

## Supplement 1

Below are questions that were asked from Councilmembers upon the budgets release and during the budget workshop session. All questions and answers are paraphrased from both councilmembers and department heads. For any question, comments, or concerns please contact the Topeka Budget Team at [budget@Topeka.org](mailto:budget@Topeka.org)

### **Councilmember Hiller**

#### **Q: Why would 2022 Parking revenue be \$400,000 less than 2019 actuals?**

**A:** 2020 revenue declined significantly from 2019, the low point of revenue was reached in late 2020 and early 2021 when our monthly revenue was consistently 35 to 40% below pre-pandemic levels.

Revenue has been recovering slowly in 2021, but we are nowhere near the occupancy that downtown garages and lots were experiencing in 2019. Our current leased occupancy is below 70% of available garage space. Garages represent nearly 80% of parking revenue. We have been in communication with several of our larger customers like Evergy and BNSF who have communicated that they don't expect to return staff to 2019 levels in the future and will not purchase parking permits at the rates they previously did.

We are forecasting incremental improvement for the balance of 2021 and 2022, but we do not expect full occupancy to be achieved by the start of 2022 based on current trend.

We are preparing proposals to change parking rates, but without approval from the governing body we have not forecasted those changes into the 2022 budget

**Q:** On page 2, you discuss some changes in contractual costs, personnel costs and commodity costs. Just to make sure we are clear....could you refresh us all on how much the annual subsidy to the Zoo is....and correspondingly how much of our contractual increase was due to their contract (therefore how much other contractual obligations went up or down), same question with Personnel and same with Commodities?

**A:** General Fund Contractual expenses increased from \$16.4 Million in 2021 to \$18.2 million in 2022. This is a total increase of \$1.74 Million. The Zoo contract for the 2022 budget is \$1.97 Million. The Zoo had a contractual budget of \$844,421 in 2021; therefore, the zoo accounts for about \$1.1 Million of the variance. The additional approximately \$600,000 increase is driven by Utilities and Public Works TSG Service Licenses.

Three employees stayed with the city from the Zoo. We pay those salaries (\$232,188) and are reimbursed by FOTZ for that cost. The personnel cost for the zoo in 2021 was \$1.6 Million. Although the total general fund personnel cost increased by about \$300,000 from 2021 to 2022, this total includes the \$1.4 Million decrease from the zoo as a result of the transition.

Commodities for the Zoo in 2021 were budgeted at \$257,210. For 2022 there are no associated commodities costs.

The total cost for the Zoo was budgeted at \$2.69 Million in 2021 and is budgeted at \$1.97 Million in 2022.

**Q:** Could you give us 2020, 2021, 2022 Debt Service costs for Utilities and for General Fund, and correspondingly how much debt each fund is expected to have....now that the CIP is passed?

**A:** Provided to the Councilmember with modeling files attached.

**Councilmember Emerson**

**Q:** Why do we have voice expenses since our desk phones are VoIP?

**A:** We are using SIP similar to VOIP but each telephone still needs to connect to a telephone switch. The telephone switch the SIP phones connect to be hosted in the AT&T Hosted Voice Service cloud. The cost per SIP telephone is approximately \$9.00 per month. Other costs include an AT&T data circuit necessary to connect to the telephone switch in the AT&T Cloud, voice encryption services and call recording for PD. Thanks.

**Q: Explain Special Liability**

**A:** We made the mistake of not updating page 105 correctly after making some changes during the budget process. We will update this for the final version of the book. For reference we will be looking at page 243. 2019 and 2020 both have revenues that exceed expenses. 2021 projected, and 2022 proposed are both budgeted so that expenses exceed revenues. The reason for this are two fold: 1) We budget high (\$450,000) for other payments, claims, and damages because there is always a possibility that we will need to pay out a large amount of money and the legal authority is established by the budget.2) Miscellaneous Contingency.

The Special Liability Fund is given authorization each year to spend the entirety of the fund balance in case it is needed. As you can see in 2019 and 2020, this amount is usually not spent. The approved budget for 2021 included \$1.5 Million in contingency that the Special Liability Fund is authorized to spend. To calculate 2022's contingency number the 2021 contingency number was taken out of the expenses for 2021 with the assumption that it likely would not be spent. This allows us to authorize the full amount of fund balance to be spent in the 2022 budget. Although both would be approved, if the fund balance were to reach \$0 then we would not be able to spend out of the fund and any remaining expenses would be charged to the General Fund.

**Councilmember Lesser**

**Q:** Please make Slide 4 public.

**A:** We will do that. It is available at <https://www.topeka.org/finance/budget/> named "Property Taxes by Entity 2021"

## **Police**

### **Councilmember Hiller**

**Q:** Does the county have the capacity to help with Animal Control officers?

**A:** They have been helping us, but the methodology has been different and we have concerns with how they are handling situations. They cannot enforce city ordinances.

**Q:** Can they be deputized by the city?

**A:** They were not willing to change their processes to align with ours. It's not as effective as what we would be comfortable with.

### **Councilmember Emerson**

**Q:** Blight remediation – Is there money available for blight remediation on commercial activities?

**A:** That is not an effort we typically do. We often do not have ownership of the properties. They are also often excessive in cost.

### **Councilmember Padilla**

**Q:** Do bodycams go to the investigative division or other divisions?

**A:** Some go to the Community Engagement bureau. Uniformed officers will have body cams, many in the investigative branch do not.

**Q:** What about the tactical team?

**A:** Yes, every member has a camera.

### **Councilmember Ortiz**

**Q:** Is there any carryover money in the budget from demolishing homes?

**A:** All the money was suspended last year during the public health emergency.

### **Councilmember Hiller**

**Q:** Do you expect us to need \$400,000 a year every year going forward for blight remediation?

**A:** This year is high. We have seen an increase in the past few years and it has caught up to us.

**Q:** Could we use ARPA money?

**A:** It is not allowable under ARPA unless we tied it to affordable housing. We could look at some CARES money as an option. There are some options that are available, but as of now it fits into the budget we are proposing.

**Q:** Are the dollars in the budget for full staffing?

**A:** Yes.

## **Fire**

### **Councilmember Naeger**

**Q:** Are other communities having the same recruitment issues that we are having?

**A:** It is a nationwide issue. Many communities are offering incentives to try and attract more employees. We are working on adjusting our Academy to train EMTs rather than requiring EMT certification beforehand. It will extend the training time a little bit.

### **Councilmember Lesser**

**Q:** Will you send the Council all of the ride-along/recruitment type efforts and a comprehensive presentation of the steps that the Fire Department is taking to improve recruitment?

**A:** Yes, it will be attached online.

Over the last four years TFD has taken measures to help improve recruitment efforts. We currently have 14 individuals that participate on our recruitment team. When we receive information on a job fair we have members of our team attend. We also contacted local colleges which have included:

- Barton CC
- KCMetro CC's
- K-State
- Neosho CC
- UMKC
- Hutchinson CC
- Kansas City Kansas CC
- Johnson County CC

These colleges do have the required courses and certification classes for individuals wanting to become Fire/EMS providers. The Covid pandemic impact with the closing of schools in 2020 halted recruitment visits to colleges that have EMS/Fire courses. We have already taken the steps in 2021 to contact the area colleges and in April 2021 we were invited to Hutchinson CC to speak to their Fire Science and EMT class students. Each area college is slowly moving to open up recruitment at their schools as they again open up to students

In the fall of 2019 we had our Public Education Officer partnered with the TPD Public Safety Program and one day a week TFD visited each of the three Topeka Public High Schools and spoke to students who had an interest in a firefighter career. These visit also included fire crews who assisted by showing the students fire apparatus and equipment. These efforts are expected to begin again in the fall semester.

We partnered with the Jayhawk Area Council of the Boy Scouts to bring back the Explorer program. January and February 2020 we held our monthly meetings and the program was halted by the Jay Hawk Area Boys Scouts. These efforts will be restarted as soon as feasible.

In 2019 a program was initiated with the leadership of TCALC to assist with the Public Safety program for Law Enforcement and Fire/EMS Careers. We donated time and equipment to the program until the program was put on hold in early 2020. We hope to continue these efforts in the fall.

In 2019 TFD held its first all-female Fire Camp (Camp Courage). This was a great success but the 2020 Camp Courage was cancelled. We were able to host this event again in 2021 and it has received positive reviews by the participants and the female firefighters who were the lead instructors in this program. This will be an annual event.

As you may know applicants for TFD must be 20 years of age when hired, have a HS diploma or GED, a valid driver's license, Kansas EMT certification, and be able to complete and pass a "Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT). Our intent is to conduct our own EMT course and recruit at local high schools for viable candidates who we will put through the EMT course. We will also help them prepare for the CPAT. When they are able to successfully accomplish these requirements in the timeline set forth by the program and have reached the age of 20 years they will be placed in the next scheduled fire academy. This program will help us maintain our personnel numbers and also help us to have a more diverse department that is representative of the community we serve.

We have also revised our Ride-a-Long program to allow high school students who are participating in the TCALC program or attend any of the three Topeka Public High Schools Public Safety programs.

It should be noted again that recruitment has been an issue in the public safety arena throughout the country. TFD will continue to look at ways or programs to better our recruitment and also reach out to the youth of the community.

### **Councilmember Duncan**

#### **Q: Are we too low on our fuel cost estimates?**

**A:** Our current fuel contract with Capital City Oil we pay the OPIS rate + \$.05 for unleaded fuel and \$.10 for diesel. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration Short-Term Energy Outlook (July 7, 2021) "U.S. regular gasoline retail prices averaged \$2.78 per gallon (gal) in the first half of 2021, compared with an average of \$2.20/gal in 2020. In June, monthly retail gasoline prices averaged \$3.06/gal, the first time the monthly average was more than \$3.00/gal since October 2014 (in nominal terms). We forecast regular-grade gasoline prices to average \$2.92/gal in the second half of 2021 and \$2.74/gal for all of 2022."

(<https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/steo/>)

Price Summary				
	2019	2020	2021	2022
WTI Crude Oil <sup>a</sup> (dollars per barrel)	56.99	39.17	65.85	62.97
Brent Crude Oil (dollars per barrel)	64.34	41.69	68.78	66.64
Gasoline <sup>b</sup> (dollars per gallon)	2.60	2.18	2.85	2.74
Diesel <sup>c</sup> (dollars per gallon)	3.06	2.55	3.16	3.09
Heating Oil <sup>d</sup> (dollars per gallon)	3.00	2.44	2.97	3.05
Natural Gas <sup>d</sup> (dollars per thousand cubic feet)	10.46	10.83	11.24	11.01
Electricity <sup>d</sup> (cents per kilowatthour)	13.01	13.20	13.57	13.81

<sup>a</sup>West Texas Intermediate.  
<sup>b</sup>Average regular pump price.  
<sup>c</sup>On-highway retail.  
<sup>d</sup>U.S. Residential average.

**Q:** Why do we need to add a Deputy Fire Chief Position?

**A:** This was not an added position. This position was left open to save monies when the person holding that position took the early retirement package in September 2020. This position was to be filled the 3rd quarter of 2021.

**Q:** Why are we decreasing protective equipment gear?

**A:** The fire department received CARES funds to purchase a 2nd set of gear for all front line personnel. This will save budgeted monies used to repair or replace older gear.

**Q:** Does this budget have a plan for replacing radios?

**A:** The budgeted year to replace all the radios is 2023. This may have to be moved up to 2022 as the availability of replacement parts has diminished. Also the manufacturer has ceased making the intrinsically safe batteries. These types of batteries have been hard to come by.

**Councilmember Emerson**

**Q:** Major program accomplishments on page 121 says “Hired an Assistant Fire Marshall/Plans Reviewer”

**A:** This position will be filled upon approval. It will be a reclassification of a Fire Inspector position

**Q:** What would that position do?

**A:** This position will work directly with planning and engineering. They will have direct contact with the architects, contractors, and owners. To have a one point of contact for all projects. This position will work with inspectors to insure all change orders meet all fire, building, and occupancy codes are met during the design and construction phase prior to a certificate of occupancy being issued.

**Councilmember Dobler**

**Deputy Fire Marshall is that the same in the FTE count?**

The Division Chief of Operations Chief is being reclassified to Division Chief of Administration at the same level, so this is a neutral change within current FTEs and Funding. The FTE Equivalents in the proposed budget need to be updated to reflect 0 for Division Chief- Operations in the fire Prevention Category and an add to the Administration & Business Services category needs to be made for Division Chief- Administration.

**Was it in the budget last year?**

The Fire Inspector was in the budget. It will be reclassified to Asst. Fire/Marshal/Plans Reviewer

**Councilmember Emerson**

**A:** You have 4 people in this department will it change to 5?

**Q:** The goal for this division will be to maintain a staff of 3 Inspectors along with the Assistant Fire Marshal/Plans Reviewer through 2021, then review if the current number of personnel is meeting the needs of the division.

**Councilmember Hiller**

**Q:** Why can the plan reviews not be done with existing personnel?

**A:** It will be done with the same division, it is a reclassification of all 4 into one person.

**Q:** Are those tasks a full-time job?

**A:** Yes, it helps us to get things out in a timelier manner.

**Councilmember Emerson**

**Q:** Is this just commercial building permits? How many plan reviews did we do last year?  
(Planning Question)

**A:** We had about 500 building permits last year, about half of those were commercial. That includes 3 units or more residential.

**Q:** Knowing that last year's numbers may have been impacted by Covid, could you also provide the same breakdown for 2019?

**A:** 2020: 513 total combined residential/commercial permits

- 173 total commercial
- 25 new construction
- 148 remodel/additions

2019:

- 475 total combined residential/commercial
- 222 total commercial new
- 42 new construction
- 180 remodel/additions

Development Services has 2.0 FTEs dedicated to commercial plan reviews. The permit section manager also has the capacity to do plan reviews, but that is not their primary duty. Therefore at full staffing, I'd say we would be able to devote 2.5 FTEs to this task if needed. Currently, our plan review positions have both been vacant since late 2020 so I'd say in reality we have been at 0.75 FTE as the manager has had to perform all commercial plan reviews in addition to her other duties. We have had to outsource some plan reviews to keep pace. These reviews are separate from fire, electrical, mechanical, and plumbing.

## **Public Works**

### **Councilmember Duncan**

**Q:** We keep talking about outsourcing/etc. of various PW functions. Have we done any analysis on making these changes?

**A:** We continue to assess our ability to contract services where it is feasible to do so. We are also investigating the possibility of contracting those segments of the street sweeping operation such as commercial corridors and special event support while maintaining an in-house operation for residential street sweeping and for emergency on-call support. We will conduct a comparative analysis for the commercial corridor and special event segments of the street sweeping operation. Our current operation is sufficient to allow us to maintain the residential and emergency on call segments of the street operation. We continue to assess comparative cost analyses for other services such as right-of-way mowing. Where we do currently have a contractor providing mowing services. However, the price per unit increased from \$49 per acre to \$59 per acre, requiring us to reduce the number of parcels we were able to have serviced utilizing this contractor. As a result, we have allocated an additional \$60k into our Street Maintenance budget to hire two (2) temporary employees for median and round about maintenance throughout the city.



**Councilmember Dobler**

**Q: Where is the Countywide Sales Tax Fund information? Is it a part of the Public Works section?**

**A:** No. It is located in the Other Funds. See pages 245 and 246 of the budget book.

**Councilmember Hiller**

**Q: Utilizing technology to conduct the tree inventory for city right-of way and public space trees. Digital Inventory of Right of Way trees. Could you describe what the process entails and what it costs us?**

**A:** While conducting the operational assessment to ascertain the pavement condition index (PCI) values for our city streets, the technology used also allowed us to capture numerous other city assets located within the city's rights-of-way to include trees, signs, street lights, fire hydrants manhole covers, storm drain inlets and sidewalk data. We will continue to utilize technology to capture right-of-way assets, and where necessary we will augment this effort with physical inspections and verification to properly catalog critical information such as planted tree species to ensure urban canopy viability.

**Councilmember Ortiz**

**Q: Parking – Agencies not coming back, what is the plan for that?**

**A:** Our occupancy is very low right now. June we have about a 70% lease rate. We have some options.

**Councilmember Hiller**

**Q: Are you still working through the comprehensive plan for deferred maintenance, etc?**

**A:** Yes we are. We are working through the most immediate concerns first and assessing other aspects and presenting at the infrastructure committee.

**Q: On the Personnel we decided to just authorize 2 for SOS Sales tax correct?**

**A:** Yes.

**Utilities**

**Councilmember Valdivia-Alcala**

**Q: Are your Temp agencies filling up the shortages that you are experiencing?**

**A:** No, we are able to fill a few employees, 2-4 positions. We hope we will be able to permanently fill positions.

**Q: What is the starting wage?**

**A:** Starting wage is about \$14.73 for a Utility Service Worker I (USW); \$16 for USW II.

### **Councilmember Ortiz**

**Q:** Some utility companies allow for a payment online, do we have that for checks?

**A:** The new system has been in place for a couple months. Online payments by check is available.

**Q:** What was the dollar amount for the PVC/Great freeze loss?

**A:** The amount varies from job by job. 1<sup>st</sup> street was \$5,000. Supply and demand costs adjust.

**Q:** Is there work on making the cash-to-debt ratio greater?

**A:** There is always a tension, rate increases would be necessary. Our goal was 25%, we are better than that right now. We want to be good stewards and find the sweet spot for projects.

**Q:** Are we mapping our water lines or looking at a different approach?

**A:** Since 2017 we are utilizing a Fracta model. Takes factors into account including livelihood of failure and consequence of failure and then we are able to make good data-driven decisions.

**Q:** Need to get the information out that you can save checks in the bill paying system?

**A:** Molly will be doing a social media push as well as letting local media outlets know how to set up payment options.

### **Risk Funds**

#### **Councilmember Emerson**

**Q:** Sometimes I hear that the city is “Self-Insured” is this true?

**A:** We have a very high deductible. We insure about \$650 Million of property

**Q:** Unemployment – Does the city pay into the State unemployment fund?

**A:** We self-fund. We are billed actuals on the quarterly basis. The answer is no, we pay expenses as they are incurred.

**Q:** Worker’s Comp – 2-3 Million dollars seems like a lot of money to be paying out. How much of that is long-term carryover from years prior?

**A:** The bulk of the claims are older. We currently carry 3 death claims. We have to carry the total liability for each claim to show that we are able to cover all liabilities.

**Q:** Still seems like a lot of claims?

**A:** We work with each departments. Risk manager Sarah Jones works with department meetings to try and recognize better safety measures.

**Q:** What is the Inmate crew Rate?

**A:** \$10 an hour. \$7 a day. We are facing competition from private companies that are offering \$14-\$17 an hour. We needed to be competitive as well. Public Works is sharing the cost of the inmate program.

### **Administrative and Financial Services**

#### **Councilmember Ortiz**

**Q:** How many people are in the finance department?

**A:** 23 FTE's in which 22 are currently filled.

**Q:** Can we request someone to make a presentation to us (Governing Body) about the ARPA so the public can get a better understanding what ARP is all about.

**A:** There is a presentation on the August 10<sup>th</sup> council agenda

### **Legal**

#### **Councilmember Duncan**

**Q:** Can we get information about the use of outside counsel?

**A:** \$87,302 for 2020; \$55,226 for 2021, to date.