



# CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES

## SOCIAL SERVICE GRANTS COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL  
City Hall, 215 SE 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 255  
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**Date:** March 24, 2023

**Time:** 9:00 a.m.

**Location:** Virtual Meeting Only via Zoom platform

**Committee members present:** Councilmembers Karen Hiller, Sylvia Ortiz.  
Councilmember Brett Kell was absent.

**City staff present:** Carrie Higgins (Division Director Housing Services), Freddy Mawyin (Chief Financial Officer), Brad DeMers, Kristin Moorhead,

### 1) Call to Order

Committee member Hiller called the meeting to order at 9:03am.

### 2) Election of 2023 Chair

Committee member Ortiz nominated herself to serve as the Chair. Committee member Hiller seconded the motion. Motion to approve 2-0-0. Committee member will serve as the 2023 Chair. Committee member Brett Kell was absent.

### 3) 2024 Process Review/Training for Committee

Brett Martin with United Way of Kaw Valley, provided the Committee with an overview of the process. United Way of Kaw Valley became a third-party vendor for the City of Topeka a few years ago to oversee most of the Social Service Grants (SSG) process. Since that time, there have been a few changes made to the process, however for the most part it remains the same as it has been for a number of years.

The SSG funds continue to be comprised of General Fund and HUD dollars that come into the community. The priority areas of Emergency Aid and Preventative and Counseling programs that serve groups that live within the city limits, remain the same.

In terms of the process, there is a Request for Proposal (RFP) released. The 2024 Process RFP will be released in April. Those grants will go live the following week. United Way hosts a grant workshop. This will take place via Zoom, and United Way will invite all interested parties to attend. This training opportunity seeks to answer questions related to the RFP. It is a change from prior years, as the RFP

used to go live during the workshop. However, Councilman Emerson made the suggestion a couple of cycles ago to put the RFP out a week prior to the workshop to allow people to read and review it.

Around the end of May is when submissions are due. The team from United Way provides technical assistance along the way, as well as providing input needed from City staff to ensure the programs have the supports needed to submit the best possible applications.

At the beginning of June, the scoring process begins. United Way of Kaw Valley recruits three to five volunteers, with grant experience, to review applications. The independent volunteer reviewers spend about 40 hours each on reviewing the grants. This is a significant investment of volunteer time.

Following the review process, United Way notifies any applicant who did not meet the minimum requirements. United Way then gets the scoring recommendation to the SSG Committee near the end of June. There is an appeals process, which closes in early July and the SSG Committee meets to hear those appeals and make a recommendation that is then sent to the Governing Body for final approval by August 1<sup>st</sup>. At that point, final notifications are made and contracts are drawn up during the Fall, and the grant year begins January 1, 2024.

An internal determination was made last year to put the City's General Fund dollars and the CDBG dollars from HUD onto the same cycle. They used to be on different cycles, which created difficulties for agencies. Agencies are required to submit quarterly reports, which United Way monitors.

#### **4) Review 2024 Timeline; Set Future Meetings**

Committee member Hiller brought up that the Committee had created an option, a couple of years ago, to add in a special topic study session. The timing had worked out to be set for September or October. One year the topic was on senior centers, the second year it was on process. It is an optional session, but is worth mentioning to allow agencies and Committee know the topic for the focus of the meeting.

Mr. Martin noted a meeting would need to be set for the week of June 26<sup>th</sup>, and the week of July 10<sup>th</sup>. With Committee member Kell being absent, Mr. Martin and Liz

Toyne will work together to send information out to seek the availability of the Committee members.

Mr. Martin suggested a special topic of homelessness being the focus for the September/October meeting. There will be a Homelessness Summit coming up in April and a vendor coming in to work on solutions, it might be timely to bring that back to review.

MOTION: Chairwoman Ortiz made a motion to set “homelessness” as the focus topic for the September/October meeting. There was no second for the motion, and the motion failed.

Committee member Hiller felt it was likely that the Committee would want to have that meeting, however the exact topic may not be known at this time. The subject of homelessness is something that is being worked on by agencies and groups all over the City, and she felt issues may be able to have plans in place by the Fall.

Committee member Hiller shared that the Committee comes back in the Fall to review priorities, funding and other pieces for the future year (2025 process) and feels that something may emerge by that time related to homelessness that is identified as a gap need. Chairwoman Ortiz felt that, by setting homelessness as a topic for the Committee, it would send a strong message of support to discussing and reviewing needs for that topic. The meeting could be cancelled later if it was decided to no longer be needed.

The Committee will plan to meet in September or early October.

## **5) Other Items**

No additional items.

## **6) Adjourn**

Chairwoman Ortiz adjourned the meeting at 9:24am.

Meeting video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/72pP6kZ8mdl>