



Town Hall Meeting Summary Half Cent Sales Tax Extension

Date: May 22, 2018

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Place: Law Enforcement Center
320 S. Kansas Avenue, Classroom A
Topeka, Kansas, 66603

Mayor De La Isla welcomed citizens and thanked them for attending. She expressed her appreciation to Councilmember Jensen for organizing the town hall meeting. She commented on much needed infrastructure improvements in the community and across the nation. She reported the City's current Pavement Condition Index (PCI) score was 50-55, an unsatisfactory range. She thanked citizens who have provided correspondence to the Governing Body prior to the meeting and stated information from the correspondence as well as the meeting would be posted on the City's website.

Councilmember Jensen provided opening comments and stated the City wants to move forward and focus on providing better infrastructure for the future. He reported the State of Kansas determines tax exemptions on the sale of food; and the only funds available to pay the costs of infrastructure projects are property tax or sales tax revenues according to State law. He stated staff would draft a comprehensive plan on infrastructure projects once citizen input has been gathered and reviewed. He stated infrastructure projects continue to be a complex issue and he would like to gather citizen input on what projects are important, funding mechanism options and expected project timelines.

Brent Trout, City Manager, stated the City has completed a comprehensive review of city streets; however, they are seeking citizen input on how to improve infrastructure and what citizens expect from the City.

Councilmember Jensen thanked Jason Peek, Public Works Director, for his work and ability to balance resources with the needs of the community.

Leo Hafner commented on the need to work on smaller projects that could be completed at a faster rate instead of only large projects; why do improvement projects last so long; crews do not seem to work consistently at job sites; believes City budget should be used for core functions of government only; suggested moving water and/or sewer lines to easements to minimize intrusion of street repairs to local businesses and traffic

Larry Hinton urged citizens to volunteer and become involved in their neighborhood improvement associations in order to remain informed on City business; all City infrastructure needs should reflect change and growth of the community; commended the City Planning and Engineering staff members for their improved communications and flow of information to the public

Clark Trammell stated he supports extension of sales tax at the current rate of one half-cent; believes more projects could be accomplished through efficiencies in City operations; suggested street crews work in cooler months and at night to move projects along in a timely manner; any tax increase will put a greater burden on low-income households; suggested outlining how areas are determined for improvement projects and project timelines before beginning the project

Spencer Duncan stated he understands the importance of funding street repairs; however, he continues to be concerned with public perception over the last 10 years and how extending the newly proposed sales tax would be different; suggested outlining the correlation between revenues received and detailed expenditures of projects based on how much funding went to streets, sidewalks, curbs, etc.; offer incentives to contractors to get projects done in an efficient and timely manner; improve coordination with utilities

Web Garlinghouse stated citizens do not believe they are getting the results they voted for in 2009; suggested hiring a consultant to determine the best way to improve and maintain city streets; expressed concern with citizen perspective and the credibility of the Governing Body within the community

J.R. Campbell stated he believes city streets have made vast improvements and supports extending the sales tax

Shanae Holman, JUMP representative, stated she believes the City's core function should be to maintain and repair infrastructure; the City needs better accountability and project management; many citizens believe more projects should have been completed by this time; need transparency of project timelines and goals; suggested a side-by-side comparison of projects the sales tax revenues would cover versus what has been accomplished to date; offered approach to diversify sales tax revenues to set aside funds for safe and affordable housing

Mayor De La Isla and Councilmember Coen left the room.

Leroy Wetteking expressed concern with how the Citywide Sales Tax was proposed to citizens in 2009; spoke in opposition of extending the current sales tax; believes many of the new street projects were done poorly

Marge Ahrens spoke in opposition of extending the current sales tax; expressed concern with loss of revenue due to tax incentives being offered to large businesses which in turn could be used to fund proposed improvements; believes offering a lower sales tax rate could entice more people to visit the Topeka-Shawnee County area

Councilmember Jensen thanked citizens for providing input and stated transparency continues to be a priority for the Governing Body. He announced a summary of the questions and answers would be posted on the City's website and used to form a basis for the Governing Body to discuss when setting goals and funding mechanisms for City infrastructure for the next 10 years. He encouraged everyone to send their thoughts and comments regarding the Citywide Half Cent Sales Tax extension to the Governing Body at governingbody@topeka.org.

The meeting concluded at 7:02 p.m.