



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL
City Hall, 215 SE 7th Street, Suite 255
Topeka, KS 66603-3914
Tel: 785-368-3710
Fax: 785-368-3958
www.topeka.org

TRANSIENT GUEST TAX COMMITTEE

Date: May 21, 2019

Time: 9:30 am

Location: Holliday 1st Floor Conference Room; 620 SE Madison

Attendance

Committee Members Present: Tony Emerson, Michael Padilla, Aaron Mays
(Chair)

City Staff Present: Nick Hawkins (Finance), Mary Feighny (Legal), Brent Trout
(City Manager)

1) Call to Order

Councilmember Mays called the meeting to order. Committee members introduced themselves.

2) Approve Minutes from May 8, 2019 meeting

Councilmember Emerson made a motion to approve the minutes.

Councilmember Padilla seconded the motion. The minutes were approved 3:0.

3) 2020 TGT Fund Budget: Discussion and Possible Action

Brent Trout, City Manager, provided committee members with a Special Events report which outlines the amount of City funds that are spent on Special Events. Mr. Trout noted that \$9,107 were spent in 2018 on various events, parades, and festivals which fall under the tourism category or are put on by Visit Topeka. Mr. Trout noted that the reason for reviewing this proposal and the special events budget have been brought on by a short-fall to the General Fund budget, and staff has been reviewing various ways to decrease that deficit.

Councilmember Emerson made some inquiries while reading through the report with regard to some of the lines being blacked out.

SGT Ronnie Connell with the Topeka Police Department clarified that parts of the report are blacked out due to the event either being cancelled, or a small enough event such as a block party which will not require officers to stay and attend for the duration.

Mr. Trout noted that overall, the City was short about \$200,000 within the Special Events budget. The material provided to the committee was to assist with showing the breakdown of those costs associated.

Councilmember Mays noted that with regard to some of the larger events, it may be wise for the Governing Body to review the Special Events fee and perhaps raise it.

Nick Hawkins, Budget and Finance, noted that the \$100,000 in question has been included to the proposed 2020 Budget. If the committee decides to reject or make changes to the proposal, staff will update the proposed 2020 Budget.

Councilmember Padilla inquired about the efficiencies of the resources currently used and inquired if the City might review ways to economize or duplicate services in a way to be more efficient. Councilmember Padilla mentioned reducing manpower of the Police Department to continue providing the public safety element, however not over

SGT Connell discussed the processes that are used for identifying the amount of manpower that is needed for various events while reviewing special event applications. SGT Connell noted the size of the event, amount of people expected to attend the event, and whether or not alcohol will be served are factors he reviews with each application. Councilmember Padilla replied that he appreciates the continued efforts that are being made by SGT Connell to reduce unnecessary personnel and noted that he did not want to see response time to other calls increase due to more officers being pulled away from the street. Councilmember Padilla also noted he liked the idea of event coordinators supplying some of their own staff or volunteers at special events as a way to assist with reducing the number of police officers having to attend.

Councilmember Mays reviewed some of the financial breakdown and noted that a large amount of the budget was spent on the Presidential and Vice Presidential visits commenting further that those events likely will not occur on an annual basis. Councilmember Mays inquired about the fees associated with the Vice Presidential visit to Wichita. Mr. Trout noted that the City sent officers to Wichita to assist with this event, and that other agencies have provided officer assistance to Topeka as well.

Councilmember Mays also inquired about the notably higher fee associated to the Spirit of Kansas event. SGT Connell noted Holiday Pay is associated with the fee. SGT Connell also noted that manpower was reduced from 23 officers to 10 in 2018.

Brett Oetting, with Visit Topeka, addressed the committee and provided information to the committee members. Mr. Oetting noted the four special events that had been discussed by staff had no impact on tourism or Visit Topeka and that the cost for those four events amounts to two hundred dollars (\$200) less than what a single large event promoted by Visit Topeka brought in. Mr. Oetting noted that Visit Topeka is combatting the perception that there is nothing to do in Topeka and combatting the decline of people living in Topeka.

Councilmember Padilla asked Mr. Oetting to elaborate on how the funds are used to attract new people to Topeka and the marketing strategy used. The best example that Mr. Oetting provided were the advertisement deals made with the Capital Journal to get a specified number of prints on their website, ads in the paper and online for specific events. These are also done in the local market areas of Omaha and Lincoln, Nebraska; Springfield & Joplin, Missouri; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and in some instances, Des Moines, Iowa.

Vince Fry, Downtown Topeka Inc, addressed the committee to clarify that each event hosted by DTI pays for the full amount, as well as paying for a number of other events that are not directly related to DTI, but is located in Downtown. Mr. Fry feels clean-up that occurs post-event is not an issue for City staff as DTI pays for contracted services to clean the streets, portable restrooms, etc.

Kurt Young, Topeka Lodging Association, addressed the committee to express his feelings of taking a step back each time City staff propose to cut funding to the Visit Topeka TGT Base fund. Mr. Young noted that part of the reason members of the Lodging Association joined and supported the Downtown Plaza and Business Improvement District endeavors was due to Mr. Young being able to show the membership the success that had been had in previous years with showing how the TGT dollars had been spent wisely. Mr. Young noted a feeling of moving backward with the request by City staff to transfer the funding. Mr. Young expressed disappointment with not being able to review the information presented to the committee members ahead of time.

Matt Pivarnik, with the Greater Topeka Partnership, addressed the committee to express a need for funding in order to continue the progress of bringing tourism to Topeka. Mr. Pivarnik noted that Visit Topeka is accredited through a national program, which is rare for tourism organizations, and supports what Visit Topeka and the Lodging Association brought to the committee.

Councilmember Mays inquired about the BID Fund, which appears to be \$25,000 less than it was two years ago, and Visit Topeka appears to be \$30,000 less, however funds for the Zoo, Evel Kenival, Sunflower Soccer, have been going up.

Mr. Hawkins noted that part of that growth is due to the allocations that are provided. Sunflower Soccer receives the 1% straight allocation. With Visit Topeka and the Visit Topeka BID fund, there was a percentage change in the allocation. With regard to the Zoo, there is a 10% allocation. A 2% Administrative Fee is collected from the TGT Base, Sunflower Soccer and the Zoo. After collecting the 2% Administrative Fee, the Zoo receives 10%, Visit Topeka Base receives 80%, and the Topeka BID Fund receives 10%. With Sunflower Soccer, the additional improvements were approved by the TGT Committee in January of 2019.

There was some discussion about the Sunflower Soccer allocation and the breakdown of those monies.

Councilmember Padilla made a motion to reject the proposed amendment to the budget.

Councilmember Emerson seconded the motion.

A vote by the committee to reject staff proposal to transfer \$100,000 in funds from the TGT Base fund into the City's General Budget for Special Events passed 3:0.

4) Other Items Before the Committee

Elizabeth Taylor, Owner of Woodward, spoke to the committee members and provided testimony and history on her time in Topeka. Ms. Taylor had paid for and received advertisements in the Topeka Travel magazine until 2017. Ms. Taylor does not feel it is the right of Visit Topeka to choose who goes into the Travel guide. Ms. Taylor wanted to address the committee to be heard and to point out that some of the changes made within Visit Topeka have not been positive for all in the city.

5) Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned.

The video of this meeting can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/jYKzMkKRnns>

