

## **Council Minutes – January 13, 2015**

COUNCIL CHAMBER, Topeka, Kansas, Tuesday, January 13, 2015. The Councilmembers of the City of Topeka met in regular session at 6:00 P.M., with the following Councilmembers present: Councilmembers Hiller, Brown, Ortiz, Everhart, De La Isla, Manspeaker, Schwartz, Schmidt and Harmon -9. Mayor Larry E. Wolgast presided -1.

AFTER THE MEETING was called to order, Councilmember Manspeaker provided the invocation.

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by those present in the chamber.

A PRESENTATION of the City Manager's 2015 Strategic Plan was given by Jim Colson, City Manager. He spoke about the City's progress over the past year and gave a preview of the citywide Strategic Plan for 2015. He recognized the City's successes in adopting the 2014 balanced budget with no property tax increases finishing the year with a 15% general fund balance; improved bond rating; receiving the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for Comprehensive Financial Aid Report (CFAR); and Public Works and Topeka Police Department reaccreditations and continually building a leadership team for the City's future. He stated he believes taking the City in a different direction to interact with neighborhoods on a much closer level would foster better communication and success in meeting the community's needs. He commented on the City's launch of Nextdoor.com a free and private social network for neighborhoods; and the City's e311 program an interactive customer service portal. He reported the five year plan would make Topeka a better place to live and allow the City to continue to pursue fiscal health and sustainability with a focus on best practices, service delivery and fiscal management of public monies. He also commented on continuing to build effective internal and external communication through increased visibility by creating a higher

level of engagement with neighborhoods and ensuring public safety programs meet the needs of the community. He reported Doug Gerber, Administrative and Financial Services Director, has been directed to analyze City utility operations for approximately six months with the goal of delivering effective and efficient utility services to city residents.

Mayor Wolgast thanked the City Manager for providing an introduction to the City's 2015 Strategic Plan.

Councilmember De La Isla thanked the City Manager for providing an overview of the City's 2015 Strategic Plan and starting the year with such enthusiasm. She acknowledged Brandon Kauffman, City of Topeka Chief Fiscal Officer, for delivering comprehensible financial statements each month and making them available for the public to view on the City's website at [www.topeka.org](http://www.topeka.org). She commended the City Manager, Mr. Kauffman and City staff for an excellent 2013 audit.

THE CONSENT AGENDA was presented as follows:

MINUTES of the regular meeting of January 6, 2015, was presented.

Councilmember Schwartz moved to approve the consent agenda. The motion seconded by Councilmember De La Isla carried unanimously. (9-0-0)

APPROVAL of a Real Estate Purchase Agreement between the Topeka Rescue Mission and the City of Topeka for the sale of surplus real property located at 630 NW Topeka Boulevard, in the amount of \$25,000 and specifically authorizing Mayor Larry E. Wolgast to execute the agreement was presented. (Contract No. 44105)

Jim Colson, City Manager, reported approval would authorize the sale of surplus property located at 630 NW Topeka Boulevard to the Topeka Rescue Mission.

Robert Kennedy, City of Topeka Engineering Right of Way Agent, reported the Topeka Rescue Mission would like to acquire the property to add to their daycare center project. He stated the property was originally acquired by the City for the Topeka Boulevard Bridge project; however, all City departments have indicated they have no need for the property and have declared it as surplus.

Mayor Wolgast asked if there are any structures located on the property at this time.

Robert Kennedy stated there are no structures on the property.

Councilmember Harmon asked if the property has been appraised.

Robert Kennedy reported the property was appraised at \$25,000 by Taggart & Associates.

Councilmember Brown moved to approve the real estate purchase agreement. The motion seconded by Councilmember De La Isla carried unanimously. (9-0-0)

A Retail Cereal Malt Beverage License application for Walmart #6585 located at 335 SW MacVicar Avenue was presented.

Councilmember Ortiz moved to approve the retail cereal malt beverage license application as presented. The motion seconded by Councilmember Everhart carried. Mayor Wolgast voted “yes.” Councilmember Manspeaker voted “no.” (9-1-0)

DISCUSSION for the purpose of providing an update on the Topeka Zoo Master Plan was presented.

Brendan Wiley, Topeka Zoo Director, provided an update on the Topeka Zoo’s Master Plan and distributed plans of the Entry & Otter Exhibit, World Plaza & Butterfly Plaza, and Africa and Camp Cowabunga-Gary Clarke’s Africa. He asked the Council, “If you could change the world, would you do it?” and stated when people see live animals it makes a much stronger connection to the world around us. He commented on the Topeka Zoo’s former designation of “World

Famous” and believes the Zoo could once again achieve that designation through new design concepts and improvements. He reported the master plan illustrates the Zoo being divided into geographical locations, growth of the elephant exhibit, as well as, indoor spaces of animal exhibits and a learning environment. He gave an estimated cost of \$43 million in zoo projects over the next 20 years and each phase would include a private and public funding piece to make it a reality. He referenced the recent public vote to extend the Half-Cent Sales Tax which included zoo projects; however, the sales tax revenues would not be allocated until 2017; therefore, fundraising efforts have already been underway for the “Heart of Africa” area which will be known as “Camp Cowabunga-Gary Clarke’s Africa” a learning environment surrounded by other animal exhibits with the feel of being on an African safari which may open in Spring 2017. He also reported there is an anonymous donor interested in a project for an Asian Garden that would be an excellent addition to the zoo. He stated many great things can happen at the Zoo because the Topeka community has incredibly generous and caring people who care about the Zoo’s future.

Councilmember Schwartz reported many of her constituents have stated they voted for the half-cent sales tax extension because the Topeka Zoo was included in the list for future improvements. She stated she believes it is way past time for improvements to be made at the Zoo and thanked Brendan Wiley for his presentation and efforts in improving the Zoo.

Brendan Wiley stated he has a great team at the Zoo, as well as, leadership to help move the Zoo into the future.

DISCUSSION for the purpose of providing an update on the status of the Heartland Park Redevelopment District was presented.

Chad Sublet, City Attorney gave a brief overview of the current status on the Heartland Park Redevelopment District and stated it has been a difficult process over the last several months. He reported the State of Kansas Court of Appeals has ordered to extend the brief filings until January 16, 2015, followed by the Court of Appeals granting a temporary stay for an additional ten (10) days; therefore, meeting the deadline of February 1, 2015, included in the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Topeka and the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) will be challenging. He stated the City would continue to move forward as much as possible; however, the City could not market the bonds while the court process is underway. He commented on the post audit meeting which went well and announced there is another meeting scheduled to discuss the issue further. He noted documents are on the City's website for the public to view and continued discussions are occurring with the proposals; however, the City is at a standstill until the issue is resolved in a court of law.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CITY MANAGER, MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL;**

Mayor Wolgast reported January 11-17, 2015, is "Living the Dream Week" in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and presented a proclamation at the kick-off musical celebration on January 11th at the Mount Carmel Missionary Baptist Church. He stated there are many events planned throughout the week to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and encouraged the community to attend. He announced the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship and Awards Banquet would be held on January 17th at the Ramada Hotel and Convention Center, Regency Ballroom.

Councilmember Manspeaker announced the Fraternal Order of Police is sponsoring a Zumbathon Fundraiser benefit for the family of fallen Topeka Police Corporal Jason Harwood

on January 17, 2015, 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Washburn University's Lee Arena. He noted the proceeds would help the family attend a workshop in Washington D.C. designed to help families who have experienced similar tragedies. He thanked the Kansas Silverbakks for providing a safe and warm place during the cold weather last week for the homeless and reported the building was able to stay open for 72 hours because of volunteer efforts. He announced he would not run for re-election for Council District No. 6 and expressed his appreciation to Councilmembers, staff and the community for all the time and effort in accomplishing goals over the last four years. He encouraged people who are interested in representing Council District No. 6 to submit an application by January 27, 2015 to the City Clerk's office located at 215 SE 7<sup>th</sup> Street.

Councilmember Schmidt acknowledged the participants at the Jam for Justice, an event campaigning against international human trafficking on January 10, 2015, at The Celtic Fox. He stated he welcomes any discussions regarding the financial future of the City of Topeka and recognized the progress made in the City's financial health over the past year. He stated he is proud of improvements made and raising awareness over many difficult issues and thanked Councilmembers, City Manager and staff for their work.

Councilmember Hiller reported she attended the first session of Alternative Sentencing, an effort launched by the City to provide treatment instead of jail time for people whose misdemeanor crimes are linked to mental illness at the Topeka Municipal Court on January 7, 2015. She noted a presentation will be made soon to the Council once the program has gotten underway. She welcomed the Kansas Fairs and Festivals Association to Topeka and stated she was able to discuss the City's historical sites, as well as, the State Capitol building and the Neighborhoods on the Move program with its members and introduce the City's new branding efforts.

Councilmember De La Isla thanked Councilmembers Hiller and Schmidt for attending the Economic and Community Development Committee meeting on January 9, 2015, to discuss grant allocations to various organizations in the community. She reported there was positive feedback on the allocation process and many comments and concerns were addressed at the meeting. She commented on the new Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority buses and looks forward to a great 2015.

Jason Fizell appeared to speak under public comment.

NO FURTHER BUSINESS appearing the meeting was adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

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Brenda Younger  
City Clerk