



Message from the Mayor

My dear Topekans, I hope all of you enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving. I am so excited this season is upon us. The holiday season is a wonderful time of the year in which we have the opportunity to pause, enjoy time with family, and bring the people we love together. However, some of us may be struggling with loss or may not have a place to go to. This holiday season, I encourage each of you to consider who you could open your door or your heart to, so that while we are counting our blessings, we also include the people who may not feel so blessed. Please extend a courtesy, kindness, or simply your presence to those who could use some extra care and attention during the holidays.

I also want to address the fact that every day we lose more than 20 veterans to suicide, and the holidays are a particularly sensitive time for those of us that are suffering from grief, loss, or depression. For anyone reading this, I want you to know there is hope. There are people who care about you, and if you are feeling like you are losing hope, I want to encourage you to contact Valeo at 785-233-1730. Valeo is an amazing community health organization that has 24-hour crisis service, and a hotline that can be reached by calling 785-234-3300. If you have a child struggling with depression, Family Service and Guidance Center can offer you support and can be reached at 785-232-5005. Regardless of your circumstances, please know that there is hope and help.

The City of Topeka has wrapped up some significant projects as we approach the end of the year. The City Council adopted a new flag, and had some challenging conversations about the potential for term limits for city council members. We are also working our best to ensure that our budget is meeting your needs. Please email me at mayor@topeka.org with any feedback, questions, or concerns about how our city government prioritizes its budget.

I would also like to thank everyone from the Central Park and Chesney Neighborhood Improvement Associations who attended the joint meeting and chili feed last month. You asked some very thoughtful questions and I appreciated your honest feedback about improvements to your neighborhoods and our city. Thank you to the neighbors and volunteers from the M4T Community Outreach Team who brought food and beverages to share. It was a wonderful event.

Finally, I want to take a moment as your mayor to say that I am grateful for all of you. Each of you contributes to raising our community up, and helping it become an even more amazing place for all of us to live, work, and play. We have achieved much, and still have much farther to go. I am proud to serve all of you, and I want to thank you for choosing Topeka as your home, and for being a part of our community.

City Council Recap

On November 12th, the City Council voted 9-1 (with Councilwoman Ortiz dissenting) to approve the new Topeka city flag. The flag was part of a citywide effort that took place in the fall of 2018 and spring of 2019 to create a new image that would be embraced by the Topeka community, and the flag adopted by the governing body received over 70% of the public's vote. The council also received a presentation from the Finance Department, as well as the Development & Growth Management Department's third quarter reports.

The governing body also selected Neil Dobler to fill the remaining city council term for District 7. The council seat was open after Aaron Mays was recently elected to serve on the Shawnee County Commission during a special election created by the retirement of Commissioner Bob Archer. Dobler, a former Topeka interim City Manager and Public Works Director, was selected for the position over Erica Garcia, an air quality engineer at Evergy, Dana Book, parent engagement coordinator for the Kansas Children's Service League, and longtime Topeka resident Margaret Soroko.

On November 19th, the governing body authorized the issuance, sale, and delivery of \$1.625 million of taxable, general obligation, temporary notes to fund future capital improvement projects. The City Council also approved a vacant and foreclosed property registration program, which requires property owners to register and pay a fee for a vacant property when certain conditions are met. For example, owners of properties that exceed sixty days without utility use or have boarded up windows would be required to register under the new ordinance. The council also discussed and ultimately voted down a potential charter ordinance introducing term limits for city council members and discussed the potential impact of proposed utility rate increases over the next several years.



Voters Elect New City Council and School Board Members

The City of Topeka elected three new city councilmembers and several school board members during local elections held on November 5, 2019. In District 6, which covers central Topeka, voters elected Hannah Naeger, a local dentist and business owner, over Clark Trammel and Lucas Ryan with 61% of

total votes cast. In District 8, Spencer Duncan narrowly defeated incumbent Jeff Coen by a margin of 13 votes. Finally, Christina Valdivia-Alcala was elected with 57% of total votes cast over Will Pope and Tameka Terry in District 2, which covers portions of north and east Topeka. Councilman Tony Emmerson retained his seat representing District 4 after running unopposed.

Candidates who will join the U.S.D. 501 School Board include Lalo Muñoz, C. Richard Bonebrake, and Sue Bolley. David Hines and Tara Dimick were elected to the Auburn-Washburn School Board of U.S.D. 437. Finally, Lauren Tice Miller and Jason Schulz were elected to serve on U.S.D. 450's school board for the Shawnee Heights School District.

Police Department Partners with PERF on Best Practices Study

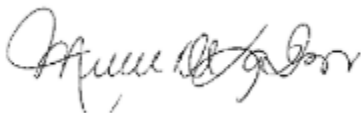
The City of Topeka Police Department is mid-way through a three-year partnership with the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF). PERF is an independent research organization that analyzes critical issues in policing with the goal of reducing police use of force, developing community policing strategies, and reducing overall crime. The TPD's research project with PERF is designed to study non-fatal shootings and identify best practices to implement both in our police department and across other agencies with the goal of reducing gun violence overall. Once the gun violence study is complete, Chief Cochran hopes to develop a best practices model endorsed by PERF that will be implemented by TPD moving forward, and potentially other cities across the nation as well.

Under the leadership of Chief Bill Cochran, TPD has been implementing other best practice strategies recommended by PERF for more than one year with promising results. For example, earlier this year, Chief Cochran reported that objective data demonstrated that officers were unbiased with regard to race when conducting routine stops. We are proud of the work of our police officers and we are looking forward to continuing our partnership with PERF over the next few years.

NOTO Dedicates New Redbud Park

More than 100 people attended a ribbon cutting ceremony on November 16th that transformed a parking lot and former industrial space into a beautiful park where the public will be able to enjoy art, live music, green spaces, and redbud trees. The new park, which is located at the intersection of N. Gordon and Kansas Avenue, features the replica of a sculpture by the late Clare Swogger, which will be called "Clare's Corner." The land for the park was donated by Glenn and Clare Swogger, and also received support from Kaw Valley Bank and a grant from the Joint Economic Development Organization. The park also features an 1,800-foot shed that will be used for an indoor stage. This is a joyous occasion in our community, and we are so proud of the work that NOTO, its business owners, and residents have done to create a unique, lively, and entertaining district in our community.

Sincerely,



Michelle De La Isla

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