



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL
City Hall, 215 SE 7th Street, Suite 255
Topeka, KS 66603-3914
Tel: 785-368-3710
www.topeka.org

Date: August 15, 2024

Time: 1:00pm

Location: 1st Floor Conference Room, Cyrus K. Holliday Bldg 620 SE Madison (*a virtual attendance option is available*)

Committee members Present: Spencer Duncan (Chair), Marcus Miller, Michelle Hoferer

Council Present: Councilmember David Banks, Councilmember Sylvia Ortiz via zoom

City Staff Present: City Manager Dr. Robert M. Perez, City Attorney Amanda Stanley, Planning Director Rhiannon Friedman, Division Director of Development Services Richard Faulkner, Budget Manager Josh McAnarney

1) Call to Order

Committee member Duncan called the meeting to order at 1:00pm.

2) Approve June 11, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Committee member Hoferer made a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting.

Committee member Miller seconded. Motion approved 3-0-0.

3) ARPA Funds Update

Josh McAnarney, Budget Manager, stated there are no changes this quarter. All organizations have submitted compliant reports. Child Care Aware is planning to draw the rest of the money by the end of the year. There is concern for The Oasis Group of them getting their purchase order submitted by the end of 2024.

Chairman Duncan stated that he will reach out to the Oasis Group and ask them to attend the October Policy & Finance Committee meeting. He also suggested that there be 5-7 random Check In Audits on grants received to check to see if the groups are using the funds to show that the committee is doing its due diligence by ensuring the money is going where it is intended to go. He encouraged all groups to use all their ARPA funds received.

Councilmember Miller questioned City Attorney Amanda Stanley if there is any language in the contract that prohibits random audits. She will find out and let the committee know.

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4) LAND BANK ORDINANCE

Rhiannon Friedman, Planning Director, stated that the suggestion is to have an amendment to the current ordinance. It would allow the language to transfer property utilized as rental property; instead of only land ownership.

Chairman Duncan provided history of the Land Bank ordinance as it was originally written. He passed on that vacant lots are ideal to provide a multi-unit for-profit development. The Land Bank program will continue to have the authority to follow the rules with having good standing landlords with also owning the land for a minimum of five years.

Committee member Miller asked if there is a clear criteria for any denials of the program. Spencer Duncan replied that there is a clear list of requirements that applicants must have.

Councilmember Banks asked how many properties are in Landbank. Duncan stated there are five; they are vacant lots that the City of Topeka owned. He is looking to expand to ten to twelve.

MOTION: Committee member Duncan made a motion to approve and get on the Governing Body agenda to amend the ordinance language for the Land Bank. Committee member Miller seconded. Approved 3-0-0.

5) LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Chairman Duncan asked that there be a general consensus on topics that could be included for consideration. There will be a meeting in September to review the actual language, then in October having the Legislative update ready for the Governing Body meeting. This will give the lobbyist and the City of Topeka's legal team a chance to speak to the legislators.

Chairman Duncan gave a review of the 2024 Legislative Priorities and passed on his suggestions for what is currently in the agenda.

- Finance & Taxation: Remove. The Local Ad Valorem Tax Reduction (LAVTR) does not exist anymore.
- Business Competition: Will stay. This is relating to government competition and legislation; it would imply that if the City of Topeka is running something that a private business thinks is in competition with, they would not have to pay taxes.
- Sales Tax: Will stay.
- Unfunded Mandates: Will stay.
- Abandoned Housing: Will stay.
- Mental Health: Will stay.
- Medicaid Expansion: Will stay.
- Homelessness: Will stay.
- Minimum Wage: Will stay. Need to take out the reference to the Old Senate Bill

- Menninger Property: Most likely be removed until there is more known with the new ownership; it has moved from nonprofit.
- Broadband. Will stay.

Chairman Duncan gave suggestions to consider for new additions for 2025 relating to taxes: (1) Reevaluate the property tax valuation system; a possible rolling average for residents (2) Revenue neutral process (3) Sales tax exemption; suggests that the legislative make their exemptions at the State level but the City tax collection should be given authority by local council.

City Attorney Amanda Stanley spoke to feedback that she has received from Citizens, Governing Body and City of Topeka staff on possible items to consider for the new Legislative Agenda in 2025: (1) Open Records Act; to allow helmet cams for the Fire Department. (2) Traffic tickets; enforced by private company. (3) Change age requirement to join Police Department to 18; instead of 21 years old. (4) Grant Access Program; to incentivize local employment to be able to help with hiring qualified candidates for hard to fill categories. (5) Contract for Deeds; add language to strengthen penalties under the Landlord Tenant Act for bad landlords.

Chairman Duncan gave emphasis that the committee is looking at what language should be opened up to review for the new Legislative Agenda. He stated that Privatizing traffic tickets is not something to move forward on. He supports looking at the use of helmet cams for the Fire Department, incentives for candidates through grants for employment, and Contract for Deeds. He added that he is open to seeing the language on police officers age requirement.

Committee member Miller does not support the age requirement for police officers to age 21 and expressed the importance of being able to make quick decisions. He is open to seeing the language on the helmet cams for the Fire Department.

Committee member Hoferer offered support for the age requirement to 20 for the Police Department to help with recruitment. She also gave support to the Open Records Act with helmet cams.

Councilmember Banks expressed his thoughts about the age requirement being lower at the Police Department. He believes the interview process will show a lot about an applicant, including cognitive and skills.

City Manager Dr. Robert M. Perez spoke to the Red-Light Cameras and private companies that have certified police officers that review tickets. He also added that there could be policies put in place to help with the age requirement for the Police Department. Lastly, he added the idea of a program for rental properties required having inspections.

City Attorney Amanda Stanley stated that the City of Lawrence has implemented a program of

voluntary inspections for rental properties. She added that she is exploring ways to tie habitability into inspections.

6) BI-ANNUAL CONTRACTOR LICENSING PROPOSAL

Richard Faulkner, Development Services Division Director, presented information on the current code; the current municipal code requires that all trade licenses be issued for one year. Development Services is proposing to issue licenses for two years. The proposal has gone to the Board of Building and Fire appeals (BBFA), talked with contractors and stakeholders; which is being supported. He spoke to the implementation of online license renewal which has provided the staff the ability to issue a license much quicker. By issuing a two-year license this would allow contractors the convenience of not going through the process yearly, and improving the City's efficiency to serve its customers. There were comparisons done with Olathe, Overland Park, Junction City, Shawnee, Lawrence, Lawrence, Leavenworth and Manhattan to review their building codes, all but Manhattan is in a two-year licensing.

Rhiannon Friedman, Planning Director spoke to the revenue impact of licensing contractors with the current fees. They will be staggered into two groups; Contractors with qualifying party and the trade contractors with master. With the proposal all would go to two-year licenses.

Committee member Miller asked for clarity on the process of the two groups and the cost of the contractor licensing. Planning Director Friedman stated that all licenses will be two years, there would be a staggering of the groups when being issued. Pricing is the same, but applicant would be paying for two-years at a time.

Councilmember Ortiz questioned an instance of a contractor losing his license. Richard Faulkner, Development Services, stated the contractor would have to wait until the year is up, then they would pick up where they left off, pay a penalty and then license would be issued.

Committee member Hoferer supports the proposal of a two-year licensing. She asked if there is a database of contractors that are not licensed. Faulkner responded that if they are not on the list than they are not licensed with the City of Topeka.

Committee member Miller asked Richard Faulkner for an example of how to lose a license. He responded that false credentials would be a way. Chairman Duncan added that there are laws in place relating to code violations that can contribute.

Chairman Duncan supports the proposal of a two-year licensing for contractors. He added as a possible option, an applicant could apply for a two-year license but pay for one year at a time, to spread out the cost. He also suggested the City of Topeka departments look at all fees across the City.

MOTION: Committee member Miller made a motion to approve and get on the Governing Body agenda support the Bi-Annual Contractor Licensing. Committee member Hoferer seconded. Approved 3-0-0.

7) Adjourn

There will be a September and October Policy & Finance meeting scheduled. Chairman Duncan adjourned the meeting at 1:52pm.

The video of this meeting can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/LhLfqD-aUtI>