for other constituents.

Kansas Open Meeting Act requirements: The motion to recess into an executive session must be recorded in the permanent minutes and explicitly state three things under Kansas Supreme Court decisions, which the Shawnee County Commission is not doing:

1. Subject: A description of what will be discussed, without revealing confidential information.
2. Justification: Reference to a specific statutory reason permitted under K.S.A. 75-4319(b).
3. Resumption Time and Place.

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 Board

October 2, 2026

Observer: Vicki Arnett

Topeka city manager has made some structural changes to the TSAB. They are staffed by Kaitlyn Willis through the city manager's office. There is currently only one vacancy. The meetings are broadcast and on zoom.

The student intern in the city manager's office, Chase Holstin presented his report. He interviewed all departments to assess how departments are implementing sustainable practices. Dr. Perez attended this meeting. Although the report only lists activities, the city manager has established some preliminary objectives. He plans to use the IECLEA grant to establish specific climate goals and action plans.

The TSAB will provide input and review when a contractor is hired to establish standards for data center development.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF TOPEKA-SHAWNEE COUNTY

Topeka City Council Meeting

October 6, 2026

Observer: Vicki Arnett

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

The council approved the board of appointment of Colleen Campbell to the Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board, Fatima Perez-Luthi to the Topeka Metropolitan Transit Board and Michael Byington to the Topeka Americans with Disabilities Act Advisory Council.

The council approved the Historic Old Town Neighborhood Plan update and two additional rezoning changes to benefit housing development and the Breakthrough House Homeless Outreach Program.

The council heard an update and passed as a resolution, the 2027 Legislative Agenda. Items approved include use of opioid settlement money, keeping franchise fees whole, preventing "pot hole" jury trials, updating the flood maps to insure updated flood insurance maps and mitigation, continuing to allow for building permit fees to be held and support for community solar and battery energy storage systems. The city approved, with recommended changes, approval of the 2027 special alcohol-program fund programs. The recommendation is to spend down the total amount of the fund to fund more programs at the requested amount. This is to fund more programs and lower the reserve.

The council heard a presentation from the Topeka police department on the use of public safety cameras. The department has about 40 cameras located throughout the city. This number does not cover the scope of the coverage of cameras due to many being in private and business hands and in use by the sheriff's department. The department did not speak about the number of mobile cameras and their use. The sheriff's department did not speak. The department has recently changed its policy on record retention from the cameras by reducing it from 90 days to 21 days. Council requested consideration of 7 days only. The council seemed to want to regulate in the form of a privacy ordinance with short term data retention.

The council heard a presentation on proposed sales tax extensions, the need and the current dates of expiration. During this discussion, members of the public brought forward issues of non-disclosure agreements and the lack of JEDO transparency.

Eight members of the public spoke with four more signed up who left when the council did not adjourn at 10:00 p.m.

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

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF TOPEKA-SHAWNEE COUNTY

Shawnee County Commission

October 8, 2026

Observer: Elvera Johnson

All 3 Commissioners present

The meeting began with the recognition of the 4-H King, as this is National 4-H week. The 4-H queen was not present.

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

For Information Technology, Commissioners approved expenses for 3 employees to attend the Central Square Engage Conference. It is an annual update on changes to the program. This system is used by all departments of County government.

For Human Resources, Commissioners approved the cost of the RxSaveCard Service Agreement to be used for physician-prescribed weight loss drugs.

For Parks + Recreation, Commissioners approved use of Gage Park Sales Tax Funds for electric light replacement in the Rose Garden, a light bollard installation at Play Land, and extended water service to a new drinking fountain.

For Solid Waste, Commissioners approved a contract with architects for professional design services. Solid waste is user-fee funded.

For Corrections, Commissioners gave permission to accept a grant from JAG program for County Community Corrections.

No public comment was offered.

Administrative Communications was mostly about events taking place this weekend or next week. There was an announcement about the lights at Old Prairie Town this month. The lights will be around the park and not specifically in the garden.

No executive session was called.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF TOPEKA-SHAWNEE COUNTY

Shawnee County Commission

October 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?	No – absence not explained.
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.

Continued

Discussion of Issues:

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

Public comment:

Dave Jackson (former owner of Jackson Greenhouse, now retired) is a volunteer at the Friends of the Ted Ensley Gardens. The group has obtained more than $60,000 in donations for the gardens according to Mr. Jackson. He stated that the County Parks and Recreation Department is no longer willing to work with his group. Commissioner Cook noted that the apparent problem is due to a lack of a written memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the group and the department, and stated that the Parks Director was willing to work out a new MOU.

Wayne Bradley, a Montera resident, stated that the proposed development by Compass Data Center will have an adverse impact on Montera and may interfere with operations at Topeka Regional Airport. Commissioner Cook noted that any engineering study would look into these issues.

Retirement ceremony for Zeus, a member of the K-9 corps. Zeus is a 12-year-old Belgian Malinois (similar in looks to a German Shepard), who was with the Sheriff's Department for 10 years.

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.