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 and Elvera Johnson
Observer Corps Coordinator: Meredith Willard

Topeka City Council Meeting

October 20, 2026

Observer: Vicki Arnett

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

The mayor made a proclamation in support of World Polio Day.

The council heard an updated city financial report.

The council approved moving placing a 0.1% sales tax on the March 2027 ballot to fund the affordable housing trust fund and evidence based homeless initiatives inside the city limits. Council member Ortiz voted No.

The council approved changing the city charter and placing the charter ordinance change on the March 2027 ballot which will allow for a city auditor to report directly to the mayor.

There were many public comments both in support and opposition to the proposed sales tax increase.

There was a need for an executive session to discuss personnel matters.

Shawnee County Commission

October 29, 2026

Observer: Elvera Johnson

All Commissioners present.

Routine opening business was quickly completed.

Public Works received approval for purchase of a Caterpillar loader using a combination of Capital Outlay funds and Public Works special machinery fund. This is used extensively for loading salt, sand and other products used for road maintenance and construction.

Stormont Vail Events Center received approval for the purchase of chairs to replace ones that are 40 years old. They received approval for replacement of the broken floor entrance door that is handicap accessible. Commissioners also approved funding for ice rink and ice plant maintenance for the hockey season.

In Public Comment, a citizen expressed thanks to Attorney Eckert and to Commissioners for dealing with the data center applicant so quickly. He also said that he and others would be available to protest other over-eager applicants.

In Administrative Communications, Election Commissioner Howell, reported that his office has been processing an average of 1800 early voters daily. This is unusual for a non-presidential election. About 12% of registered voters have voted. He encourages voters to know their polling sites before Election Day and consider the routes, as road construction is going on at many places.

Commissioners reminded attendees of various activities going on this weekend. No Executive Session was called.

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Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board

November 6, 2026

Observer: Vicki Arnett

Because the proposed report on data center development sustainability and environmental issues developed by the board and to be presented to city council possibly at a Dec. meeting was not distributed greater than 24 hrs. ahead of the meeting, the board was not able to vote on the recommendations.

The board did discuss the report in general. The draft seemed to oppose battery energy storage systems in addition to data centers using 10 mw or greater of electricity.

The board will next meet Dec. 4

Topeka City Council Meeting

November 10, 2026

Observer: Vicki Arnett

All members, including the mayor, were present in chambers. Assistant City Manager, Wesley Moore served instead of the new interim city manager.

The council heard a presentation regarding the ADA Accessibility transition plan and study sponsored by a grant from KDHE. The discussion included council comments on ADA difficulties reported by constituents. The grant included funding for an energy audit of city buildings. The presentation did not include information on this audit.

The council approved a RHID application from a developer regarding state support for a housing development of homes in the 350,000 to 500,00 price range.

The council approved ordinance changes which allow for different permitting categories related to street repair to apply for right of way, traffic disruption permits.

The council discussed and requested more information regarding a proposal to allow duplexes, triplexes and quadraplexes in residential areas zoned R-1 and R-2. Twelve members of the public spoke regarding the issue.

Twelve additional members of the public spoke during public comments regarding a variety of issues, including data centers. One person spoke about the FAA reviewing the proposed data center under consideration at Forbes Field. Many people spoke about transparency and the reported private meeting between the assistant city manager, utilities director and members of Rural Water district 3 as a possible violation of the moratorium on data centers.

Shawnee County Commission

November 12 2026

Observer: Elvera Johnson

All 3 Commissioners present

A 3-page Consent Agenda included 19 right-of-way easements payments, relating to the Rochester Road reconstruction project. Commissioners' letter of concern to the Kansas Department of Corrections regarding reductions in Evidence-Based Community Juvenile Justice Funding. Final expense payments for 2 individuals. Amendments to four Gage Park Construction projects. Out of state travel for 5 Election Office employees; and more.

Voucher Payments and correction orders were approved along with authoring cereal malt beverage licenses to TJs Express, Seaman 66, Viking Express and The Shack.

A long discussion followed regarding a recommendation by Joni Thadani of Land Use & Development to change the Zoning Classification from C-2 (Commercial) to M-2 (Multiple Family Dwelling District). At this point there are a number of commercial enterprises in the area. It turns out the developer had spoken to Commission members about future expansion to more housing, and Joni's committee was not aware of these plans. There has been concern from some neighbors regarding the crowding of so many family units in a small area, and traffic and parking space. Joni stated that if she had known about the developer's future plans, they may not have recommended approval. The developer got up and expressed frustration about the amount of "bureaucracy" he is dealing with. Commissioners voted 2-1 to approve the plan as M-2. Cook voted no.

For Public Works, Commissioners approved an amendment to the design contract which adds CE services relating to a bridge on Maple Hill Road that is 1/4 mile long and contains lead paint that must be treated carefully by law. The Commission also approved the purchase of clean, crushed limestone. They agreed to reclassify the Assistant Fleet Supervisor position to a mechanic (teamsters covered) position. They need an additional mechanic because one mechanic is on extended leave. They authorized a resolution to place a temporary 10 MPH speed reduction on NE 46th St and Croco Road. There are school children in the area.

For Corrections, the Commission approved renewal of a maintenance agreement for hardware and software. They approved installation of a smoke detection system. Corrections has filled many vacant positions, which means they need more radios. Commissioners approved this purchase.
For Human Resources, Commissioners approved a Price List Addendum to the Minor Med Contract. The cost has not been raised since19 years ago.

Commissioners appointed Commissioner Mays as the voting delegate and Counselor Eckert as the alternate for the Annual KAC Conference. Both will attend.

Continued...

Commissioners acknowledged the notice of the resignation from Jeff Shenk as Grove Township Treasurer, effective January 11, 2027. Anyone interested in applying can contact the Commission in the next month.

Three individuals shared ongoing concerns regarding water and environmental problems related to Compass and other possible AI applicants. A 3-month moratorium was set. What will change between now and then? Is anything being done?

Parks + Recreation announced that they need volunteers to plant tulip bulbs. Payment is available.

County Treasurer: Homeowners will soon receive notice of real estate taxes due for 2027.

There will be no work session on Monday. Continue election audit.

No Executive session was called.