



# CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES

## PUBLIC WORKS INFRASTRUCTURE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL  
City Hall, 215 SE 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 255  
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Date: September 8, 2020

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Location: 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room, Holliday Building, 620 Madison

**Committee members present:** Deputy Mayor Tony Emerson, Councilmembers Michael Padilla, Neil Dobler, and Michael Lesser

**City staff present:** Brent Trout, Brian Faust, Hannah Uhrig, Jaci Vogel, Dan Hanover, Jehan Zeb, Bill Fiander, Taylor Wolfe, Robert Bidwell, Mary Feighny, Lisa Robertson, Jessica Lamendola, Stephen Wade, Rachelle Mathews, Braxton Copley

### Call to Order

Deputy Mayor Emerson called the meeting to order at 3:00pm.

### Elect Committee Chair

Committee member Emerson nominated Committee member Dobler to serve as the committee chair. Committee member Lesser seconded the motion. Committee member accepted the nomination. Motion passes 4:0.

### Discuss Committee Purpose

City Manager Brent Trout provided the background for this committee, along with the tasks set before the committee. These include:

- Review and recommend CIP projects to the full Governing Body (GB) for GO funded projects for Facilities, Sidewalks, and Fleet replacement identified in the 2021-2030 Capital Improvement Program resolution adopted by the GB on June 2, 2020.
- Review and recommend approval of project budgets to the full GB for Fix-our-Streets projects in excess of \$250,000 that are funded in whole or in part by the City's Half-Cent Sales Tax.
- Review and recommend a list of projects to the full GB that are funded by the City's Half-Cent Sales Tax in an amount of \$250,000 or less.
- Work with Department of Public Works staff to review and recommend project selection criteria for projects identified in items 1 thru 3.
- Evaluate if this special committee should continue as a standing committee, and develop parameters as such.

City Manager Trout stated there is a pavement plan, but input from the Governing Body is needed to help determine where those expenditures go. City Manager Trout

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noted this committee could be created as one of the standing council committees should the Governing Body agree.

Chairman Dobler discussed the meeting schedule.

### **GO Bond Funded Sidewalks - Pedestrian Masterplan & Annual Sidewalk Projects/Planning**

{Presentation attached to bottom of approved minutes} Bill Fiander, Director of Planning, and Taylor Wolfe, Planner I, presented the Topeka Pedestrian Master Plan. Having sidewalks on both sides of every street, basically 100% coverage, is not the goal, nor would be cost effective. The plan also include ramp applications and crosswalks.

Focus areas - began with highest demand. Group A was high demand areas and schools. These areas have been completed. The next areas will be in Group B, and are North Topeka West, Downtown, Historic Holliday Park, and Tennessee Town. The other areas in Group B will continue in the next year and two year timeline. The goal is to complete two areas per year. With Topeka Boulevard being a large area, it will continue to be worked on through 2021. The areas that have not been highlighted or marked for construction have not been assessed yet to determine a priority timeline. Director Fiander expressed gratefulness to the Engineering staff and partners for the work put in to bring the cost of the project to almost half of the initial estimations.

Process - Ms. Wolfe noted this project will begin in the fourth quarter of the year. Initial plans, preliminary designs, and priorities will be selected and presented to the neighborhoods within the first and second quarters of the year. Ms. Wolfe provided the Elmhurst neighborhood as an example to describe the process. To begin, the safe routes to school are identified and mapped out. Ms. Wolfe then walks the entire route. She then creates a map for the consultant to give an idea of where sidewalks could be placed. The consultants then do their analysis based on the information provided by Ms. Wolfe. They also identify problem areas within the area where a sidewalk would be placed, such as stairs, bricks, etc. During this time, homeowners are contacted and involved in the consultation process. Postcards are placed on doors of residents in the area where the project will take place to invite them to the public input meetings. Feedback from the neighborhood is important.

Once public input meetings have taken place, the consultants will move forward.

Committee member Emerson inquired about the process for putting in curb and gutters. Ms. Wolfe noted curbs and gutters are placed as money allows. With the neighborhood of East Topeka North, staff knew additional funding would be coming in through the SORT grant, so the priority to provide curb and gutters was much lower. Director Fiander noted sidewalks were put in on one side of the street. Committee member Emerson inquired if there are opportunities when a sidewalk could be extended outside of the original plan if it is shown to be needed. Director

Fiander confirmed that could be the case, but plans generally stay on target. However, if the neighborhood feels it is an important priority, and there is funding available, they will grant the request.

Chairman Dobler inquired if sidewalks are generally placed on both sides of the street or only one. Ms. Wolfe noted that ideally, both sides are completed. However, there are times when funding only allows for one side of a street to be completed.

Chairman Dobler inquired about Americans with Disability Act compliant (ADA) ramps. Ms. Wolfe noted that separate funding is used for ADA, however sidewalk projects work together with the ADA ramp program to target the same area in a neighborhood.

Brian Faust, City Engineer, stated brick sidewalks are often times difficult for reaching the ADA requirements. Often, permission is sought by the owner to replace the brick with concrete.

### **Critical Path Project List for 2021**

{Presentation will be attached to approved minutes} Mr. Faust presented this project.

Committee member Lesser inquired about Prospect Hills and if there will be sidewalks on both sides. Mr. Faust noted that currently, the designs show the street improvements and where water lines will be placed, however adding sidewalks to the project could be done if needed.

In looking at the diagrams for Hi-Crest and Central Highland Park, the streets highlighted in 'yellow' are bad while green is good. The Council previously set a PCI goal of '60' for the entire city. Hi-Crest is rated at '33'. Both Hi-Crest and Central Highland Park projects would be done in tandem with storm water improvements.

Committee member Emerson inquired if this information is current. Mr. Faust stated that the information presented is from the 2019 PCI evaluation of the streets. The first was done in 2016 and the city is working to re-evaluate on a three-year cycle. Between citywide re-evaluations, the city manually updates the map when projects are done. For example, when a mill/overlay is completed, the street is upgraded to a PCI of 80. Committee member Emerson inquired if a map of the whole city was available. Mr. Faust stated it is, however staff is in the process of confirming the accuracy of the data. City Manager Trout noted "Fix Our Streets" interactive map can be found on the City of Topeka website.

Chairman Dobler inquired about the waterline replacement program and if decisions are made based on when waterlines are planned to be replaced. Mr. Faust stated when the sales tax projects first started that was not the case, however coordination between the two departments is now occurring. Previously street projects would drive utility projects. City Manager Trout noted this now goes both

ways. A water line project may be moved up to match a street project, and vice versa.

Mr. Faust continued with stating the NOTO Alleys will begin the 2021 season. Utilities is completing an assessment of sewer lines under these alleys.

A photograph showing SW 29<sup>th</sup> street between Burlingame and Fairlawn where patch failures are incredibly noticeable. There is growing concern on this street as winter approaches.

Committee member Padilla inquired about the concrete aggregate failure the area of SE 6<sup>th</sup> from Golden to Croco and in the area presented by Mr. Faust. Mr. Faust noted this area would be an example of the poor aggregate that had been used, and it is being reviewed.

Committee member Emerson inquired about the aggregate and if the process and material change would solve the problem. Mr. Faust stated the city is now using a hard-rock/granite aggregate and this should correct issues with the concrete. There was conversation between Committee member Emerson and Mr. Faust about process and materials used for crack sealing, patching and past practice.

Chairman Dobler inquired about the determination between asphalt and concrete. Mr. Faust noted generally, the decision is made to replace using asphalt. Asphalt has been cheaper than concrete, however the lifecycle cost between the two materials was not been a part of the evaluation process.

Mr. Faust talked about the surface preservation component of the pavement plan. The city expects micro-surfacing of residential streets to last 7 to 10 years, however heavier traffic areas do not hold up as long. Beginning in 2021, the city plans to crack seal arterials but not micro-surface them. Micro-surfacing will be done mainly on lower volume streets. Chairman Dobler inquired about the oldest micro-sealed street. Mr. Faust noted a pilot program to test a two-block street was done in 2017, with more streets completed in 2018. The residential streets are expected to last 7 years.

ADA Sidewalk Ramp program will continue in 2021. The city has a number of locations where ADA ramps are challenging due to the steep slopes.

Mr. Faust noted there are many medians in bad shape. Years ago, many median caps were chip-sealed and now they are crumbling and in poor condition. Chairman Dobler mentioned this was probably done to help control weed growth in the medians.

Mr. Faust discussed the process for a project that would go out for bid now, would take three weeks before the bid would close. Then the applications would go through the review process by the Finance, Legal, and Procurement departments

and getting sales tax funding from the County, the process can take up to 5-6 additional weeks. It would be a stretch to see the project begin in 2020. However, if the process began in December or January, work would be able to begin early spring once the asphalt plants open back up. Committee member Emerson inquired about the length of time it took for the contract and bid process. Mr. Faust noted with staff shortages, staff working from home due to COVID-19 restrictions, it is a much slower process. City Manager Trout noted a Rapid Improvement Process (RPI) review had been scheduled to break-down and find ways to improve the efficiencies of this process, however, the pandemic halted that plan. This would remain a priority for RPI review. City Manager Trout continued by saying staff was looking at software which would allow for electronic signatures to be completed, which would speed up the approval process as well. Committee member Emerson suggested looking at an in debit quantity contract used by the Utility Department that they use to set prices for projects, such as a mill/overlay.

Braxton Copley, Deputy Director of Utilities, provided information about the referenced Utility Repair Replacement program. Line item bid prices are solicited for asphalt, concrete, curb & gutter, sidewalk, grading and seeding. The tabulation to determine the lowest bidder is completed, and work is taking place year-round.

Committee member Padilla noted appreciation for moving the intersection project at 29<sup>th</sup> & Kansas to a high priority.

Mr. Faust continued the presentation with "Reconstruction" (page 9).

Chairman Dobler inquired if the total annual budget of the ½ cent sales tax was used for the projects presented. Mr. Faust confirmed the majority was. Chairman Dobler inquired as to which of those projects fell under the \$250,000 and stated he felt it would be important for the committee to review a project budget. Mr. Faust noted the committee would work through the project list and identify the budget for each of the projects, then send a final list of recommendations to the Governing Body. City Manager Trout inquired the committee's preference for budget, and if it would include listing out each project and price for the \$8 million worth of pavement management program, or if that would be too much detail. City Manager Trout wanted to understand the amount of oversight the committee and Governing Body want to have, and how can staff and the Governing Body work together to find the best way to serve the community.

Committee member Lesser was hoping the committee would be able to take a better look of what is best for the citizens in Topeka rather than what is preferred for each district. Chairman Dobler noted he would like to see the list of projects more than the engineering aspect of projects. City Manager Trout noted having the breakdown of the projects and providing the information to the committee and council members would allow for better understanding of where and how the funds are being used. Feedback on some of the newer projects and programs will be appreciated.

Committee member Emerson inquired about the GO Bonding projects, and why there was a change to using that funding to complete engineering projects. Chairman Dobler stated there was an issue when projects were not able to be completed by the time the bond ended. Mr. Faust stated he felt the 3-year window currently used for CIP program allows for

the projects to be identified and begin the process or make changes before the funding runs out. City Manager Trout agreed that by having the CIP on a 3-year makes a difference, for planning. If an additional engineer needs to be hired for the third year, a temp bond can be sold in order to hire the engineering expense; and the full bond can be sold to refund the temp bond. Chairman Dobler noted those projects, as far as streets are concerned, have already been authorized, and are not covered by the GO Bond process.

Committee member Emerson inquired about staffing. Mr. Faust noted the Engineering Division is down to two Project Engineers from six last year. City Manager Trout noted two of those positions were approved to be filled in 2020, and one additional position will be filled in 2021. Committee member Emerson inquired if the shortage was creating frustrations with the City. Committee member Lesser inquired if a concierge position had been explored to assist with fielding project related communications. Mr. Faust noted many questions raised by the public require speaking directly with the project manager, rather than another staff member. City Manager Trout noted the starting rate for the open position was increased twice to entice applicants. This has not been successful as of date. Mr. Faust noted finding Engineers was an industry-wide problem.

Chairman Dobler appreciates the information being shared and provides good information to the public regarding the process, and to highlight some of the projects.

### **Other Items**

The next meeting will be September 28, 2020 at 10:00am. Location TBD.

### **Adjourn**

Meeting was adjourned.

*{In accordance with Governing Body Rule 8.14 Television Coverage, due to technical difficulties, there will be no video recording of the September 8, 2020 meeting.}*