



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: August 27, 2018

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Location: Holliday 1st Floor Conference Room, Holliday Bldg 620 SE Madison

Committee members present: Councilmembers Sandra Clear, Sylvia Ortiz (Chair) and Mike Padilla

City staff present: Luther Ganieany, Topeka Police Legal Advisor; Lisa Robertson, City Attorney; Brent Trout, City Manager; Sergeant Joshua Klamm, Topeka Police Department; Sasha Haehn and Corrie Wright, Neighborhood Relations

Call to Order

Councilmember Ortiz called the meeting to order.

Approve Minutes from July 20, 2018 meeting

Councilmember Padilla moved to approve the minutes. The motion seconded by Councilmember Ortiz. Councilmember Clear was absent for the vote. The motion carried unanimously. (2-0-1)

Reports and Follow-Ups from Organizations

- Councilmember Clear arrived
- Corrie Wright, Department of Neighborhood Relations and liaison for the Homeless Taskforce, provided committee members a letter and addressed the committee with the following highlights:
 - Suggested building a designated camping area, California has weather proof tents (link provided below). This idea would have access to water, restrooms, and the tents are roughly \$2,500 each and the Taskforce recommended having 20 tents to begin with. Community conversations would take place to help fund the program privately without using City tax dollars. Ms. Wright will speak with Luther Ganieany, Legal, to research legal matters that might come up.
 - Educate business owners about their legal rights regarding calling police.
 - Creating a day center in the downtown area which would provide a place out of the weather to socialize, have access to a light meal, and activities to keep individuals from loitering around the downtown area, which has been a concern from many citizens.

- Options for free bus passes, to hopefully entice individuals to travel for a job, or social services that they may be in need of.
- Funding for the Topeka Police Department to have homeless outreach officers.
- A group of members from the Homeless Taskforce went out and interviewed a number of homeless individuals to get their input. These interviews were videotaped and could be provided to the committee to view at a following meeting.
- Councilmember Padilla inquired about the interview with homeless individuals to find out what would be needed for living or what the holdup is as to why they are staying on the street.
 - Brett Martin with United Way discussed his interviews with homeless campers along the Kansas River and noted that many of the individuals were not generally transient, and were willing to gain assistance if it were made available. They would prefer a designated camping area with cover.
 - Council members were interested in watching the video of interviews.
 - No children were present and there are a total of 53 known households camping.
 - Sergeant Klamm: There may be camps on the west side, but not a large number. They conducted outreach with individuals prior to discussing their situation. Some they talked with were chronically homeless. Some have various barriers to finding alternative housing. A facility with water or designated area would be positive, but some issues within the community may have to be worked out. His team will be in charge of homeless outreach. This team would begin with one officer until more manpower/resources are dedicated. Another concern was what to do with belongings if the homeless individual is arrested, they are supposed to hold their stuff for 90 days. TPD is currently looking at a shipping container to keep at the impound lot. This option is cost effective. Councilmember Padilla asked how this population sustains themselves with food and other necessities. SGT Klamm noted the individuals go to the Mission, Let's Help and travel to get water and bring it back to the camp within walking distance.
 - Councilmember Clear queried if the individuals who were interviewed provided an accurate representation to the homeless camping community as a whole. SGT Klamm noted that in addition to the seven individuals who were interviewed, he had spoken to about four the week prior and all parties confirmed a similar response. They would be interested in living in a designated area as long as basic commodities would be available. SGT Klamm suggested doing a more in depth survey with more of the population to have a more rounded answer. Councilmember Clear noted that having a designated camping area would allow authorities to say "yes" instead of so many "no's" with regard to where homeless individuals could be or not be. SGT Klamm met with Barry Feaker of the Topeka Rescue Mission and the Mission is interested in having more conversations about having space near the Mission for an outdoor camping area.

- SGT Klamm stated another hurdle is the issue of identification. This process is difficult under current state requirements. Houston, Texas has a program that their police department set up which allows homeless individuals to obtain a Social Security card and birth certificate. SGT Klamm provided the committee with an example of the Identification Letter. SGT Klamm has more follow up to do with state organizations to inquire about the possibilities of TPD being able to run a similar program, but felt this program would be relatively easy to run and would not utilize a lot of resources or man power to do it. Councilmember Ortiz asked Legal to draft something for this project. Councilmember Ortiz also noted that individuals who were in need of a copy of their birth certificate, or social security card, if it is on file, could go to the Department of Child and Family Services and receive one free of charge.
- Councilmember Ortiz inquired with Luther Ganieany about the status of the MOU. Mr. Ganieany noted that the MOU is in the final stages, however is not ready to date.
- Councilmember Ortiz instructed SGT Klamm to send team information to Liz Toyne (Council Assistant).
- Mary Tibbitts with Stormont Vail addressed the committee and noted that health care services are not a high priority on homeless list. Ms. Tibbitts informed the individuals that the team met with about GraceMed, and offered it as a secondary option to going to the Emergency Room. Ms. Tibbitts noted that in her experience with working with homeless individuals, health care is not generally a priority unless there is an immediate emergent need. Councilmember Ortiz asked Ms. Tibbitts to provide Liz Toyne with her contact information.
- Councilmember Ortiz went down her check list
 - Legal Updates: Luther Ganieany noted a designated campground would be considered an alternative to housing but requested the committee to give thought to how this campground would remain clean/sanitary, as this would be a big issue.
 - Councilmember Clear and Ortiz asked Frank Henderson, with Topeka Rescue Mission and Liz Toyne to follow up with Barry Feaker to invite him to attend the next committee meeting.
 - Councilmember Ortiz asked Corrie Wright to reach out to Topeka Metro to see what they can offer.
 - Community Action - was not present at the meeting, but would be invited to attend the next meeting.
 - Beds and caring shelters - Corrie Wright noted that funding is an issue but had some ideas. Ms. Wright will be going to another community with Mary Tibbitts to see respite homes that hospitals run.
 - City Manager - Councilmember Ortiz asked Brent Trout to inquire with Doug Gerber and the Finance Department about setting up an account to receive funds from private sector
 - JUMP - Councilmember Ortiz inquired with the organization as to if they had determined a definition of what affordable housing was - no definition

was provided.

- Councilmember Ortiz noted that Chesney Park NIA and Stormont nurses offer blood pressure check, diabetic testing, etc for free and asked Corrie Wright to look into that resource as an option.
- Councilmember Ortiz commended all of the entities that attended the meeting noting that this process is long and appreciated their attendance and input.
- Councilmember Padilla inquired with City Legal as to if camping is allowed on any city easements. Luther Ganieany noted that yes, if the area is public/city property. If it is on private property, individuals can be asked to move. Councilmember Padilla suggested the campground as a better option and would urge homeless to go to that location.
- Councilmember Padilla inquired if the homeless know what resources are available to them and where to if they know how to access them. SGT Klamm responded that the individuals do have good networking and are very resourceful. The ID program would be easy to do for small amount of money.

Public Input

None

Adjourn

Councilmember Ortiz adjourned the meeting.

Meeting video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/L7JSC-ZUInc>

Link for referenced Tents: <http://worldshelters.org/shelters/u-dome>