



CITY OF TOPEKA

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EXCERPT

HOLLIDAY 1st FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM, Topeka, Kansas, Tuesday, September 14, 2021. The Public Works Infrastructure Committee members met at 10:00 A.M., with the following Committee members present: Dobler (Chair), Emerson, Lesser.

The following is an excerpt of the draft minutes from the meeting:

APPROVAL by the Committee of the Resolution to remove the hoods on parking meters along the side streets (“hundred block streets”) of South Kansas Avenue.

Presentation: Parking Garage Infrastructure & Parking Fund [Video 16:50 minute mark]
[This presentation can be found in the “Supplemental Materials” section on the Committee’s webpage.]

Deputy Director Uhrig stated conversations have resumed with Downtown Topeka Inc (DTI) to discuss what options they would also like to consider. The information today will touch on high-level review of the revenue/expenses are for each garage, as well as to review some of the next steps for revamping the parking rates and some of the Downtown parking structures.

Jason Tryon presented information on current garage rates, to include profit and loss for the entire parking garage system. The Park & Shop Garage is the only garage that currently generates a profit.

Highlights:

- Current Garage Rates – all garages are \$67.75/monthly with exception of reserved spaces at Center City (\$75.50/mo) and 9th Street (\$47.75/mo).
 - Coronado Garage has long-term contract for discounted pricing on 100 spaces with Topeka Grand Real Estate. This expires in 2022.
 - 512 Jackson Street Garage has long-term contract with Dept. of Children & Family Services for 355 spaces with automatic escalators in 2022, 2027, 2032, and 2037.
 - Crosby Garage has long-term contract with Dept. of Corrections for 100 spaces expiring in 2034.
- Profit & Loss information and a pro forma for each garage
 - Current revenue for 2022 for entire garage system is just under \$2M/yr.
 - Operating costs are about “break even”
 - Capital expense is what drives totals to a \$1M negative

- Park & Shop garage is only one that shows a profit. There is not as much capital expense needed, and also benefits from receiving more hourly revenue than the other garages.
- Map showing current parking zones and designated times. There are six various timeframes in the Downtown area for parking. Staff would like to bring consistency to some of these areas.
- Proposed Parking Changes was discussed some at the previous meeting, however Staff brought additional suggestions:
 - Simplifying the parking zones where possible, and making sure the same rule applies to each block.
 - Would like to test app-only zones. In the future, Staff feels it may be necessary to have paid parking spaces that do not have a physical meter at them. Testing a zone to see how it was received through an app-only measure would provide additional data to Staff. This may be something to consider in the future for Kansas Ave for aesthetic reasons. This is not being recommended today, however would like to look further into it in the future as it is a current revenue source that the City is not tapping into, by allowing free parking on Kansas Ave.
 - In the future, Staff would like to establish a minimum and maximum pricing range for each of the parking areas. This would allow the parking administration department to set their rates without having to have approval for each individual pricing change that we would make.

Questions

- Director Jackson inquired with Mr. Tryon if the time slots were based on observed demand?

No. There has not, historically, been any type of reporting or data collection done on demand, until 2020. As of today, we do have some of that information because about 25% of our revenue does come from people who are paying by app. In that case, we can see which zones are paid for most frequently. However, we are not able to pull data from things like demand-based pricing, because the meters are based on physical points, so cannot fluctuate based on pricing demand.

- Could you please review the annual revenue and expenses?

Maintenance cost – anything spent on physical goods that are needed to repair the garages. This also covers the cost for contractors who are called out to make repairs.

Insurance – This is property insurance. It is an expense that has increased significantly over the past two years.

Utilities – Would include electricity and water. Constantly trying to reduce the electrical expense. More recently have been trying to replace lighting with LED lights when possible, however many of the light fixtures are old and not compatible with LED lighting. This would be an example of another repair cost.

Pilots – Payments In Lieu Of Taxes. Assessed to each individual garage.

Employee Expense – This covers Parking Administration Department staff in the office, as well the maintenance staff that works on the garages, and includes a share of employee expense for the Parking Control Officers, that is assessed to the garages. The majority of the Parking Control Officer expense is assessed from the on-street parking fund, however, they do still patrol the garages and make sure there are not issues or problems throughout the day.

Internal Services – Include things like IT expenses for maintaining the servers and various software programs used for parking system maintenance.

Office Expense – This would include the cost for the office space at Holliday, general office supplies, and various other permits and forms that have to be printed.

Debt – The City currently owes on the Crosby and Center City garages. Center City has debt payments through 2031. Crosby through 2036. The way the debt is structured, it would be Mr. Tryon's hope to see, in 2031, significantly lower debt service. The way the Center City garage is structured, as the debt is paid off, there is additional debt that is due on Crosby. The annual expense is fairly flat at this point. That changes as the Finance Department pays off bonds earlier or makes other arrangements they make based on the market.

Annualized Capital Expense – Refers to the estimate received from Walter P. Moore for the 10-year Capital Improvement Plans, and then taking that 10 years' worth of expense and annualizing it to a one-year budget. This shows what would need to be spent in each garage, on average, every year through that decade.

Chairman Dobler inquired if this was to be cash or additional debt service? Mr. Tryon noted that decision was still left to be discussed and decided on. Staff is putting together recommendations, based on revenue enhancements that they would like to make, for increasing the cost of some of the garages or changing some of the on-street revenue. There are a few different scenarios that would cover them by cash. However, doing the entire \$10M worth of improvements would likely require a reissuance of additional debt to cover that.

Parking manages a reserve fund which currently sits at about \$2M, however, there is an additional \$8,000 in the 2021 budget to make repairs that are needed at Townsite. If the City continues to make repairs over the next few years, the decision would need to be made to either increase the revenue substantially so that fund would not be reduced, or issue a new debt.

- Looking at this forecast now, are we thinking that we will just break even?

Correct. As of right now, our Annual Operating Expense is about breakeven. Given the 2022 budget, we do expect that revenue will rebound, with the hope being we will see pre-pandemic figures again by 2023. This is roughly \$400K for the garages. We were trending well, however August dropped a bit, more than we had seen in June and July.

- Is the insurance cost of \$190,000 part of the City's insurance plan, and deductible, in totality?

City Manager stated it was part of the \$500,000 plan. Committee member Lesser was curious if it would be worth looking into self-insuring in totality. These are masonry structures, and as such will not be nearly as likely to catch on fire or blow away. Deputy Director Uhlrig noted that when the 2021 insurance rates increased, the parking budget was hit significantly, financially. Committee member Lesser suggested re-evaluating on this policy. City Manager stated the allocation may also need to be reviewed.

- Committee member Emerson inquired about the parking meter app and the revenue that it has generated thus far. Mr. Tryon responded that about 26% of current meter revenue is being paid by customers using the app. We are seeing people take advantage of the app, mostly in the longer-term parking of the 10 hour meters.
- How are the PILOT fees calculated?

Mr. Tryon's division receives an overall number from Finance that is the overall number to allocate toward Parking. Then his division assigns the internally, and the figure the revenue center based on the revenue that the parking garage or parking lot generates. In the past, we have not separated out the individual garages or parking lots were provided back to the specific location, rather than just one lump allocation.

- Kansas Ave side street that has had hooded meters for a long time, what would your suggestion be; if we put those meters back into 2 hour meters and continue to allow Kansas Ave to be 2 hour zones?

Under the hooded meters, are one-hour and two-hour meters. Staff would recommend converting all of those to two-hour meters. It would also be recommended that Kansas Avenue continue to be designated at two-hour block zone, and charge for the hundred blocks on either side. A current problem that is occurring now is that people are using the free two-hour zone on Kansas Ave, and then hoping to the side streets; each of which are separate two-hour zones. This is a way people have been exploiting to avoid paying for parking. Most of this is occurring by people who work or live in the Downtown area, rather than visitors.

- Would you recommend implementing those immediately?

Yes, if we could implement that program immediately, that would be ideal. As we are looking at increasing our revenue over the next several years, this would be one of the first things on the table Mr. Tryon feels should be implemented. Deputy Director Uhlrig noted that the placement of the hoods on meters were done at the direction of a former City Manager, and was not implemented under an ordinance. However, prior to moving forward, we would like to seek approval from the Governing Body as to what their desire would be before taking any action.

- How does DTI feel about this change?

Seemed receptive overall, and understanding for the need to change the status quo. Feedback was that moving steps at a time would be more beneficial. Keeping the free parking along Kansas Ave, for the time being.

- What form of action we would like to take?

City Manager Trout suggested writing up a resolution in order to proceed, in order to have clear language as to what action is being asked of the Governing Body to take.

- Would you need to inventory the current meters for functionality?

There are likely some that are rusted out and will need to be replaced, however there is ample inventory on-hand of replacement heads.

- Would you consider making these meters app only?

It could be a consideration, however, if there are only a few that are non-functional, it may create more confusion by customers if all of the meters are not the same. The new meters could be set up to allow for customers to pay by coin or by app. Mr. Tryon would not recommend testing out the app-only zones in that immediate area because it would be too many changes at once and likely would receive a lot of push-back from customers and businesses. Mr. Tryon would suggest trying the app-only system in a lower used area in the beginning, such as in the 10-hour meter zones, to test the feedback. And then slowly moving into other meter zones.

- Is there a pro forma associated with replacing meter heads, or is it as easy as replacing old meter heads with new ones and we will not incur additional costs in doing that?

There would only be the cost of labor for internal maintenance staff to change those out. There is adequate inventory of functional coin-operated meters to change those out.

- Committee member Emerson inquired about people space hopping, and asked for clarification.

People are able to park on Kansas Ave for 2 hours. There is no ordinance that allows for citing people who move from Kansas Ave to the side hundred streets.

- **MOTION:** The Public Works Infrastructure Committee is making a recommendation to move to Governing Body to make a motion to remove the hoods on parking meters along the side streets along Kansas Ave. Committee member Lesser made the motion. Committee member Emerson seconded the motion. Motion moved 3:0.
- Regarding suggestions by constituents to sell the parking garages:

- With the study that was done, what does that gain the City? In 10 years, what condition are those parking garages going to be in? Will we be looking at another capital expenditure at that point?

It is a combination of certain things that were recommended by the study that would require ongoing maintenance, and is not necessarily a one-time cost. In terms of whether the City would have to spend \$10M every ten years, that information is not accurate. It would be a portion of that amount, but would not be the entire \$10M. In terms of selling the garages, that is something that staff has been approached with a couple of times with, since Mr. Tryon's tenure. However, from those conversations, the desired sale price and the desired buy price are pretty far apart. Another option that has been explored would be to enter into some sort of public-private partnership. Columbia Capital completed a study, in February of 2020 just before the pandemic hit, with some figures. However, since that time, the value of a parking garage may not be exactly what it was then. Within the study, a number of different risks were identified. And although no formal recommendations were made, the study did show that there was significant risk to enter into a public-private partnership. An arrangement like that may look like the City selling the garages to a private entity with a range of prices that they would be allowed to charge, which would be agreed to at the time of sale. That option could be something staff continues to explore, however, there are no interested buyers in the short term. With the proposed improvements, the City is not over-improving the assets, rather they are being made to ensure the structures are where they need to be for public safety, to upgrade the outdated lighting fixtures, to ensure there is adequate emergency lighting, and to ensure all of the fire suppression is working properly.

- If the City were to sell all of the garages as a package, that would be the floor of what we would need to get out of the debt service, correct?

If the City were to sell all of the garages, we would have to pay off all of the bonds by the time of sale. Those fees would need to be factored into the price of sale.

Mr. Tryon stated some of the Downtown stakeholders have noted they are happy to continue paying what they are paying to the City, because they know that maintenance on owning their own garage would be excessive.

- One option, in the future, would be to sell off all of the garages. If we could get out of the parking garage business, would we be happy? Are there single parking garages that it would make sense to sell and have a private owner come in?

We would have many things to consider:

- There would be risk associated if we sold off the asset, it may be harder for businesses to have public parking offered.
- With fewer parking spaces that the City controls in Downtown, gives us less flexibility to control the price of what we charge for Downtown.
- Long-term question if we do not have any public parking. There have been studies from municipalities that sold their garages only to have to then build a new one to entice a client in their downtown area.

- How much of an impediment is the 9th Street garage to the overall system, since it has special conditions? That garage would not significantly impact the entire system. Mr. Tryon recommended that if the City increased the price for other garages, that we lower the price of 9th Street. One reason would be to show a gesture of goodwill to the community. That although most prices are being raised, there is a lower price option available for people willing to walk a few additional blocks. The 9th Street garage also has excess capacity and could accommodate more users. In the short term, we could lower the price to entice people to come in. We could also lower rates of some of the parking meters that are a few blocks farther away. These fees would raise along with the others as time would go on.
- Next steps: Bring back list of proposed ranges that Staff would like to get approval from the full Governing Body, which would give Staff the discretion to make pricing changes within that range. Staff would also like to bring the Committee a new layout of what the rules regarding Downtown parking would be. Deputy Director stated staff would like to take the updated list to the Downtown stakeholders to receive their feedback, as the previous conversations were had over a year and a half ago. From there, a change to the resolution would be required as defined amounts are listed in the current resolution.
