

2025

Citizen Government Review Committee Report



June 17, 2025

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

To Mayor, City Council, City Staff and Attendees:

First, the Citizens Government Review Committee would like to thank the support of the Governing Body and City Staff, without it we would not have been able to function as smoothly. We would like to thank everyone who took the time to present and share their insights with the Citizens Government Review Committee.

The Citizens Government Review Committee (Committee) consists of the following members: Brian Broxterman, Connie Jacobson, Jim Kaup, Shampayne Lloyd, Tamara Martin and Zachary Surritt.

The Committee was formed to study and review the form of government of the City of Topeka and make recommendations to the City's Governing Body for amendment or modification.

Topeka Municipal Code Chapter 2.210 requires the Committee to meet at least every 10 years, with the last review in 2014. Committee meetings were held on the following dates: February 5 and 19, March 5 and 26, April 9 and 26, May 7 and 21, and June 4 and 11, 2025. All meetings gave the public an opportunity to provide input and were announced on the City's website, social media outlets and local TV broadcast channels. Written comments were submitted and considered by the Committee. Final recommendations were submitted to the Governing Body on June 17, 2025.

The Committee's report contains the details and a brief explanation of each recommendation. Committee agendas, minutes and meeting videos are on file in the City Clerk's Office, located at 215 SE 7th Street, Room 166, Topeka, Kansas, 66603, and can be viewed online at <https://www.topeka.org/bccc/citizens-government-review-committee>.

The Committee heard from several individuals and groups in the city, and we thank each and every one for their input. We have heard from the following in chronological order:

- Jim Reardon, 2014 Citizens Government Review Committee Chair, Attorney & former City Councilmember
- Hannes Zacharias, Professor of Practice, University of Kansas School of Public Affairs & Administration
- Councilmember Karen Hiller and Councilmember Spencer Duncan
- Dr. Robert M. Perez, City Manager
- Monique Glaude, City of Topeka Director of Inclusive Communities
- Mayor Michael Padilla

- Juliet Abdel, Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce
- Topeka Justice Unity & Ministry Project (JUMP) members Sarah Balzer and Minister Melodene Byrd of El Shaddai Ministries; and Reverend K.O. NooNoo of Westminster Presbyterian Church
- Councilmember Marcus Miller
- Vicki Arnett, League of Women Voters Topeka-Shawnee County
- Bill Fiander, Lecturer, Washburn University
- Douglas Jones, Johnson County, Kansas, Auditor

SECTION 2: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition, the Committee heard from citizens by email and attended meetings in person. The Committee appreciates everyone's input. After discussion and listening to the comments made in our meetings, the Committee makes the following recommendations with a brief summary to the Governing Body.

1. CITY MANAGER FORM OF GOVERNMENT

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee recommends taking no action regarding changes to the Council-Manager form of government. It is noted that the Committee heard criticism related to the turnover in the City Manager position, i.e. the City's failure to follow-up on actions recommended in City-commissioned studies, from civic groups, and from citizens. This contributes to some level of public frustration and a sense that accountability is not consistently demonstrated. While it is too soon to give a grade to the current city manager, the comments received showed confidence that he would provide the stability and continuity the community needs.

2. ELECTIONS, TERMS AND REPRESENTATION

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee recommends taking no action regarding the number of Councilmembers and no action regarding the method of election and terms of the Governing Body. The Committee does recommend acting regarding the structure and considerations of the Redistricting commission. It is recommended that the members of the commission are not chosen only by Councilmembers to avoid conflicts of interest. It is also recommended that the commission remain at nine members, but with the addition of a tenth member appointed by the Administrative Judge of the Topeka Municipal Court who shall serve as the chair of the commission. The Committee also recommends that it is written in the City's charter that when the redistricting commission makes its own recommendation to the Governing Body, the new council district lines are not made with the consideration of incumbent council members' home addresses.

3. FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURES

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee recommends a formal follow-up mechanism for Committee/Board/Commission recommendations. The Committee recommends the Governing Body and Staff collect and categorize correspondence to ensure timely documentation and categorize feedback. To designate responsible parties to ensure clear ownership and set deadlines for feedback on correspondence. To create an action plan of development that prioritizes feedback, by identifying if the correspondence is a critical issue or medium importance or low importance and create a corresponding action plan. To complete

regular progress updates in the form of status reports to ensure transparency. To hold follow-up meetings/check-ins that include scheduled reviews and to encourage continuous feedback. Evaluate feedback to determine effectiveness and lessons learned. To complete a final report and acknowledge contributions of the Governing Body/Staff members. This will be a final summary to be shared with the Governing Body. To use automated tools such as task management software to track feedback and automate reminders and deadlines.

4. INTERLOCAL COOPERATION

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee recommends the Governing Body and Shawnee County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) conduct joint meetings on a regular basis to consider matters of mutual concern, including review of existing interlocal agreements, to research the Secretary of State's records to identify programs and services the City has not previously considered, the Governing Body, working with BOCC, create a joint City-County body, similar to the Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO), to identify areas where cooperation with other local units of government can result in efficiencies and economies. That body would make recommendations to the Governing Body and the BOCC for those matters of highest priority, with timelines for the necessary actions to reach desired outcomes. Interlocal agreements would be used to provide a degree of certainty, and longevity, to any agreed-to cooperative measures. To help ensure that the recommended actions of the body are given proper consideration, annual reports on the status of interlocal agreements would be given to the Governing Body by the City Manager or the proposed City Auditor.

5. CITY AUDITOR

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee recommends changing the City charter to create the office of the City Auditor, who will be appointed by the Governing Body and serve at the pleasure of the Governing Body. An Audit Committee of the Council will provide direction to the City Auditor. The City Auditor will perform both performance and financial audits. The recommendation is for the Governing Body to utilize readily- available and professional resources, and to talk with other cities, to identify the best set of duties the auditor should fulfill. An auditor appointed by the Governing Body to advise the Council, Mayor and the City Manager, is the auditor position the Committee envisions.

6. CITIZENS GOVERNMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE SIZE/APPOINTMENT

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee recommends no change in the timeline of reviewing the form of government every 10 years. The Committee recommends changing the composition from 5 members to 10 members, one member from each council district who resides in that district and is appointed by the councilmember for that district and the tenth member appointed by the Mayor.

7. CODE OF ETHICS MISCONDUCT AND PRACTICE VIOLATIONS

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee heard credible testimony that, at least in the recent past, there have been violations of Sec. A2-28(c) of the Charter-the provision prohibiting councilmembers from "dealing" with officers and employees under the city manager's supervision. The Committee recommends requiring a signature to acknowledge receipt and understanding of codes of ethics and practices with yearly reviews to refresh current councilmembers with future review and possibilities of forming an ethics committee.

SECTION 3: EXPLANATORY STATEMENTS

1. CITY MANAGER FORM OF GOVERNMENT

The City of Topeka's Charter lays out the form of government that the city will operate under and what positions make up the Governing Body. Currently, the City of Topeka operates under a council-manager form of government since it was adopted in 2004. The governing body is made up of nine council people, each elected to represent one of nine geographic districts all made up of relatively the same number of constituents, and one Mayor, who is elected by the voters of Topeka at-large. Under this system, the City Manager answers directly to the Governing Body and oversees the day-to-day operations of the City of Topeka. The Governing Body has the power to appoint and remove the City Manager as well as conducting the business of the city by voting on ordinances, resolutions, applications, plats, zoning petitions, receiving reports and other items.

CONFEREES:

- Jim Reardon, 2014 Citizens Government Review Committee Chair, Attorney & former City Councilmember, February 5, 2025
- Hannes Zacharias, Professor of Practice, University of Kansas School of Public Affairs & Administration, February 5, 2025
- Councilmember Karen Hiller, February 19, 2025
- Councilmember Spencer Duncan, February 19, 2025
- City Manager Dr. Robert M. Perez, March 5, 2025
- Mayor Michael Padilla, March 5, 2025
- Monique Glaude, City of Topeka Director of Inclusive Communities, March 5, 2025
- Juliet Abdel, Topeka Chamber of Commerce President, March 26, 2025
- Topeka Justice Unity & Ministry Project (JUMP) members Sarah Balzer and Minister Melodene Byrd of El Shaddai Ministries, March 26, 2025
- Councilmember Marcus Miller, April 9, 2025
- Vickie Arnett and Dr. Glenda Overstreet-Vaughn, League of Women Voters, April 9, 2025
- Bill Fiander, Lecturer, Washburn University, May 21, 2025

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Deborah Dawkins, Written, March 17, 2025
- Joseph Ledbetter, Written, March 25, 2025

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The Committee recommends that the Governing Body take the following action(s):

- **FORM OF GOVERNMENT:** The Committee recommends no action. This Committee found no strong evidence and very little support for changing the Council-Manager form of government. In fact, many strongly supported this form. The Committee had lengthy discussion around the topic of the council-manager form of government beyond what was presented in the form of conferees and public comment. Each time, it was found that the current form of government satisfies the need to have an efficient and effective method of running the business of the city while still having accountability to the public. A City Manager creates stability in the operations of the city, both as it relates to city employees as well as to the public. The City Manager still answers to the Governing Body and can be removed by the Governing Body if necessary. Currently, any issues with the management of the city are taken up with the City Manager and their staff. The Strong Mayor form of government creates more responsibility and burden on the mayoral office but can remove stability as the office is susceptible to change at least every four years.

2. ELECTIONS, TERMS & REPRESENTATION

The City of Topeka's Charter lays out the form of government the city will operate under, what positions and how many are elected, when, how, and for how long those local representatives are elected, and how the redistricting process occurs. Currently, the City of Topeka operates under a council-manager form of government with the governing body made up of nine council people, each elected to represent one of nine geographic districts all made up of relatively the same number of constituents, and one Mayor, who is elected by the voters of Topeka at-large. All governing body members are nonpartisan and elected to four-year terms with no term limits. Topeka elections for its governing body are held in odd-numbered years and staggered so that not all members are being elected at once. All even-numbered districts are elected one year, and all odd-numbered districts and the mayor are elected two years later. It is required by state statute that municipal elections occur on the same schedule as all other elections in the State of Kansas, meaning that primary elections occur in August and general elections occur in November. Primary elections are only held for offices where there are four or more candidates on the ballot by the filing deadline. If three or fewer candidates are on the ballot, no primary election is held, and that office is decided by the voters in the November election. Every ten years after the official United States Census report, a redistricting commission is formed by the City of Topeka to review the City Council district boundary lines and recommend any necessary changes to ensure that all nine districts are roughly even in population. That redistricting commission is made up of nine Topeka voters, each representing a Council district and appointed by the Council member of each district.

CONFEREES:

- Jim Reardon, 2014 Citizens Government Review Committee Chair, Attorney & former City Councilmember, February 5, 2025
- Hannes Zacharias, Professor of Practice, University of Kansas School of Public Affairs & Administration, February 5, 2025
- Councilmember Karen Hiller, February 19, 2025
- Councilmember Spencer Duncan, February 19, 2025
- City Manager Dr. Robert M. Perez, March 5, 2025
- Mayor Michael Padilla, March 5, 2025
- Monique Glaude, City of Topeka Director of Inclusive Communities, March 5, 2025
- Juliet Abdel, Topeka Chamber of Commerce President, March 26, 2025

- Topeka Justice Unity & Ministry Project (JUMP) members Sarah Balzer and Minister Melodene Byrd of El Shaddai Ministries, March 26, 2025
- Councilmember Marcus Miller, April 9, 2025
- Vickie Arnett and Dr. Glenda Overstreet-Vaughn, League of Women Voters, April 9, 2025

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Deborah Dawkins, Written, March 17, 2025
- Joseph Ledbetter, Written, March 25, 2025

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The Committee recommends that the Governing Body take the following action(s):

- **NUMBER OF COUNCIL MEMBERS:** Committee recommends no action. This Committee heard that nine Council members works well, allowing more members to sit on each committee, without constituting a majority of the Governing Body and being at the same place without concern for the Kansas Open Meetings Act. It also makes the Governing Body more representative of citizens as a whole.
- **ELECTIONS AND TERMS:** Committee recommendations no action. There is strong support for staggered elections so experience and institutional knowledge is retained while allowing new members time to fully understand their responsibilities. Four-year terms were also supported and have become more and more common in cities similar to Topeka. Four years was determined to be enough time for any new governing body member to spend time getting to know the city better and their responsibilities without needing to worry about another election for a reasonable amount of time. There was no strong stance on term limits from conferees or the public. Some cities have opted to enact term limits on their Mayor and Council members where there is a limit of serving two or three terms depending on the city. The Committee discussed the item of term limits for Governing Body members with consideration of what was presented to the Committee as well as research that had been conducted into the structure of other cities similar to Topeka. It is an item that may be considered in the future, but no action is being recommended at this time.

- **REDISTRICTING:** Committee recommends that the Governing Body amend the structure and considerations of the redistricting commission, so the council members are not the only ones appointing commission members while then having their own addresses considered when the commission makes any potential changes to district boundary lines. The Committee recommends that the commission still be made up of nine members appointed by the governing body to represent each district, but with the addition of an additional tenth member who is appointed by the Administrative Judge of the Topeka Municipal Court who shall serve as Chair of the commission. The Committee also recommends that the charter be amended to state that when the redistricting commission makes its own recommendation to the Governing Body, the new boundary lines are not made with the consideration of incumbent council members' home addresses.

3 . FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURES COMMITTEES/BOARDS/COMMISSIONS

The proposal outlines a structured process for collecting, categorizing, and acting on feedback from Governing Body and Staff members. It begins with timely documentation and classification of feedback into clear themes, followed by assigning responsibility and deadlines for addressing each item. Feedback is prioritized by importance (critical, medium or low) and each is paired with a specific action plan. Regular updates are provided to ensure transparency and progress tracking, while follow-up meetings allow for ongoing dialogue, the resolution of challenges, and continuous feedback.

Further steps include evaluating the effectiveness of actions taken, documenting lessons learned and compiling a final report summarizing the feedback and results. This report should be shared with the Governing Body, potentially up to and including placing the issue on the agenda for a vote, if deemed necessary. The proposal emphasizes the use of technology for automation and efficiency and highlights the importance of recognizing contributors. Overall, the framework promotes accountability, transparency and continuous improvement in Governing Body/Staff operations.

Implementing a well-structured follow-up mechanism ensures that Governing Body/Staff feedback is not only acknowledged but actively incorporated into decision-making processes. This approach promotes transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement, ultimately leading to more effective and responsive Governing Body/Staff operations.

CONFEREE:

- Topeka Justice Unity & Ministry Project (JUMP) members Sarah Balzer and Minister Melodene Byrd of El Shaddai Ministries, March 26, 2025
- Vickie Arnett and Dr. Glenda Overstreet-Vaughn, League of Women Voters, April 9, 2025

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The Committee recommends that the Governing Body take the following action(s):

- **GOVERNING BODY/STAFF CORRESPONDENCE COLLECTION & CATEGORIZATION**
Timely Documentation: Ensure that feedback requested from Governing Body/Staff members is collected at a designated time frame after meetings/correspondence and documented in a shared, accessible platform (e.g., project management tool, shared document). **Categorize Feedback:** Classify feedback into themes (e.g., general suggestions, concerns, specific action items, policy changes) to streamline the follow-up process and assign responsibility accordingly.

- **DESIGNATE RESPONSIBLE PARTIES Assign Clear Ownership:** For each piece of feedback, designate a responsible person or team member to address the issue. Ensure that this individual has, or has access to, the expertise or authority to take the necessary actions. Set Deadlines: Establish reasonable deadlines for the resolution of each piece of feedback. Ensure that assigned owners are aware of these timelines.
- **ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT Prioritize Feedback:** Not all feedback may require immediate action, but all feedback will require immediate follow-up. Establish a prioritization process, such as: Critical Issues: Requires urgent attention and resolution. Medium Importance: Can be addressed in the medium term. Low Importance: Requires consideration but not immediate action. Create an Action Plan: For each piece of feedback, an action plan should be developed that includes specific tasks, responsible people, and deadlines.
- **REGULAR PROGRESS UPDATES Status Reports:** Provide regular updates to the Governing Body and person requesting the action on the progress of addressing feedback. This could be through periodic emails, meetings, or a shared dashboard that shows the status of all feedback (e.g., completed, in progress, pending). Transparency: Ensure that all members have visibility into the status of each action item. This transparency fosters accountability and keeps the committee informed.
- **FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS/CHECK-INS Scheduled Reviews:** Schedule follow-up meetings or check-ins (e.g., bi-weekly or monthly) to review the progress of feedback implementation. These meetings can be used to discuss any challenges or roadblocks encountered during the implementation process. Continuous Feedback Loop: Use these meetings to encourage further feedback from Governing Body/Staff members on the resolution of previous feedback and to ensure that no item is left unresolved.
- **FEEDBACK EVALUATION Evaluate Effectiveness:** Once feedback has been addressed, evaluate the effectiveness of the changes or actions taken. This can be done through surveys, discussions, or a formal evaluation process. Lessons Learned: Document any lessons learned from the follow-up process to improve future feedback management and ensure continuous improvement.
- **FINAL REPORT & ACKNOWLEDGMENT Final Summary:** Once all feedback has been addressed, create a final report that summarizes the feedback, actions taken, and outcomes achieved. This document should be shared with the Governing Body for transparency and accountability. This could include Governing Body action to place the issue on the agenda for vote following submission of a valid petition. Acknowledge Contributions: Acknowledge the contributions of Governing Body/Staff members who provided valuable feedback. Recognizing their input fosters engagement and encourages future participation.
- **AUTOMATED FOLLOW-UP TOOLS Use of Technology:** Consider using automated tools (e.g., task management software like Asana, Trello, or Monday.com, etc.) to track feedback and automate reminders and deadlines. This can help ensure that feedback is not overlooked and that follow-ups are timely.

4. INTERLOCAL COOPERATION

Kansas law gives local governments a broad, liberal grant of authority to enter into interlocal agreements, encouraging efficiency and economy in government. This benefits taxpayers while still protecting public health, safety and welfare. under the Kansas Interlocal Cooperation Act (K.S.A. 12-3901, et seq.) if each participating unit of government has the power to do something separately, then they may do so jointly via an interlocal agreement, e.g. law enforcement, distribution of water. Topeka and Shawnee County have a history of some successful joint undertakings, including:

- Topeka-Shawnee County Public Library
- JEDO
- Gage Park Improvement Authority
- Metro Topeka Airport Authority

Agreements between Topeka and other cities, Shawnee County, townships, USDs and Rural Water Districts are all possible. While Topeka has had experience with interlocal agreements there are additional areas of governance which the City should identify and then perform an analysis as to whether Topekans would benefit from new arrangements/agreements. These include but are not limited to:

- Housing for the unsheltered
- Public health/Mental health
- Law enforcement
- Firefighting
- Emergency services
- Solid waste collection and recycling
- Information Technology/Cybersecurity

While the Intergovernmental Cooperation Council exists to facilitate the exchange of information among participating entities, its membership and mission may be too limited to serve as the vehicle for facilitating interlocal agreements.

CONFEREES:

- Councilmember Karen Hiller, February 19, 2025
- Councilmember Spencer Duncan, February 19, 2025
- Vickie Arnett and Dr. Glenda Overstreet-Vaughn, League of Women Voters, April 9, 2025
- Jim Reardon, 2014 Citizens Government Review Committee Chair, Attorney & former City Councilmember, February 5, 2025
- City Manager Dr. Robert M. Perez, March 5, 2025

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The Committee reviewed the first draft of this issue paper on April 23, 2025. The Committee did not want the original proposal that recommendations either be adopted or rejected by the Governing Body within a fixed period of time following their presentation to the Governing Body. The Committee recommends that the Governing Body take the following action(s):

- **CONDUCT JOINT MEETINGS** The Governing Body and the Shawnee County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) hold joint meetings on a regular basis to consider matters of mutual concern, including the review of existing interlocal agreements and how they are serving the public.
- **RESEARCH OTHER INTERLOCAL COOPERATION AGREEMENTS** The Governing Body direct the City Manager, City Auditor or City Attorney to research the Secretary of State's records of agreements, filed per the Interlocal Cooperation Act, to identify those pertaining to programs and services which the City has not previously considered providing via interlocal agreements.
- **CREATE JOINT CITY-COUNTY BODY** The Governing Body, working with the Shawnee County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), create a joint City-County body, similar to the Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO), to identify areas where cooperation can result in efficiencies and economies and maintain, or enhance, public health, safety and welfare. That body would make recommendations to the Governing Body and the BOCC for those matters of highest priority, with timelines for the necessary actions to reach desired outcomes. Interlocal agreements would be used to provide a degree of certainty, and longevity, to any agreed-to cooperative measures. To help ensure that the recommended actions of the body are given proper consideration, annual reports on the status of interlocal agreements would be given to the Governing Body by the City Manager or the proposed City Auditor.

5. CITY AUDITOR

The purpose of a city auditor is to collaborate with the Governing Body and City Manager to elevate trust in government by providing objective, independent assurance and advisory services. A city auditor would conduct performance audits to provide objective analysis to assist the Governing Body and City Manager to:

- Improve the performance of city programs and services
- Reduce costs
- Facilitate decision-makers in taking corrective actions
- Contribute to public accountability

A city auditor would also conduct financial audits to provide an independent assessment of the city's financial condition, its use of resources and other financial information. Topeka is the largest city in Kansas without a city auditor.

CONFEREES:

- City Manager Dr. Robert M. Perez (memo) April 18, 2025
- Hannes Zacharias, Professor of Practice, University of Kansas School of Public Affairs & Administration (memo) May 7, 2025
- Topeka Justice Unity & Ministry Project (JUMP) members Sarah Balzer and Minister Melodene Byrd of El Shaddai Ministries (memo) May 21, 2025
- Douglas Jones, Johnson County, Kansas, Auditor May 21, 2025

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Leo Hafner, April 23, 2025
- Monica Hill, Written April 23, 2025

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS: At the April 23, 2025, meeting the Committee agreed with the proposed recommendation but noted that the City's fiscal condition might necessitate a delay in creating the office of city auditor. The Committee recommends that the Governing Body take the following action(s):

- **AMEND THE CHARTER TO CREATE THE OFFICE OF CITY AUDITOR.** The Auditor would be appointed by the Governing Body and serve at the pleasure of the Governing Body. An Audit Committee of the Governing Body would provide direction to the City Auditor. The City Auditor would perform both performance audits and financial audits. Among the duties of the City Auditor would be to:
 - a. Ensure that studies and reports produced by the City and its consultants have their Governing Body-adopted objectives and timelines complied with.

- b. Provide analysis and recommendations that will help the Governing Body assure the public that potentially controversial actions have been thoroughly, objectively and independently vetted.
- c. Handle internal whistleblower reports.
- d. Advise the City on risk management, including employee discrimination claims, self-insurance levels and commercial coverages.
- e. Conduct performance audits of programs and services.
- f. Conduct financial audits of programs and services.
- g. Advise the Governing Body and City Manager on the use of outside consultants and other providers of services.

6. CITIZENS GOVERNMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE

Amendments to the Charter provisions for the Citizens Government Review Committee could be beneficial to the mission of the Committee to examine the structure of City government for possible modifications.

CONFEREES: None

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS: On April 23, 2025, the Committee discussed the timing of committees. The initial proposal was to shorten the period between Committees from 10 to five years. The thinking was that events can occur rapidly, and five years would allow the Committees to be more responsive to changes, or the need for changes. Also, five years could make it easier to follow-up on the recommendations made by a previous Committee. Following comments by the City Clerk, a majority of the Committee chose to stay with the current 10-year provision. The Committee also discussed the number of committee members. The initial proposal was to increase the size of the Committee from five, plus an alternate, to 10 members. Further, that some of the membership would be representatives of civic organizations, such as the League of Women Voters and the Citizens Advisory Council, in order to better achieve public engagement. Following discussion, the Committee reached a consensus to have 10 members, one residing in each council district, chosen by the councilmember for each district, with the 10th member appointed by the mayor. The Committee thought this approach would provide more visibility for the public and more of a sense of ownership by the City Council and Mayor. The Committee recommends that the Governing Body take the following action(s):

- **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP.** The Committee recommends that the Charter be amended to provide that the Citizens Government Review Committee be comprised of 10 members. Nine members, each from one council district who resides in the district and is appointed by the councilmember for that district, and the 10th member appointed by the mayor.

7. CODE OF ETHICS MISCONDUCT & PRACTICE VIOLATIONS

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT: At the May 21, 2025, meeting the Committee heard testimony of instances where Governing Body members had allegedly involved themselves in administrative matters, with intrusion with and coercion tactics which are solely within the domain of the city manager. The Committee agreed to review whether and how other cities prohibited such involvement. It was in this reviewing process and discussion the Governing Body appeared to be out of compliance of Topeka's Charter in current practices of operations with no clear direction of accountability in regard to ethics and codes of conduct infractions. Concerns were also raised that there were no procedures with clear steps towards consequences and or penalties for violations of said infractions. This Committee found evidence of action steps and or routes to address this issue are in place, in fact in reviewing of other cities processes, ours is more stringent and clearly defined than others with the exception of Wichita who has an ethics committee. This Committee also received a memo from Senior Attorney Mary Kuckelman Spinelli concerning Checks & Balances in the Charter Ordinance which further addressed practices in place to deal with this issue.

CONFEREES:

- Bill Fiander, Lecturer, Washburn University, May 21, 2025

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The Committee recommends that the Governing Body take the following action(s):

- **INTEGRITY AND CODE OF CONDUCT:** Require a signature to acknowledge receipt and understanding of codes of ethics and practices with yearly review to refresh current councilmembers, with future review and possibilities of forming an ethics committee.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

Thank you to all the conferees and City staff for your thoughtful input and valuable time throughout this process. We also sincerely appreciate the public comments shared with the Citizens Review Committee -- your voices are an important part of this work and have helped guide our discussions and recommendations.