

Council Minutes – March 8, 2016

COUNCIL CHAMBER, Topeka, Kansas, Tuesday, March 8, 2016. The Councilmembers of the City of Topeka met in regular session at 6:00 P.M., with the following Councilmembers present: Councilmembers Hiller, Clear, Schumm, De La Isla, Jensen, Schwartz, Coen and Harmon -8. Mayor Larry E. Wolgast presided -1. Absent: Councilmember Ortiz -1.

AFTER THE MEETING was called to order, Barry Feaker, Topeka Rescue Mission, gave the invocation.

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by those present in the chamber.

A PRESENTATION of the Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority (TMTA) Update was given by Susan Duffy, TMTA General Manager. She stated TMTA continues to evaluate services to ensure they are meeting the needs of the community. She discussed route changes and additions, Flex Service, expanding hours and changes to peak and off-peak frequency. She thanked TMTA employees and community partners for their success on the road.

Elsie Eisenbarth, TMTA Board Chair, provided a brief overview of the TMTA Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2015, Bike Share Program, Kids Ride Free Program and new ticket vending machines.

Mayor Wolgast commended TMTA for their service to the community.

Councilmember De La Isla asked what has contributed to reduced ridership and how the Bike Share Program was being utilized in the community.

Susan Duffy reported the Bike Share Program was being used by people as a transportation tool as well as for recreation. She noted statistics show ridership may have slowed because of lower gas prices.

Councilmember Clear asked if TMTA was offering special programs during Spring Break.

Susan Duffy stated TMTA was currently promoting Families Ride Free all during Spring Break. She reported 51,000 kids took advantage of the free rides last year compared to 2,000 in 2011.

Councilmember Hiller commended TMTA on their creativity and engaging the community on public transportation.

THE CONSENT AGENDA was presented as follows:

BOARD APPOINTMENT recommending the appointment of Christine Steinkuehler to the Topeka Landmarks Commission for a term ending March 8, 2019, was presented.

MINUTES of the regular meeting of March 1, 2016, was presented.

Councilmember De La Isla moved to approve the consent agenda. The motion seconded by Councilmember Jensen carried unanimously. Mayor Wolgast voted “yes.” (9-0-0)

DISCUSSION relating to the Topeka Pedestrian Master Plan was presented.

Bill Fiander, Planning Department Director, stated the Pedestrian Master Plan was initiated and funded through a grant from the Metropolitan Topeka Planning Organization (MTPO) to address pedestrian accessibility needs in the community and is recommended for implementation. He reported the four major goals of the Plan include:

- 1) A complete pedestrian network connecting all neighborhoods.
- 2) Maintained sidewalks for safe travel at all times.
- 3) A safe and comfortable walking environment.
- 4) A culture of walking.

Mr. Fiander summarized the recommended actions to prioritize over \$21 million of sidewalks, ADA ramps and crosswalk improvements in the City’s highest pedestrian demand areas (Group A) which include areas around schools, bus routes, parks and intensive care/at risk neighborhoods. He reported Group A would include #2 North Topeka East, #4 East Topeka North, #9 Central Park, #12 Elmhurst, #13 Old Town and #18 29th Street. He commented on the

process which has included community forums, stakeholder committee meetings, citizen survey responses and neighborhood group meetings. He noted the recommendation is to implement the plan from 2016-2019 and includes continuing annual allocations for Infill Sidewalks in the CIP at \$600,000, Complete Streets in the CIP for \$100,000 and devoting \$100,000 out of \$300,000 for ADA ramps allocated in the CIP. He thanked City staff and Topeka residents for their help in planning the focus areas and noted 45 miles of new sidewalks and 16 miles of repairs would complete the goal as outlined in the plan.

Mayor Wolgast asked staff to comment on the significance of a Pedestrian Master Plan.

Councilmember Jensen expressed concern with funding being inadequate in regards to addressing pedestrian accessibility.

Bill Fiander stated adopting the plan would implement the goals by supporting increased levels of funding for sidewalk repair and infill sidewalks in the community. He reported the projects would include infill sidewalks and repairs, ADA improvements, crosswalks and pedestrian-focused lighting.

Councilmember Schumm reported citizens continue to support street improvements as a priority before sidewalks.

Teresa Miller spoke in support of the Pedestrian Master Plan.

DISCUSSION of the proposed 2017-2021 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and 2017-2019 Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) was presented.

Doug Gerber, Deputy City Manager, reported the CIP outlines a five-year plan for capital improvements and the corresponding CIB consists of a three-year budget outlining funding sources. He reported discussion would continue at the March 15, 2016, Council meeting with consideration of the CIP resolution proposed in April 2016.

Nickie Lee, Budget Manager, stated the CIP and CIB are planning tools which authorize expenditures of funds identified in each project budget and reflected in that year's operating budget in the appropriate fund. She reported the CIP information and an educational video could be found on the City's website at www.topeka.org. She gave a brief overview of the 2017-2021 Proposed CIP which includes a forecast of major funds and financial information, a funding sheet for each project broken down by funding source, Citywide Half-Cent Sales Tax projects split by year and Information Technology Department projects.

Brandon Kauffman, Finance Director, gave a brief debt overview which included outstanding and projected general obligation bonds, utility revenue bonds, State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) and the City's total current and projected debt levels based on no rate increases. He stated the two most important financial indicators Moody's will focus on is the determination of the City's rates in regards to Days Cash and Debt Service Coverage Ratio which are both trending downward.

Councilmember De La Isla encouraged staff and the Governing Body to be proactive and monitor the City's debt service to promptly address any impact on the City's audit ratings.

Councilmember Jensen commended staff for planning ahead and asked when the City should start addressing issues that directly impact ratings.

Doug Gerber stated the City currently has a three-year utility rate increase from 2015 through 2017; however, discussions will continue with the anticipation to consider action in the 2018 City operating budget.

Councilmember Schumm asked how much spending would need to be reduced to avoid a rate increase in 2018.

Jim Colson, City Manager, stated the amount could not be determined at this time. He reported staff would focus funding analysis break down on existing and projected expenditures in all categories and isolate them to determine internal savings first.

Councilmember Hiller expressed concern with the City's debt service and encouraged staff to scrutinize every dollar to ensure the City was making good financial decisions.

Jim Colson stated he understands concerns expressed by the Governing Body as well as the serious situation the City may be facing in the future regarding the proposed tax lid.

Nickie Lee highlighted some general fund and enterprise fund projects. She stated continued discussion as well as a review of 2015 projects is scheduled for the March 15, 2016, Council meeting with consideration of the CIP resolution next month.

Councilmember Schumm asked if the Ash Street Force Main Replacement project was the location where the City experienced issues with overflow being released into the Kansas River.

Doug Gerber stated the Ash Street Force Main Replacement project is part of an overall improvement to the system and it was not the location of overflow permitted by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

Mayor Wolgast requested a list of completed Citywide Half-Cent Sales Tax projects.

Councilmember Schumm requested staff review the \$500,000 placeholder for the proposed Kansas Turnpike Authority (KTA) interchange and if more funds should be allocated moving forward into 2020.

Doug Gerber stated staff would prepare reports on the completed projects as well as present more information on the projects during the continued CIP discussion on March 15, 2016. He reported the funding set aside for the KTA interchange was for design purposes only and more funding would be needed to move forward with the project.

Councilmember Schwartz commented on the City's water quality and the need for oxidization. She questioned if the issue has been addressed in the CIP.

Doug Gerber stated the project was not included in the CIP because it was determined the City's water meets all levels at this time; however, if it becomes an issue the City would have adequate time to address the problem and adjust projects within the CIP to accommodate needed action.

Teresa Miller spoke in support of the CIP and commended staff on improved transparency of project information.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CITY MANAGER, MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL;

Jennifer Goodrich, Deputy City Clerk, gave a brief overview of the March 15, 2016, Council agenda.

Jim Colson, City Manager referenced the CIP Open House held on March 3, 2016, and the great discussions held with the public. He announced Catherine Walter, Assistant City Attorney, was awarded the 2016 Boss of the Year by the Topeka Legal Professionals. He also announced the groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of the Oakland Levee Unit would be held March 31, 2016 at 11:00 a.m.; and a news conference would be held March 10, 2016, at 1:00 p.m. in front of Highland Park High School announcing the partnership between Topeka Public Schools, the City of Topeka and local businesses to provide wifi access to middle and high school students of Topeka Unified School District 501 for the purpose of allowing students to complete their course work. He encouraged business owners within a half-mile radius of any USD 501 secondary school willing to allow students free access to their wireless internet to contact Monique Glaude at mglaude@topeka.org or 785-368-4470 by March 25, 2016.

Councilmember Clear announced the Boys and Girls Club of Topeka will host the Great Futures Gala on March 29, 2016, from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Downtown Ramada Hotel.

Councilmember Schumm encouraged local businesses to participate in the free wifi access program for secondary students and to contact Monique Glaude at 785-368-4470 for more information.

Councilmember De La Isla thanked City staff for their work on the Pedestrian Master Plan and presentation of the CIP and CIB. She commended staff on the level of work and information given to the Governing Body to help make informed decisions.

Councilmember Jensen commended the Jayhawk Area Council Boy Scouts of America on their involvement in the community.

Councilmember Schwartz commended City staff on the presentation of the CIP and CIB and encouraged everyone to view the informative CIP video on the City's website at www.topeka.org. She commended Police Chief James Brown on a Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) he attended and noted some of his comments at the forum were published nationally. She stated this week's "gem" of Topeka is the Topeka Police Department and Animal Control Division.

Councilmember Coen announced a public meeting would be held on March 10, 2016, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at Cornerstone Community Church to discuss the widening of SW 21st Street from SW Urish Road to SW Indian Hills Road. He also announced construction has begun on the Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Pool Project at SW Urish Road and SW 21st Street.

Councilmember Hiller commended City staff and the public for working together on the Pedestrian Master Plan and the City for hosting the Open House CIP on March 3, 2016.

Joseph Ledbetter appeared to speak under public comment.

Councilmember Jensen moved to recess into executive session for a time period not to exceed 30 minutes to discuss potential litigation and to include the Governing Body, City Manager, Deputy City Manager, Finance Director and City Attorney. The motion seconded by Councilmember Clear carried unanimously. Mayor Wolgast voted “yes.” (9-0-0)

Councilmember De La Isla left the room.

At 8:15 p.m., the Governing Body reconvened into open session and Mayor Wolgast announced no action was taken.

Councilmember Jensen moved to recess into executive session for a time period not to exceed 20 minutes to continue discussion on potential litigation and to include the Governing Body, City Manager, Deputy City Manager, Finance Director and City Attorney. The motion seconded by Councilmember Coen carried unanimously. Mayor Wolgast voted “yes.” (8-0-0)

At 8:36 p.m., the Governing Body reconvened into open session and Mayor Wolgast announced no action was taken.

Councilmember Jensen moved to recess into executive session for a time period not to exceed 15 minutes to discuss non-elected personnel matters and to include the Governing Body and City Manager. The motion seconded by Councilmember Clear carried unanimously. Mayor Wolgast voted “yes.” (8-0-0)

At 8:51 p.m., the Governing Body reconvened into open session and Mayor Wolgast announced no action was taken.

Councilmember Coen moved to recess into executive session for a time period not to exceed 15 minutes to continue discussion of non-elected personnel matters and to include the Governing

Body and City Manager. The motion seconded by Councilmember Jensen carried unanimously.
Mayor Wolgast voted “yes.” (8-0-0)

At 9:11 p.m., the Governing Body reconvened into open session and Mayor Wolgast announced no action was taken.

Councilmember Hiller moved to recess into executive session for a time period not to exceed 15 minutes to discuss non-elected personnel matters and to include the City Council and Human Resources Director. The motion seconded by Councilmember Clear carried unanimously.
(7-0-0)

At 9:30 p.m., the City Council reconvened into open session and Deputy Mayor Hiller announced no action was taken.

NO FURTHER BUSINESS appearing the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Brenda Younger
City Clerk