

Citizen Government Review Committee Minutes
March 26, 2025

Cyrus K. Holliday Building, First Floor Conference Room, Topeka, Kansas, March 26, 2025. Committee Chair Jim Kaup called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. with the following Committee Members present: Brian Broxterman, Connie Jacobson (Vice Chair), Jim Kaup (Chair), Shampayne Lloyd, Tamara Martin and Zachary Surritt (*alternate*) -6.

APPROVAL of the March 5, 2025 meeting minutes:

Chair Kaup requested an amendment on page 15, first sentence, paragraph seven, to replace the word “as” with “to bridge.” Correction will state “serves to bridge the education gap.”

Connie Jacobson moved to approve the meeting minutes of March 5, 2025, as amended. The motion seconded by Tamara Martin carried unanimously on voice vote. (5-0-0)

Connie Jacobson provided a brief update of her appearance on the WIBW Red Couch and Fox 43 Morning Show. They conducted one-on-one interviews and discussed general topics of the Committee and as well as how to submit public input.

Zachary Surritt requested to consider Agenda Item 5., Guest Speakers, as the next item on the agenda to have sufficient time for the three speakers, as he believes they can provide valuable input on the two discussions items.

Connie Jacobson moved to adjust the agenda order as stated by Zachary Surritt. The motion seconded by Shampayne Lloyd carried unanimously on voice vote. (5-0-0)

Juliet Abdel, President of the Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce; Sarah Balzer, Topeka JUMP and Melodene Byrd, El Shaddai Ministries appeared as **GUEST SPEAKERS**.

Juliet Abdel, President of the Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce and Vice President of the Greater Topeka Partnership (GTP) stated GTP serves as the umbrella company for Downtown Topeka, Inc., Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce, Growth Organization (GO) Topeka, and Visit Topeka – all entities have separate budgets, boards and policies geared toward different aspects of economic development at the local, national and international levels.

Chair Kaup referenced the slow, nearly stagnant population growth of Topeka since the 1970's. He questioned how the population of the community comes into play when trying to attract new businesses. He also asked how the lack of diverse affordable housing impacts potential economic development in regard to businesses located here or expanding existing businesses.

Juliet Abdel addressed the misconception about actual population data growth. She reported there are many factors associated with attracting business other than population which include quality of life, probusiness environment, regulation, taxation etc. She referenced the METL (Manhattan, Emporia, Topeka and Lawrence) Program for the purpose of maintaining partnerships with surrounding communities by sharing State and Federal priorities that need to

be enhanced or seen as opportunities to make businesses and overall communities flourish – by combining these communities from an economic development standpoint it is much more powerful when there are approximately 600,000 in population to attract potential projects to the Topeka-Shawnee County area. Regarding affordable housing, it continues to remain a priority in their Legislative Agenda, and they support continued growth in that area. She said it is important to engage stakeholders to determine “community wants” as it relates to housing – with an overwhelming response of the need for “diverse” housing (affordable housing, apartments, single-family etc.). They keep an open dialog with the City, County and community businesses to understand the housing needs of the community.

Chair Kaup asked if the City of Topeka Municipal Government scores favorable in terms of coordination, communication, facilitation and responsiveness in their commitment in improving the economy compared to other cities with similar forms of government.

Shampayne Lloyd asked if City regulations impede their efforts in securing new businesses in Topeka.

Connie Jacobson asked what has worked in other communities that Ms. Abdel would like Topeka to consider.

Zachary Surritt referenced the possibility of changing how governing body members are elected as well as reducing the number of governing members with the intent that some will serve as at-large representatives. He asked if Ms. Abdel sees a benefit in making these types of changes as it relates to economic development and if she supports the current form of government.

Juliet Abdel reported that the City of Topeka remains very responsive to feedback and offers a fast track permitting system for businesses. She stated they believe one of the primary core purposes of municipal government was infrastructure investment and protecting and maintaining the roadways. The City continues to provide this core function to local businesses in every aspect as the Polk-Quincy Viaduct Project moves forward. She stated in her opinion what makes Topeka great is that the City, County and private sector businesses work together on a consistent basis trying to answer one another’s question and try to be a good resource. She stated in regard to improvements in the City Government, she would suggest improved education and transparency for sales tax initiatives, detailed budget items for residents as well as other taxing entities. Elections always have an impact on the community; however, it depends on the demographics of the community. She spoke in support of the current form of government and believes it works. She suggested the Committee review the dynamics related to the 3-mile Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) as it relates to economic development and crime statistics. She spoke about the effectiveness of the Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO).

Connie Jacobson thanked Ms. Abdel for her input and welcomed any additional comments from other members of the Chamber and community.

Sarah Balzer distributed the Topeka JUMP: Overview and Recommendations to Citizens Government Review Committee (**Attachment A**). Topeka Justice Unity Ministry Project (JUMP) is a coalition of 30 different faith communities to provide a powerful vehicle for

marginalized communities in Shawnee County through justice. She highlighted the organization's background and observations as they connect with City and County elected officials. Their top priority is to increase affordable housing in Topeka which they have made good process on through the Topeka Housing Trust Fund; however, they are seeking a permanent funding source that is sustainable.

Melodene Byrd, El Shaddai Ministries, stated the second priority is Violence Reduction through the training of community members who can de-escalate the moments of violence and prevent retaliation between groups. JUMP formed the Community Inspired Violence Intervention Coalition (CIVIC) for the purpose of reducing violence in Topeka. They are seeking City and County support for long-term sustainability. Finally, the last priority, addressing Homelessness. She spoke about the serious community issue of homelessness and the social and economic barriers that need to overcome through the implementation of low barrier shelters in Topeka. She also expressed concern about the high turnover of executive positions and the lack of follow-through from the City.

Connie Jacobson thanked Topeka JUMP for their input and questioned if the lack of response was due to the high turnover rate of executive positions over the past several years.

Melodene Byrd and Sarah Balzer confirmed they believed it was related to the high turnover of personnel as well as the lack of action taken by the Governing Body. They reported after former City Manager Brent Trout left the City, the process and momentum for affordable housing slowed significantly and until recently, City Manager Dr. Robert M. Perez has been responsive and provided honest feedback to Topeka JUMP. They expressed the importance of Governing Body members continuing to gather input from constituents on the issue.

Connie Jacobson stated elections matter in dealing with these tough issues.

Zachary Surritt stated their task was to figure out if the current system was working for the citizens and for organizations that are trying to make positive changes in the community. He stated he believes the issues associated with former city managers were out of the organization's control and it was unfortunate; however, he is glad to know that a good City Manager and City Staff is now in place. He asked the perspective of Topeka JUMP members as it relates to elections and term limits and if it would be beneficial to create turnover for the purpose of change.

Sarah Balzer stated she would not comment on behalf of Topeka JUMP as an organization; however, personally she could see an advantage in keeping consistency in membership to keep initiatives moving forward as well as change would generate new ideas.

Melodene Byrd spoke in support of term limits were appropriate and the importance of staying engaged with the community. She questioned how a Council member who struggles to represent one district could effectively serve as an at-large representative.

Brian Broxterman thanked Topeka JUMP members for providing their perspective on Council member representation.

Shampayne Lloyd stated in terms of the way the City of Topeka was governed, she asked for further explanation in their crime initiative efforts.

Sarah Balzer reported they are working on the second attempt to implement the “CIVIC” initiative and have had good conversations with Councilmembers and the new Police Chief so far. She stated the biggest issue has been with affordable housing.

Chair Kaup referenced the City of Topeka Housing Study conducted in 2020 identifying an affordable housing crisis along with an implementation strategy. He spoke about the importance of continuing to work on the initiative aside from the turnover of executive staff and councilmembers.

Sarah Balzer invited Committee members to attend their Annual Nehemia Event on April 10, 2025 at Washburn University White Concert Hall.

DISCUSSION OF CONFEREES for Upcoming Meetings:

Chair Kaup confirmed a representative from the League of Women Voters and Councilmember Marcus Miller would be guest speakers at the April 9, 2025, Committee Meeting. He asked if it was the will of the Committee to conduct public hearing on April 23, 2025.

Brian Broxterman asked Brandy Roy-Bochman, Assistant City Attorney, to determine if a public hearing was necessary and noted that general-public input has been allowed at all committee meetings.

Assistant City Attorney Roy-Bochman stated she would confirm the requirement before the April 9, 2025, Committee Meeting

Connie Jacobson suggested that if a stand-alone public hearing was not required then they should begin working on final report recommendations.

Committee members concurred that if public hearing was not required to be conducted on April 23, 2025, they should instead schedule a work session.

Shampayne Lloyd submitted written comments from Kathy Votah, LuLac Senior Center (**Attachment B**) and Deborah Dawkins (**Attachment C**)

Megan Brunson, Assistant City Clerk, reported the written comments would be distributed to the Committee and attached to the March 26, 2025, Committee meeting minutes.

Following discussion, it was the consensus of the Committee to accept written or verbal comments until April 23, 2025, from City Department Directors and to begin work on final recommendations through the month of May and submit a final report recommendation in June 2025 to the Governing Body.

Following discussion, it was the consensus of the Committee to schedule meetings on May 7, 2025, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.; May 21, 2025, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.; June 4, 2025 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. – all to be located in the City Hall First Floor Conference Room, 215 SE 7th Street, Topeka, 66603; and tentatively June 11, 2025 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. with location to be determined.

Connie Jacobson moved to approve the meeting dates, times and locations as stated above. The motion seconded by Brian Broxterman carried unanimously on voice vote. (5-0-0)

DISCUSSION OF COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:

Chair Kaup asked Committee members to submit their recommendations for consideration by the Committee as a whole, with the hope that Committee members will volunteer to help with the write-up of each recommendation to be finalized in May.

It was the consensus of the Committee to complete write-ups on the following recommendations to be discussed at the April 23, 2025, work session Committee meeting.

- Pursue City-County Collaboration (not consolidation): Assigned to Chair Kaup
- Follow-up Mechanism for Committee/Board/Commission Recommendations: Assigned to Brian Broxterman.

Zachary Surritt stated he would provide a write-up on elections to discuss at the April 23, 2025, Committee meeting.

Following discussion, it was the consensus of the Committee that the suggestions outlined in the written comments submitted by Joseph Ledbetter (**Attachment D**) were views that have only been expressed by Mr. Ledbetter and do not fall under the purview of the Committee.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT:

Public comment was submitted via email by Deborah Dawkins (**Attachment C**) and Joseph Ledbetter (**Attachment D**).

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

Brenda Younger, M.M.C.
City Clerk



Topeka JUMP: Overview & Recommendations to Citizens Government Review Committee

Topeka JUMP is a coalition of 33 faith communities. Our mission is to provide a powerful vehicle for marginalized communities in Shawnee County to Do Justice. Our congregations do lots of direct-service work through investing in and volunteering with organizations like Let's Help, Doorstep, Habitat for Humanity, Topeka Rescue Mission, etc. (the list goes on!). However, when we join together in our work as JUMP, we are focused on how the systems that impact our communities can be amended to support the people on the margins of our community. For this reason, we frequently interact with our community's governing bodies. Below are our priorities & observations.

PRIORITY: INCREASING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Topeka's 2020 Citywide Housing Market Study found **a shortage of over 10,000 affordable homes and apartments**. This means 10,000 families are living with relatives, spending more on rent than they can afford, or living in unsafe conditions. **The study's top recommendation was to fund the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF)**. This tool uses both public & private funding to incentivize developers to build affordable housing. For 5 years, the Affordable Housing Trust Fund has sat inactive & underfunded. Recently, JUMP has been successfully pressing the city to follow through on the recommendations from their own study.

So far, the city of Topeka has:

- ✓ Invested \$750,000 of one-time funds into the AHTF
- ✓ Added activating the AHTF to City Manager's strategic priorities for 2025
- ✓ Revised the AHTF Ordinance so it can be activated
- ✓ Pledged to form a committee & activate on April 1, 2025

What's Next?

- ② The City of Topeka must dedicate annual public funding to the AHTF. Businesses, foundations, and other private investors will not invest until they see a functioning program. Across the country, **successful affordable housing trust funds are sustained with annual investments of public funds**.

↪ more information can be found through National Low Income Housing Coalition: <https://nlihc.org/housing-trust-fund-project>

PRIORITY: VIOLENCE REDUCTION

36 Topekans were murdered in 2023, a tragic new record for our city. Our research shows that Topeka needs a proven violence reduction program with trained community members who can step in the moment violence occurs to help de-escalate the situation and prevent retaliation between groups. Retaliation has been a major cause of increasing violence in Topeka. JUMP was instrumental in forming CIVIC (Community Inspired Violence Intervention Coalition)- a group dedicated to using this strategy to reduce violence in Topeka. This group already received \$600,000 to kickstart a proven violence intervention program & plans to have the program up and running by the end of this summer. We are now pressing for our city & county to support the program so it can be sustained in the long term.

The total cost of violence to Topeka taxpayers in 2023 was:

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \$13,699,954 \text{ (criminal justice)} \\
 & + \$27,397 \text{ (emergency transport)} \\
 & + \$12,292,329 \text{ (medical care, govt. portion)} \\
 & + \$4,333,025 \text{ (police)} \\
 & + \$52,039 \text{ (Supplemental Security income)} \\
 & \quad \quad \quad = \mathbf{\$19,595,867}
 \end{aligned}$$

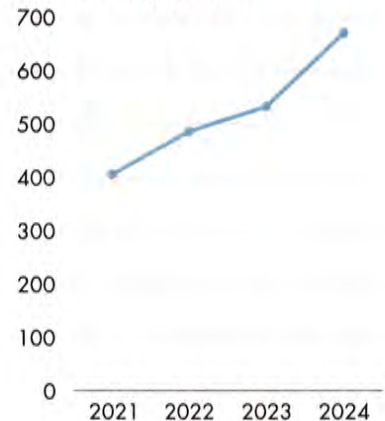
Data according to
"Everytown for Gun
Safety Support Fund,
Economic Cost of
Violence Calculator
tool"

PRIORITY: ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS

The number of people experiencing homelessness in Topeka has risen by over 60% in just 3 years.

Point in Time Count of people experiencing homelessness as defined by Dept. of Housing & Urban Development, plus an average of 120 people in the Shawnee County Jail who have nowhere to go when they get out.

Housing programs in Topeka have strict requirements, like needing an ID, class participation, staying sober, or leaving pets behind. These can all be barriers that prevent people from seeking shelter. There are many communities across our country that have services that remove those barriers while still keeping residents and staff safe. These are called low-barrier shelters- and we need one in Topeka. Alongside our partners at All Hands on Deck, JUMP is pushing our community to invest in a low-barrier shelter & other compassionate solutions to homelessness.



RECOMMENDED FOR NEXT STEP ACTION IN 2024 - 2025

1. **One Stop Homeless Resource Center****
2. **Investment in a Continuum of Housing Solution**** — specifically a low-barrier shelter and permanent tiny home villages
3. **Multi-Sector Community Coalition** — Development of a multi-sector community coalition, designed to support systemic and collaborative action towards solutions designed to reduce/end homelessness

The city of Topeka hired Sylver Consulting to provide recommendations on how to address homelessness. This is an excerpt from their presentation on 5/21/24. All Hands on Deck goals are aligned with these recommendations.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT:

Benefits:

Meeting time: evening meetings are more accessible to all people when held in the evenings instead of during the work day like many county meetings.

Councilmembers elected by district instead of an at-large system: this way each neighborhood has a councilmember whose job is to answer to their district.


Challenges:

Turnover of city staff: our goal is to establish relationships of mutual respect with officials. It has been hard to build those relationships as we have worked with more than 5 city managers in 10 years. Some turnover is unavoidable but having more consistency would be beneficial.

Public Comment: Our members (some of whom can't drive at night or have to put kids to bed) have had to wait hours to give public comment at council meetings. It might be beneficial to move all public comments to the beginning of meetings.

Mechanism for follow-through on study recommendations: JUMP has noticed a trend of council approving funding for studies that provide recommendations for how to address pressing problems. However, there is no system for making sure those recommendations are followed, so many are dramatically delayed or never implemented at all.

Attachment B – Lulac Center

 Lular ^{Kathy Votah} 287 people 52 yrs (retired teachers
strong mayor form low year
1) to top Heavy. accountant
very diverse and
Topeka connected
involved

- paying City manager
& Assistant big bucks

Rehash & Recreate the same wheel

- Same issues
- Crime
- Homelessness Both years.

2). City Council. non effective
only see elected officials
3). when they need votes.

Senior Services 25,000
through City of Topeka
is not enough & even attainable.

4). Money Spent Primitives is at Max

5). Feel as if they have fallen
through the cracks. (They have something to offer
Taking care of Everything else except foundation)

Attempts from City to assist
Seniors aren't helpful because
it puts more burden on them
Not less & they are not 'well'
I thought ok.

Cherry 21/							
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Attachment C



Fw: Effectiveness of City Government

From Shampayne Lloyd <shampaynelloyd@yahoo.com>

Date Wed 3/26/2025 1:56 PM

To Shampayne Lloyd <slloyd@phoenixhomehc.com>

Caution: This is an external email and could possibly have malicious content. Please take great care when clicking links or opening attachments.

Ms. Shampayne Lloyd
785-220-6964

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Shampayne Lloyd <shampaynelloyd@yahoo.com>

To: Shampayne Lloyd <slloyd@phoenixhomehc.com>

Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 at 02:25:30 PM CDT

Subject: Fw: Effectiveness of City Government

Ms. Shampayne Lloyd
785-220-6964

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Deborah Dawkins <debbdaw@gmail.com>

To: Shampayne Lloyd <shampaynelloyd@yahoo.com>

Sent: Monday, March 17, 2025 at 12:27:41 PM CDT

Subject: Effectiveness of City Government

I feel the city manager/ city council form of government is more effective than a strong mayor system because the latter would be driven by the personal preferences of the mayor. Should the city manager not prove to be effective, they can be terminated by the council.

It is important that there are alternating terms for the city council so there is not an entire new council at one time. By staggering the terms, the council always has some experienced members. Council members do need to do a better job of connecting to their constituents to make sure concerns are addressed by the council

Be Blessed
Deborah Dawkins

Attachment D

REC'D TOPEKA CITY CLERK
'25 MAR 25 PM3:36

Dear Citizen Government Review Committee

March 25, 2025

The following are my suggestions after nearly 20 years of watching this form of government in Topeka, KS:

1. Our City Charter ordinance needs to be changed to where all contracts and purchases of \$50,000 or more needs to be approved by a majority vote of the council/governing body. This would also include change orders or amendments to contracts of \$50,000 or more. This gives more oversight of any City Manager and is the way most Kansas cities of the first class operate. It provides accountability, oversight and transparency of city funds.
2. Every month the Council/governing body shall have by charter ordinance a monthly public work session to go over monthly financial statements that shall be provided by the City finance department and signed by a CPA. This shall include but will not be limited to: Number of current City employees FTEs by department, all current debts, liabilities of the City, current cash balances of City, current deposits and where they are, per cent of City budget spent to date by department, current reserves of the budget as per cent. There can be more categories.

Additionally, I will tell you that support for this current form of government has waned over the past several years. I have found no support for it among our citizens recently, that are not in city government. The idea of electing our CEO as a Strong Mayor has a lot of appeal to most folks/ taxpayers I have talked to. Most have suggested a total of seven council people with perhaps two of them elected at large. This last paragraph is based on conversations with a good number of Topeka voters I know.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,



Joseph Ledbetter, Topeka Citizen, Attorney, MPA