



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

ECONOMICS & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: March 29, 2016
Time: 2:00 p.m.
Location: Holliday Conference Room, 620 SE Madison St.

Committee members present: Deputy Mayor Karen Hiller (Chair), Councilmembers Brendan Jensen and Jonathan Schumm.

City staff present: Sasha Haehn, Corrie Wright and Rachelle Vega-Retana from Neighborhood Relations and Doug Gerber, Interim Utilities Director.

1. Deputy Mayor Karen Hiller called the meeting to order.
2. The January 8, 2016 meeting minutes were approved.
3. Combining Utility Grant Programs Discussion

Discussion on whether it would be more cost effective to have all utility grant programs administered by one entity.

The Franchise Fee Program was explained by Doug Gerber (COT Utilities) and GR Laughlin (CRC). \$185,000 is budgeted for this program and held by the City; \$100,000 for water & wastewater, \$60,000 for gas & electric, and \$25,000 for administrative fees. Recipients of these funds can also qualify for other utility assistance programs. GR Laughlin stated that it is a challenge to get the word out to the community about this program. It would cost the City more than \$25,000 a year to pay a full-time employee to administer the Franchise Fee Program. CRC allows for one-stop-shopping.

The Water Share Program (previously Water Round Up Program) is advertised via flyers mailed out with water bills. City water customers have the option to donate money to this program; totals approximately \$15,000 annually. CRC administers this program for the City via Door Step, Salvation Army and Let's Help who disperse the funds to the water utility company.

Corrie Wright outlined the CDBG funds that are distributed for rent and utilities assistance to Catholic Charities and Door Step. Rachele Vega-Retana described the criteria for the Water Share Program.

Brendan Jensen expressed his concerns that citizens are being inconvenienced by having to go to multiple agencies and fill out multiple applications to get assistance. He wants to make getting assistance as easy as possible; would like to know how to do that.

John Homlish, Community Services Director for Community Action Inc. explained their utility & rent assistance program.

Corrie Wright mentioned that they are working on creating an application form that will be a single form used for multiple agencies. Brendan Jensen was happy to hear this and would like to see us try this system for a year and see how it goes.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

Meeting video can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_AjPehyigs