



# CITY OF TOPEKA

## CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

### PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL  
City Hall, 215 SE 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 255  
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Date: March 29, 2019  
Time: 3:30 p.m.  
Location: Holliday 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room, Holliday Bldg 620 SE Madison

**Committee members present:** Councilmembers Karen Hiller, Sylvia Ortiz.

**Committee members absent:** Councilmember Aaron Mays

**City staff present:** Brent Trout, City Manager; Mary Feighny, Deputy City Attorney; Sergeant Joshua Klamm, Topeka Police Department; Sasha Haehn and Corrie Wright, Neighborhood Relations

#### **Call to Order**

Councilmember Ortiz called the meeting to order. Committee members and staff introduced themselves.

#### **Election of 2019 Chair**

Councilmember Hiller nominated Councilmember Ortiz to serve as the Chair. Councilmember Ortiz accepted the nomination. Councilmember Mays was absent. Councilmember Ortiz will serve as the 2019 Committee Chair with a vote of 2:0:1.

#### **Discussion: 2019 Goals with regard to the proposed Public Camping Ordinance and Alternative Programs**

Councilmember Ortiz provided a brief overview of the proposed ordinance and the work that has been assigned out to various staff. Councilmember Ortiz then asked those staff members to provide an update on their work.

Corrie Wright from the Neighborhood Relations Department serves on the Homeless Task Force. Ms. Wright provided an update on the Shelter Plus Care program that began a Housing First approach in February with a new provider. This approach is encouraged by the Department of Housing in Urban Development and has been around since 1990, but current research has been showing positive trends. Ms. Wright met with Dr. Russell Burton and his team who transported unsheltered individuals to the meeting. Thirty-one (31) vouchers, which included forty-three (43) people, were distributed on February 25th, 2018 and March 4th, 2018. As of the Public Health & Safety meeting date, twelve (12) households with nineteen (19) individuals have been able to get off of the streets and into a residence. Ms. Wright noted that with the City ID program

initiated by SGT Josh Klamm and the Topeka Police Department, Valeo, and Dr. Burton, this program has seen the early success that it has. Ms. Wright noted that the Shelter Plus Care program is full, however would like to see a second round of individuals go through the program and get off of the streets.

Councilmember Ortiz inquired with Ms. Wright about the number of organizations that compose the Homeless Task Force, noting that she believed it to be around forty-seven (47). Ms. Wright confirmed she believed it to be around that estimate and will provide the Council Assistant, Liz Toyne with that information to be shared with the committee members.

Councilmember Ortiz called SGT Josh Klamm to the podium to provide an update on the projects he has been working on.

SGT Klamm will provide Councilmembers Hiller and Mays with the example City ID application. Since the beginning of the City ID program in November of 2018, 160 IDs have been created, with another sixty (60) applications on SGT Klamm's desk. Volunteers In Police Service (VIPS) have been manning a desk in the front lobby of the Law Enforcement Center weekly to assist with the applications and taking a current photo of applicants. Out of the 163 IDs, about 25 of those have been converted to State IDs. TPD partnered with the state to help individuals obtain their state ID in order to get copies of birth certificates, social security cards, and eventually a six year validity driver's license or permanent ID. Having identification will allow individuals to apply for jobs and housing. This pilot program is going smoothly.

With regard to the ordinance, SGT Klamm noted that if an unsheltered individual was arrested, the police department would have to gather and store their belongings during the time they were held. A shipping container was purchased and has been placed at the police impound lot and will be used for storing items collected.

Councilmember Ortiz inquired with the rapport that has been established between SGT Klamm and members of the unsheltered community. SGT Klamm responded that working alongside these individuals has been going well. Donations from local churches and organizations have been coming in and with the warmer weather, SGT Klamm expects to meet more unsheltered individuals.

Councilmember Ortiz inquired about the staff assigned to the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT). SGT Klamm noted that the team consisted of himself, one officer and that a second officer had been assigned to the team, but was going through training and it would be a few months before that second officer would be ready to help with the team. Councilmember Hiller appreciated the report.

Councilmember Ortiz inquired if Councilmember Hiller had additional comments or questions. Councilmember Hiller noted her appreciation in taking part of the discussion and the work that the 2018 committee members, staff and community members had been doing with regard to the ordinance as well as addressing some of

the challenges that are facing the unsheltered population of the city.

Councilmembers Ortiz and Hiller expressed gratitude to Dr. Russell Burton's work with partnering with staff as well as the unsheltered members of the community.

### **Public Input**

Pamela Burkhart is a participant in the Shelter Plus Care program and provided her testimony to the committee.

Dr. Russell Burton addressed the committee. Dr. Burton noted that having the proposed camping ordinance sitting in committee is distressing to the unsheltered population who will be effected if the ordinance passes.

Councilmember Ortiz noted that the ordinance is not something that the committee nor Governing Body are planning to pass the ordinance any time soon. As the committee continues to review various programs and community work, there is a possibility that the ordinance may be deemed as no longer necessary.

McCall Enloe addressed the committee to share his testimony about his experience with the Shelter Plus Care program as well as his feelings of apprehension regarding the proposed ordinance. Mr. Enloe felt encouraged by the work that is being done with the new initiative of the Shelter Plus Care program.

David is a community member who resides near the river and provided testimony with the help he has received from the City ID program. David would like to see a program to help someone in a similar financial circumstance. Councilmember Ortiz asked Corrie Wright to meet with David and see what additional assistance might be available for him.

Jake Wall, a concerned citizen, addressed the committee inquiring if a date of postponement to the ordinance could be provided, noting that many of the unsheltered population lives in fear that the ordinance could be passed at any time and would directly affect their way of life. Councilmember Ortiz noted that the committee is not in a hurry to pass this ordinance and had Mary Feighny, Deputy City Attorney, comment on the steps of the process that would be taken prior to the proposed ordinance taking effect.

Mary Feighny noted that the committee will give an update to the Governing Body in June of 2019. Ms. Feighny noted that the process to approve the camping ordinance will not be rushed. Another piece that will be considered along with the camping ordinance is the traffic and pedestrian safety ordinance with yet another larger committee would have to meet and agree on a strategy before the ordinances would be considered. Mr. Wall was encouraged to hear that any final action regarding the ordinance was a long way out. Councilmembers Ortiz and Hiller made additional comments regarding the processes to work through the various aspects and details of the ordinance.

### **Other Items Before the Committee**

Councilmember Hiller noted that the topic of Code Compliance had been discussed.

Councilmember Ortiz inquired with City Manager Trout if Code Compliance had been reviewed by the RPI program. Mr. Trout noted that the session regarding the nuisance abatement process had been completed using the RPI process and that a presentation to the Governing Body would be provided in April. Mr. Trout further explained that having further discussion regarding some of the definitions found in the International Property Maintenance Code could change the way staff administers it. Mr. Trout stated that the committee should focus on the policy that the Council wants to have implemented by staff. Mr. Trout recommended that committee members create a list of concerns that they have for staff regarding Code Compliance and areas they want to discuss.

A community member going by the name Lieutenant Dan addressed committee members to inform them that the current Code Compliance standards were part of the reason for him being on the street.

### **Schedule Next Meeting(s)**

Councilmember Hiller suggested meeting monthly to begin working through the Code Compliance tasks and discussing the Public Camping Ordinance periodically as necessary. Councilmember Ortiz agreed with City Manager Trout, that a list be created and shared with staff so that staff can begin working on requesting information.

### **Adjourn**

Councilmember Ortiz asked Liz Toyne to meet with Councilmember Mays and recap the meeting as well as to assist the committee in developing a list to share with the City Manager. A schedule of meetings can then be developed after consultation with the City Manager.

Councilmember Ortiz adjourned the meeting.

Meeting video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/7UEgUK5kQ6g>