



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

BUDGET COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: June 17, 2015
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: Law Enforcement Center, 320 S. Kansas Ave.

Committee Members present: Deputy Mayor Karen Hiller (Chair), Councilmembers Richard Harmon, Elaine Schwartz, Sylvia Ortiz, Sandra Clear, Jeff Coen, Jonathan Schumm, and Advisory Member Mayor Larry Wolgast. Councilmembers Michelle De La Isla and Brendan Jensen arrived late.

Staff present: Administrative & Financial Services Director Doug Gerber, Budget Manager Nickie Lee, Deputy City Attorney Mary Feighny, City Manager Jim Colson and Department Heads and/or their representatives.

1. Call to Order - Deputy Mayor Karen Hiller, Chair
2. Councilmember Harmon moved to approve the June 13, 2015 meeting minutes; seconded by Councilmember Clear. Approved 8-1. Councilmember Ortiz abstained due to not having time to review the minutes prior to the meeting.
3. Opening Comments
Councilmember Coen stated that since the City has more revenue than expenses, he would like to see some of that money returned to the taxpayers.
4. Follow up from June 13, 2015 meeting
Nickie Lee reviewed Supplement 1: 2016 Budget Committee Q&A (see Q&A handout attached).

Nickie Lee referred Councilmember Clear to page 199 in the Budget Book to see all FTE's by Department.

Councilmember Schwartz asked Nickie Lee to provide a visual chart showing the percentage breakdown of the general fund.

Councilmember Ortiz would like to know how the new software for Code Enforcement, that was intended to create efficiencies, is working. She asked Jim Colson to come back with an answer at a later time.

Councilmember Ortiz asked why the Van Buren School has not been torn down, and where is the owner. Jim Colson stated that the City does not

have the funding to pay for the asbestos. He said he would get back to the Committee with the specifics.

Councilmember Schwartz asked if the City goes after bad debt relating to code compliance fines. Jim Colson stated that the City does use collection agencies and he will get details on this process to the Committee.

Nickie Lee provided details on the 2016 Downtown Redevelopment Incentive Grant Program. Councilmember Schumm stated that one of the grant recipients is familiar to him and he wanted to be sure there is no conflict of interest; Doug Gerber stated that the Assistant City Attorney, Mary Feighny, is aware of this and is looking into it.

Deputy Mayor Hiller asked if property valuations have increased approximately 70% how does that compare to what the expense was. Nickie Lee stated that she would get that information to the Committee.

Councilmember De La Isla made a correction to a previous statement she had made, stating that the return on investment was 3 to 1; it is actually 10 to 1.

Jim Colson asked Vince Frye, President/CEO of Downtown Topeka Inc. to come forward to answer questions regarding the 2016 Downtown Redevelopment Incentive Grant Program.

Councilmember Ortiz asked what the Topeka Cemetery did with the emergency funds that were given to them years ago? She recalled that Topeka Cemetery had indicated that they would use the funds for a project that all other cemeteries would want to model. She asked staff to look into this.

Councilmember Ortiz would like the City to ask the County if they can put money into the City budget for their use of City4 staff and equipment to broadcast their meetings. Jim Colson stated that he would look into it and get back to the Committee.

Councilmember Schwartz would like funds budgeted for new street lights. There is a long waiting list of requests for new street lights, but the list never goes down because there are no funds available.

Councilmember Ortiz asked Jim Colson to research the maintenance cost for the upkeep of new street lights, and to provide this information to the Committee. She stated that she can get a Community Development Block Grant for new street lights, but the grant cannot be used for street light maintenance.

Jim Colson stated that his Executive Assistant, Kelly Baker, has just completed grant writing training and will be working with Departments to assist with grant writing.

Mayor Wolgast asked that training/travel funds be added to the City Council budget to allow Council Members to attend meetings & conferences such as the League of Kansas Municipalities. He stated that JEDO and GoTopeka pays for the Council to attend the annual Intercity Benchmarking.

Public Works Director Doug Whitacre presented a proposed solution and funding requirements to address street preventative maintenance and routine replacements. Doug stated that it would require an additional eight equipment operator positions and one new street sweeper per year, to provide quarterly street sweeping citywide.

Jim Colson responded to Councilmember Schwartz' concern regarding so many trash trucks damaging streets and alleys. He stated that he would be happy to come back with a legal analysis on this issue, which could be run through the Policy and Finance Committee if desired.

Councilmember Jensen suggested adding a surcharge to the trash provider's fees to pay for street and alley repairs.

Councilmember Ortiz asked if there are funds in the budget to keep the ditches clean? Doug Gerber confirmed that there was. She asked Doug Gerber to provide how much money is in the budget for ditch cleaning and what it covers?

Councilmember Ortiz asked why we have a 19 million dollar fund balance in the half cent sales tax? Jim Colson will research and provide an answer.

Deputy Mayor Hiller proposed that leftover Social Services Grant funds be distributed to Keep America Beautiful. These funds could be used to bring a designated area of Topeka up to code to be a model for other areas.

Meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

The videos of this meeting can be found at:

Part 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9qxMExvcKA&feature=youtu.be>

Part 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pd6IqRJ-Nww>