



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL
City Hall, 215 SE 7th Street, Suite 255
Topeka, KS 66603-3914
Tel: 785-368-3710
www.topeka.org

Date: March 25, 2025

Time: 1:00pm

Location: 1st Floor Conference Room, Cyrus K. Holliday Bldg. 620 SE Madison (*a virtual attendance option is available*)

Committee members Present: Spencer Duncan (chair), Marcus Miller, Michelle Hoferer

City Staff Present: Senior Attorney Brandy Roy-Bachman, Division Director of Budget and Finance Josh McAnarney, Budget Manager Karisa Mueller, Fire Department Chief Randy Phillips, Deputy Director Public Works Jason Tryon, Parking Manager Sterling Emerson

1) Call to Order

Committee Chair Duncan called the meeting to order at 1:00pm.

2) Approve January 28, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Committee member Miller made a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Committee member Hoferer seconded. Motion approved 3-0-0.

3) Presentation: Special Street Fund

Budget Manager Karisa Mueller spoke to the purpose of the Special Street Fund which is to repair, give alteration and provide maintenance to streets, including snow removal and sweeping. The challenge of the Special street/Highway Repair Fund is projected to be more difficult in 2026 due to flat revenue due to flat revenue, rising commodities, and personnel costs.

Presentation highlights:

- Revenue Sources: State of Kansas motor fuel tax
- Historical Finances:
 - Revenues decreased 2021 \$6,095,505, 2024 \$5,726,931
 - Expenses increased 2021 \$5,389,491, 2024 \$6,979,313
 - End of Year Balance 2021 \$3,709,057, 2024 \$2,396,798
 - Salary and Vacancy Correlation
 - Blight Crew replaced Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC) Prisoner Crew
- Revenue and Expenses Overview-Projected End of Year Balance:
 - Negative \$673,401 for 2025 Adopted Budget. Negative \$3,913,338 for 2026 Preliminary Budget
- Allocation of Expenses: Personnel 55%, Contractual 26%, Commodities 19%
- Options to Increase Revenue in 2026: Subsidize from General Fund, Sales Tax Initiative
- Options to Remove Expenditures in 2026: Transfer expenses to Citywide Half-Cent Fund, Transfer expenses to General Fund, Reduce Services

Committee member Miller asked about the option of reduction of services. Public Works Director Groen spoke to the staffing and vacancies and how it would impact the results of projects and response time.

Committee member Hoferer questioned duties of the City of Topeka Blight Crew. Deputy Director Tony Trower confirmed that trash only in camping areas is removed plus working with the City of Topeka Forestry Department to care for roundabouts, weeding, mowing. He confirmed that there are no additional costs being taken out of the Special Street Fund for a homeless camp abatement.

Committee member Hoferer asked about results of year-over-year on potholes in the City. Deputy Director Trower stated he believes they are better this year due to the engineering projects being completed. Public Works Director Groen confirmed that updated pothole numbers will be given to the Governing Body on April 8, 2025.

Committee member Hoferer inquired about the Kansas Legislative State fees for Electric and Hybrid vehicles. Committee chair Duncan responded lobbyists are advocating that the fees will go back in the State Highway Fund.

Committee chair Duncan spoke to the Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) employees' numbers and if their working time on projects are tracked. He spoke to the importance of reviewing continual work orders versus a possible reconstructed road. Division Director of Budget and Finance McAnarney confirmed 59 FTE is what is budgeted for 2025 Special Street Fund. Deputy Director Trower confirmed there is 38 FTE with ideally being at 41 FTE for the Street Crew. Public Works Director Groen confirmed projects are all tracked by work orders.

Committee member Miller questioned the Pavement Condition Index (PCI) in the City roads. Public Works Director Groen confirmed a summary will be provided at the Governing Body on April 8, 2025.

Committee chair Duncan asked if any of the projects in the Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) are a part of the Special Street Fund. Division Director of Budget and Finance McAnarney confirmed that the Special Street Fund is strictly for general maintenance.

Committee chair Duncan spoke to the potential opportunity to contract maintenance items and if there are any cost benefits. Public Works Director Groen responded that his experience has shown that there is slower response time to work orders and cost is higher.

Committee member Hoferer asked Division Director of Budget and Finance McAnarney if the Citywide Half-Cent Fund is on target for the 2025 year. He confirmed that the summary will be provided at the Governing Body on April 8, 2025.

4) Action Items:

a.) Fee Schedule

Budget Manager Karisa Mueller spoke to the review of existing department fees.

The review was designed to reflect market rates, account for inflation, and insure

that the City is in line with other agencies. She continued to speak to some examples with highlighting how the fee increase would impact revenues.

Division Director of Budget and Finance McAnarney confirmed that the Governing Body would need to approve the final fee schedule.

Committee chair Duncan thanked the staff for their work on the proposed fee schedule, he appreciated the details for reasons for the changes. He spoke to the Ordinances that involve Property Maintenance Unit (PMU) fees to determine if they are in line.

Topeka Police Department Business Services Manager Gretchen O'Donovan stated that all Property Maintenance Ordinances were reviewed in 2022 and were amended to charge what the costs are.

Committee member Hoferer questioned abatements and demolitions and if the City of Topeka is getting reimbursed. She spoke to the many expenditures at 605 Fairlawn has had and added the importance of ensuring repayment. Director of Planning and Development Rhiannon Friedman stated that expenditures fees are tracked and monitored through the City of Topeka Prosecution Department.

Committee chair Duncan spoke to the Fee Schedule and items that are not currently being collected due to an Ordinance that has been repealed. Division Director of Budget and Finance McAnarney stated that the final Fee Schedule and those items will be removed.

Committee member Miller does not support any increase changes to delinquent fees. He questioned if there is a way to give the citizens of Topeka an incentive to maintaining their utility services. Director of Budget and Finance McAnarney confirmed that all fees are being reviewed.

Committee chair Duncan stated that the Assistance Fund has been increased and is there to help with delinquent fees. He also added the importance to review the policies for disconnect and reconnect fees.

MOTION: Committee member Miller made a motion to approve and move forward to the Governing Body for action. Committee chair Duncan seconded. Motion approved 3-0-0.

b.) Ambulance Service Ordinance

Senior City Attorney Brandy Roy-Bachman spoke to a recent ambulance service that was within the Topeka City limits and had not applied for a franchise agreement. This prompted the need for ambulance service modifications and updating the definitions. The last updates to the Ordinance was done in 1995. She spoke to the key changes in the proposed Ordinance. (1) Updated Definitions (2) Types of Services provided (3) Minimum Insurance Requirements.

Committee chair Duncan questioned if there are any ambulances that have continued to serve the City of Topeka without a franchise agreement. He asked if the proposed Ordinance will help move to get any franchise agreements finalized. He expressed his support for having set deadlines to ensure all ambulances are complying.

Senior City Attorney Brandy Roy-Bachman responded that currently there are two ambulance services that do not have a franchise agreement. There is one owner that has requested an application and has been given a 60-day deadline to complete. The second owner was sent a notice in the mail but it was returned to the Legal Department due to failure of address. She stated that with the new Ordinance it will clarify any questions to get the franchise agreements completed.

Committee member Miller thanked Senior City Attorney Brandy Roy-Bachman for providing the time frame of the application deadline.

Committee member Hoferer asked for an explanation of an ambulance service vs American Medical Response (AMR).

Topeka Fire Department Chief Randy Phillips provided information that AMR is the primary ambulance service for the City of Topeka and Shawnee County. He added there are two additional ambulance services currently operating that don't run 911 calls. They do the interfacility transports such as the Veterans Affairs (VA) but no 911 calls. He added that ambulance services have trained Emergency Medical Service (EMS) staff on them while there are also companies that provide those type of transportation services, like taking people to doctor's appointments, that don't have trained EMS staff operating them and they are not ambulance services.

Committee chair Duncan spoke to the State of Kansas requirements about having certifications that distinguish the ambulance services from a non-ambulance service.

Committee member Hoferer inquired about ambulances that transport within the City of Topeka that are coming from outside Shawnee County.

Senior City Attorney Brandy Roy-Bachman confirmed that the Ordinance would apply to services that regularly offer transports for residents within Topeka.

Committee member Hoferer noted that the proposed Ordinance, Section 4 has a clerical error.

Senior City Attorney Brandy Roy-Bachman confirmed it would be corrected.

Committee member Miller questioned if the current ambulance service holders with a franchise agreement have the proposed Ordinance insurance limits.

Senior City Attorney Brandy Roy-Bachman confirmed AMR currently has higher insurance limits than the proposed Ordinance.

MOTION: Committee chair Duncan made a motion to approve, with the correction to Section 4, and move forward to the Governing Body for action. Committee chair Hoferer seconded. Motion approved 3-0-0.

c.) Downtown Parking Ordinance & Resolution

Parking Manager Sterling Emerson spoke to the Downtown Parking and the proposed Resolution and Ordinance.

- Current Issues: (1) Current zones are confusing and inconsistent (2) Current policies encourage leapfrogging (3) On street reserved spaces are not permitted for food trucks or similar vendors (4) Revenue at current rate structure doesn't meet annual expenses
- Downtown stakeholders' takeaways: Supports leapfrogging, food truck proposal, 15-minute loading/unloading in lieu of cones, increasing 10-hour meters, weary of parking garage increases, and opposed to charging street parking in the 100 blocks and Kansas Avenue.
- Recommendations:
 1. Increase Garage monthly rate from \$67.75 to \$74.00
 - Effective at earliest convenience in Centre City, Crosby Place and Townsite Garage
 - Effective at Uptowner upon re-opening to the public
 - Effective at 512 and Park N Shop upon completion of structural repairs, estimated fall 2025.
 - Effective at Coronado Garage upon completion of structural repairs, no later than 2026.
 - 9th Street Garage would increase from \$47.43 to \$51.00 upon increase at Coronado (This is obligated by contract with BNSF)
 2. Increase 10-hour meter price from \$0.50/hour to \$1.00/hour
 3. Increase 10-hour monthly permit price from \$44.00 to \$74.00
 4. Add code language from KS Avenue block zone to all timed zones (eliminating leapfrogging)
 5. Add language allowing reserved spaces to include downtown businesses seeking for profit sales
 6. Introduce designated and signed 15-minute pick up spaces on KS Avenue (replaces orange cones)
 7. Relax restrictions north of sixth street, remove metered spaces West of Topeka Boulevard.
 8. Remove yellow hoods on 100 blocks East and West of KS Avenue, charge \$1.00 per hour, institute paid parking on KS Avenue of \$1.25/hour effective January 1st 2026.

Committee member Marcus Miller supports the details from the presentation and the fees proposed.

Committee chair Duncan questioned why there is a need for 10-hour meter pricing. He added his support for encouraging 10-hour monthly permit holders and parking garage use. He requested to know what the operating numbers would be for street parking versus garage parking.

Deputy Director Public Works Jason Tryon responded that the 10-hour metered parking timeframe is for more than 2 hours to give a more of a long-term parking option; potentially for downtown employees or the Kansas State Capitol. He added there are approximately 60 10-hour monthly permit holders and said that meters can be programmed for a different time period. Lastly, he stated that revenues are at 80% parking garage and 20% street parking.

Parking Manager Sterling Emerson spoke to the cost for maintaining street and parking garages like striping lines, clearing trash, maintain meters. Currently, there are 3 fulltime facility employees.

Committee member Hoferer inquired about the parking at City Hall. She also asked about the front row being metered and the east side of City Hall. Deputy Director Public Works Jason Tryon responded by Fall 2025 things should be returned to pre-construction. He stated that the front row parking and east side parking is a policy decision that will be made by City Manager Dr. Robert M. Perez.

Deputy Director Public Works Jason Tryon responded to the question if there are delays with going to the Governing Body it can potentially affect the revenue structure.

Committee chair Duncan supports advancing the presentation and proposal to the Governing Body for discussion.

Committee member Miller stated he feels the approval should first come from the Policy and Finance Committee.

Committee member Hoferer supports proceeding to the Governing Body for discussion.

MOTION: Committee chair Duncan made a motion to proceed to the Governing Body with no recommendation. Committee member Hoferer seconded. Motion approved 2-1-0. Committee member Marcus Miller voted "no"

5.) Discussion:

a.) External Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS)

Budget Manager Karisa Mueller spoke to Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS); they are payments made to the City of Topeka by various organizations or agencies based on agreements. The agreements have granted tax abatements and PILOTS are a portion of the taxes that may be due to the City; therefore, not paying taxes on their buildings. She added that currently there are no external organizations or commercial buildings that are voluntarily paying anything to the City of Topeka in a form of a PILOT fee.

Committee Chair Spencer Duncan stated that by the State of Kansas cities cannot require a PILOT fee; but the fees could be paid voluntarily. He continued to speak about properties requiring fire, police, city infrastructure and that there is no payment of property tax from those entities. He suggested that by the voluntarily recommendation it could be based on building square footage. He stated with possible payments from commercial properties could generate revenue for the General Fund.

Committee member Marcus Miller supports receiving PILOT funds but added his concerns with the State law not supporting.

Committee member Hoferer spoke to the PILOT fee building square footage matrix and added that it would help the public to receive payments voluntarily from commercial properties.

6.) Other Items

Committee chair Duncan adjourned the meeting at 2:26 pm

The video of this meeting can be viewed at; <https://youtu.be/soR9FJtxpac>