



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: July 30, 2021

Time: 10:30am

Location: 1st Floor Conference Room; Holliday Building 620 SE Madison (virtual via Zoom as well)

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

City staff present: City Manager Brent Trout, Chief of Staff Bill Cochran, Monique Glaudé (Director of Community Engagement & Ombudsman), Mike Haugen (Property Maintenance)

1) Call to Order

Committee member Hiller called the meeting to order at 10:33am. Committee members and staff introduced themselves.

2) Approval of July 8, 2021 minutes

Committee member Valdivia-Alcala made a motion to approve the minutes. Chairwoman Hiller seconded the motion. Minutes approved 2:0.

Broadband for Topeka Residents

Chairwoman Hiller stated a working team had been continuing forward with this topic. She asked for an update to be provided by City Manager Brent Trout, followed by any additional information regarding progress on the plan by team members Scott Gowan (USD 501), and Lazone Grays (IBSA, Inc).

City Manager Trout noted that there would be further discussion, but that the City had received the Kansas Health Foundation grant. City Manager Trout signed the grant agreement, and progress is moving forward. Community Engagement Division Director and City Ombudsman, Monique Glaudé, was in the process of setting up the steps necessary to hire and train the two part-time staff which would serve as the Digital Navigator and Technical Navigator.

City Manager Trout touched on the American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funding and stated he would continue researching possible ways the City could pursue those funds. There is a line that relates to being able to do some literacy training, when

it comes to technology literacy. The City would not be able to purchase devices, or things like that to help people gain access, but it was possible to do some different training and assistance with getting people knowledge on how to use their systems. Most of the ARPA requirements are geared toward creating hardwire infrastructure, not Wi-Fi capability.

Chairwoman Hiller requested a brief overview of what is included in the Kansas Health Foundation grant. Division Director Glaudé reviewed those details to include:

- City of Topeka is one of four organizations that obtained the \$250,000 grant for digital equity and inclusion.
- The grant will be disbursed in a 3-year time period. The City will receive \$80,333.33 per year.
- The money will be earmarked for the part-time Digital Community Navigator and part-time Technical Navigator, as well as marketing.
- A small section will be available in year two and three for some equipment.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcala inquired if there was additional information as to the dollar amount for equipment. Division Director Glaudé stated she would be able to provide an update with that dollar amount at the next meeting. The hope would be to have some of our local partnerships with various corporations and organizations around the community, donate their used equipment to an outside vendor, who would strip all of the data and we could load some data to have available. She will be meeting on August 26th with KHF to learn a little more about what that might look like.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcala noted she had understood there was a mention of centralized hubs in underserved communities, and would like to be part of those conversations as they begin to take place.

Draft Future Plan from Working Group

Scott Gowan, USD 501/Broadband Group, stated the focus of the grant was helping our community connect with the resources that are already available. Families in our community can work through the FCC Emergency Broadband Benefit. There are at least two organizations, the Topeka Shawnee County Public Library (TSCPL), and Topeka Public Schools (TPS), working together to also take advantage of the FCC Emergency Connectivity fund. They are also trying to apply these resources and get an early start. The grant was about getting a Digital

Navigator in place, even though it is only a part-time position for now, to help point our families in the right direction. And also to get the part-time Technical Navigator in place to help families once they have access, to resource help to make that access work within their home. Those are two pieces of the puzzle that come from the grant, but that is only the first step in the group's vision. Where the group would like to go is to help the families connect with the resources, and get those things in place.

Mr. Gowan continued with stating the next step in what the group's current work evolves around producing a handbook for the new staff members in order to make sure they have the resources they are going to need in order to answer the questions and be able to point families in the right direction. The group is also working on a long-term budget that recognizes that the needs will evolve. For now, while we have the support of the FCC, and while we have the supportive resources throughout the community, we have some of those pieces in place. Down the road, that may not be the case, and the group wants to make sure there is a sustainable model.

Mr. Gowan noted that in addition to the measures mentioned before, the group is trying to partner with a vendor to, basically, take devices from an organization, such as TPS, and make the devices that are no longer useful for our students and staff, to refurbish them and make them useful for the families and in their homes.

Conversations have been had with a member of the Shawnee County Commission, and they have since joined the working group, to discuss some of the parallels between the City's needs and the County's needs, as well as the differences of needs.

Mr. Gowan noted that, from the perspective of connectivity, we are in a great position. We have vendors in our city that can virtually connect almost every home. What we do not have is the affordability. The County is also looking at the affordability piece, but also have parts of the county have are not receiving connectivity.

TPS and TSCPL have applied for the Emergency Connectivity Fund. That is an additional resource that is available to schools and libraries, through the FCC, to provide connectivity support in the home.

Mr. Gowan noted that, at an earlier meeting, he had presented that TPS would begin shifting the families that the district had been supporting last year, toward the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) in order to encourage a better connection for them. He noted that they had begun that effort, but had also decided to continue with the effort that was in place last year, where TPS provided in-home internet for about 3,000 families who were eligible. Those eligible families may continue to stay with TPS if they would like, or can continue to pursue the EBB, whichever they are more comfortable with. We did this because, even though we've been communicating about the EBB for a little over two months, TPS continues to have about 3,000 families who have stayed with the district and are continuing to use the broadband services that had been placed in their home. In wanting to continue to offer the service, TPS applied for the Emergency Connectivity Fund. The district has also purchased some data plans, for the existing fleet of hotspots. The TSCPL is going to also try to continue a hotspot strategy as well. There is a shared goal to have a lot of different ways to address the needs of our families this coming year.

Chairwoman Hiller asked if Mr. Gowan could speak to the hotspot hubs. Mr. Gowan noted that he had understood the question to be more about hotspot hubs with community centers as being part of the Community strategy. This is part of the vision. Mr. Gowan believed this would classify as the next step within the vision. The group wants to provide a training model, or support model, that can be adopted in community centers, or in places such as Lundgren Elementary, or other school facilities that may be available in different communities. The strategy behind that would be to partner with other organizations within the community that have expressed an interest in holding a training opportunity at a particular location. Some of the equipment that was earmarked in the grant for years two and three, was intended to be equipment that could be used for presentation purposes, or equipment that can be used to help our families better learn some of the programs that some of us do on the internet every day that we take for granted. They may not have had the opportunity to learn this because they have not had the connectivity yet in their home. There is a plan to work with community centers, for that effort, and the group plans to partner with different community organizations, and churches, to deliver those trainings, opportunities, and a strategy that we could support in some way. It may also look like, maybe, our Digital Navigator and Technical Navigator might be invited by a community organization to an event, which they are sponsoring, to provide additional support in the context of that event.

Mr. Gowan continued, the additional funding that can be put toward additional full time employees in the area of both Digital and Technical Navigators, is essential. Halftime people that we applied for the grants for, are just to get the program started. There is no way we will be able to shift the adoption and shift the paradigm for those families without having some additional support. So this is really just the start the grant, with the intention of it being to get us going in the right direction, and then rely on community partners and additional funding resources to be able to extend that impact.

Chairwoman Hiller asked if the group's focus was still on allowing children and families to work in their home. Or if it had expanded to include the entire community? For example, kids wanting to do their homework outside of their home or need to be connected someplace else; seniors connecting to their community centers, each other, or families. Mr. Gowan confirmed that the focus in the near-term, was on families and children in the home. The year two focus is more centered on community centers. We have chosen not to go with a community wide broadband effort yet, simply because we have connectivity in the community already. It is a matter of pointing families in the direction of being able to get that in their homes, and then using common facilities as a strategy for teaching them how to do creative things with the internet, in order to improve their financial situation, improve their access, or to improve their employment situation.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá stated she would hope that when the time comes to expand into the community-driven initiative for the hubs that the hubs of organizations would be given the chance to apply. That the goal would be to seek out the most potent locations, where the flow of traffic or familiarity within the location is known by the neighborhood.

Chairwoman Hiller voiced concern for children working outside of buildings because, for whatever reason, they were not able to work from home. Mr. Gowan noted that hotspots were able to be purchased through Emergency Connectivity Fund grant, but can be provided to those families. There may be additional support that TPS can provide either through the EBB, which is available to anyone throughout the United States who qualify, or to use our hotspots. By having these unlimited hotspots that we have applied for through the Emergency Connectivity grant, we will have unlimited data to be able to serve more, in those situations where the student has a variable home or where the student has some additional

needs outside of their specific home. Those needs are addressed on a student-by-student basis.

Mike Siebert inquired about Impact Avenues and shared-custody families. Mr. Gowan noted that the Emergency Broadband benefit can be applied to a secondary household. The primary household could benefit from the USD 501 program. The homeless population has been the primary focus with the hotspots to address an immediate need until they can get connected to a more permanent service.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired if there was more information as it related to Impact Avenues. Lazone Grays, Digital Equity Partners, addressed the Committee and shared information that about the EBB as it relates to providing service to homeless youth and their parents. Through the EBB, homeless individuals are eligible. One of the requirements, however, is that they need to have a mailing address. Mr. Grays stated he felt that once the Digital Navigator position is established, there would be opportunity to share information and resources that he has personal experience with. His organization has the ability to serve as a mailing address for those individuals, so that they can receive the hotspots. Mr. Grays also noted the PC's for People website is also an organization that has received EBB grant and hotspots, as another place that will be able to provide a hotspot for the homeless population. One of the problems, is that the ISP is not really into the position to provide the computer, because you have to get the computer in order to get the rebate. There is not a very structured process. The individual is eligible for the computer and the internet. The computer is discounted, but first you have to purchase it. So that is one area that needs to have continued dialogue.

Mr. Grays also noted that before the EBB, there was an agreement that the Department of Children & Families (DCF) will purchase the computer, or internet, for those recipients who are receiving particular services such as TANIF, food assistance, and the GOALS program. He is hopeful that once things get started, we could host a Digital Equity Summit, to bring stakeholders, and others interested in knowing what is going on, and those who already know what is going on, to the table. This will help get a beat on all of the resources and things that are available. Once the Digital and Technical Navigators are brought on board, he can get them plugged into the resources of national practitioners through the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, because a lot of the framework has already been done, but he is perhaps the only person in Topeka that has the full knowledge. He is

looking forward to passing that knowledge on, so that individuals can better access the information and be of service here.

Chairwoman Hiller stated that the process made a lot of sense, and asked what a realistic timeline might be for hiring the individuals and being prepared for the summit. Mr. Grays noted another team member may be able to speak to some of that. However, with regard to the community-based plan, Mr. Grays referenced minutes from the September 14, 2020 Committee meeting, the group really needs to hear from the community, and a summit would bring those voices and ideas together to better identify where children, their parents, and others can go to access the internet. Chairwoman Hiller would like to ensure that seniors were included in the plan. Mr. Grays added there were a number of resources, but felt there was a way to help ensure everyone had an equal stake in addressing digital equity. These initiatives can help grow on longer term goals, five years, seven years. Mr. Grays noted there has been some other legislation, including the new infrastructure plan, which if passed, is going to give a great benefit to addressing digital equity. Dialoguing with the State would be encouraged as well, as they have a lot of monies through the ARPA that they would be able to allocate. Mr. Grays stated he sent an inquiry to the Treasury Department about digital literacy, to ask if the ARPA funds could be used for digital literacy, and they responded with the final interim ruling and a list of frequently asked questions, that he feels can help identify that the funds can be used for digital literacy training and such.

Mr. Grays continued that there will be a great learning curve, to address not only getting the device, but learning how to use the device, and how to effectively go online for job searching, using telehealth communicating with doctors, other virtual platforms for speaking with teachers, family, elders, etc. He is looking forward to getting the Digital Navigator plugged in, so they can become the guru to this knowledge.

Chairwoman Hiller stated that broadband and connectivity is basically a new utility, similar to electricity. We are looking at creating a new utility, so we are not just planning for an emergency fallback, but rather planning and envisioning a permanent utility and network for our community. She expressed interest and excitement in the process and voiced appreciation that the group is doing the hard work.

Mr. Gowan agreed with the comment that broadband has become a utility. He stated it is an emerging civil right. We are talking about a disparity that exists in

our society. And we can reach a point with this momentum and with the effort and with the resources, where we can lower that disparity.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcala inquired if the handbook would also be available in Spanish? Mr. Gowan noted the handbook was more of a working document for the Digital Navigator, however that all materials that go out into the public will be bi-lingual, as well as offer resources to access the material to be translated into other languages in addition to English and Spanish, as needed.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcala inquired about how soon they wanted to see the summits. Mr. Grays stated he felt it was important to have the Digital Navigator and Technical Navigators in position by the time we have the summit. He would like to see it happen within a couple of months once those positions were filled. Mr. Grays added that the EBB might be able to work for providing cell phones.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired who all was actively involved with the working group.

- Monique Glaudé and LaToya Burnett-Martinez, from the City of Topeka
- Topeka Shawnee County Public Library
- Topeka Housing Authority
- Jayhawk Area on Aging
- Housing and Credit Counseling
- Michelle Stubblefield with Greater Topeka Partnership
- Representative Ann Mah
- Shawnee County Commissioner

Mr. Gowan noted the providers had not been invited to the meetings yet, at this point. Currently, with designing the initiative, and the strategies behind it, and with the next phase of shifting from the individual households to getting community centers going, it is essential to have other voices in the space at that time.

Draft Broadband Policy Statement

Chairwoman Hiller noted a policy had been drafted to apply for the grant, and she inquired if that policy was ready to be reviewed. City Manager Trout stated the policy statement was a component of the grant application. He stated he felt some of the things included in the policy statement will be some of the things done with this effort, and that at some point, we would look to eventually get a policy

approved. Chairwoman Hiller inquired if it was better to hold onto it for reference, or to discuss more today. Division Director Glauvé felt it would be best to hold onto at this time. Mr. Grays stated that he felt this may be the time to review the policy, as it could be adopted by the Governing Body and could be added to the Consolidated Action Plan. Sometimes, the grant funding that is made available from the Federal Government is contingent upon having a policy established.

Chairwoman Hiller stated she felt uncomfortable with having the City take over the full policy. She would prefer to have, maybe, identical or customized ones to make clear that there is a partnership that is strong; and within that, being able to know who the emerging leader would be, if there is one, or whether it is literally a collaborative effort. Structure matters, and the group has done a wonderful job of getting this whole thing going. Mr. Grays noted that the administrative policy did not state the specifics, but rather that it stated the City of Topeka was supportive of digital equity in Topeka, and to be part of the consolidated action plan. It is not saying what will happen and what will be made available, but it is saying that the City is supportive of this. This is something a little more active than the studies and reports that we have just been collecting dust. He is encouraging the Committee not to wait too long, but to get it passed and written into the Consolidated Action Plan. The page for Broadband is short and brief, but if it shows the City is going to be driven with the City of Topeka Digital Equity Inclusion Administrative Policy, and feels it would be appropriate if there is anything that needs to be added or amended to it, it could be done at a later time. But did not want to see this be confused with the community-based equity plan. Chairwoman Hiller agreed.

Mr. Siebert referenced a program, called 1-800-children which allows materials to be translated into many different languages. The website is www.1800childrenks.org toll free number is 1-800-children. This is a 24/7 free resource for parents, children, family members and is powered by the Kansas Children's Service League. He encouraged the group to place references to this location when rolling out the marketing.

3) Property & Premises (video 54:00 minute mark)

Chairwoman Hiller reviewed, as a refresher, that the Committee adopted a preliminary recommendation at the July 8, 2021 meeting. At that time, there were two small amendments.

Following the July 8th meeting, Staff was given time to turn in a response, and that was received, on time, around July 22 or 23. That response will be what is reviewed and discussed today. The idea for today being that we will have a preliminary recommendation to put out for public comment, and then loop back around with this Committee to have a final report for recommendations to the Governing Body.

Chairwoman Hiller stated that the public in-put hearings will not be to talk about what the problems are, but rather how we can collaborate and move to “yes” for solutions and challenges that we have mutually agreed on.

Staff Responses to Working Document

City Manager Trout provided a memo which provided information and tried to summarize some of the primary issues that Staff have identified. There are some examples of issues that Staff is encountering, and some ways to make slight modifications to programs. He noted there are some items that would requiring taking action steps in order to look at campaigns to get the word out on various areas that we are trying to impact. There may be some actions steps that require policy changes, and maybe even ordinance changes. Some of the steps that we see occur, but that it would be contingent on the comments provided at the public input meetings. The intention of the response to the document was not to go that deep, but simply how the City would attack some of these issues, and identify and call out where some changes would be occurring, or that have already been modified in how we do business, that maybe are more recent. City Manager Trout provided the example of the Vacant Property Registration program, and the recent change in how it is done. City Manager Trout stated the Staff feedback to the document was trying to balance what we can do with the Staff, and with the laws, to eventually accomplish the goals that have the Committee has espoused to, while also realizing Staff is struggling a little bit regarding how many, for example, substandard houses we have.

With regard to addressing substandard housing cases, being able to better define what components the Committee or Governing Body would want to include to help Staff begin addressing those cases.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcala inquired about a time study that had been discussed at the last meeting. City Manager Trout noted there were two different types of time studies that they were going to look at, however has not thought

more about who would conduct the time studies, whether it would be internally through another department, or contracted out.

Chairwoman Hiller referenced the role of the Administrative Hearing Officer, and Senior Inspector role, that were added fairly recently. And that layers of appeals that we have. It looked like Staff was envisioning giving the Inspectors a little more authority for extensions, but the language was not very clear. City Manager Trout responded that that additional authority was a response to the staffing shortage that the division was experiencing currently. The desire is to have voluntary compliance with individuals showing noticeable progress to addressing the issues. Mike Haugen, Property Maintenance Division Director, agreed that the addition of the Senior Inspector position was a beneficial addition to the division. Currently, however, due to the staff shortage, he has been in the field filling in. The Senior Inspector's role is to follow up on properties that have received warrants to make sure everything is done correctly, to ensure the work is consistent and is following policy.

Chairwoman Hiller noted she would like to perhaps see some policy change, and any campaigns, be identified following the public hearings, to create a more concrete list to take along, and possibly having those policy changes included. With regard to the campaigns, she would like to identify if there are initiatives where we would need partner agencies or neighborhood associations, etc. and that it would be an opportunity to lay it out and let people engage.

Affirm Next Steps

Chairwoman Hiller provided some suggestions of what it might look like. One thought was to find a simple way to put the Committee's recommendation out front, and ask people to react to those; as to whether they support the Aspirational Goals and the Challenge Goals, and then engage them in how we could achieve those goals. Her hope would be that the participation is constructive and productive to help us move forward, rather than rehashing old issues.

Chairwoman Hiller also noted there had been some suggestion of creating a survey. She suggested that the survey could also be the framework that is used in the public engagements; so that there was structure, and also a way to compile the feedback. She would like to begin setting those public input sessions.

Framework: City Manager Trout noted that it is likely feedback would include hearing problems. He noted having the moderator help keep the meetings on track by stating that along with a problem, requesting a suggestion for solving a problem would be much more beneficial, and a critical piece of the framework for these meetings. Chairwoman Hiller agreed.

Chairwoman Hiller referenced a recent campaign where a neighborhood had been targeted to cite for paint violations. She felt the topic would be worth a conversation, to decide whether the notices would be sent out in February, and to work through whether giving notice a year out rather than the current 90 days would be an equally successful way to notify people, or not. City Manager Trout agreed and noted that paint is sometimes a particularly difficult type of case, because there is a limited number of available contractors and sometimes sending a notice adds complexities. However, for most instances, the Division has simply requested proof of a plan to address the situation, such as showing a copy of a contract. The goal is to gain voluntary compliance to have the house painted.

Chairwoman Hiller stated she would like to have neighborhood-based hearings located in the targeted neighborhoods, or make sure community members in nearby areas know they are invited to attend, because she would like to receive feedback from all areas of the city.

City Manager Trout noted that when the notices are sent out, there is no way to know what the recipient's response will be, or what situation they may be facing. However, being consistent with encouraging people to contact the Division can sometimes help resolve concerns or questions.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcala inquired if it would be possible to turn this memo into a slideshow, or something easier to understand in simpler terms, would be helpful for the public sessions.

Chairwoman Hiller provided suggestions for the presentation format, to create a slide with information on the goals, another one on operations and what we want to do, one to note the other departments that are part of the team, one to include aspirational goals, and one that would lay out the four challenges with a picture/chart/graph.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcala reminded that she had brought another presentation to the Committee at an earlier time, and wondered when a good time would be to work through it. Some of the ideas from the article would be newer, and may be able to show if there is an interest in Topeka for those changes. Chairwoman Hiller felt this would be the time to do that. Most of the materials have been made available online already, however putting it together and including it with the presentation materials may be helpful as well.

City Manager Trout requested a couple of weeks to get a webpage established and made live, with a goal date of being August 15th. He acknowledged that some of the presentations, minutes, and other materials from these meetings could already be found on the Committee's webpage at: <https://www.topeka.org/citycouncil/public-health-safety-committee>, beginning in 2019, and that he would envision webpage completely separate from the Committee to facilitate this topic.

Holliday Bldg Hybrid, in-person and Zoom attendance options: September 14, 2021 @ 10:00am-12:00pm. Additional hybrid meeting would be September 16, 2021 @ 6:00pm-8:00pm. The meetings would be live-streamed and recorded.

Additional Property & Premises Comments

Chairwoman Hiller would like to bring a report to the Governing Body at the August 17th meeting. She is hopeful the briefing would also bring awareness for the public input sessions. She instructed for all materials be added to the agenda website (<https://topeka.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/>).

4) Other

City Manager Trout will be working on the invitations for the hybrid meetings.

Two sessions in Holliday would be hybrid. Neighborhood meetings would only be in-person. Receiving comments/responses from hearings and survey, who will collect and sort through. This may be a collaborative effort between the City Council Assistant and Community Engagement Staff. Survey would be open comment. One question would be to ask if people agreed on goals, and if not to add what they would want changed. There may be some feedback provided from the surveys about what substandard housing would look like.

5) Set Next Meeting Date

With August and September being full, the next Committee meeting will be Wednesday, October 13, 2021 at 10:00am in the Holliday 1st Floor Conference Room.

6) Adjourn

Chairwoman Hiller adjourned the meeting at 12:23pm

Meeting video can be viewed at: https://youtu.be/cJWopg2x_lm