



# CITY OF TOPEKA

## CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

### PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL  
City Hall, 215 SE 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 255  
Topeka, KS 66603-3914  
Tel: 785-368-3710  
[www.topeka.org](http://www.topeka.org)

**Date:** April 16, 2025

**Time:** 9:30am

**Location:** Topeka Police Department in LEC Classroom A, 320 SE Kansas Ave  
(virtual attendance option also available)

**Committee members present:** Councilmembers Karen Hiller (Chair), Christina Valdivia-Alcalá, David Banks, and Brett Kell (Zoom)

**City staff present:** Property Maintenance Director John Schardine, Director of Communications Dan Garrett, Division Director of Housing Services Carrie Higgins, Fire Marshal Alan Stahl

#### **Call to Order**

Committee chair Hiller called the meeting to order at 9:30am. She introduced staff and committee members.

#### **Approval of March 19, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

Committee member Banks made a motion to approve the minutes. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá seconded. Approved 4-0-0.

#### **Social Determinants of Health**

LiveWell Shawnee County Committee member Danielle Twemlow, Director Community Health Engagement Stormont Vail Health Karla Hedquist, and Director Shawnee County Health Department Teresa Fisher shared the presentation:

- Public Health Approach: Surveillance, Risk Factor Identification, Intervention Evaluation and Implementation.
- Social Determinants of Health: Education Access and Quality, Health Care Access and Quality, Neighborhood and Built Environment, Social and Community Context, and Economic Stability. “Your zip code has become more important than your genetic code.”

1 – Public Health & Safety Committee

Minutes Taken: April 16, 2025

Minutes Approved: May 21, 2025

Minutes Submitted By: TRJ

- Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA): Systemic process for understanding and documenting health needs and social challenges of our community. IRS requirement of non-profit hospitals every 3 years, followed by development of CHIP strategies/interventions, and Hospital Implementation Plan. Required for public health department accreditation (PHAB), Required of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), Required for Certified Community Behavioral Health Center (CCBHC) designation.
- CHNA includes: Perception survey regarding access to care, preventive care, health and social concerns, income, and demographics. Roundtables with under-represented voices on community strengths, quality of care, concerns, underlying reasons, suggested improvements. Data analysis of community demographics, economic factors, health indicators, and County Health Rankings. Town Hall meeting to review all information collected to determine priorities.
- 3,816 Total survey responses this year, having 2,536 responses in 2021. 203 more men responded this year than 2021. Age was fairly representative. 9.6% of Black or African American survey respondents compared to 8.5% of residents in Shawnee County. Fell short in Hispanic, Latino, and Spanish speaking with only 9.54% of respondents versus 13.4% of residents in Shawnee County but did have 181 more responses than 2021.
- Priorities for 2025-2027: 1) Behavioral Health (Mental Health and Substance Misuse 2) Neighborhood Safety and Housing (first time as a top priority) 3) Food Security (Healthy Eating and Accessibility) 4) Health Equity (Addressing Disparities ex. STI's, Infant Mortality).
- Community Health Improvement Process (CHIP) 1) Identify community partners 2) Acquire and analyze data 3) Present community health needs assessment 4) Prioritize community health issues 5) Recruit additional community partners 6) Plan implementation strategies 7) Finalize and present community health improvement plan 8) Implement community health improvement plan and monitor progress.
- Heartland Healthy Neighborhoods (Est 2008) had a rebranding last year. It has been that grassroots coalition that has multiple organizations, community leaders, and members from across our county who come together monthly for meetings to collaborate on solutions that are part of this process of the CHIP and the CHNA. What we do: 1) Measure (We collect and evaluate data to determine what disparities are impacting our communities. 2) Develop (Using our

network of partners and resources we connect the right people to the right tools, to solve problems. 3) Implement (Our coalition partners work to implement improvement plans across our communities).

- Examples of How Local Government Fits In/Local Government Initiative Examples: Complete streets, Smoke-Free Air-Flavored Tobacco Restrictions, Alcohol Ordinances-Safer Alcohol Sales, Landlord-Tenant Rights-Legal Support for Renters-Healthy Rentals, Land Banks and Affordable Housing Trusts, Increase Safe Green Spaces, Healthy Food Purchasing, High-Quality Accessible Childcare and PK, Safe Air Quality, Violence Reduction Strategies, Social Services Funding.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired on how long the process takes from the start, to getting all the information printed. Community Health Engagement Stormont Vail Health Karla Hedquist advised it takes two years. She also shared that they met weekly as responses were coming in looking at zip codes of the responses to make sure that we were demographically representative of our community.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired on how zip code mattered regarding Infant Mortality. LiveWell Shawnee County Committee member Danielle Twemlow confirmed that 66604 was the last identified zip code as having the highest Infant Mortality rate in the state. A couple years back black babies were dying two and a half times the rate of white babies, our community is now at five times the rate, that number just increased again in the last few months with new reporting. Committee chair Hiller inquired since she has some of 66604 in her district and both hospitals are in there does it adjust due to the fact of medical services are there. LiveWell Shawnee County Committee member Danielle Twemlow confirmed no it's based on the mother's residence at the time of death of baby.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired if we wanted to develop a partnership with LiveWell or Shawnee County Health Department, with a goal of them coming monthly and becoming a mainstay of this committee what needs to be done. City Attorney Amanda Stanley advised it would be best to do an MOU so that the County Commission is on board with their staff being here on a regular basis as well as the Governing Body as a whole.

Committee member Banks spoke about the effort and work that's been put into the Health Assessment. He questioned how they get men to realize the importance of taking the surveys. Director Community Health Engagement Stormont Vail Health Karla Hedquist shared they meet monthly or weekly during the survey process to see what they can do; they looked at different occupations that employ more men.

Committee chair Hiller spoke to it being hard for people filling out the survey to identify what the core problem is and the LiveWell team have worked on that as well.

### **Changing Our Culture of Property Maintenance (CoCPM) – Fines and Fees for Landlords**

City Attorney Amanda Stanley shared she was asked by Council member Valdivia-Alcalá whether or not there was an ordinance we could put in place to make it clear that there are different expectations for landlords than regular citizens that may have code violations because they can't afford to paint, and are waiting for grants through our Housing Services Program. And in talking with the court system and prosecution the biggest thing that came up is the issue with equity in the court system, we need a public policy statement from the Governing Body that says, "This classification there's a legitimate public policy reason why these particular individuals or businesses are being treated differently". The best way to legally accomplish that is recommending an ordinance be drafted that says exactly what you have asked that everyone should have a safe and habitable place to live, and landlords are making money off these properties that is different than someone who is trying to stay in their home. Worked with Judge Thadani and Prosecution to draft an ordinance for your consideration. We don't normally have a "Whereas" clause at the beginning of an ordinance, that's specific so that we get that public policy reason on record to establish for the public that this is why we're doing this. The changes to the ordinance itself start on page two (2) where it talks about; The goal is to be in compliance with code, thus abatement by the person may result in dismissal of a case, except in cases where the person is a landlord (defined by TMC 9.25.020) of the premise, in which those cases a prosecutor shall not dismiss the case solely based on voluntary compliance.

Committee chair Hiller spoke to when they did a three (3) year review that fines and fees weren't automatically being charged. City Attorney Amanda Stanley advised that there's some misunderstanding on how code department works in municipal court. This ordinance would allow us to say because this special classification that the Governing Body has recognized even if you fix the toilet, sink or whatever if you are a landlord and we gave you an administrative process you took forever to fix something that someone's paying you to live in, were going to continue to criminally prosecute that through, and if found guilty of a misdemeanor the court will assess a criminal penalty through a fine and then that would progress. So it's not as simple as fines and fees weren't being collected, you must have a conviction to go ahead and proceed. So that gives legal basis to go ahead in moving forward. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá shared the explanation helps because in effect what you're saying we as a Governing Body have fleshed this out to see that there's this particular group which is why its not being treated the same way as a resident, because they have more power and control over the property that they own. Committee chair Hiller inquired how does this work for someone to become a repeat offender. City Attorney Amanda Stanley stated because right now it's hard for a landlord to become a repeat offender if they know they can fix it and get case dismissed, but if they get prosecuted even if you comply, then it becomes a repeat offender.

### **Updates**

Director of Communications Dan Garrett shared that the deadline for being a judge for the Yard of the Month is Friday April 18, 2025. There has been a short survey created to nominate a yard, the yard signs are designed and ready to be ordered, press releases and graphics are drafted and ready to be launched. Regarding the Community Cleanup Community, Director of Community Engagement Monique Glaude' will be providing a more in depth update soon, as she and City Manager Dr. Robert Perez have an idea.

### **Other**

Committee Chair Hiller shared Changing our Culture Program Administrator Nicole Stovall, is working to confirm and finish the overall action plan for Changing Our Culture of Property Maintenance (CoCPM). Also working on retaliation, tenant health, and safety protection.

**Next Meeting**

Committee Chair Hiller requested to meet May 21, 2025 at 9:30am.

**Adjourn**

Committee Chair Hiller adjourned the meeting at 10:51am.

This meeting can be viewed online at: <https://youtu.be/8wp0zyicydw>