



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: July 15, 2025

Time: 11:00 a.m.

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

Committee members present: Councilmember Sylvia Ortiz. David Banks (Chair) and Neil Dobler.

Council member present: Councilmember Michelle Hoferer.

City staff present: City Manager Robert M. Perez, Deputy City Manager Braxton Copley, Assistant City Manager Avery Moore, Senior Attorney Brandy Roy-Bachman, Utilities Director Sylvia Davis, Public Works Director Steve Groen, City Engineer Mark Schreiner.

Call to Order

Committee member Ortiz called the meeting to order at 11:00 am.

Approval of June 17, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Committee member Neil Dobler made a motion to approve the June 17, 2025 meeting minutes. Committee member Sylvia Ortiz seconded. Motion approved 3-0-0.

Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Project Exceeding \$250K: SW 37th Street Topeka Boulevard to Kirkland Avenue. Project No. 841098.06.

Public Works Director Steve Groen spoke to the SW 37th Street Topeka Boulevard to Kirkland Avenue consisting of mill an overlay with full-depth patching. The project will be funded under the Pavement Management Program.

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

Amending the 2025-2034 CIP and the 2025-2027 CIB: SE 29th Street Kansas Avenue to Adams Street - Revised. Project No. 701039.00.

Public Works Director Steve Groen spoke to amending the 2025-2034 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the 2025-2027 Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) to increase the budget for street improvements at SE 29th Street Kansas Avenue to Adams Street. The project will include mill and overlay with minor patching and curb

replacement. Construction of the project will coincide with the Bridge project on SE 29th Street over Butcher Creek.

Committee member Ortiz questioned the guard rail on the bridge. Public Works Director Groen confirmed it will all be replaced.

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

Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Project Exceeding \$250K: SE 29th Street Kansas Avenue to Adams Street. Project No. 701039.00.

Public Works Director Steve Groen spoke to the project at SE 29th Street Kansas Avenue to Adams Street and rescinding Resolution No. 9632. He added Federal Funds exchange will be assisting with the increase to pay for railroad flagging services. All inspection services from BNSF Railway have been received. He spoke to the uncertainty of material pricing and that Contracts and Procurement are ready to send for bids. With the approval of the Public Infrastructure Committee on July 15, 2025 11:00 a.m. meeting it will go to the Governing Body meeting July 15, 2025 6:00 p.m. meeting.

Committee member Ortiz inquired about the traffic signal replacement at 29th and Fremont. She spoke to the concern of a business owner having a loss traffic due to the entrance closure. She expressed the importance to help the best way possible to limit full closer. Joe Harrington, Project Engineer, confirmed closure will happen two times for replacement of box culvert and for the waterline construction. Deputy City Manager Braxton Copley spoke to the difficultness of having large projects that require a closure. He added the improvement is extremely needed to increase the size of the box to assist with a large rain event. Staff intentionally reviewed the project to decrease the amount of closure and is now going in multiple phases. He added that the City does not have liability for loss of business. Lastly, he emphasized there will be access to the property but the through traffic cannot be maintained and will need to use a roundabout process.

Council member Michelle Hoferer inquired how long is the project will take. Groen responded it will take two years with the box covert beginning winter 2026.

Committee member Ortiz inquired about the median. Mark Schreiner, City Engineer, stated the median is coming out in the first phase to maintain traffic through, before the box is torn out, then the median will be replaced.

Committee chair Banks spoke to the importance to help business owners and consider ways to accommodate to help them stay functioning.

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

Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Project Exceeding \$250K: Central Park North Rockfire Odor Control. Project Nos. 291146.01, 291138.01, 291139.01, 291142.02.

Utilities Director Sylvia Davis spoke to the Central Park North Rockfire Odor Control project that will be furnishing all equipment, materials, supplies and labor. The cost is \$3,608,000. She spoke to the natural occurrence of odors of Hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) that is generated in wastewater through the microbial breakdown. She added that there has been an approach of addressing the odors with chemical feeds at the pump stations, which has led to spending between \$400,000 to \$500,000 per year on chemical costs. She continued to speak to the studies that were compiled and the 2023 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) project to begin addressing the odors more proactively. By using the technologies, it will keep from getting stagnant and reduce the odors.

Committee member Sylvia Ortiz inquired how Collins Park will be affected. Davis confirmed she will report back on the impact of the area.

Council member Michelle Hoferer questioned if the system will cut down on costs of the chemicals. Davis confirmed there will be a cost savings.

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

Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Project Exceeding \$250K: Shawnee I, II and Westedge Pump Stations. Project Nos. 291105.03, 291120.06, 291140.01, 291141.01.

Utilities Director Sylvia Davis spoke to the Shawnee I, II, and Westedge project replacing three failing pump stations near Lake Shawnee with two new wastewater pump stations. The project cost is \$4,094,000. She added by eliminating one station the operating and maintenance costs will be reduced.

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

Discussion:

Utility Rates - Readiness to Serve (RTS).

Utilities Director Sylvia Davis spoke to the Readiness to Serve (RTS). She provided a recap of the history from December 2022 concerning utilities for water, wastewater, and stormwater. On April 11, 2023 Ordinance No. 20416 was voted on by the Governing Body for the new rate structure in 2024, 2025 and 2026. She continued to speak to the RTS that was affective in 2024; any resident, whether the service is used and if you are connected, there is a base rate charge if there is a connection to water infrastructure or wastewater infrastructure. She added as it occurred only active users were being charged and it was following discussions per Ordinance that applying to

everyone whether it was an active user or not would be the change. She continued speaking to the terminology change that went into effect and is referred to Readiness to Serve base charge now. Also, property owners are now receiving monthly bills with a base charge for both water and wastewater. Lastly, she added 98% of active customer users had a minimal increase due to the addition of revenues of RTS monies.

Committee member Neil Dobler questioned the monetary impact of the RTS charge and how it now includes all properties that have a meter. He questioned if things were changed back to before how that could impact users. Davis responded that the impact is approximately \$500,00 for water and \$500,000 for wastewater for people that are not active users. She added if the total \$1,000,000 was spread to active users there would be approximately 90 cents for water and 80 cents for wastewater increase. Dobler continued to show his support for the need to go back to the previous ordinance with a base charge and continue with the rate schedule increase to apply to active users of water. He also expressed the importance of letting the community know about the Water Assistance that is available.

Committee member Sylvia Ortiz questioned the amount of Water Assistance funds available. Deputy Utilities Director Nicole Malott stated \$500,000 is available in funds and of that \$100,000 has been allocated to customer accounts for 2025, \$87,000 allocated in 2024. She noted there is an annual qualification, \$300 per utility account and paid out quarterly.

Committee member Sylvia Ortiz questioned what would happen to the customers that removed their water meter and did not want to pay. Dobler and Davis supports having a case by case situation to help customers.

Committee chair David Banks and Committee member Neil Dobler support bringing the proposed Ordinance to the Public Infrastructure Committee to have the language reviewed before it goes to the Governing Body for vote.

Committee chair David Banks thanked staff for their work and expressed his appreciation for the discussion.

Other Items:

Committee member Neil Dobler spoke to recent street projects in the City. He expressed his thanks to the staff and contractors for doing a good job and keeping residents informed.

Committee chair Banks stated that the Utility Department staff will contact concerned citizens for assistance with resolving property situations.

Committee Ortiz questioned about current RTS charges. Utilities Director Davis responded the current ordinance is still using the existing rate structure and confirmed accounts are still receiving the RTS charge. She added there has been a hold on requests for liens on unpaid balances on vacant properties. She confirmed there is

\$645,000 of unpaid balances for 2024 and 2025.

Public Comment:

Debbie Harrod spoke to utility rate charges and the collection of funds from all property owners that do not use water. She added the importance to keep all owners informed and to make sure they understand the process for collection accounts.

David Freise expressed his appreciation for the RTS discussion. He questioned how many more months would the RTS charges continue to be accessed.

Mike Conn spoke to the property at 2313 SE 29th Street. He referenced the rate increase for storm drains and the rain water that falls on the property. He believes the charges are unjustly and does not feel the water that drains off the property impacts any of the storm drains. He stated he would like the charges removed from his account.

Pat DeLapp referenced the RTS and his two water meters that previously was not charged for and did not apply to use the service. He continued to speak to accounts that are sent to collection agencies. Lastly, he spoke to his properties having continued sewer line maintenance issues and the possibilities to increase revenues and water usage for the City.

Adjourned 12:03 p.m.

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