

Council Minutes – November 17, 2015

COUNCIL CHAMBER, Topeka, Kansas, Tuesday, November 17, 2015. 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 and Schwartz -6. Mayor Larry E. Wolgast presided -1. Absent: Councilmembers Ortiz, Coen and Harmon -3.

AFTER THE MEETING was called to order, Francis Wood, Legislative Director of Womens' Christian Temperance Union, gave the invocation.

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

A PRESENTATION on the South Kansas Avenue Project was provided by Doug Whitacre, Public Works Director.

Governing Body members commended City staff members for their great management of the project to date and expressed their appreciation to the private sector for their extensive contributions.

A PRESENTATION on the 3rd Quarter Financial Report and Yearend Projections was provided by Brandon Kauffman, Finance Department Director, and Doug Gerber, Deputy City Manager.

Pat Downes, Topeka-Shawnee County Riverfront Authority Director of Development, provided an update on the status of the Kansas River Weir project.

Governing Body members commended City staff for their excellent leadership in fiscal management.

THE CONSENT AGENDA was presented as follows:

BOARD APPOINTMENT recommending the appointment of Joel Cromwell to the Shawnee County Community Corrections Advisory Board for a term ending November 30, 2017, was presented.

ADVISORY COUNCIL APPOINTMENT recommending the appointment of Joseph Harrington to the City of Topeka ADA Advisory Council for a term ending November 30, 2017, was presented.

BOARD APPOINTMENT recommending the appointment of Carole Jordan to the Topeka Board of Zoning Appeals to fill an unexpired term ending November 30, 2018, was presented.

BOARD APPOINTMENT recommending the appointment of Patrice Coleman to the Community Action Board was presented. Appointee will serve the same term as the Mayor and the Council Representatives.

MINUTES of the regular meeting of November 10, 2015, was presented.

Councilmember Jensen moved to approve the consent agenda. The motion seconded by Councilmember Clear carried unanimously. Mayor Wolgast voted “yes.” (7-0-0)

AUTHORIZING a public hearing for December 8, 2015, for the purpose of hearing answering objections of taxpayers relating to the proposed amendments to the 2015 Operating Budget was presented.

Brandon Kauffman, Finance Department Director, reported there were a total of nine budgets to be amended totaling \$2,810,276. He stated approval would set the public hearing date on December 8, 2015.

Councilmember Schumm moved to approve the public hearing date of December 8, 2015, and to authorize the publication of the notice of public hearing in the November 23, 2015, Topeka Metro Newspaper. The motion seconded by Councilmember De La Isla carried unanimously. Mayor Wolgast voted “yes.” (7-0-0)

RESOLUTION NO. 8735 introduced by City Manager Jim Colson, naming banks and savings institutions that are designated as depositories for all City of Topeka accounts and authorizing signatories and rescinding City of Topeka Resolution No. 8689, was presented.

Brandon Kauffman, Finance Department Director, reported approval was necessary due to changes in staff and working titles to complete daily duties.

Councilmember Jensen moved to approve the resolution. The motion seconded by Councilmember De La Isla carried unanimously. Mayor Wolgast voted “yes.” (7-0-0)

RESOLUTION NO. 8736 introduced by City Manager Jim Colson, concerning the City of Topeka’s participation in the State of Kansas Municipal Investment Pool and rescinding City of Topeka Resolution No. 8688, was presented.

Brandon Kauffman, Finance Department Director, reported approval was necessary to amend changes in staff and working titles.

Councilmember Hiller moved to approve the resolution. The motion seconded by Councilmember Jensen carried unanimously. Mayor Wolgast voted “yes.” (7-0-0)

RESOLUTION NO. 8737 supporting two grant applications for the Kansas Department of Transportation’s (KDOT) 2015 Transportation Alternatives (TA) program was presented.

Bill Fiander, Planning Department Director, reported approval would support two grant applications sponsored by the City of Topeka for Quincy Elementary Safe Routes to School and the Hi-Crest/Landon Trail Multi-Use Bridge.

Ralph Krumins spoke in support of the Hi-Crest/Landon Trail Multi-Use Program and the overall improvements of the bicycle system throughout the city.

Susan Liotta, Quincy Elementary Principal, spoke in support of the Quincy Elementary Safe Routes to School program and stated there was a great need for sidewalks for school children.

Andy Fry spoke in support of the Hi-Crest/Landon Trail Multi-Use program and noted it allows connectivity of Hi-Crest to other parts of the city.

Joseph Ledbetter, Hi-Crest Neighborhood Improvement Association President, spoke in support of the Hi-Crest/Landon Trail Multi-Use program and noted the program supports the overall neighborhood plan.

Councilmember Schwartz stated the programs are a great example of many entities working together for the betterment of the community.

Councilmember De La Isla moved to approve the resolution. The motion seconded by Councilmember Jensen carried unanimously. Mayor Wolgast voted “yes.” (7-0-0)

RESOLUTION NO. 8738 introduced by City Manager Jim Colson, approving the 2016 Neighborhood Empowerment Grants as recommended by the Neighborhood Empowerment Grant Committee was presented.

Sasha Stiles, Department of Neighborhood Relations Director, reported approval would allocate \$137,890 to seven projects in Central Highland Park, Central Park, Oakland, Valley Park and Ward-Meade and provide for a contingency of \$12,110 for an allocated total of \$150,000.

Councilmember Schumm moved to approve the resolution. The motion seconded by Councilmember Jensen carried unanimously. Mayor Wolgast voted “yes.” (7-0-0)

DISCUSSION regarding legislative priorities identified by the Council to be addressed or monitored during the 2016 Legislative Session was presented.

Jim Colson, City Manager, stated the discussion would begin the process of developing 2016 legislative priorities for the purpose of developing a legislative agenda for the City of Topeka Governing Body to present for consideration during the 2016 Legislative Session.

Whitney Damron, City of Topeka Lobbyist, provided a brief overview of the issues facing the Kansas Legislature in 2016. He discussed proposed priorities including abandoned housing; tax policy and urban economic development opportunities.

Councilmember Schwartz commented on the removal of \$9 million from the Kansas Children Cabinet and Trust Fund and asked if it was anticipated more lawsuits would occur similar to the Kansas School Finance lawsuit.

Whitney Damron stated he was unable to make a prediction about lawsuits and related budget cuts as this time. He announced the Shawnee County Delegation would hold a meeting on December 14, 2015, at the Statehouse and encouraged Governing Body members to speak about issues of interest or the legislative agenda.

DISCUSSION regarding the recent City of Topeka bond rating received by Moody's rating services was presented.

Brandon Kauffman, Finance Department Director, and Doug Gerber, Deputy City Manager, provided a brief overview of the methodology of Moody's Investment Services, the company currently providing the City's utility bond rating. He stated the City was evaluated on (1) System Characteristics, (2) Financial Strength, (3) Management and (4) Legal Provisions. He discussed the general indicators the City needs to address including asset conditions that may need improvement; decrease of debt or increase of revenues; rate management and improved capital planning.

Jim Colson, City Manager, reported staff plans to discuss the overall system and include public input before a utility rate change would be considered or implemented.

Mayor Wolgast asked what amount the City's utility bonds total.

Councilmember Jensen asked how long the current rating would hold steady or improve.

Brandon Kauffman stated the City's total utility bonds are approximately \$132 million and it would be difficult to determine how long the current rating would hold.

Jim Colson stated the City is driven by the best financial practices and cares greatly about the rating; however, it is important to consider addressing the overall long-term issues such as infrastructure improvements.

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

Mayor Wolgast announced there would be no City Council meeting November 25, 2015.

Jim Colson, City Manager, announced the City received the Government Finance Officers' Achievement Award for fiduciary reporting and transparency. He commented on the upcoming holidays and the great opportunities in the community which allow people to focus on humanity and remind everyone of the challenges others face during the holiday season.

Councilmember Schwartz announced this week's "gem" of Topeka is Visit Topeka Inc., and the city's attraction sites. She encouraged citizens to visit Topeka attractions and experience all the community has to offer.

Councilmember Hiller expressed her appreciation to Visit Topeka Inc., on their new vision and the development of "The Cyrus" along South Kansas Avenue, a boutique 79-room hotel. She announced the ground breaking of the new Southwest Topeka Public Aquatic Center along SW 21st Street and SW Urish Road and noted Midwest Health Management Inc., has contributed \$1 million towards the aquatic center. She commended the individuals honored at the Topeka 20 Under 40 banquet held on November 12, 2015.

Councilmember Clear asked when the Governing Body would receive a copy of the draft fire study.

Jim Colson stated draft studies are not typically distributed; therefore, it would not be provided at this time.

Councilmembers De La Isla and Jensen encouraged people to volunteer during the holiday season to help those in need and offered their thoughts and prayers to the citizens of Paris, France.

Mayor Wolgast announced the Community Thanksgiving Dinner would be held on November 26, 2015, at the Kansas Expo Centre Agriculture Hall starting at noon. He stated the meal serves over 1,000 citizens in the community and if citizens would like to volunteer with the dinner they should contact the Topeka Rescue Mission at (785)354-1744.

Joseph Ledbetter appeared to speak under public comment.

Councilmember Hiller moved to recess into executive session for a time period not to exceed 45 minutes to discuss non-elected personnel and to include the Governing Body. The motion seconded by Councilmember Clear carried unanimously. (7-0-0)

At 8:42 p.m., the Governing Body reconvened into open session and Mayor Wolgast announced that no action was taken.

Councilmember Hiller moved to recess into executive session for a time period not to exceed 40 minutes to continue discussion relating to non-elected personnel and to include the Governing Body. The motion seconded by Councilmember Clear carried unanimously. (7-0-0)

At 9:22 p.m., the Governing Body reconvened into open session and Mayor Wolgast announced that no action was taken.

Councilmember Hiller moved to recess into executive session for a time period not to exceed 30 minutes to continue discussion relating to non-elected personnel and to include the Governing Body. The motion seconded by Councilmember Clear carried unanimously. (7-0-0)

At 9:52 p.m., the Governing Body reconvened into open session and Mayor Wolgast announced that no action was taken.

NO FURTHER BUSINESS appearing the meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Brenda Younger
City Clerk