



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

PUBLIC WORKS INFRASTRUCTURE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: October 12, 2021

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: 1st Floor Conference Room; Cyrus K. Holliday Bldg 620 SE Madison (*option to attend virtually via Zoom*)

Committee members present: Council members Neil Dobler (Chair), Tony Emerson, Michael Lesser

City staff present: City Manager Brent Trout, Chief of Staff Bill Cochran; Public Works: James Jackson, Tony Trower, Hannah Uhlrig, Jason Tryon, Kristi Ericksen; Finance: Stephen Wade Utilities: Braxton Copley, Michelle Neiswender

Call to Order

Chairman Neil Dobler called the meeting to order at 10:00am. Committee members, and other Council members in attendance introduced themselves.

Approve Minutes from September 17, 2021 special meeting

Chairman Dobler made a motion to approve the minutes. Committee member Emerson seconded the motion. Motion passes 2:0. Committee member Lesser was not yet in attendance.

Utilities Dashboard

[*This presentation will be made available on the Committee's webpage:*

<https://www.topeka.org/citycouncil/public-infrastructure>]

Utilities Director, Braxton Copley, brought a presentation to the Committee discussing the new interactive project dashboard. He introduced Utilities Engineer Michelle Neiswender and Consultant Mike Lorenzo, who helped with the development of the program and thanked them for their efforts which were recognized by the Water Environment Foundation. The model was published in the Foundation's latest journal.

Highlights:

- This model is designed to provide Staff with good data driven decision making.
- There are 840 miles of sanitary sewer line in the city's collection system. There is not enough money to replace all of those, so there needed to be a way to help with making good decisions in terms of replacement and rehabilitation, and in a way to prioritize those lines as well.
- Guiding principles

- Do not operate pipes until failure
- Address emergency repair needs upon identification, because of effect on the environment.
- Identify pipes suitable for trenchless repair and rehabilitation methods
- Objectives & Goals
 - Televis and inspect approximately 10% of the 872 miles of sewer pipe and associated manholes, annually.
 - Develop recommendations for prioritized, cost-effective collection system improvement projects.
 - Prepare design packages to implement recommended improvement projects.
- Progress to date
 - Began in October 2018
 - As of September 2021
 - 532,057ft (100.8 miles) of pipe inspected. 13% city-wide.
 - 2, 478 manholes inspected. 18% city-wide.
 - Planned through June 2022
 - 423,666 ft (80.2 miles) of pipe planned for cleaning and inspection
 - 1, 843 manholes planned for inspection
 - Program progress was severely hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020.
- Approach
 - Cost-effective improvement recommendations for pipes and manholes
 - Data-driven asset management methodology to prioritize improvement recommendations and future inspections.
 - Standardized cost factors that can be globally updated.
- Dashboard - Web-based repository of information that enables:
 - Continuous monitoring of program progress
 - Review of inspection scoring
 - Rapid development of projects and cost estimates
- Graphs and charts help identify the severity of issues, how much progress has been made, and maps out the area of locations.
- The information shown on the maps allow Staff to identify areas to target for replacement.

Questions/Comments:

- Chairman Dobler thanked Director Copley and Staff for the presentation. He noted that being able to do some of the work ahead of the major street projects, and the coordination between the underground utilities and street work has been something that has been improving over recent years, and it is appreciated.
- This program also helps to show that the department is utilizing tax dollars efficiently.
- Chairman Dobler voiced appreciation for a recent public meeting where Director Copley scheduled after hearing concerns from a neighborhood. Although they did not receive the answer they had wanted, they walked away with a better understanding of the methodology and were able to have questions answered.

Being able to have their voices heard and some dialog with the City was helpful and something Chairman Dobler felt was needed by other City departments across the board.

Downtown Parking Plan [Video 11:00 minute mark]

[*This presentation can be found in the “Supplemental Materials” section on the Committee’s webpage.*]

Hannah Uhrig, Deputy Director, provided a memo to the Committee with detailed items for implementation regarding the Downtown Parking Plan. Since the last Committee meeting, Staff has met with the Downtown stakeholders to reiterate the plan moving forward, to talk about the priorities and to align with them in terms of the direction that has been communicated to the Committee. Staff is requesting support from the Public Infrastructure Committee to move forward with adjusting the rate ordinance, as it is the last piece of the short-list of steps to move forward that requires additional action from the Governing Body before Staff can proceed.

Chairman Dobler requested a walk-through the outreach process of the stakeholder meetings. Deputy Director Uhrig stated that the initiative began just prior to the pandemic, about two years ago. At that point, there were a lot of in-person meetings to include the Downtown merchant group, and DTI Board, and Parking Subcommittee. Since the last Committee meeting, City Staff was able to meet with the DTI Board and Downtown Merchant Representative to review the requested changes and sought their input to make sure their needs were still aligned with the City’s. Through both of those engagements, support has been shown by the stakeholders for the plan that has been put into place, with an understanding of the need of the City’s infrastructure improvements, both from structural and security standpoints.

Chairman Dobler sought to clarify that within the ordinance, that is going before the Governing Body this evening, there includes a minimum and maximum threshold and as such, will allow Parking Staff to increase or decrease rates as they deem necessary. Deputy Director Uhrig confirmed.

Chairman Dobler sought clarification that the ordinance also removed the hoods on either side of Kansas Ave. Deputy Director Uhrig confirmed that the item on the Governing Body agenda for tonight, is a stance that DTI has shown support for, and that the ordinance changes would allow the City to have the flexibility to adjust the rates of on-street parking, in the event where it was needed.

The full Governing Body will vote tonight on a plan to remove the parking meter hoods from meters located on the side hundred blocks of Kansas Avenue. This is something that the Downtown stakeholders are in agreement with. Rhiannon Friedman with the Greater Topeka Partnership and Ken Scott with Capitol Federal and DTI provided comments reflecting support and approval of the proposed change to the ordinance.

Greg Braden, owner of LLC which leases parking spaces in the 5th and (soon to be) 1st floor offices of the City Center Parking Garage, spoke to issues that have been growing in the parking garages. Incidents of gang activity and unsheltered individuals has increased within the past year. They are supportive of the City and is appreciative of the efforts being made by the City. His company is in the process of providing a new security system to hopefully help prevent the issues. Deputy Director Uhrig echoed comments made by Mr. Braden. She noted that issues are being addressed as they come up, however that funding for security is a lower priority to making structural improvements that need to be made first.

MOTION: Chairman Dobler made a motion to move the changes of the ordinance to the Governing Body. Committee member Emerson, Chairman Dobler seconded. Committee member Lesser opposed. Motion carries 2:1.

Items from Staff [video 21:35 minute mark]

[*This presentation is available to view on the Committee's webpage*].

Director Jackson reminded the Committee that they had previously approved two items related to the Horseshoe Bend subdivision at a prior meeting, and that it will now go before the full Governing Body later this evening. During that meeting, Director Jackson will be bringing a full explanation and requesting approval of the resolution. No action was needed from the Committee at this time. No additional questions were asked.

Other Items

Director James Jackson noted he would like to bring forward a street assessment and dashboard to the Committee at the next meeting.

Committee member Lesser noted that he was not voting against the parking fee structure in its entirety, and clarified he did not agree with the implementation of the fee structure. He thanked Deputy Director Uhrig and her staff for the work they have put into the plan.

Adjourn

Chairman Dobler adjourned the meeting at 10:30am.

Video of the meeting can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/5Zv5EkxmNtw>