

Community News

Budget committee

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The committee’s duties and responsibilities will be to: “receive and review departmental budget submissions; assess short-term and long-term revenue forecasts and spending needs; hold public meetings to gather community input; ensure compliance with Kansas budget laws and procedures, including setting deadlines for public notices, public hearings and budget adoption; prepare a formal written report with budgetary findings and recommendations for submission to the Board of Bourbon County Commissioners,” the bylaws state.

County Clerk Susan Walker said she would publish a notice regarding the letters of interest in The Fort Scott Tribune and other outlets, using the committee’s bylaws as a guide.

According to the notice

from the clerk’s office, the commission will accept letters until noon Monday, June 16 at the clerk’s office, 210 S. National Ave. The notice states “qualifications and duties expected of the board members” can be found in the committee’s bylaws, which are available on the county’s website, www.bourboncountyks.org, and the clerk’s office.

On Tuesday, Milburn-Kee told the Tribune the reasons behind the committee are to enlist the help of a group of experts and get views “from their perspective” as opposed to just the perspectives of the individual commissioners. She said another reason is to help herself and Beerbower through their first experiences designing a budget.

“The other reason is I’m not a finance expert,” she said. “I’ve not went into budget season before.”

According to the bylaws, the purpose of the com-



Jason E. Silvers/Tribune photo

Bourbon County Commissioner Mika Milburn-Kee makes a motion to form a budget advisory committee during Monday’s commission meeting.

mittee is to: “review budget requests from county department and elected officials; assess revenue projections and spending priorities; make written recommendations regarding the annual budget to the Board of County Commissioners; promote transparency and

public engagement in the budget process; assist in ensuring compliance with Kansas budget law and other applicable statutes.”

The committee will operate in an “advisory capacity and has no binding decision-making authority.” Their recommendations will

be submitted to commissioners for consideration, the bylaws state.

Committee members will serve two-year terms, renewable by appointment, and will not be compensated. The committee chairperson will preside over meetings, coordinate activities and serve as the committee’s spokesperson, the bylaws state.

The committee will meet “as needed, at a minimum of six times annually, including during the formal budget development cycle.” The meetings will be open to the public. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the currently appointed members. The committee’s recommendations “shall be adopted by a majority vote of the members present.”

The committee will also submit a final written budget report to the commission “no later than July 14.”

Other business

- Commissioners again tabled recommendations from a zoning advisory committee, which was slated

to present their findings Monday. The commission approved a motion by Beerbower to table the recommendations until June 30 to allow time for the process to appoint a third commissioner to be completed. Beerbower said the committee will continue to work on their report.

- The commission approved the meeting agenda and minutes from the June 2 and June 6 meetings. The consent agenda, which included June 5 accounts payable totaling \$26,963 and June 6 accounts payable totaling \$117,112.54, was also approved.

- Commissioners took no action following a 20-minute executive session for consultation with an attorney for the public body or agency which would be deemed privileged in the attorney-client relationship. The session included commissioners and attorney Jacob Bielenberg.

More on the meeting will appear in a future edition.

City budget

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Hart reviewed a section which shows the dates for work sessions in 2024. Commissioners worked on the first part of the budget on Aug. 6, then conducted a workshop prior to their Aug. 20 meeting with a public hearing Sept. 3.

“It just gives you some guidance as to what we did last year,” he said.

Commissioners also reviewed dates for meetings this summer.

“Obviously, June is way too early,” Hart said. “We’re looking at July.”

Hart said if commissioners conduct workshops in August, the dates would be Aug. 7 and Aug. 19, with a public hearing slated for either Sept. 2 or Sept. 16. The commission will have two regular meetings in September that still meet the Sept. 20 deadline for public hearings.

Commissioner Dyllon Olson said the budget deadlines only apply if the city plans to exceed the RNR.

“This commissioner won’t support that,” he said.

According to the Kansas Department of Administration, taxing subdivisions budgets not exceeding the RNR are due to the county clerk by Aug. 25. Entities following procedure to exceed the RNR must submit budgets by Oct. 1.

Mayor Tim VanHoecke asked if Hart thought commissioners were “pressing or too close to the edge” during budget work last year. Hart talked about the state of the economy and said the bond market is fluctuating.

“No, I don’t think so,” Hart said. “It actually gave us more time to really receive more data on the revenue side. At this point, sales tax is chugging along pretty good but I’m not going to bet anything on the rest of the year just because of where the economy is going. I really don’t care about political persuasions, it’s just the economy.”

Hart said the bond market “got crazy and it’s still crazy ... the more data, the better. Expenses are what they are. We’ll get information back from departments – that’ll be the easy part.”

He said if revenue trends stay consistent, “we may be able to offer an additional capital or whatever you guys may decide to really look at.”

Hart said at the request of a commissioner last year, he plans to get commissioners budget information at least

a week in advance this year. VanHoecke said he did not feel pressed last year and receiving the information early would be beneficial.

Commissioner Matthew Wells said he would prefer to consider the revenue neutral rate and set dates for the budget during the commission’s July 15 meeting as he will be unavailable from June 20 through late July.

Other business

- The commission approved the consent agenda, which included an appropriation ordinance, expense approval report and payment dates of May 15-28 of \$790,786.25, and minutes of the commission’s May 20 regular meeting.

- Kathy Dancer spoke to commissioners about water issues affecting her commercial building due to the poor condition of the alley behind her property. Dancer said the back wall of her building has been repaired twice in three years due to penetration of water. She asked the city to repair the alley, adding that previous promises to fix it had not been fulfilled. City Manager Brad Matkin acknowledged the issue and said city staff would examine the alley when they receive asphalt equipment, according to an unofficial summary of the meeting minutes.

- Cory Bryars with Care to Share provided an update on the activities of the cancer support group.

- Jennifer Simhiser, founder of the Path of EASE Association, informed commissioners she has opened a recovery house for women and children in Fort Scott. Simhiser shared her personal journey through addiction and recovery and said she identified a need for recovery housing in the city. She requested funding for safety updates for the facility, including replacing older lighting fixtures, installing a privacy fence and adding a security system and cameras, according to an unofficial summary of the meeting minutes.

- Following a public hearing, the commission voted unanimously to deny a petition to vacate a street at 761 S. Garrison. The petitioner was not present.

Wells said the request was to vacate Goodlander Street, which is a 60-foot platted road, according to an unofficial summary of meeting minutes.

- Commissioners approved replacement of a window at La Hacienda, 24 N. Main St., pending approval from the State Historic Preservation Office. The commission tabled replacement of a door at the

business until they receive further information.

- After a lengthy discussion regarding whether to create a voluntary or mandatory business registry, the commission voted 3-2 to create a voluntary registry. Wells, Olson and Commissioner Kathryn Salsbury voted yes, while Dancer and VanHoecke voted no.

- Matkin said a project to remodel bathrooms at Memorial Hall will be rebid as no bids were received.

- The commission approved a change order for \$1,448.96 for additional pipe and fittings to tie into the existing force main on a project at the Charles Street lift station. Commissioners also approved final acceptance and payment of \$68,161.51 to Cardinal Site Work for the project.

- Commissioners approved a change order decreasing the contract for the project to make improvements on Horton and Sixth streets by \$18,500, and approved final payment of \$489,525.55 to Heck and Wicker for the project.

- The commission took no action following a 15-minute executive session to discuss financial affairs or trade secrets. The session included commissioners, Matkin and City Attorney Bob Farmer.

KCC schedules public hearings on Evergy’s request to raise rates

SUBMITTED TO THE TRIBUNE

TOPEKA – The Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC) is conducting public hearings this week in Wichita and Topeka to give Evergy Kansas Central customers the opportunity to learn more about the company’s rate increase request, ask questions and make comments before the Commission.

Evergy filed an application with the Commission in January seeking a \$196.4 million (8.62%) rate increase. If approved as filed, the new electric rates would take effect in September 2025, resulting in an average monthly increase of \$13.05 for residential customers.

Attendees may participate in person or virtually via Zoom. Those participating virtually must register by noon the day prior to the hearing using the registration links below. In addition, the hearings will be broadcast live and recorded for later viewing on the KCC’s YouTube channel. Registration is not required

to attend in person or view on YouTube.

Public hearings

Wednesday, June 11 at 6 p.m., Wichita State University, Lowe Auditorium Hughes Metropolitan Complex 5015 E 29th St. North Wichita, KS 67205. Register to attend via Zoom (deadline noon June 10)

Monday, June 16 at 6 p.m. Washburn Institute of Technology 5724 SW Huntton St. Topeka, KS 66604. Register to attend via Zoom (deadline noon June 15)

The Commission will accept written comments through 5 p.m. July 14. Comments may be submitted online, by mail or by calling the KCC at 785-271-3140 or 800-662-0027.

To register to participate in the hearing via Zoom, make a public comment online or find additional information on the application, go to the Commission’s website (www.kcc.ks.gov) and click on the “Your Opinion Matters” tab.

The Commission will issue an order on the application on or before September 29..



“Tell your care team you want to go back home for your recovery.”

– Carol Crawford

After a serious compound fracture to her femur sent Carol to a major city hospital for surgery, she chose swing bed care at her hometown hospital to help her rebuild strength and get back to doing what she loves.

Allen County Regional Hospital in Iola and Anderson County Hospital in Garnett offer an inpatient skilled nursing and short-term rehab program, commonly known as swing bed.

A patient can transition to swing bed care if they have been in the hospital for at least three days and continue to have a qualifying skilled need, such as debilitating weakness, wound care, respiratory therapy, or IV therapy.

Learn more about Carol and swing bed care at your hometown hospital

saintlukeskc.org/SwingBedKS

 **Allen County Regional Hospital**
SAINT LUKE’S HEALTH SYSTEM

 **Anderson County Hospital**
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