



# CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES

## SOCIAL SERVICE GRANTS COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL  
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**Date:** September 19, 2019

**Time:** 10:30 a.m.

**Location:** Classroom A; Law Enforcement Center 320 S. Kansas Ave Ste 100

**Committee members present:** Councilmembers Jeff Coen (Chair), Michael Padilla, Councilmember Michael Lesser

**City staff present:** Brent Trout (City Manager), Sasha Haehn (Director of Neighborhood Relations), Corrie Wright (DNR), Rachelle Vega-Retana (DNR), Councilwoman Karen Hiller

### 1) Call to Order

Councilmember Coen called the meeting to order at 10:30am.

### 2) Discussion: Outsourcing Grant Process

Councilmember Coen asked Staff to introduce the proposed outsourcing process. Sasha Haehn, Director Department of Neighborhood Relations, noted discussion by the committee from a few months back indicated an interest in finding more information about outsourcing the grant process.

Ms. Haehn noted that there are a few outside agencies who assist with reviewing grants. Some of the preliminary research yielded the following:

- Support by majority of City Council to approve moving forward with outsourcing
- Issuance an RFP & selection of agency, which can be carried out by the City Manager. The City Manager would need direction by the governing body to carry out that transition.
- \$52,000 in expenditures is estimated for staff time.
- On average, outside agencies will charge 2-3% of the total fund to manage the process.

Ms. Haehn noted that the grant process for 2020 has concluded, and any decision made at the current meeting would apply to the process beginning in 2021.

Councilmember Coen inquired if there were any questions or comments from individuals who were in attendance at the meeting.

Councilmember Padilla inquired if there was knowledge of a history of, or experience with a partnership between the City and an outside agency with this grant process, or the City has always conducted the process in-house. Corrie Wright, Division Director of Housing, stated she did not have experience or knowledge of a history with the City outsourcing this process before. Ms. Haehn stated that the City does have funds to outsource other programs, such as the Water Share program and Franchise Fees, which are currently administered through CRC. Although these are not social service funds, they are City funds and processes that are overseen by an outside agency. Councilmember Padilla noted that Councilmember Hiller was in attendance and suggested that she speak to the committee.

Councilmember Hiller asked for clarification as to the part of the grant process which was being discussed for outsourcing. Councilmember Coen stated the feedback that was received from agencies had been that the current process was not to the level of satisfaction by a number of the agencies. Some of the agencies had previously stated that they preferred the grant method used by Shawnee County. Councilmember Coen continued that although the method used by the County may not be attainable by the City, it was felt that another option would be to look into outsourcing the social service grant process as a whole.

Councilmember Hiller stated that the grant management process has never been outsourced. Councilmember Hiller provided some of her history of the process as an applicant as well as in the council capacity. Around 2009, the City Council chose to have the advisory process brought in-house. Prior to 2009, an outside agency review the applications and submit their feedback to the City and Governing Body. Following that, the process of reviewing applications and making recommendations for funding was done by a citizen review panel, however, those individuals were unfamiliar with the non-profit world or organizations and it was difficult to make educated decisions. Prior to the current process, agencies would attend the Governing Body meetings to provide testimony and funding requests. From there, the Governing Body decided that a new process which was very outcome-oriented and transparent to allow a committee to create a recommendation that could be less political and reduce the need for an appeal process.

Councilmember Lesser inquired how long it had been since the City had been conducting the process as it currently is. Councilmember Hiller noted the decision process was brought in-house about ten years ago, and clarified the

grant management process has never been outsourced. Councilmember Hiller ended with suggesting that by having a fixed system, a bubble was created, which has triggered some of the current concerns that have been stated by the agencies. Councilmember Hiller cautioned the committee and staff to be specific with what they want to fund and how they want the process to go, so that the process does not return to the lengthy agency testimony session at Governing Body meetings.

Councilmember Coen inquired if the process would be derailed should the committee begin picking and choosing which agencies to fund.

Councilmember Lesser stated that he would like for the committee to have the opportunity to review the RFP's that are received prior to making a recommendation to the Governing Body, and inquired if that would be possible.

Brent Trout, City Manager, commented that Staff could contact an agency to inquire what a fee might look like prior to creating the formal RFP, and that information could be provided to the committee to allow for more discussion. Councilmember Lesser stated that would be acceptable, and although it will be impossible to make everyone happy, finding an option that would work the best to meet the requirements and needs of the majority is what should be reviewed.

Mr. Trout stated Staff would be able to contact at least three agencies and obtain a cost estimate to allow the committee to decide if the cost would be worth changing the process.

Councilmember Lesser stated that while there were some agencies that were not happy with this cycle of funding, 90% of the agencies were satisfied.

Ms. Haehn noted that \$424,566 was allowed in the 2020 budget for social service grants, 2% of that equals \$8,491 and 3% is \$12,737. Ms. Haehn continued by saying that if the committee chose to designate funding to the senior centers, that funding would be on the priorities that the committee would need to determine. The committee would have as much or as little control of setting the formula in which the funding to agencies would be allocated. Another option could be to outsource the scoring and recommendation process, while still administering the contracts in-house. Ms. Haehn continued that the City would remain responsible for monitoring the programs that are funded by CBGB Funds.

Councilmember Padilla inquired with Staff if anyone was familiar with the way Shawnee County runs their grant process. Mr. Trout and Ms. Haehn stated they were not familiar with the County's process, however could look into it and have it ready to present at the next meeting.

Councilmember Lesser suggested establishing a list of priorities and set sub-scoring into those different organizations that would allow for comparisons with agencies or programs that have similar structures. Councilmember Lesser noted that there are markedly different structures between an agency with a four-person Board versus an agency with a thirty-person Board.

Mr. Trout stated that Councilmember Lesser's comments speak to how the components are weighted within the system. This would be an area where the committee would the framework to assist with the guidelines to provide funding to the agencies which are felt to use it wisely.

Councilmember Coen suggested setting up a meeting in October to allow time for staff to find out the process for Shawnee County, revise priorities, as well as to gather information on the financial information from outsourcing agencies.

Ms. Haehn stated she could find out rough estimates on cost to administer application. Ms. Haehn noted that the two percent to three percent that was mentioned earlier was for if an agency, such as United Way or CRC or the Community Foundation, were to administer the grants. The cost may be higher if those agencies are responsible for the review process and recommendation on funding.

Councilmember Lesser stated he would like to keep whichever outside institution and the financial amount provided, confidential.

Ms. Haehn stated that the items to be discussed at the next meeting would include:

- Rough cost estimates for administering the application, review process, and recommendations
- Shawnee County's grant-making process
- Materials to review 2021 priorities

### **3) Other Items Before the Committee**

None.

### **4) Adjourn**

Councilmember Coen adjourned the meeting.

Meeting video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/WvoQ-6KDse0>