



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

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

Date: September 17, 2025

Time: 9:30am

Location: 1st Floor Conference Room; Cyrus K. Holliday Building 620 SE Madison
(*virtual attendance option also available*)

Committee members present: Councilmembers Karen Hiller (Chair) and David Banks. Absent: Councilmembers Christina Valdivia-Alcalá and Brett Kell.

City staff present: Director of Communications Dan Garrett, Fire Marshal Alan Stahl, Changing our Culture Program Administrator Nicole Stovall, Director of the Office of Inclusive Communities Monique Glaude', Senior Attorney Mary Kuckelman Spinelli, City Manager Dr. Robert Perez, Commander Colleen Stuart, Community Navigator Leo Hope, Community Engagement Program Coordinator Amanda Cisnerios

Call to Order

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

Approval of July 16, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Committee member Banks made a motion to approve the minutes. Committee member Hiller seconded. Approved 2-0-0.

Social Determinants of Health (SDoH)

Director of LiveWell Shawnee County Sarah Karns-Vincent spoke to how City Code and Code Enforcement Impact SDoH. She advised that SDoH are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. Sarah also shared there are five domains that make up SDoH; Economic Stability, Education Access and Quality, Health Care Access and Quality, Neighborhood and Built Environment, and Social and Community Context. 80% of a person's health is made up of

Social Determinants where they live, the other 20% comes from your genetics. She shared how Neighborhood and Built Environment focuses on water quality, air quality, and weather. The quality and impact of the environment are often affected by historical, economic and sociopolitical factors. Sarah spoke to the negative impacts of inadequate code and code enforcement can make a difference on a community's health and well-being, especially those that are most vulnerable. Tenants in low-income areas may be reluctant to report violations, which results in extended exposure to those harmful environments like poor water quality, lead paint, lack of heat or air in intense weather which greatly impact a person's health and quality of life, as well as Respiratory illnesses. Per a source asthma rate in adults are highest among residents residing in East Topeka. Respiratory illnesses and asthma can be due to mold, moisture, pests, and the presence of lead paint, which can be tied to Code and Code Enforcement. There is a direct correlation between substandard housing and poor or lacking code regulations. SDoH-centered Code and Policy impacts health positively; Better Air and water quality, Empowered Homeownership, Reducing Landlord Negligence, and Decreased Homelessness.

Committee Member Banks requested that Director of LiveWell Shawnee County Sarah Karns-Vincent explain what redlining is so that everyone understands. Sarah shared that historically redlining took place as a means for getting certain racial groups out of neighborhoods through real estate, and local government policy. Dr. Tara Wallace is working with Topeka Bottoms Project and would be a good source. Committee Member Banks shared the reason he wanted the explanation was when he grew up in Chicago in the 40's and 50's they developed housing projects called Core way buildings that housed 300-400 families, and the term they use to call it was "clusters". And living like that caused people to have negative feelings about themselves, and their mental health, which eventually led to crime, and other things that weren't positive. He also shared Code enforcement in his opinion is when we provide areas or neighborhoods where people can look out and feel good about where they live it increases their health both mentally and socially, all those things improved.

Committee Chair Hiller shared that a reason for starting the Changing Our Culture of Property Maintenance (CoCPM) initiative was the data from SDoH; that walking down a poorly maintained street with vacant or rundown houses can cause anxiety. Director of LiveWell Shawnee County Sarah Karns-

Vincent shared that our ability to have close personal relationships where we're supported in times of need impacts our health greatly, it may not connect directly as neighborhood and built environment does to code enforcement. Committee Chair Hiller stated she brought it up due to when working code enforcement, you're telling people what they must do to their house or property, and the fundamentals go back to health and safety is reason for code, why language is the way it is and why we enforce it. Director of LiveWell Shawnee County Sarah Karns-Vincent shared requirements from landlords' impact directly the air quality, water quality, property maintenance, they are within the built environment domain that directly impacts a person's health.

Director of LiveWell Shawnee County Sarah Karns-Vincent extended her willingness to speak on any of the domains and factors that influence Public Health and Safety beyond code enforcement. And that SDoH is a wide vast area.

Changing Our Culture of Property Maintenance (CoCPM)

1. Marketing and Education Updates

Director of Communications Dan Garrett shared they have been working on Social Media to promote the CoCPM initiative. They recognized the first Yard of the Month winner, as well as created a video for it. The Yard of the Month Social Media video received over 14,000 views, and a lot of positive interaction. The next Yard of the Month winner will be announced on Thursday September 18, 2025, and media will be onsite. Dan also shared the Coffee with Code Event has had 137 people respond to the event online, the 1st one takes place this Saturday September 20th. Committee Chair Hiller requested more notice be sent to the Public Health & Safety Committee on the Yard of the Month winner announcements so that they can plan to attend.

Director of the Office of Inclusive Communities Monique Glaude' introduced Leo Hope. Leo will be the City of Topeka's new Community Navigator. Community Navigator Leo Hope shared his role is to connect neighbors to organizations, resources, and partnerships that help our community thrive. His goal is simple; To strengthen connections, provide support where it's needed and help create a more resilient community for everyone. Committee Chair Hiller and Committee Member Banks welcomed Leo aboard.

1. Upcoming Renter Education

Committee Chair Hiller shared that CoCPM has a contract with Kansas Legal Services (KLS) to provide legal counsel to anything related to code compliance for any individuals. This is an exception to what they typically do but because it's the contract with us regarding code compliance that they are available for assistance. She also shared that Nick Blessing with KLS reached out and they are putting together a city-wide community education program. The education program will be the evening of Thursday November 6th at the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library. She has requested KLS to include a solid piece on small claims court in the education program. Dan's team will be comarketing as well as Monique's team.

2. Coffee with Code

Changing our Culture Program Administrator Nicole Stovall shared that the first of three planned Coffee with Code Events is this Saturday September 20th from 10:00am-12:00pm at the Oakland Community Center. Property Maintenance Director John Schardine and at least two Property Maintenance Inspectors will be present. They will be able to answer questions as far as how stuff gets done and how inspections happen. The Fire Department and Zoning Departments have been invited, Fire Marshal Alan Stahl confirmed Fire will be there. It will be a collaborative effort to have some community contact while explaining what code and fire looks at, how they work together, and what their goals and accomplishments are. Committee Chair Hiller credited Property Maintenance Director John Schardine who took the initiative on his own to set up Coffee with Code. They are aware that people are afraid to call Fire, Police or Code, so people need education to help break down some barriers, to know things will be okay and they will be safe, since trust is so important.

Illegally Parked Vehicles - Citations for Abandoned Vehicles

Commander Colleen Stuart shared that she would like to request amendments be made to the Topeka Municipal Code Sections S2.40.130, S2.40.210 and S10.25.010 regarding the Ordinance concerning citations for abandoned vehicles. Colleen stated the Topeka Police Department (TPD) focuses strongly on responses to certain calls for service, and they concluded abandoned vehicles is perhaps best served by our Property

Maintenance Unit (PMU) as they deal with code violations on private property as well as public property all the time.

Commander Colleen Stuart shared that the Broken Windows Theory was initially about finding out where crime is and putting cops on dots. They saturate an area with law enforcement, crime goes down, law enforcement leaves, and it's a matter of time before crime is back up, making the Broken Window Theory the perception of crime. If a neighborhood allows junk vehicles, then that is the perception, there is indifference in the neighborhood. The Broken Windows Theory is a casual relationship between disorder and criminal activity and criminal behavior. She shared disorder weakens neighborhood control which generates opportunities for crime or conflict. The cycle continues until interventions are in place, which can be demolitions or cleanup campaigns

Commander Colleen Stuart stated that 973 See Click Fix requests have come to the Topeka Police Department in the past year, 629 (65%) were to report abandoned vehicles. An abandoned vehicle is one parked on a public street longer more than 48 hours or is blocking a driveway or ingress/egress. It has been proven challenging to track initial marking of a vehicle and follow-up towing due to not always being the same officer working area, and may be busy with higher priority calls, where the PMU is structured under TPD and knows the areas and works the same areas daily. This would allow them to create cases, write citations (currently only able to for vehicle violations of parking on an unimproved surface) if needed and request a tow truck, they would need some training. Colleen shares this has supported PMU's mission of protecting the public's health, safety, and welfare, as they work to improve the community's appearance and the quality of life in neighborhoods.

Committee Member Banks inquired if the only way we identify abandoned vehicles is if they're on the street. Commander Colleen Stuart stated yes that the ordinance talks about being on the public roadway. That is if PMU can handle this new workload along with their current workload, then they will work on having them help with vehicles on public property.

Committee Chair Hiller spoke to the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) that we have adopted defines their purview to include premises which includes the right of way near the property. So, they can already write up any inoperable vehicle because that's defined as not being road worthy

which we didn't have in the Topeka Municipal Code for years, that they're able to write up ones that are inoperable or on blocks, but they couldn't write up one that was just parked there indefinitely that was operable. Commander Colleen Stuart clarified they can't write a citation on private property for inoperable vehicles, that's part of charges they long form to the city municipal court, this ordinance expands their ability to write a citation on public roadway. Committee Chair Hiller inquired if you wrote that up under municipal code how much time do you have to wait to call a tow truck and get the car pulled from the public roadway. Commander Colleen Stuart stated 48 hours, but it does depend on the type of vehicle. There are some vehicles that are not allowed to park on the side of the roadway at all, for example semi-trucks. Committee Chair Hiller shared she meant how much time between when you ticket it and when it gets towed away. Commander Colleen Stuart stated it's immediately. Committee Chair Hiller spoke to, as of now with Property Maintenance Code you must write a ticket and give at least 10 days for them to remedy so it takes time. Commander Colleen Stuart shared that it's because of being private property. Changing our Culture Program Administrator Nicole Stovall shared from the date of the notice it's 13 days after that they go back and reinspect, once they have reinspected, they would go and apply for an administrative search warrant, once warrant is approved then they would be able to have the vehicle towed.

City Manager Dr. Robert Perez shared what is being proposed is an expansion of the ordinance to give our Property Maintenance Unit Inspectors the same authority that our police officers have, they would basically take over that function operating as the Police Department currently does. Timelines and everything would be the same.

Committee Member Banks shared that this is important enough of an issue to move to the Governing Body. Committee Chair Hiller agreed.

2024 International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC)

Committee Chair Hiller shared staff is looking at updating our property maintenance code from the 2012 version to the 2024 version, we did some customizing to the 2012 version and need to look at what the differences are in standards between the 2012 version and the 2024 version.

Changing our Culture Program Administrator Nicole Stovall spoke to 101.2.1 appendices and that Appendix A (Boarding Standards) will be adopted as a

guideline and Appendix B (Appeals) will be deleted in its entirety. It was decided to just keep the Boarding Standards which refers to how to board up an unsecure property, and delete the Appeals since we already have violations, hearings, and appeal type process already listed in our code.

Nicole shared that 109.9 Restoration or abatement had a portion added that's not in the 2012 code. It states, to the extent that repairs, alterations, or additions are made or a change in occupancy occurs during the restoration of the structure, such repairs, alterations, additions, or change of occupancy shall comply with the requirements of the International Existing Building Code. Committee Chair Hiller shared that code has said all along that the condition of an appliance or structure is they're going to rate it when they inspect it based on how it was supposed to be built or function when it was first created, whatever the codes were at that time, and this is clarifying that if they've got to redo it or replace it, it needs to be to current code. Nicole added that the next two are definition bases. When referring to Rubbish, they added the following items to the term shall include but not be limited to appliance parts, bicycle parts, inoperable lawn equipment, lawn equipment parts, and unsecured bins. Committee Chair Hiller stated this has been a big one for her. She shared when abatements are done and items are taken from people, and they were planning to repair the item, where is the line between someone with two items possibly just needing repaired versus trash and junk. Committee Member Banks stated that you would think they got a notice, they would remove those things since the abatement crew is coming. Changing our Culture Program Administrator Nicole Stovall stated from the time there is a notice that they have 13 days before reinspection happens, the first and foremost goal is to have voluntary compliance rather than going in and cleaning out a yard. Committee Member Banks inquired if there is much push back when they visit a property and tell that person that items are rubbish, and they don't feel its rubbish that they has plans to use the item for something. Nicole shared that she has heard there is push back for that reason, but that they must enforce the issue due to health and safety concerns versus their plans for the items. She shared that when referring to tenant they added; When the occupant is not the owner the occupant shall be considered a Tenant only when occupancy is with the permission of the owner.

Changing our Culture Program Administrator Nicole Stovall shared that 303.2 Enclosures had a small addition which was Private swimming pools equipped with a power safety cover that complies with ASTM F1346 and is in working condition using the control switch. Previously it just talked about spas and hot tubs and didn't mention private swimming pools.

Nicole shared that 304.14 Insect screens they added, and every screen door used for insect control shall have a self-closing device in good working

condition. Exception: Screens shall not be required where other approved means, such as air curtains or insect-repellent fans, are employed. She added that a screen door can't swing freely it must latch. Committee Chair Hiller stated that a lot of people that have kids and pets running back and forth don't like to have the self-closer on it by choice, she'd sure whether we should require it.

Changing our Culture Program Administrator Nicole Stovall shared that 304.17 Guards for basement windows was previously included in the 2012 code version, it will no longer be a standard in the 2024 code it's been deleted entirely. And that 605.4 Wiring the only change was they added "under carpets". Nicole shared that 701-704 Fire Safety Requirements had several portions that were added and or expanded in the 2024 version versus the 2012 version. Fire Marshal Alan Stahl shared that this allows us to work better as a team and gives us better foundations for education with our partners with PMU. If PMU is at a property and notice a minor violation this would allow them to cite the violation, where fire inspectors may not regularly visit. Alan shared that with fire code little will apply to rented single family homes, when talking about fire resistance ratings, those are all for common spaces. They come into play on multifamily and multitenant locations. Committee Chair Hiller spoke to PMU and Fire cross-training and collaborating with each other.

Changing our Culture Program Administrator Nicole Stovall shared that 705 Carbon Monoxide Alarms and Detection has been added to the 2024 code. Committee Chair Hiller stated they cost \$50 a piece, so what's the reaction and plan. Fire Marshal Alan Stahl shared they are a combination of a fire alarm and carbon monoxide alarm. He added that it's a great leap forward for the safety of Topeka. Committee Chair Hiller inquired people aren't aware of the requirement will there be education and conversations. Nicole shared it will only be in interior inspections; someone would have to allow us inside. But first and foremost, anything we do is about education and voluntary compliance. Alan shared they have tried to get the dual alarms for their smoke alarm program, but that the alarms are provided through American Red Cross and that they do not offer the dual alarm currently. Committee Member Banks shared that through our education program is trying to provide a comprehensive pathway for them, that you should always have a fire alarm but it's a good idea to have a carbon monoxide one as well. Committee Chair Hiller added that there's a difference between it's a good idea and it's the law, if we recommend it then say that, if it's something we require then enforce accordingly. She will work with appropriate staff on moving forward with the changes.

Next Meeting: Committee Chair Hiller requested to meet October 15, 2025 at 9:30 a.m. 1st Floor Conference Room; Cyrus K. Holliday Building 620 SE Madison.

Adjourn: Committee Chair Hiller adjourned the meeting at 11:09 a.m.

The video of this meeting can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/6hha5Dm4X8>