



# CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES

## PUBLIC WORKS INFRASTRUCTURE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL  
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Date: November 17, 2020

Time: 3:00pm

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

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

Councilmember Michael Lesser was absent.

**City staff present:** Brent Trout, Hannah Uhrig, Jaci Vogel, Jehan Zeb, Brian Faust, Kerri Connell (TPD), Jessica Lamendola, Braxton Copley, Mary Feighny, Travis Tenbrink, Brian Bigenwalt, Mark Price, Dan Hanover, Bill Fiander, Dee McElwee-Vazquez

### Call to Order

Chairman Neil Dobler called the meeting to order at 3:05pm. Committee members and Staff introduced themselves.

### Fleet Replacement Program Overview (Video 0:01:10)

{This presentation can be found on the committee's webpage:

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

Hannah Uhrig, Public Works, presented the Fleet replacement program. The presentation will be reviewing assets over \$5,000 (capital assets).

Chairman Dobler inquired about the starting balance of \$700,000-800,000. Ms. Uhrig stated that it actually started out with \$900,000; \$300,000 being contributed by the Fleet fund and \$600,000 from the general fund.

Committee member Emerson inquired if staff was recommending the lease option. Ms. Uhrig stated today was informational, however it is a very solid option if we were to consider it as a hybrid model. It doesn't have the applicable nature for the large or heavy duty equipment items. Could be a good way to help infuse a new fleet and help reduce operational costs immediately. If this is the way the Governing Body would like to go in terms of how we want to commit our cash.

Committee member Emerson inquired if the enterprise lease would be something that she would want to begin in 2021 or further out. Ms. Uhlrig felt waiting would not be a wise choice. If the decision was made to not participate in a lease program, she would recommend waiting and try to infuse more departments over the next few years, until they get to the large cash influx built into the CIB in 2024 but would like to see this begin in 2021.

Committee member Emerson stated it was up to the individual departments to determine the replacement needs for their departments. Ms. Uhlrig confirmed. It is not best practice, as the accountability and ownership should go to one department that is the expert in the subject matter. As it is today, departments do pay for repairs as they come in, or are billed a flat rate each year based on utilization. This does not incentivize departments to exchange new vehicles. Best practice would be to centralize that approach, so that you can leverage a citywide fleet. So one department may get a new vehicle one year and the next department another but they're both paying in and as a city you're able to balance the needs of the division more equitably versus leaving it up to the individual departments to manage on an operational basis.

Chairman Dobler inquired if there were any issues with cash basis law by entering into long-term lease. Ms. Uhlrig stated that they build the lack of appropriation into all of their contracts but there may be additional clause from enterprise similar to what they've done for other municipalities. Mary Feighny noted it would have to be approved by the governing body and would need to apply to the cash basis law. City Manager Brent Trout noted this would be an experimentation, and that a flexibility clause could be added to the

Chairman Dobler made the following inquiries:

- What is the difference of charges? There is a 10% difference due to the upfront fee on the invoicing price, the bond rates being closer to 4%. It is most likely cost prohibitive with regard to fees. Future forecasting would be very complex if self-funded. There would be some benefit to outsourcing.
- Mercury Study identified 200 that are low to medium. Is staff looking at emergency vehicles moving to the program? Eventually. Chief Cochran is open to exploring the program but there is not as much of a cash upside and would need more exploration. Would not recommend leasing the patrol vehicles. However, there may be other vehicles assigned to the department that could be appropriate to lease.
- What are the other major categories besides light/medium duty? Ms. Uhlrig listed heavy equipment (fire trucks, dump trucks, and snowplow equipment), different road pavement equipment, and Water plant trucks. The high number of categories is due to tailoring the approach to our fleet. Heavy Duty leasing would not be done through enterprise and would need further exploration.

Ms. Uhrig noted if the Governing Body went the direction of leasing, there would be additional challenges of managing multiple different programs and the complexities that would add to the general planning cycles.

- If the decision was made to self-fund rather than to lease, would the vehicles qualify for GO Bonding. City Manager Trout confirmed those vehicles would not, nor did he feel it would be a good idea for those smaller vehicles. However, the large equipment vehicles would make sense to sell GO Bonds to support replacing some of that equipment, as it has a longer use. With regard to the police patrol vehicles, City Manager felt they would not be a good candidate for the lease program.
- Does the \$4.6 million include everything? Ms. Uhrig confirmed and said Jaci Vogel could explain further during her presentation.

### **PW Fleet Equipment Request for GO Bond Funding for 2021 (Video 48:49)**

Jaci Vogel, Deputy Director of Public Works, presented on the Public Works Fleet vehicles and the request for the GO Bond Funding.

Chairman Dobler inquired about the replacement cycle, as one section stated 12 years and one stated 20 years. Brian Bigenwalt with Fleet, stated he thought it was 20 years.

Committee member Padilla inquired if other tree trimming services were called in to assist with larger jobs, and if it was better to keep the number of trucks we currently have. Ms. Vogel noted that during large storm clean-up, it takes a concerted effort between the private businesses and the City to manage those incidents. Travis Tenbrink, City Forester, has a small budget for contracted work that usually gets used for backlog work.

Committee member Emerson noted that Ms. Uhrig had noted that some of the trucks in her department that might be under fleet, and inquired if it would be possible to combine vehicles for jobs through different departments. Ms. Uhrig stated that fleet assists in the inspection and acquisition, but it is truly on the independent departments. This is due to different revenue sources and independent management. Brian Bigenwalt, Fleet Manager, added that they purchase vehicles off the state of Kansas contract where they can. This method doesn't really help regarding the number of vehicles purchased. Ms. Vogel added that we can piggyback off the state of Kansas contract for dump trucks. She is hoping to work with other municipalities that have similar purchase needs.

Chairman Dobler inquired if there was a motion to purchase 6 vehicles and trading in 7 in 2021. Committee member Emerson made the motion. Committee member Padilla seconded the motion. The motion carried 3:0, to move to the Governing Body.

Chairman Dobler inquired about the direction. Ms. Uhrig inquired on the general direction on how the committee would like them to proceed. There are still a lot of conversations if they go lease based with legal and finance to work out. If its cash based then they will need to work with finance on the next budget period. Chairman Dobler inquired about the funding in the 2021 budget currently. Ms. Uhrig stated she would not be able to provide that information currently. Ms. Vogel stated each department budget did not specifically identify the type of item, but there would be a line titled "Capital Outlay" that would identify the total.

Chairman Dobler asked if there is approval on the request to move ahead with the enterprise program, would the City be purchasing 120 vehicles in 2021. Ms. Uhrig confirmed that is the recommendation. The cash source to fund the initial 111 vehicles would need to be identified, including exploration of leveraging some of the cash for light duty vehicles in the replacement fund pilot program as that influx to offset year one. Would require meeting and approval of departments in that program.

Chairman Dobler sought input from the other committee members regarding direction to move to lease rather than cash purchase Does staff invest their time in this. Ms. Uhrig felt a hybrid model would be appropriate. It does not make sense to lease the large vehicles. However for the light to medium use vehicles for administrative and supervisor vehicles, it would make sense to lease those out. Jessica Lamendola, Finance Director, stated it may be difficult to roll this program out in the first quarter of 2021, however it could be reviewed. She would like to research what other municipalities have done regarding the unwinding cost, as it is the biggest downside risk. She felt the enterprise model would be the best direction to go. City Manager Trout stated he felt the model looked correct, however he would want to involve each department to better understand how it effects each of them before making a final commitment.

Chairman Dobler inquired about the timeline. Ms. Uhrig responded that it would be around late spring, to allow for further discussion with all departments involved and to ensure it complies from a legal standpoint. Shawnee County has adopted this model, so there may not be too many challenges with regard to the law portion. Staff is requesting direction from the committee, and Governing Body, on where they should be focusing their time, and whether to proceed with the 2021 lease option, or additional cash funding in the 2022 budget.

Committee member Padilla stated he would like to move forward with taking a deeper look into the lease option. Chairman Dobler inquired on whether the City would still provide the maintenance. Ms. Uhrig stated that they would be opting out of maintenance program and do it in-house.

Committee member Emerson agreed that he would like to continue looking into the lease option, however would also like to look at the cost comparison for tandem vehicles.

Chairman Dobler noted Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcalá was in attendance virtually and asked for her thoughts. She agreed with the other committee members.

City Manager noted that by reviewing this option, it may provide additional guidance to not purchase or lease vehicles in the first quarter.

**Approve minutes from October 27, 2020 meeting**

[The draft minutes from October 27<sup>th</sup> were not reviewed or acted on by the committee. They will complete this at the December meeting.]

**Update: 50/50 Sidewalk Repair Program (Video 1:19:42)**

Brian Faust, Engineer, stated he had been provided a copy of the City's Utility Indefinite Quantity contracts from Committee Emerson, and that they were continuing to review that information.

Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcalá stated she had some questions regarding some of the information that was provided at earlier meetings on the 50/50 sidewalk program. She inquired if the contract is lengthy for the applicant to fill out. Mr. Faust stated the program was for residential projects only. The current process includes the city bidding the work at the beginning of the year, identifying and notifying residents of needed repairs and 50/50 sidewalk repair program information, and he felt the current process takes too long. He stated that by bundling the project into a larger project, it saved money but could take longer to get addressed. Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcalá asked what the average price range was for residents approved for the 50/50 program. Mr. Faust stated that it is approximately \$8 a square foot and depends on the size of the sidewalk that needed to be replaced (\$240-\$300 for one section of sidewalk). So for a \$300 replacement, once the resident pays \$150, then they would go on the waiting list for sidewalk replacement. An additional question was asked if \$500,000 is for the program. Mr. Faust replied that \$100,000 is for the 50/50 Sidewalk Program. Additional questions were asked for each year of the past five years: the number of sidewalks that are done, how many individual residents participate. Mr. Faust will look into it and provide an update. He also mentioned that some years there is still funding.

Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcalá inquired about the tracking process, and asked if any notes were made regarding whether or not individuals are able to afford to apply for the 50/50 program. Mr. Faust noted records are kept of all of the complaints of the sidewalks. It is understood that some are not able to pay the 50%. She stated that some of the issue in the Oakland neighborhood are due to old sidewalks, huge trees that have roots pushing the sidewalk up, etc...and asked if there were any proactive measures in place to address the cost issue. Mr. Faust answered that the program only responds to complaints. He could look at assisting with paying a larger portion for those cases. Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcalá asked the committee to consider waiting on taking action to provide time for the council members to research before putting more responsibility on residents. She suggested looking at

maybe partnering with local agencies for those that need assistance with the application. Chairman Dobler inquired if there was BLOCK Grant funding available to assist with this. City Manager Trout noted the SORT grant helped to address this, however could re-evaluate sidewalk repair priority through the half-cent sales tax funds. Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcalá would like to seek out a more proactive approach for addressing the sidewalks. Chairman Dobler stated the 50/50 sidewalk program would be part of the agenda for December.

**Draft Agenda for December, Set December meeting date (Video 1:36:02)**

Items mentioned include: update on 50/50 Sidewalk program, lease program, recommendation for extending this committee's charge and creating it to be a fifth standing committee.

Committee member Padilla stated he felt the committee was beneficial and would recommend creating it to become a standing committee. Committee member Emerson agreed. Chairman Dobler asked City Manager to bring a draft resolution to the next meeting with regard to creating a standing committee.

City Manager Trout felt it would be beneficial for the committee to be provided with presentations from the Utilities department. The projects have already been approved by the Governing Body, however, the information and details would be beneficial to take a more detailed look. He also suggested having a presentation about Facilities. Braxton Copley, Deputy Director of Utilities, would be open to presenting. City Manager suggested a 45 minute presentation on the pipe-replacement project, followed by an overview of the other projects.

**Items from Staff & Committee**

No additional items.

**Adjourn**

Meeting was adjourned at 4:47pm.

Meeting video can be viewed at: [https://youtu.be/ndVPkSOM\\_DI](https://youtu.be/ndVPkSOM_DI)