



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: November 8, 2021

Time: 10:30am

Location: ECR (3rd Floor City Hall) 215 SE 7th Street (virtual via Zoom as well)

Committee members present: Councilmembers Karen Hiller (Chair), Christina Valdivia-Alcalá, Neil Dobler

City staff present: City Manager Brent Trout, Chief of Staff Bill Cochran, Monique Glaudé (Director of Community Engagement & Ombudsman), Mike Haugen (Property Maintenance), LT Andy Beightel (Police), Chief Craig Duke (Fire)

1) Call to Order

Committee member Hiller called the meeting to order at 10:32am. Committee members and staff introduced themselves.

2) Approval of October 13, 2021 minutes

Committee member Dobler made a motion to approve the minutes. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá seconded the motion. Minutes approved 3:0.

3) Digital Equity & Inclusion Partnership: Update & Administrative Policy Review

Scott Gowan, IT Director with Topeka Public Schools, provided an update on the work being done by the Digital Equity & Inclusion Partnership. Updates included:

- Digital Navigator and Technical Navigator Positions have been filled or are almost to that point. Monique Glaudé will be able to provide more information on that.
- The Policy Statement will be brought forward today with a request for approval by the Committee to move forward to the Governing Body. With Governing Body approval, this Policy Statement would serve as a guide for the two employees (Digital Navigator and Technical Navigator), as well as for any future activities that we can engage in as an organization of leaders throughout the community.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired if the group had asked each player what their organizations will be able to bring to the table with a request to adopt the same policy? The City has taken some leadership, however she did not feel that the full

responsibility should be on the City municipality to run. Mr. Gowan stated that question had not been presented, but noted he would take it to the group.

Committee member Hiller voiced concern that, throughout discussions in these meetings, a new utility is being created. At some point, a decision needs to be made as to who is responsible for it. At present time, Chairwoman Hiller did not feel comfortable with having the City remain in the lead role/responsibility for this utility.

Chairwoman Hiller noted that the Infrastructure Bill had recently been approved, and inquired if Mr. Gowan was ready to address what he was seeing in the new Bill? Mr. Gowan answered that he had been watching along the way, to see what was being included and excluded, but that at this point the Digital Equity & Inclusion Partnership team needs to get back together to help encourage the Digital Navigator to represent and do a referral process for. The FCC has a big role in the allowances and provisions with the Infrastructure Bill, and the group will be doing referrals, in that situation, to the FCC's program. Outside of that, we want to parse it out as a Committee and see the different pieces in play now that it has been enacted.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá noted she agreed with supporting the group with moving forward, but also shared the opinion of Chairwoman Hiller that the City of Topeka should not be the sole entity responsible for the program.

Community Engagement Director Monique Glaudé provided the following updates:

- Maria Anderson has been hired as the part-time Digital Navigator
- Sean Scozzare has been hired as the part-time Technical Navigator
- Although these positions have been filled, it will likely be January 2022 before the information and programs will begin being offered to the community.

Committee member Dobler inquired as to the next steps for moving forward with the administrative policy and the usual process that would occur. City Manager Brent Trout stated the document is a policy statement as to the position of the City as it relates to these items. It is a public-facing document. The steps would include having Staff vet the document, followed by Committee approval, and finally approval by the Governing Body.

City Manager Trout noted that this policy does not set broadband as a utility, but more provides the guiding principles that will operate under for the grant program and anything that is done in the future as it relates to dealing with broadband and providing technology availability.

Additional discussion has had to address concerns about moving the policy forward without taking the final lead in eventually creating a utility. City Manager Trout noted that a charge for service would be part of a creation of a utility, and that there was currently no intention to pursue that at this time. Chairwoman Hiller sought confirmation that the intention of this policy statement was not to become a utility, but that we are trying to make sure that the function is here. Committee member Dobler stated that although receiving similar policy statements from other entities, the current document being proposed for approval does not commit the City of Topeka to anything except what is written into the document presented. City Manager Trout stated that from a logistical standpoint, the Committee could approve the policy statement now, and the other individuals that have been, or would be, interested in partnering could be notified that the Governing Body would be voting on this item within a month and suggest they look into considering to do the same as well. He noted that the City has already taken the lead position, as the new staff hired are under the City's employment, however there are a lot of strong supporting characters, and he did not feel there would be anything to stop the group from moving forward. Mr. Gowan stated that a policy statement from each entity to establish how they are involved, and that the language would likely be similar although may not be exactly the same. Mr. Gowan felt now would be an appropriate time to move the current policy statement to the Governing Body for recommended approval, as the structures are already in place to move to those next steps. He also felt a statement to include language to the effect that the City is counting on their partners to encourage members of those to support the effort as well.

MOTION: Committee member Dobler made a motion to send the policy statement to the Governing Body with a recommendation for adoption, in January 2022. Committee member Dobler requested City administration seek policy statements from other organizations be presented by that time. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá seconded. Following comments from Mr. Lazone Grays, Committee member Dobler amended the motion to bring the item to the December 21, 2021 Governing Body meeting rather than waiting until January. Motion as amended approved 3:0.

Mr. Gowan stated he would get the working group together again. He noted that this model was centered on a political entity and the model of the NDIA recommendations that had been provided previously. He noted the group could pull language from the model and draft some statements of support, which might be referendum in some organizations or policy in other organizations. There may be different ways of showing support depending on the organization.

Mr. Grays noted that, as a long-term member of the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, they have been putting on the wording and pressing legislation on the Digital Equity Act. This is part of the Infrastructure bill that was passed and awaiting signature. He had additional information about the broadband additional support for broadband benefit and digital equity act funding that would be expected in the act. As a first point, the digital equity adoption and offering of digital equity would for sure be part of the secured set of funds allocated toward digital inclusion for future monies. NDI had a direct thumbprint on the language put into the digital equity bill. Secondly, the capital projects funds under the ARPA funds is \$10B. Mr. Grays would like to see the City send a request to apply for funding for the Federal Capital Project funds, on our city's behalf. The deadline for that application is December 27, 2021. Mr. Grays stated he would be able to make the connections between pertinent parties if there were questions regarding the application. He referenced a 58 minute video link from the Treasury Department with additional information that he would send to the Committee members. This directly discusses funding digital hubs in facilities and other important pieces of the bill. Chairwoman Hiller inquired if there was anyone from the working group who was acting in an advocate capacity for the City to the State? Mr. Grays responded that the City and County has to make their own request. City Manager Trout noted that the SPARKS Committee at the state level would likely be who was applying for this funding.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired if the City has to apply to the State to receive a portion of the municipal funding? Mr. Grays confirmed. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired if there was a way to utilize the State grant as a vehicle to set up the digital hubs, and then enhance it later? Mr. Grays stated there were some things the ARPA funds would work well for, but that there were some specific areas, such as digital connectivity technology projects, and multipurpose community facility projects which looks at physical facility spaces. Something like Lundgren Elementary would fall in line with this request. For us to have our facilities identified will be specific things that will need to be added.

Chairwoman Hiller noted that a community network could be just as much of having a senior center set up and to ensure that all of the parts will be working to help all of the community. City Manager Trout noted that once the working group had that information, they could send it to him for next steps, as it would not require approval by the Governing Body.

4) Changing the Culture of Property Maintenance

[All items discussed at this meeting will be available to view at:

<https://www.topeka.org/citycouncil/changing-the-culture-of-property-maintenance-public-input-meetings/>]

Chairwoman Hiller noted there were three pieces to be addressed. There is a slightly updated preliminary recommendation, with the idea being to come out of the public input sessions with the set of initiatives and revision of the recommendation ready to be approved by the Committee and moved to the Governing Body for approval.

a. Goal & Challenge Recommendation (video 46:15 minute mark)

City Manager Trout noted that he and staff had developed a definition of “substandard structure”. He noted it likely would not change any of the recommendation, but wanted to share it with the Committee. The brief description of “substandard” would include not having plumbing, or sanitary facilities operating. Without those functions, people should not be living in a house. Life safety issues would also be included. This definition sets a much higher bar than one single violation. While there may be thousands of houses with violations, adhering to this definition will reduce the number of true substandard houses/properties. Chairwoman Hiller expressed concerns that this definition was very similar to the current standards of “uninhabitable”. City Manager Trout felt the definitions were different enough, as someone may be able to live in a home but still need to mow the yard and fix a window.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired if there would be any impact on lessening the amount of the houses/properties that receive citations? City Manager Trout stated it did not. There is a need for an agreed upon definition, or it will create more challenges. This definition would not need to be approved today, but will need to happen at some point in order to ensure that Property Maintenance Staff has the same expectation and

definition as the Governing Body. Chairwoman Hiller felt that the recommendation could move forward, but agreed that additional conversation would need to be had regarding the definition of “substandard”.

Chairwoman Hiller noted that if the Committee felt comfortable with moving forward to the Governing Body, the dates listed on the timeline could be kept. Committee member Dobler felt that moving forward with this document forward could allow for the partnerships to begin falling into place.

MOTION: Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá made a motion to move this document to the Governing Body, as a final recommendation from the Public Health & Safety Committee. Committee member Dobler seconded the motion. Motion passed 3:0.

b. Initiatives 2022-2025 (video :09:00 minute mark)

Chairwoman Hiller noted that there had been great attendance and input brought by community members during the course of the seven public input sessions and via email/online forms. From that information, Chairwoman Hiller and Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá created a consolidated document. City Manager Trout requested that some of the Community Engagement pieces to be prioritized, as the full list is extensive and there would be a lot of time involved.

MOTION: Committee member Valdivia-Alcala made a motion to move the Changing the Culture of Property Maintenance initiatives proposal to the Governing Body for approval. Committee member Dobler seconded. Motion carries 3:0.

c. Karen Black Consultation Report (video 1:20:00 minute mark)

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá reported that a video meeting had been held with Attorney Karen Black, Chairwoman Hiller, City Attorney Amanda Stanley, and herself. Ms. Black expressed appreciation for the extensive amount of work that had been done by the Committee, City Staff, and the public input sessions, and stated she was excited for the potential to come to Topeka to consult. Chairwoman Hiller noted similar sentiments. She noted that the work being done was possibly cutting edge on the forefront

of Topeka making these holistic community changes. City Manager Trout stated he would be willing to help with proceeding forward, with detailed parameters, to create an RFP with Ms. Black, but would need additional information from the Committee. He stated that this is not a long process, and that a draft could be created within a few weeks. A funding source would also have to be identified.

5) Other Items

None.

6) Set Next Meeting Date

Next meeting date TBD. Information will follow on the City of Topeka's Public Calendar.

7) Adjourn

Chairwoman Hiller adjourned the meeting at 12:03pm.

Meeting video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/fYy5cjTEwGo>