

Council Minutes – July 22, 2014
Special Meeting

COUNCIL CHAMBER, Topeka, Kansas, Tuesday, July 22, 2014. The Councilmembers of the City of Topeka met for a Special Meeting at 6:00 P.M., with the following Councilmembers present: Councilmembers Hiller, Brown, Ortiz, Everhart, De La Isla, Manspeaker, Schwartz, Schmidt and Harmon -9. Mayor Larry E. Wolgast presided -1.

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

Councilmember Harmon referenced an article published in the Topeka Capital Journal newspaper on July 16, 2014, in regards to the July 15, 2014 Council meeting and his early exit during the meeting. He announced his formal apology to the residents of Topeka, the Governing Body, City staff and Shawnee County Commissioners.

Councilmember Everhart moved to suspend Council Rules 6.1 and 6.2(g). The motion seconded by Councilmember De La Isla carried unanimously. (9-0-0)

Councilmember Ortiz moved to reconsider the resolution expressing the City Council's position to the Board of Commissioners of Shawnee County regarding the proposed ballot question for a countywide retailers' sales tax. The motion seconded by Councilmember Brown carried unanimously. (9-0-0)

RESOLUTION NO. 8642 introduced by City Manager Jim Colson, expressing the City Council's position to the Board of Commissioners of Shawnee County regarding the proposed submission of a ballot question to the electorate for a countywide retailers' sales tax was presented.

Councilmember Schwartz moved to approve the resolution. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Schmidt.

Councilmember Hiller spoke in support of the resolution; however, she would like to review the interlocal agreement before September 1, 2014, and research the option of applying the 2004 countywide sales tax surplus revenue to the County Trails System.

Mayor Wolgast explained the ballot question process between the City and Shawnee County. He stated the resolution would be a tool to convey the City's views on what projects could be funded through the extension of the countywide sales tax.

Councilmember Manspeaker asked if the Infill Sidewalks project was included in the resolution.

Jim Colson, City Manager, reported he has discussed with Shawnee County whether to consider utilizing surplus funds which expire in December 2016 for the Infill Sidewalks project and the County Trails System. He stated there are ongoing discussions regarding the issue and would keep the Council informed as discussions move forward.

Councilmember Ortiz requested the City Attorney read the list of projects included in the resolution.

Chad Sublet, City Attorney, read the following projects which are included in the resolution:

1. Economic development
2. SW 6th Avenue – Gage Boulevard to Fairlawn Road
3. SW 17th Street – Adams to Washburn
4. SW 17th Street – MacVicar to Kansas Interstate 470
5. Topeka Boulevard – 15th Street to 21st Street
6. SE California – 37th Street to 45th Street
7. NE Seward – Sumner to Forest
8. SW Huntoon Street – Gage Boulevard to Harrison Street
9. SW 12th Street – Gage Boulevard to Kansas Avenue
10. NW Rochester Road – US Hwy 24 to NW 50th Street
11. NW 46th Street – Button Road (N) to Rochester Road
12. County Bridges
13. Topeka Zoological Park

14. Kansas Expocentre
15. SW 29th Street – Fairlawn to Wanamaker
16. SW 37th Street – Scapa Place to Burlingame
17. SE 37th Street – Kansas to Adams
18. Bikeways Master Plan

Councilmember Ortiz asked if economic development could be listed as a separate ballot question because she believes it is important to let the public decide if \$75 million should be allocated towards economic development.

Chad Sublet stated economic development could be requested as a separate ballot question.

Councilmember Schwartz reported she has spoken with many of her constituents and they prefer to allocate funds to better the City's infrastructure.

Councilmember Harmon stated the 2004 sales tax was approved for two purposes, (1) to find a stable funding source for economic development and (2) to provide funding for infrastructure projects inside and outside city limits. He listed many projects such as the Topeka Boulevard Bridge that were completed with sales tax revenues and allowed focus on other areas of improvement, as well as, stable funding of economic development which is critical to bring businesses to Topeka. He stated he hopes the Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce, Growth Organization of Topeka and Joint Economic Development Organization would be willing to consider if the current economic development model is still valid or should be modified to move into the future. He suggested the Governing Body contact the Kansas Legislature and League of Kansas Municipalities to discuss changing the limit of dividing sales tax revenues from 1/4 of one cent to 1/8 of one cent so that more flexibility could be used when separating a ballot question. He noted he believes the whole process has focused too much on what projects could be included in the ballot question; therefore, if it fails it has jeopardized our economic investment dollars. He expressed concern with presenting the ballot question two years before it is set to expire in 2016 which has also raised some suspicions within the community. He commented on

the need to put infrastructure projects first because public support starts to fall away when trails, bikeways and the Zoo are added. He spoke in opposition of allocating \$45 million to the Kansas Expocentre because he believes sales tax revenues are not a proper funding source and ties the Expocentre to this particular location for another 22 years. He stated the Expocentre has served the community well for many years; however, it is an aging structure and he does not believe this is the right avenue to address the repair issues.

Councilmember Hiller stated she would like to work on the interlocal agreement soon with hopes of prioritizing street projects first. She reported many constituents have expressed strong support for a seven (7) to ten (10) year extension and have suggested expanding and clarifying Joint Economic Development Organization's (JEDO) role and setting measurable goals.

Mayor Wolgast commented on the process which has included public meetings and working with Shawnee County Commissioners to understand the issues pertaining to now and in the future. He noted it has been very challenging to decide what issues to put on the ballot for the next ten (10) years.

The motion to approve the resolution carried. Councilmembers Ortiz, Manspeaker and Harmon voted "no." (6-3-0)

NO FURTHER BUSINESS appearing the meeting was adjourned at 6:27 p.m.

Brenda Younger
City Clerk