



# CITY OF TOPEKA FIRE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Date: November 19, 2020  
Time: 6:00 pm  
Location: Virtual

## **Commissioners present:**

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

## **Commissioners absent:**

CM Mike Lesser (Excused)

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### **1. Introductions**

CM Trout called upon the Commission members to introduce themselves. Councilman Lesser was excused. All other members were present.

### **2. Selection of Commission Chair**

CM Trout gave first choice of acting as Commission Chair to any Council Member. There were no volunteers. CM Trout proposed that a citizen could chair the commission or he would agree to be Chair.

Councilwoman Ortiz nominated Lt. Aaron Freeman. Lt. Freeman stated that his preference would be to not be Chair, but he would accept the position if no one else desired to be chair.

Commissioner Clear nominated Mr. Trout.

Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala seconded Mr. Trout as Chair.

Mr. Trout asked Sandra Clear if she was interested in being Chair. Commissioner Clear indicated that she would be Co-Chair.

Mr. Trout proposed that he and Commissioner Clear act as Co-Chairs. No objections were voiced.

### **3. Purpose of the Commission**

The charge of the Commission is to study the current provision of fire service for the community and determine the appropriate level and type of fire service for Topeka for the future.

Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala asked if this Commission would look at the real needs of the Fire Department i.e. hazmat updates to uniforms. Mr. Trout responded affirmatively and added that this is why firefighter representatives are included in this discussion.

Mr. Trout stated that we want to determine the support level of fire service for the future, broad range and many facets in provision of fire service.

#### **4. Process for the Commission**

##### **a. Meeting Schedule**

The Intent is to conduct meetings on the third Thursday of each month from November through March from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. It is possible that at some point we may be able to switch the meeting format to a combo virtual/in-person.

##### **b. Topics to cover (Use list from Brent)**

Commissioners will receive a list of topics to be covered and we will also take suggestions from the floor. Commissioners will also receive data from three previous studies that were conducted by internal and external parties.

##### **c. Public input**

Meetings will be posted and we will receive comments from the public.

##### **d. Report out to Governing Body**

A report from the Fire Commission is due to the Governing Body no later than April 6, 2021.

#### **5. Review of Past Studies/Standard of Cover**

Chief Duke gave an overview of Topeka Fire Department 2019 Standard of Cover.

Deputy Chief Ty Christian gave an overview of the equipment types and uses.

EMS Chief Richard Sigle gave an overview of the medical response provided by Fire and highlighted the differences between BLS (Basic Life Support) and ALS (Advanced Life Support). In January of 2019, a pilot program was launched establishing paramedics at Stations 8 and 7.

Chief Flory gave an overview of the Training Academy.

Errin Mahan, Interim Director, Shawnee County EM, talked about threat assessments and explained the different response disciplines that participate in these exercises and the entire team of subject matter experts that are involved.

#### **6. Questions/Discussion:**

Mr. Martinez: What is a brush truck? Deputy Chief Christian gave an explanation and then further indicated that he will get pictures and explanations of what we currently have to Commissioners.

Councilwoman Ortiz indicated that she would like to see information distributed explaining where different equipment was located and the rationale behind that to give Commissioners a better understanding.

Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala made an information request. – She noted that Station 1 has been shut down a number of times. She would to know: 1) How many times were stations shut down in 2019 and 2020 and which

stations? 2) Where are these calls rerouted to when stations are closed? 3) Does closing stations skew number of calls per station, when they are actually originating for another station? 4) On pages 51-52 of SOC, Community threat and risk assessment, are they listed by proximity to station impact or council districts?

Chief Duke responded that the SOC does include some of this information. Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala will email a list of her questions to Chief Duke so that he can have a better understanding of her concerns.

Commissioner Clear stated that once needs are identified, we should make a plan to address them. She does not want the Commission to simply fulfill a mandate, but ensure that any feasible plans will be put into effect.

Commissioner Sullivan asked about Contract Fire Protection. Is this a full listing of contracts? Chief Duke responded that the list in SOC is complete. The locations with contracts are not in the city limits.

Commissioner Clear expressed a concern about presenting an abundance of information and not allowing enough time to discuss. CM Trout expects that as we go along we will discuss. Commissioner Clear asked if the Commission could ask for more time. CM Trout responded that the Commission could.

CM Valdivia-Alcala reiterated that these were serious issues and complex discussions and the Commission made need leeway to ask for more time. CM Trout responded that April had been targeted in order to get items on the 2022 budget, but yes, the Commission could ask for additional time.

Commissioner King stated that it would be helpful to see where the department wants to go - best practices or obvious weaknesses. CM Trout replied that the Commission would receive that information. CM Trout added that one goal of the Fire Department is to be accredited and the findings of this Commission would be a basic step to that.

Commissioner Sullivan stated that it would be good to know the costs per fire station and projected issues for each fire station.

Councilwoman Ortiz wants to be sure everyone is at the table and wants the Commission to look at what we have, what we need to do, and how we can do it, not get caught up in funding. Educate the public. Focus on what we have in the studies.

CM Trout stated that the goal is to learn what is needed, optimal, and set a plan to get there.

Lt Freeman offered to give tour of the stations to anyone that was interested. Contact information will be sent out with all Commissioners information for contact.

Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcala thanked the citizens for their participation.

#### **Next Meeting**

**Thursday, December 17, 6:00 pm. (Virtual Online)**