

Citizen Government Review Committee Minutes
February 5, 2025

Cyrus K. Holliday Building, First Floor Conference Room, Topeka, Kansas, February 5, 2025. Committee Chair Jim Kaup called the meeting to order at 11:00 A.M. with the following Committee Members present: Brian Broxterman, Shampayne Lloyd, Connie Jacobson (Vice Chair), Tamara Martin, Jim Kaup (Chair) and Zachary Surritt (*alternate*) -6.

APPROVAL of the January 29, 2025, meeting minutes.

Connie Jacobson moved to approve the minutes. The motion seconded by Brian Broxterman carried unanimously on voice vote. (5-0-0)

PRESENTATIONS were provided by Jim Reardon, 2014 Citizens Government Review Committee Chair, Attorney and former City Councilmember; and Hannes Zacharias, Professor of Practice, University of Kansas School of Public Affairs & Administration.

Jim Reardon highlighted his experience as a former City Councilmember and Deputy Mayor and provided an overview of how the current Form of Government came to be. He spoke to the extensive time commitment required by Committee members and the importance of gathering citizen input and representing their interests. He urged Committee members to use the resources available to them as it relates to current Councilmembers and City staff. He discussed “Areas of Concerns” on page 6 of the 2014 Citizens Government Review Committee Report including “no clear direction” as it relates to the City’s charter ordinance language regarding the term of “Governing Body” and the belief that nine council districts were sufficient; however, at-large representation should be considered as well as discussion of term limits and why elections were changed from April to November with the intent to attract more voters.

Chair Kaup asked Jim Reardon if he has any ideas on how to identify issues raised by the public or City officials.

Connie Jacobson asked Jim Reardon if there were any issues that he was aware of that have surfaced over the past 10 years since the last review was conducted.

Jim Reardon stated he believes issues will surface through the natural process of the Committee gathering input from current Councilmembers, citizens, City and Community leadership. He referenced the reoccurring issues listed in the 2014 Report and noted these issues may resurface. He reported that he was not aware of any issues that need to be addressed by the Committee.

Shampayne Lloyd thanked Jim Reardon for his comments and concurred that if there were issues they will surface when public input was gathered.

Hannes Zacharias provided a detailed overview of the City Manager Form of Government with the objective to clarify the relationship between City Administration and the Governing Body as key factors to building a culture of higher performance for the city and community. He offered his assistance as the Committee moves through the process and suggested the Committee clearly

articulate what problem(s) they are trying to solve and define how those problem(s) often lead to possible solutions, and the importance of distinguishing between government structural issues and government implementation issues.

Chair Kaup asked how they should address the general opinion of citizen distrust of government.

Hannes Zacharias stated the City needs to concentrate on the effective use of social media outlets and provide a response within a reasonable timeframe as well as making sure individuals have been seen, heard and valued. He spoke to the importance of having a civic understanding of how to address issues in the community.

Connie Jacobson thanked Hannes Zacharias for his presentation. She expressed concern with the lack of citizen involvement at the local government level.

Chair Kaup inquired on the effectiveness of citizen surveys. He asked if the City's Ombudsman position should report to the City Manager or the community.

Hannes Zacharias suggested they conduct an electronic citizen survey and ask what City Government is doing well and what can be improved upon. He referenced cities that conduct up to four survey's a year and noted, many communities are conducting annual perception surveys. He suggested they do not ask questions they have no plans to do anything about. He stated in his opinion, an Ombudsman should serve in the same manner as the Police Chief - at the pleasure of the City Manager.

Shampayne Lloyd thanked Hannes Zacharias for the information. She expressed her excitement with helping to educate the community and bridge the gap between citizens and local government officials to provide a better understanding of the government model and help define the culture of local government.

Connie Jacobson requested the City Manager provide input to the Committee at a future meeting.

Chair Kaup requested current Councilmembers be invited to provide input at the February 19, 2025, Committee meeting and on March 5, 2025, he would like to hear from the City's Ombudsman; and at future meetings he would like input from the League of Kansas Women Voters as well as the City Manager and Downtown Topeka Inc.

Zachary Surratt spoke in support of requesting input from Monique Glaude, City of Topeka Interim DEI Director and Community Engagement Division Director. He also spoke in support of inviting business community leaders from the Greater Topeka Partnership, Topeka Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Topeka, Inc., to a future Committee meeting.

Brenda Younger, City Clerk, announced the time was approaching 1:00 p.m. and the Committee must extend the meeting time or defer the remaining agenda items (Overview of Committee Rules and Procedures and Public Input Procedure) to the February 19, 2025, meeting.

Connie Jacobson moved to defer the remaining agenda items to February 19, 2025. The motion seconded by Brian Broxterman carried unanimously on voice vote (5-0-0)

Connie Jacobson moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion seconded by Brian Broxterman carried unanimously on voice vote. (5-0-0)

No further business appearing, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Brenda Younger, M.M.C.
City Clerk