



CITY OF TOPEKA FIRE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Date: March 18, 2021
Time: 6:00 pm
Location: Virtual

Commissioners present:

<i>CM Sylvia Ortiz</i>	<i>Sandra Clear</i>
<i>CM C Valdivia-Alcala</i>	<i>Pablo Martinez</i>
<i>Chief Craig Duke</i>	<i>David King</i>
<i>Lt. Aaron Freeman</i>	<i>Christopher Sullivan</i>
<i>Captain Jason Broadbent</i>	<i>CM Mike Lesser</i>
<i>City Manager Brent Trout</i>	<i>Errin Mahan</i>

Commissioners absent:

Sandra Clear, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

It has been established that Topeka Fire Service should provide ALS. There also seems to be a consensus that we should build a west fire station and keep the two fire stations in North Topeka.

Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala wanted to inform the Commission of emails she has received regarding the desire of the citizens to keep stations 11 and 1 open and have a risk assessment completed before a recommendation is made.

Councilwoman Ortiz stated that she supports building Station 13 in District 9 and keeping Stations 1 and 11 open as long as we can, noting that the stations are old and we don't have the funds to pour into Stations 1 and 11.

Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala stated that she has no aversion to building a new fire station but also believes that Stations 1 and 11 need to be kept open and fully manned.

Chair Clear determined that there was a consensus that we should build a new fire station and leave Stations 1 and 11 open until we have to do something else. There was also a consensus that a concrete maintenance plan be established, a budget formulated to meet those needs, and a method of accountability established to be sure repairs are being made.

CM Trout stated that an analysis of each fire station is being completed and a consultant has been hired to evaluate each station. Any needed repairs will be sent out for bid.

Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala noted that needs for equipment, gear and repairs should be added into the budget as well as a timeline for how long it will take to accomplish everything that is needed.

Chair Clear then moved to the subject of funding.

The consensus was that a mill levy would be a last resort, but would be supported by most.

CM Trout stated that this would be an issue that would be addressed by Council and that we are at least five years away from building a station and needing the mill levy. In that time many factors could change. However, if we are building a new station and not closing any stations, we will have to figure out where the \$1.1 million for firefighters will come from.

Councilman Lesser stated that he believes that District 9 needs a new fire station for access to the new builds and to the river. He stated that he would not support a sales tax and would not support a mill increase at this point. He believes that there are many factors to consider for the City as a whole and that he was still gathering information for a difficult decision to be made on all levels.

CM Trout reiterated that the City is probably 5-6 years away from a new build unless it becomes a priority. A new fire station is not even in the 10 year plan. Secondly, the build of a second station is even further out and conditions could change by that time. He stated that the Commission should issue a recommendations regarding the need for a new station and reconvene in eight years to evaluate conditions at that time.

Councilman Lesser noted that the completion of the Polk-Quincy viaduct could make a definite impact on the needs of the City. He stated that he fully supports a 6th street station but believes we still need more data. Councilman Lesser also concurred with the need for adequate maintenance and suggested that perhaps we should privatize the issue and utilize a property maintenance company for more accountability. He stated that the Commission needs to identify issues that need to be addressed and let the Governing Body review in totality.

Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala noted that the recommendation of the Commission will have weight. If there is a ten year timeline, then we need to spell that out. A hazard and risk assessment needs to be a part of the recommendation. Verbiage needs to state when the budget will accommodate it. We also need manpower and stations.

Chair Clear moved the discussion to apparatus deployment. The Commission agreed that the replacement schedule was aggressive and had a budget to support it. The Commission supports the current schedule.

Chair Clear asked the City Manager to provide a recap of the Commission recommendations. CM Trout gave a brief overview and indicated that he would submit a final recommendation for review.

Final recommendations discussed:

- **Station 13 will be built in District 9.**
- **Repairs will be provided to existing stations and all issues resolved so that all stations are in working order. A timeline will also be developed.**
- **Before a decision is made regarding the build, current conditions will be analyzed to see what is appropriate for the west side. When Station 13 is completed, the need for additional stations will be re-evaluated.**
- **A risk assessment that is being led by the Local Emergency Planning Committee and Errin Mahon will be considered in the decision. The commodity flow study determines what hazards are in all of Shawnee County including the City of Topeka. Exercises are being conducted to determine where improvement is needed in the areas of equipment, personnel and apparatus.**

- The current apparatus replacement schedule will continue to be followed.
- Commission recommends a subcommittee be formed to study in detail what each station needs. This committee would report to the infrastructure committee that reviews capital expenditure.
- Commission recommends the use of any and all available Covid funding immediately to complete identified maintenance projects as quickly as possible in compliance with federal guidelines for usage of funds.

Commission Chair Clear adjourned the meeting at 7:36 pm.