



# CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES

## POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL  
City Hall, 215 SE 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 255  
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Date: January 8, 2015

Time: 3:30 p.m.

Location: Executive Conference Room

Committee Members Present: Councilmembers Chad Manspeaker, Elaine Schwartz, and Nathan Schmidt

City Staff Present: Jim Colson (City Manager), Mary Feighny (Legal), Angela Horn (City Council)

- 1) Chairperson Manspeaker called the meeting to order.
- 2) Councilmember Schmidt moved to approve the May 19, 2014 meeting minutes. Councilmember Schwartz seconded it. Motion passed 3-0.
- 3) Discussion and possible action on A Charter Ordinance introduced by Councilmember Nathan Schmidt, amending City of Topeka Code Sections A2-21 and A2-22 concerning election of councilmembers.

Councilmember Schmidt agreed to sponsor the Citizen's Government Review Committee, who does a review of government every 10 years. The Committee has recommended that the City incorporate an at large form of government that would require councilmembers to be more accountable to the city as a whole rather than to their own districts.

Councilmember Schwartz asked for City Legal to comment on the possibility of putting several options on the ballot for future consideration. Mary Feighny stated that changing district lines would be an involved process and couldn't be done in time for the April elections.

Topeka citizen Orion Jordan voiced his opinion, opposing an at large form of government, based on his belief that citywide at large elections give a political advantage to certain neighborhoods.

Camille Nohe, President elect of the League of Women Voters, stated that she also opposed an at large form of government.

The Committee members presented their points of view regarding an at large form of government and how that would impact Topeka.

Councilmember Manspeaker discussed Lawrence, Kansas, who has an at large form of government that has no diversity amongst its members. He stated that he feels that we have a system that works. He also stated that when we create hurdles or make it hard for constituents to understand who their representatives are, people tend to disengage.

Councilmember Schmidt stated that this is not a reversal to what we have now, it is a tweak. This is saying that district members get to elect 2 people to represent their district. He believes this plan would be an improvement to the council.

Councilmember Schwartz stated that this is a radical change by making it a city wide vote. It would limit the candidates that would apply to run. She would like to continue to study other cities.

Councilmember Schmidt made a motion to discuss this item with the City Council. There was no second. Motion died.

4) There were no other items before the Committee.

Meeting was adjourned.