

Special Governing Body Meeting Minutes – June 25, 2019

LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER, Topeka, Kansas, Wednesday, June 25, 2019. The Governing Body members of the City of Topeka met in special session at 6:00 P.M., with the following Councilmembers present: Hiller, Clear, Ortiz, Emerson, Padilla, Coen and Lesser -7. Mayor De La Isla presided -1. Absent: Councilmembers Jensen and Mays -2.

Mayor De La Isla announced the June 25, 2019, Special Meeting agenda was revised to include discussion and possible action regarding the July 2, 2019, Governing Body meeting as well as the overall July Governing Body meeting schedules. She noted the change in agenda was due to the Gary Woodland U.S. Open Block Party Celebration to be held on July 2, 2019, at 6:30 p.m. in downtown Topeka.

Councilmember Clear moved to change the start time of the July 2, 2019, and July 9, 2019, Governing Body meetings from 6:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.; set the end time of the July 2, 2019, Governing Body meeting at 6:20 p.m.; and move all agenda items not completed on the July 2, 2019, agenda to the July 9, 2019, agenda. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Emerson. Councilmember Ortiz voted “no.” (7-1-0)

DISCUSSION on the proposed 2020 Operating Budget was presented.

Nick Hawkins, Administrative and Financial Services Deputy Director, announced the Public Works and Utility Budgets as well as the remaining Other Funds (from the Special meeting of June 18, 2019) would be discussed. He stated staff will continue tracking questions and provide answers at the July 2, 2019, Governing Body meeting, and it was anticipated proposed budget amendments will be discussed and/or considered on July 2, 2019, and if needed, again on July 9, 2019.

Nick Hawkins began the Budget Discussion with an overview of the Public Works budget totaling \$46.3.

Councilmember Ortiz asked if the City pays for the cost of street lights and upgrades to LED lights.

Councilmember Hiller expressed the importance of making sure the City receives the best possible rate by Westar Energy, Inc. She asked if productivity in the overall repair of potholes and other minor street improvements has improved; what was the anticipated trajectory of the fleet services program in terms of total replacement; and if the Forestry Division has adequate staff and if not, have they considered contracting professional arborists to assist.

In response, Public Works Director Jason Peek, reported the following:

- Westar Energy, Inc. pays for the initial conversion to LED lights and then the City pays a reduced tariff.
- Productivity has improved from last year in regards to the amount of pothole repairs as well as overall productivity of street crews.
- It will be difficult to fully utilize the fleet service replacement program until it was fully funded.
- The Forestry Division consists of nine employees responsible for the maintenance of over 60,000 trees with most of the current work being reactive. He reported they are working to better understand the needs of the tree maintenance program and the level of service needed as a whole before they communicate the needs of the Division to the Governing Body.

Nick Hawkins provided an overview of the Utilities Budget totaling \$76.8 million.

Jacque Russell, Human Relations Director, distributed a handout outlining health statistics and number of participants in the City of Topeka wellness program. She reported the annual cost of the wellness clinic was approximately \$653,000 which includes the health risk assessment charges with the overall medical trend and cost of prescriptions.

Councilmember Lesser requested the average age of employees utilizing services in 2016 compared to 2019.

Councilmember Padilla asked if employee sick leave has decreased overall for those participating in the wellness program.

Nick Hawkins reported a slight increase (4%) over the current rate was included in the Health Fund to cover the potential increase of the employer cost share of the health plan. He also reported the Utility Department was currently conducting a rate study to review and insure ongoing financial stability and affordability. He noted 2020 was the last year of approved utility rate increases.

Discussion continued on the overview of Other Fund budgets including the Downtown Business Improvement District, Topeka Tourism Business Improvement District, Information Technology, Special Alcohol, Alcohol Drug and Assessment Referral, Law Enforcement, Transient Guest Tax (TGT), Countywide Half Cent Sales Tax, Retirement Reserve, Kansas Police and Fire Equalization.

Councilmember Emerson left the meeting.

Councilmember Lesser referenced the Special Liability Fund. He asked if staff has considered the June 17, 2019, ruling by the Kansas Supreme Court, removing the dollar cap for damages and/or claims. He stated it will inevitably cause a higher risk to the City by increasing overall loss and claims.

Jacque Russell, Human Relations Director, stated the City added a layer of protection beginning in 2018 through the addition of General Liability coverage which would be over and above the City's Special Liability and Tort Claims funding caps.

Brent Trout, City Manager, stated staff would conduct further review on the Special Liability fund based on the Kansas Supreme Court ruling and report back to the Governing Body.

Lisa Robertson, City Attorney, reported in regards to balancing funds staff considers the

dollar amounts on a case-by-case basis. She stated staff has not considered the Kansas Supreme Court ruling specifically; however, she believes they have a good understanding of the dollar amount needed to settle each case.

Councilmember Hiller inquired on the \$895,058 shown under “other” for Countywide Half Cent Sales Tax for 2020.

Discussion continued on the Neighborhood Revitalization Fund (Other Funds).

Councilmember Hiller inquired on the \$130,000 obligated in the Neighborhood Revitalization budget. She asked staff to report back on the details as well as any additional forecasted funding obligations that may be needed.

Discussion continued on Other Funds including Historic Asset, Community Improvement Districts, Tax Increment Financing Districts, Debt Services, Topeka Metro Transit Authority, Worker’s Compensation, Risk Management Reserve and Unemployment.

Councilmember Hiller inquired on the Parking Fund and the status of the plan and proposal of downtown parking.

Jason Peek provided a short summary of the budget. He stated the parking proposal continues to align with the activities approved by the Governing Body in 2017.

Brent Trout, City Manager, requested the Governing Body send any additional questions and all proposed amendments to staff prior to the July 2, 2019, Governing Body meeting, to allow staff time to review and understand the impact the amendments will have on the overall budget.

NO FURTHER BUSINESS appearing the meeting was adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

(SEAL)

Brenda Younger
City Clerk