Governing Body Minutes – February 8, 2022

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, Topeka, Kansas, Tuesday, February 8, 2022. The Governing Body members of the City of Topeka met in regular session at 6:00 P.M. with the following Councilmembers present: Councilmembers Hiller, Valdivia-Alcala, Emerson, Dobler and Duncan -5; and Councilmembers Ortiz, Naeger, Kell and Lesser participated remotely -4. Mayor Padilla presided - 1.

Public comment for the meeting was available via Zoom or in-person. Individuals were required to contact the City Clerk's Office at 785-368-3940 or via email at cclerk@topeka.org by no later than 5:00 p.m. on February 8, 2022, after which the City Clerk's Office provided the Zoom link information and protocols prior to the meeting start time. Written public comment was also considered to the extent it was personally submitted at the meeting or to the City Clerk's Office located at 215 SE 7th Street, Room 166, Topeka, Kansas, 66603 or via email at cclerk@topeka.org on or before February 8, 2022, for attachment to the meeting minutes.

AFTER THE MEETING was called to order, Pastor RD Cogswell, Mission Church, provided the invocation.

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by meeting participants.

BOARD APPOINTMENT recommending the reappointment of Nicholas Smith to the Topeka Human Relations Commission to fill an unexpired term ending February 11, 2024, was presented. (Council District No. 1)

Councilmember Hiller moved to approve the board appointment. The motion seconded by Councilmember Emerson carried unanimously on roll call vote. Mayor does not vote. (9-0-0)

PRESENTATION on the 2021 City of Topeka Utilities Department 4th Quarter Report was
presented by Braxton Copley, Utilities Director.

PRESENTATION on the 2021 City of Topeka Public Works Department 4th Quarter Report was presented by James Jackson, Public Works Director.

Councilmember Ortiz recognized members of the Topeka Family and Friends Juneteenth Youth Committee that were present in the Council Chambers.

CONSENT AGENDA was presented as follows:

APPROVAL of a Public Works contract amendment to add construction administration to existing agreement for Professional Engineering Services between the City of Topeka and Bartlett and West, Inc. in the amount of $385,000, was presented. *(Contract No. 50118)*

MINUTES of the regular meeting of February 1, 2022, was presented.

Councilmember Emerson moved to approve the consent agenda. The motion seconded by Councilmember Ortiz carried on roll call vote. Councilmember Dobler abstained. (9-0-1)

RESOLUTION NO. 9290 introduced by Councilmember Christina Valdivia-Alcala proposing the establishment of a business improvement district for the NOTO Arts and Entertainment District (NOTO BID), was presented.

Councilmember Valdivia-Alcala spoke in support of establishing the District and stated there has been no opposition expressed by constituents or NOTO businesses. She expressed the need of establishing a Business Improvement District (BID) which provides a creative way to help economic development in the area.

Bill Cochran, Interim City Manager, reported that City has been working with Thomas Underwood for several months on the project.

Thomas Underwood, NOTO Arts and Entertainment District Executive Director, stated a BID provides an opportunity to make improvements to the District and helps NOTO continue to grow. He noted the BID initiative was driven by NOTO Businesses. He asked the Governing
Councilmember Duncan asked the City Attorney to summarize the process moving forward.

Amanda Stanley, City Attorney, stated approval of the resolution will set a hearing date of March 15, 2022, to consider public comment regarding establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) in the NOTO Arts and Entertainment District. She reported the ordinance establishing the District would be considered at the April 5, 2022, Governing Body meeting.

Councilmember Hiller spoke in support of establishing the District and stated she was excited to watch the NOTO area grow.

Councilmember Emerson expressed concern with the need to clarify the language on line 41 of the resolution concerning the statement “businesses identified in Exhibit A” and noted, Exhibit A only lists square footage and does not list the names of the businesses.

Bill Cochran, Interim City Manager, reported the language refers to those businesses included in Tier 1; however, he will have Staff review the language.

Councilmember Valdivia-Alcalá moved to approve the resolution. The motion seconded by Councilmember Hiller carried unanimously on roll call vote. (10-0-0)

CHARTER ORDINANCE NO. 122 introduced by Councilmember Sylvia Ortiz regarding the election of the deputy mayor by amending Charter Ordinance No. 117, Section 5 as codified at Section A2-26 of the Topeka Municipal Code, was presented.

Councilmember Ortiz reported she requested the amendment to ensure the election of a deputy mayor would occur on the same date new members of the governing body are sworn into office.

Councilmember Ortiz moved to adopt the ordinance. The motion seconded by Councilmember Naeger carried unanimously. (10-0-0)
The ordinance was adopted on roll call vote as follows: Ayes: Hiller, Valdivia-Alcala, Ortiz, Emerson, Kell, Naeger, Dobler, Duncan, Lesser and Mayor Padilla -10.

DISCUSSION concerning adoption of the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code, was presented. *(The Policy and Finance Committee recommended approval by a vote of 3-0-0 on November 16, 2021)*

Richard Faulkner, Development Services Director, stated approval of the proposed ordinance will adopt the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) which would be the first of its kind for commercial buildings in the city, including residential buildings with three or more units. He stated the 2009 IECC version would remain in place for single and two-family residential buildings due to the feedback received from homebuilders relating to increased building costs. He stated the review and adoption process began in 2021, and included a subcommittee of the Board of Building and Fire Appeals, and the Building Official who acted as a liaison to the Board. He stated the Committee is made up of Engineers, Architects, and General Contractors and noted as part of the review process, Staff reached out to design professionals and contractors for input. The Committee and City staff recommend adoption of the 2021 IECC along with the amendments outlined in the “Summary of Amendments” document included in the agenda packet, which are also integrated into the accompanying ordinance.

Councilmember Duncan reported the Policy and Finance Committee recommended approval. He expressed pride in the fact, that Topeka is one of the first communities to adopt the 2021 version of the commercial code. He stated he still believes the 2009 residential code can be updated to a newer version (2012 or 2015). He reported the Committee will continue to work with Staff to continue with updates to the building codes.

Councilmember Kell asked if the Governing Body can approve only portions of the Code that would benefit the City as a whole.
Richard Faulkner stated amendments can be made to any section of the Code that is adopted.

Councilmember Hiller referenced the Topeka Home Builders Association and why they did not provide comments on the amendments. She requested that when the international codes are adopted, they rename the codes to include the word “Topeka” in the title so it is clear what the City has adopted locally and only post the local requirements online not the international code in its entirety.

Councilmember Kell stated he concurs with Councilmember Hiller in regards to accessing only the codes that apply to the Topeka area.

Richard Faulker stated he contacted the Topeka Home Builders Association; however, they did not provide input. He noted there were not a lot of changes from the 2015 to 2021 version of the code which may be the reason the Association did not provide input.

DISCUSSION concerning adoption of the 2021 International Existing Building Code, was presented. *(The Policy and Finance Committee recommended approval by a vote of 3-0-0 on November 16, 2021)*

Richard Faulkner, Development Services Director, reported approval of the proposed ordinance will repeal the 1997 Uniform Code for Building Conservation (UCBC) and replace it with the 2021 International Existing Building Code (IEBC). He stated the review and adoption process began in 2021, and included the Board of Building and Fire Appeals, the Fire Marshal, Building Official and Permit Section Manager who acted as liaisons to the Board. He stated the board is made up of Engineers, Architects and General Contractors, and as part of the review process, Staff reached out to design professionals and contractors for input. He stated the Board of Building and Fire Appeals and City staff recommend approval of the 2021 IEBC along with amendments outlined in the "Summary of Code Changes" document included in the agenda.
packet, which are also integrated into the accompanying ordinance.

Councilmember Duncan reported the Policy and Finance Committee recommended approval. He thanked Staff for their work in moving the City forward and continued efforts in updating the building codes.

PUBLIC INPUT OPPORTUNITY to provide comments on how to spend American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds as it relates to needs within the community, was presented.

Mayor Padilla asked City Attorney Stanley to provide an overview of the rules of decorum.

Amanda Stanley, City Attorney, highlighted the protocols for addressing the Governing Body and noted each person shall state his or her name and city of residence in an audible tone for the record; all remarks shall be addressed to the Governing Body as a whole -- not to any individual member; no slanderous remarks; and in order to provide additional time for as many individuals as possible to address the Governing Body, each individual signed up to speak will need to complete his or her comments within four (4) minutes. No extensions will be granted.

Councilmember Hiller reminded those individuals speaking that this time has been set aside for the purpose of allowing public input only. Governing Body members would not ask or respond to questions.

The following individuals submitted written comments (See Attachment A):

- ShaMecha Simms, Topeka Resident
- Laura Burton, Kansas Children’s Discovery Center
- Carrie Hagemann, Topeka Resident
- Shanae’ Calhoun, Topeka JUMP, Justice Unity Ministry Project
- Michael Bell, Tennessee Town NIA President
- Lazone Grays, Topeka Resident
- Kathleen Marker, YWCA Northeast Kansas
- Bill D. Persinger, Jr., Valeo Behavior Health Care Chief Executive Officer
- Scott Gowan, Topeka Public Schools Chief Information Officer
- Erica Garcia-Babb, Topeka Human Relations Commissioner
- Joan Wagnon, Topeka Performing Arts Center (TPAC) Board of Trustees President
The following individuals appeared to speak in-person or virtually:

- **Reva Wywadis, Childcare Award of Eastern Kansas**, distributed a handout (See Attachment A). She referenced a loss of childcare centers and home childcare locations, which has resulted in a total loss of 44 child care facilities. She stated an investment of ARPA dollars focused on addressing child care capacity building should be seen as a critical and necessary next step in positioning the community for economic growth and success as they move forward.

- **Melodene Byrd, Topeka JUMP**, provided an overview of the immediate needs in the community as it relates to affordable housing. She provided highlights of community JUMP housing meetings in 2020 and 2021, and reported the number one concern expressed by meeting participants was the lack safe affordable housing, and the number two concern was the lack of mental health services.

- **Sandra Lassiter** spoke to the importance of using the City’s ARPA funding for the Topeka community as a whole. She suggested ARPA funding be spent on small businesses, non-profit businesses, job training, community violence prevention and digital literacy.

- **Tre’jor Hopkins** requested ARPA funding be used for community development and economic development as it relates to the need of affordable housing in southeast and central Topeka. He also requested the funds be used for mental health and substance abuse programs.

- **Joan Wagnon, TPAC Board of Trustees President**, referenced the repairs and deferred maintenance that needs to be addressed on the Municipal Building. She stated the Topeka Performing Arts Center (TPAC) is the responsibility of the City as it relates to existing infrastructure needs outlined in the capital improvement program. She reported the roof and HVAC repairs are critical and there is a need to make the building usable and desirable.

- **Laura Pederzani, North Topeka West NIA President**, spoke to the importance of making the best use of ARPA funding by investing in Low to Moderate Income neighborhoods. She stated she would like ARPA funds to address needed storm water improvements in the oldest and most chronically underserved neighborhoods across the city. She also suggested investing in the housing trust fund; working with organizations to address property code maintenance issues, and invest in affordable childcare programs.

- **Erma Forbes, Highland Acres NIA President**, distributed a handout (See Attachment A). She requested the funds be used to help eliminate food tax, build bus shelters for...
school children, crime prevention and promote safety, educational programs, grant funding opportunities, incentives for small businesses and startup businesses, and adjustments for high utility bills.

- Lazone Grays requested ARPA funds be used to rescue neighborhoods through job training, childcare assistance, safe affordable housing and community violence intervention. He referenced the federal infrastructure funding as well as State and County funding opportunities and asked the Governing Body to keep this in mind as they allocate ARPA funds.

- Erica Garcia Babb requested the ARPA funds be used to supplement and provide assistance to childcare providers. She spoke to the difficulties they have faced throughout the COVID-19 pandemic because they have not been deemed essential workers; therefore, receiving no relief funds or equipment needed to maintain quality childcare as the pandemic continues.

- Danielle Twemlow spoke to the example of all the services required to provide safe and affordable housing and childcare. She requested funding being used to supplement childcare and provide them the resources needed to remain in business and provide quality childcare. She suggested funding be used to support the Impact Avenues Program.

- John Campos requested the ARPA funding be used for a comprehensive sidewalk program across the city; the establishment of special events hosted by the Mayor’s Office, similar to program implemented in the City of Chicago; invest in childcare programs specifically before and after school as well as summer programs; and allocate funding to the Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO) for small business economic development.

- Michael Bell expressed concern with only allocating $10 million of the ARPA funds to “other” needs within the community. He referenced federal funding that could be used for infrastructure needs in Topeka; and therefore, purposes ARPA funds be used to address Low to Moderate income challenges.

PUBLIC COMMENT was submitted via email by Joseph Ledbetter (Attachment B) and the following individual provided public comment in-person:

Keri Strahler, stated she is concerned about the fires occurring in District 2 at the vacant homes due to the homeless population. She stated she reached out to the Topeka Rescue Mission and they are in need of cold weather items such as sleeping bags, coats, boots, and hand and body
warmers. She requested ARPA funds be donated to the Topeka Rescue Mission.

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

Brenda Younger, City Clerk, provided an overview of the February 12, 2022 Governing Body special meeting agenda; and the February 15, 2022 Governing Body regular meeting agenda.

Bill Cochran, Interim City Manager, announced the ARPA Funding Special Meeting Work Session would be held on February 12, 2022 at the Cyrus K. Holliday Building located at 620 SE Madison Street, First Floor Conference Room from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Councilmember Lesser reported he has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus and may not be able to participate in the February 12, 2022 Special Meeting Work Session if he is not feeling well.

Councilmember Hiller thanked Staff for the computer monitors being provided in the Council Chambers. She announced the Mosaic Partner Pairs program is accepting applications online at www.topekaunited.org and encouraged Governing Body members to consider the program. She noted the program is intended to advance inclusion, equity and opportunity in the community by creating a fabric to build relationships.

Councilmember Valdivia-Alcala read the definition of the term “human infrastructure” and commented on how the term relates to “societal needs.” She expressed the importance of having more dialogue to address these issues.

Councilmember Ortiz reminded citizens that the City continues to offer free smoke alarms.

Councilmember Emerson stated during public comment concerns were expressed regarding childcare and housing. He asked if there are ARPA Funds available to address these two areas.

Councilmember Kell thanked the individuals that provided verbal and written comments regarding the use of ARPA funds.
Councilmember Naeger shared her experience from February 7, 2022, while visiting the Children’s Discovery Center. She referenced the importance of childcare and making sure those resources are available for children and families in Topeka. She announced Mister Roger’s Sweater Drive and noted more information could be found online at www.ktwu.org/sweaterdrive.

Councilmember Dobler stated there is a great team working on digital literacy that will level the playing field for everyone that needs access to high speed internet in Topeka. He announced he will be requesting a portion of the ARPA funds be used to support digital literacy efforts.

Councilmember Duncan referenced upcoming application deadlines for State SPARK funding. He asked what applications were being submitted by the City.

Bill Cochran, Interim City Manager, reported Staff is aware of the upcoming SPARK funding deadlines and will be submitting an application for the Building a Stronger Economy (BASE) grant due on February 28, 2022.

Councilmember Dobler moved to recess into executive session for a period of 30 minutes to discuss matters related to an individual employee, pursuant to KSA 75-4319(b)(1). To aid in the discussion, the following individuals were present: Members of the Governing Body and Interim City Manager William Cochran. No action was anticipated when the meeting resumed open session in the City Council Chambers. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Emerson.

Mayor Padilla asked all those in favor of recessing into executive session to indicate so verbally by saying “yea” and those opposing to indicate so verbally by saying “no.” After the voice vote occurred, Mayor Padilla announced the motion carried unanimously on voice vote. (10-0-0)

Following a 30-minute time period, the meeting reconvened into open session and Mayor
Padilla announced no action was taken during the executive session.

NO FURTHER BUSINESS appearing the meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

(SEAL)

Brenda Younger
City Clerk

02-08-2022
Attachment A
(ARPA Funding Written Comments – February 8, 2022)
Greetings Ms. Younger:

I have corrected the statement and again am e-mailing this public comment to be included at the next City Council meeting. At this time, I don't think I am requesting to speak but when I read this aloud, it was still under 4 minutes.

Thank you for indulging my inner English teacher by allowing me to resubmit 😊😊

Sincerely,

ShaMecha Simms

Statement:

"It is challenging to craft this statement to the City Council regarding the use of ARPA funds.

As I'm writing this, I have now clocked four hours to write something that will read in under four minutes. I consider myself a natural optimist and rarely at a loss for words -- but I have crossed into terminal frustration. Anger, even. And that's a horrible space for an optimist to be.

As I have stated previously, I have been on a (now) three year quest to find good reasons to continue living in Topeka. I have sat through forums; answered questionnaires; expanded my "do-gooc" circle; and tried to think of not just myself, but the people whose challenges are just as significant or greater than mine. I have made comments to the City Council in public. I have written e-mails in private.

I want to say something poignant, thought-provoking, a wee bit humorous. Mine out a mind nugget that will help this governing body to think more deeply. But I keep getting stuck.

I get stuck on the fact that I and others commenting tonight have to constantly justify our existence and experiences so that we can simply be on par with basic norms.

In 1-to-1 relationships, when someone states their need and the other person/entity proceeds to demand the person justify their need, or worse, talk them out of the stated need -- we call it gaslighting.
To be poor, disabled, queer, an unmarried parent...to be anything other than a body that can be used to the gain of another: we are in an insecure attachment to those who have been tasked to steward funds on our behalf.

I know that until this council majority consists of people who know intimately how it feels to be chronically underserved, we'll continue to ask those who are most in need to justify why they should have more. And that kind of gaslighting does not represent who I am or the kind of city I want to live in.

Therefore I defer the rest of my statement in support of the other community leaders and organizations calling for the vast majority of ARPA funds being used as they were intended: to help vulnerable populations to gain traction towards equity.

I challenge the City to publicly take responsibility for the decades of poor debt and infrastructure management by acknowledging they have willfully engaged in the deterioration and failure of areas with the least amount of agency. To break the cycle of opportunism that has consistently been borne at the detriment of impoverished and marginalized Topekans.

Do not allow this seminal moment to undo inequity to pass you by. Use the ARPA funds to raise the standard of living for those who most need it."

--ShaMecha Simms
Good afternoon,

The Kansas Children’s Discovery Center would like to submit the following written remarks to be included in the governing body information for the February 8, 2022 city council meeting. These remarks share our perspective on ARPA fund priorities. City Council members should feel free to contact me with questions about these comments. Thank you, Laura Burton

Written Remarks for Topeka City Council Meeting - Tuesday, February 8

Recommended Priorities for City ARPA Funds

Kansas Children’s Discovery Center

ARPA funds present a unique opportunity to both help our community recover from COVID-19 and build infrastructure that supports families.

The Kansas Children’s Discovery Center is a nonprofit children’s museum located in Gage Park. We attract over 95,000 annual visitors from all across the region. We also serve as a community anchor and resource for local families, particularly those with a child under 5. We are committed to access for every child. More than 1 in 10 Discovery Center admissions are free or donor subsidized. In a typical year, these admissions include more than 1,000 Museums for All visitors from families receiving TANF or WIC benefits, and more than 5,000 field trip visitors from schools with a high percentage of children receiving free or reduced-cost lunches. Special programs serve children with incarcerated mothers, medically fragile children, children with an autism spectrum disorder and children in foster care at no cost to these families.

There is strong and increasing evidence that preschool children have been disproportionately affected by pandemic-related learning loss and stress. Participation in preschool programs dropped significantly in 2020 and did not fully recover in 2021. Preschool participation dropped most precipitously for families living in poverty. Remote learning is particularly challenging for young children, whose learning needs are based in child-led activities, hands-on and play-based learning, and interpersonal interactions. Parental stress and fragmented support systems have led to gaps in home-based learning and parents widely report feeling overwhelmed by child care and work responsibilities. A study from the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University documented decreases in reading books to preschool children and teaching letters, words and numbers, but also showed increases in less-structured learning activities like storytelling and singing. Simply put: there is a massive need for child-led, interactive, play-based learning that supports preschoolers and their parents.

Community organizations that serve preschoolers with innovative learning activities, parental support and quality child care must be prioritized.

As a privately funded museum that relies upon admission to serve families, we are also concerned about the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on tourism. A survey from the American Alliance of Museums found that despite creatively replacing traditional revenue models, museums are suffering prolonged stress and are in the midst of a difficult and slow recovery. These vital community institutions are under threat.

Our museum lost 93% of projected admission and membership income in 2020, and incurred significant expenses in redesigning exhibits for safety. Attendance began to recover in 2021, particularly in the summer, but overall, attendance was still less than half of what the museum would see in a typical year. More than 1 in 4 museum visitors travel from outside Shawnee County. Economic sustainability for our museum, and thus the ability to strengthen local families, relies upon tourism. Our local tourist attractions
generate significant economic benefits in Shawnee County. Attractions also establish quality of place and community pride. Frequently described as a gem of Topeka, the Discovery Center is often the first stop for local residents with out-of-town visitors, and a key part of the tours recruiters give families considering the capital city.

**Local tourist attractions that drive economic development and support vibrant culture must be prioritized.**

When the museum’s real tool build workshop needed redesign to accommodate easier sanitation in 2020, the museum took the opportunity to build Topeka pride into the permanent museum experience. The Top City Build exhibit, including Topeka destination photography and Topeka skyline graphics, invites children to use building blocks to create their own additions to our community. The exhibit helps establish community ownership and pride in our youngest Topekans, and has been extremely popular with local visitors. You would be inspired to see what children build as additions to Topeka when given the opportunity: tall towers that inspire, fun places for families to play and exciting attractions to explore. Our children have big dreams for this community. These funds provide an opportunity for us to support their dreams.

We encourage you to use these funds to support creating a safe, healthy, and vibrant community that serves the needs of all families. We must prioritize young children, who have been the most affected by this pandemic.

###
For medical reasons I can not attend the meeting. Please share my comments with the council.

As an engaged resident of Topeka I would like to provide input on where any rescue money should go. There are some agencies in our city who had a big change in their and volume change. I'm initially thinking of Valeo. The mental health of topekans has been tried through the pandemic. Valeo could use some money to further support this community and to help care for their staff.

Carrie Hagemann

Carrie Hagemann
Brenda Younger

From: Topeka JUMP <topeka.jump@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 8, 2022 10:23 AM
To: City Clerk; City Council; City Manager
Cc: Melodene Byrd
Subject: Public Commit from Topeka JUMP for Feb 8
Attachments: 2-8-2022 JUMP public comment packet.pdf

This message needs your attention
• You’ve never replied to this person.
• This is a personal email address.

Respectfully Submitted on Behalf of Melodene Byrd

Shanee Calhoun

Lead Organizer
Topeka JUMP
Justice Unity Ministry Project

"Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly now, love mercy now, walk humbly now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it."

-The Talmud Micah 6:8
TOPEKA JUMP TALKING POINTS FOR THE
TOPEKA CITY COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 8, 2022

Good evening. It is my pleasure to speak on behalf of the Topeka JUMP Organization this evening. My name is Melodene Byrd. I attend El Shaddai Ministries Community Church and I am on the executive committee of JUMP.

JUMP is made up of 31 faith communities who have come together to be a vehicle for marginalized populations to impact systemic change that will address poverty and injustice in Shawnee county.

Tonight, I'm going to explain our listening process which we use to surface and prioritize community problems for research and action. And I will share the results of our 2020 and 2021 listening processes which summarizes people's most immediate needs.

Our listening process is conducted annually from August to November. We train on average 60 lay leaders to facilitate small group discussions where participants answer discussion questions like “What keeps you up at night?” and “What concerns you about the neighborhood where you live, work, or go to worship?” There is a designated note-taker who records attendance and stories for the JUMP staff to read and sort through.

I am a lay leader who has been trained. I've held a “house meeting” every year for the past three years.

Here are the results from the Fall of 2020 and the Fall of 2021.

In the Fall of 2020, we trained 52 people throughout 29 congregations who successfully conducted a house meeting. There were 377 people in attendance. During those meetings, 313 of them chose to be active members of JUMP. The number one community problem discussed - despite JUMP having already named this a priority in the past - was high rent, unsafe living conditions and dilapidated
housing. The second most prevalent category discussed was health care and mental health care.

In the Fall of 2021, we trained 55 people throughout 31 congregations who successfully conducted a house meeting. There were 356 people in attendance. The number one community problem discussed once again was high rent, unsafe living conditions and dilapidated housing. The second most prevalent category discussed was concerning the well-being of youth and specifically adequate childcare options. A close second was frustration about who to call when people are in a mental health crisis.

By the evaluation of 70 clergy and lay leaders from 31 faith communities, we consider the most pressing needs to be:

1. To address housing equity by investing in low-income neighborhoods and building rental units BELOW the market value of $700 all over Topeka,
2. To increase access to adequate childcare, and
3. To develop a plan for people in mental health crisis to have a treatment bed in Shawnee County whether voluntary or involuntary for longer than 72 hours.

Thank you.
2020 Topeka JUMP

House Meeting Analysis

- There were 52 house meetings conducted in 29 congregations.
- There were 377 people in attendance.
- There were 313 people recruited to be Justice Ministry Network members.

The stories told fell into the following categories:

**Healthcare - 40**
- Elder Care
- Cost and Lack of Insurance

**Mental Health Care- 38**
- Lack of Access to Mental Health Care
- Addiction

**Jobs - 24**
- Low Wages
- Childcare
- Employment Discrimination

**Education - 17**
- High concentration of poverty and trauma in one school zone
- Safety and salary of teachers,
- Technology barrier

**Youth Concerns - 3**
- Poor foster care system
- Abuse and neglect

**Criminal Justice- 12**
- Racial profiling
- Re-entry
- Immigration

**Personal Stories of Vulnerability-72**

**Current Campaign Testimonies - 109**
- Housing - 75
- Transportation - 5
- Pay Day Loans - 25
- Gun Violence - 4
There were **55 house meetings** conducted in 31 congregations.

There were **356 people in attendance**.

There were **294 people recruited** to be Justice Ministry Network members.

*data as of 10-15-2021; additional house meetings have taken place*

### The stories told fell into the following categories:

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<th>Youth and Families – 46</th>
<th>Crime – 23</th>
<th>Refugees/Immigrants – 4</th>
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<td>Wages – 24</td>
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</tbody>
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### Previous Active Campaigns:

| Housing – 57 | Substance Abuse – 8 | Shootings – 20 |
Here are the kinds of stories shared at house meetings related to the problem areas team leaders voted to place on the ballot for the Community Problems Assembly.

**YOUTH AND FAMILIES**

My niece has two small children. She can barely afford her childcare.  
- abuse, neglect, and families in crisis  
- high cost of childcare  
- broken foster care system  
- bullying/bad influences on social media

**MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS**

My nephew committed suicide 2 years ago when he was in crisis. Our family was completely blindsided.  
- Crisis leading to jail and/or suicide  
- Lack access to services

**HEALTHCARE**

My health insurance costs $1200 a month for just me. It would cost $800 a month to add my husband to my health insurance.  
- high cost of health care/prescriptions  
- concerns about COVID – rate of deaths and vaccination divide  
- overburdened medical staff  
- challenging systems to navigate for benefits
Good day, all:

I am sending this email to you all because I have concerns about the discussions so far about how approximately $45 million in federal ARPA funds will be spent in Topeka.

So far spending the majority of those funds (approximately $35 million) on infrastructure has dominated discussions, leaving only approximately $10 million for community purposes. Given the breadth and depth of the pandemic and its across-the-board effects on our society, the US legislative and executive branches late last year signed off on President Biden’s “Build Back Better” proposal, which will bring $3.8 billion worth of funds to the state (https://www.cjonline.com/story/news/state/2021/11/09/what-does-1-trillion-federal-infrastructure-bill-mean-kansas-president-joe-biden/6337781001/). Topeka stands to receive some of that funding.

Why haven’t we been discussing the Build Back Better funds when it comes to the infrastructure challenges facing Topeka, challenges that multiple governing bodies have knowingly kicked down the road for years?

Given the disparate effects the pandemic has had on Topeka’s low- to moderate-income individuals and neighborhoods (21 Topeka NIAs) and how the pandemic has exacerbated the challenges already present for those populations, I believe the vast majority of the ARPA funds should go to community purposes that specifically address those challenges.

This is a one-time opportunity we have. We shouldn’t miss it by choosing to misallocate the ARPA funds and continuing to ignore the very real and very large challenges facing our most vulnerable residents.
Thank you for your time and consideration.

Michael Bell
Greetings;

I am sharing the attached for city council members in advance of me speaking tonight during the special public comment session regarding the city's use of American Rescue Plan federal funds.

Thank you in advance!

--
Lazone Grays,
Concerned Citizen of Topeka
(913) 240-6247

President/CEO
IBSA, Inc.
www.ibsa-inc.org
www.streetsuniversity.org
www.everyoneon.org/ibsa

"a wise leader plans success" - Sun Tsu
Addressing the Digital Divide
Digital Equity, Inclusion, Justice

Outdoor Public WiFi
LMI Neighborhood Locations

Digital Equity Policy & Strategic Plan

Low-Cost Computer & Internet Availability:
Connect2Compete: Unified School District 501 & Cox, ???
Bridging the Gap: IBSA & Dept. of Children and Families

Connectivity Access:
Wired & Wireless Service (Cox ACP, PCs for People, AT&T, Other?)

LMI Neighborhood Benefit: (Onsite Access to technology)
Education: Evening, After-School & Weekend Programs
Employment & Training: Relevant Workshops, Classes, Counseling
Small Business & Entrepreneurship: Courses, Workshops, Events
Nonprofit Development: Program Development & Support Services
Health & Well-Being: Medical Assistance Online (tele-medicine)

Digital Stewardship Programs:
Computer Refurbishing, Wireless Network Maintenance, Literacy & Life Skills, Etc..

Recommended $600,000

Neighborhood Multi-Purpose Tech & Learning Resource Centers

Digital Tech Skills Training

Areas Impacted:
Workforce
Business
LMI Youth & Adults
Senior Citizens
LMI Neighborhoods

DRAFT – American Rescue Plan Recommendations (City of Topeka)
Prepared By: Lazone Grays, IBSA, Inc. February 7, 2022
Economic Revitalization
Assistance to Small Micro-Business

- LMI HUD Section 3
- Disadvantaged Small Business
- Other???
- Women
- Business Grants
- Micro-Loans
- Development Services
- Tech-Related Services/Products
- Minority
- Veteran
- Disable-Vet

Recommended $7M

Neighborhood/Community Benefit: (Onsite Access to technology)
Small Business & Entrepreneurship: Courses, Workshops, Events
Nonprofit Development: Program Development & Support Services

Youth Entrepreneurship/Enterprise Development Programs:
Skills, Etc..

DRAFT – American Rescue Plan Recommendations (City of Topeka)
Prepared By: Lazine Grays, IBSA, Inc. February 7, 2022

Business Development
Upgrading websites for e-commerce
Software upgrades

Professional service support
Bookkeeping & accounting,
Legal & marketing assistance,
Document preparation, etc.

Workforce Development
Digital tech skills training (youth)
Youth Enterprise Development/Entrepreneurship

Business Grants
Facilitated by Advisory Group of Partner Organizations
Microbusinesses (firms with 1-9 employees) are the most common kind of employer firm, but they account for a relatively small share of employment. America’s 3.7 million microbusinesses made up 75.3 percent of all private-sector employers in 2013, and they provided 10.8 percent of the private-sector jobs (Chart 1). (Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Business Employment Dynamics)

Microbusinesses’ share of employment is declining.
Microbusinesses’ share of private-sector employment dropped from 15 percent in 1978 to 11.5 percent (or 13 million employees) in 2011 (Chart 2). (Source: Census Bureau, Business Dynamics Statistics, Initial Firm Size)

Most microbusinesses are more than five years old.
In 2011, 62 percent of microbusinesses were over five years old, and 65 percent of their employment was in firms that were over five years old. (Source: Census Bureau, Business Dynamics Statistics, Initial Firm Size)

Microbusinesses have an oversized importance on job flows.
Microbusinesses accounted for over 20 percent of the job gains and job losses from 2000 to 2013, with much of their gross job flows coming from new and closing firms as opposed to expanding or shrinking firms. (Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Business Employment Dynamics)

The finance, insurance and real estate industry has the highest share of microbusinesses.
The industry with the highest share of microbusinesses is the combined finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE) industry. In 2011, microbusinesses made up 85 percent of the industry. (Source: Census Bureau, Business Dynamics Statistics, Initial Firm Size)
The City of Wichita has allocated up to $10 million for this purpose.

ARPA Workforce & Small Business/Entrepreneurial Development Grants

The COVID-19 public health emergency resulted in significant economic hardships for many Americans. To help alleviate the economic hardships caused by the pandemic the City of Wichita invites grant applications from organizations interested in implementing (1) Workforce Development and/or (2) Small Business/Entrepreneurial Development through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

While the pandemic has affected communities across the country, it has disproportionately impacted low-income and minority communities, as well as, specific industries. Examples of these specific industries include, but are not limited to:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Entertainment and Leisure (includes food establishments)
- Aerospace
- Healthcare
- Agriculture
- Transportation and Logistics
- Other Service Industries

As such, preference will be given to grant applications that are tailored to address such inequities. ARPA Funding may not be used unless a negative economic impact from the public health emergency (COVID-19) has been experienced.

https://www.wichita.gov/Finance/Pages/ARPAGrants.aspx

Wichita to use ARPA funding for workforce, small biz development
December 14, 2021 3:02 pm

The money comes from the city's $72.4 million in ARPA funding, and will address the negative economic impacts of the pandemic.

The city will award the grants through an application process on the city's web site but says individuals and entities not in operation for at least a year are not eligible.

Businesses can begin applying on December 22, 2021

Applications are due by Noon on February 2, 2022. Businesses will be notified starting February 22.

A new KCK Small Business Resiliency Grant Program has been announced.

The grant is funded through the Unified Government’s allocation of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, according to a spokesman.

Businesses may use the funds to prepare for changes in the ways consumers are doing business, including funds for upgrading websites for e-commerce, buildings and physical plant remediation to comply with safety guidelines, software upgrades and professional service support, according to the spokesman.


The UG Small Business Grant is available for qualified applicants that own an existing small business with twenty-five (25) or fewer employees, that are primed for expansion and moving to the next level in business/job growth.

The strategy is to promote small business activity through a one-time reimbursable grant to applicants.

The UG will provide grants of $1,000 to $10,000 to applicants. Award amounts will be based on need and the qualified matching investment.

Types of grants for qualified applicants that own an existing small business that are primed for expansion and moving to the next level in business and job growth:

- Renovation costs (sheetrock, flooring, painting, etc.)
- Facade and minor roof repairs (painting, sealing, etc.)
- Inventory costs (other than office supplies)
- Equipment cost
- Marketing (web page, signage, etc.)

Grant Deadlines: April 1st and August 1st

https://www.wycokck.org/Departments/Economic-Development/Small-Business/Small-Business-Grant
Job Training
LMI Adults/Youth

Job Search Skills

Job Retention

Workplace Employability Skills

Wrap-Around Services
Transportation Assistance
Food assistance (SNAP)
Child support mediation (DCF)
Affordable housing (Impact Avenues)
Other...

*Seek Approval as Eligible State Program:
TANF/A-OK Program (DCF)
Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA)
Vocational Rehabilitation (DCF)

Trade Skills

Entry-level skills development and training...

Credentials Earned:
• First Aid
• CPR
• OSHA 10
• NCCER (Core)
• Lead-Safe Work Practices
• Lead Paint Abatement
  Worker & Supervisor Certification
• Mold Remediation

Recommended
$1,500,000

Transitional Jobs Program

Subsidized Employment
• Debris Removal
• Mowing
• Graffiti Removal
• Weatherization
• Other...

Specific Work Experience
i.e. fixing leaky faucets, caulking windows, jobsite safety.

Career Outcomes:
• Entry-Level Employment
• Formal Apprenticeship
• On-the-Job Training
• Other Formal Training
  o Washburn Tech
  o Other?
• LMI Entrepreneurship?
Attachment II  Workforce Programs Implementing Community Violence Intervention Strategies.

WIOA funding may be used to engage current workforce programs in new partnerships or activities supporting CVI programming. Table 1 highlights components of community violence intervention efforts that are allowable for, and in many cases already in use by, workforce programs.

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CVI Components</th>
<th>Workforce Programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian/Native American Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Corps</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Farmworker Jobs Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reentry Employment Opportunities</td>
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<td>Senior Community Service Employment Program</td>
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<td>WIOA Adult</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIOA Youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>YouthBuild</td>
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*See Table 2.
Many wraparound services in CVI are considered supportive services under WIOA.

**Table 2.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Wrap-Around Service</th>
<th>Counseling, Mental Health Services</th>
<th>Transportation</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Legal Aid</th>
<th>Referrals to Other Community Services</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIOA Adult Program</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIOA Youth Formula Program</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>YouthBuild</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
City of Topeka

Allowable use of ARPA funds:
- Lead paint abatement
- Community Violence Intervention
- Grants for nonprofits
- Digital literacy training, programs & internet access
- Weatherization
- Job training
- Grants for small business

Recommendations for City of Topeka

**Neighborhood Digital Literacy, Training, Services & Tech-Skills Programs**
Navigators (Digital & Tech), Classes/Workshops, Devices, (1) Neighborhood Hub
(See recommendations by the Topeka Digital Equity & Inclusion Partnership and/or Partners)*

**Digital Connectivity Technology Projects:** *In-house & External WiFi Networks*
High-Speed Internet Service for LMI neighborhood locations (5)
*Obligate funds for five LMI community locations location for 4 year period*
*Recommended: $600,000*

**Assistance to Small Businesses:** *Micro-business, LMI Section 3, M/W/DBE*
Designate $1,750,000/yr for grant/micro-loan program over a 4 year period
*Obligate $7M spread over a four year period (2022 - 2026)*

**Job Training Target:** *Homeless, TANF, SNAP, WIOA, Others on Public Assistance*
**Pre-Apprenticeship Training / Transitional Jobs Program**
Three month program, 3 sessions per year, 6-10 students per session

**Credentials Earned:**
- Lead-Safe Work Practices & Lead Abatement (worker certification),
- Mold Remediation, CPR, OSHA 10, First Aid, NCCER Core, Other (weatherization?)
- Wrap-around Services: bus pass, child support mediation, food assistance, other legal...

**Career Objective:** Entry-Level employment, formal apprenticeship, OJT, Washburn Tech
*Obligate funds for start-up & build-out cost over 4 Years: $1.500,000*

**Community Violence Intervention:** *Adult & Youth*
Neighborhood programs/activities; day-time, evening, after school & weekends
(i.e. mentoring, workforce development, health/wellness, community service)
*Obligate $350,000 for approved neighborhood programs over 4 years*

**Total Obligation:**
(Per Year = $2,362.500) (4 Years = $9,450.000)

Revised Recommendations

Prepared By: Lazone Grays  February 7, 2022  IBSA, Inc.,

www.ibsa-inc.org

American Rescue Plan Recommendations (City of Topeka)
Prepared By: Lazone Grays, IBSA, Inc. February 7, 2022
Brenda, I sent to the clerk but I am copying here:

Good evening,

Good evening & thank you for allowing me to present the needs that I see in our community that I hope can be addressed, in part, with ARPA funding. I had hoped to attend virtually tonight but have a conflict.

My name is Kathleen Marker and I am the CEO of the YWCA Northeast Kansas. Aside from providing education and advocacy in our community, we provide direct services to families needing childcare and before and after school care in Topeka. Our Center for Safety and Empowerment, formerly the YWCA Battered Women’s Task Force, provides FREE and CONFIDENTIAL services to victims of domestic and sexual violence, stalking, and human trafficking in Shawnee. Our services come under three categories: Safety, Support & Prevention.

- We provide safety through our 24-hour toll-free helpline, emergency shelter to all genders, and assistance filing protection orders.
- Our advocates provide support with individual counseling, support groups and court advocacy.
- Prevention includes training for professionals, awareness raising through public events and collaborations with partner agencies and community groups to promote change at an institutional level and systemic level.

The Covid 19 pandemic has put extreme pressure on the non-profits in our community who have had level or decreased funding and resources, but are expected to do more in our community for those that have been hit hardest by the realities of the pandemic. While staffing shortages have been a challenge for the public and private sector, non-profits cannot compete with the level of funding available for salaries.

At the YWCA, we are seeing a historic increase in the number of folks who are accessing services. They need and want mental health services, affordable housing and affordable and accessible childcare, so they can prosper in our community. Many times, folks leaving our emergency shelter have not had success in finding safe and affordable housing. Racial inequities continue to widen the gap when it comes to the health of our community.

The American Public Health Association (non-partisan) finds racism to be a barrier to health equity and is a driving force of social determinants of health. The social determinants of health—defined as the social, environmental, and economic factors that influence health, include employment, housing, education, access to health care, nutritious food, and public safety.

1. Poverty affects 25% of African American households and 25% of Hispanic households in Topeka; in white households it is 15%.
2. The median household income for African American households in Topeka $30,500 (two-thirds the citywide median $46,100) and $41,830 for latin-x; these are both compared to $48,950 for ncn-latin-x white.

3. Among premature deaths caused by preventable illness in Shawnee County, African Americans die sooner than whites at an average rate of 12 years/person versus whites at 6 years/person.*

4. 36% of Topeka’s Hispanic population and 52% of its African American population cannot afford a 2-bedroom dwelling.

I would ask that you consider allocating resources to mental health services, childcare affordability and affordable housing. Please view your decisions through a racial equity lens.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Marker

YWCA Northeast Kansas
225 W 12th Street
Topeka, KS 66612
www.ywcaneks.org

From: Brenda Younger <BYounger@Topeka.org>
Sent: Tuesday, February 8, 2022 4:30 PM
To: Kathleen Marker <kathleenm@ywcaneks.org>
Subject: RE: Feb 8th Zoom Meeting Log In Information

To the Governing Body? I do not see written comments from you?

From: Kathleen Marker <kathleenm@ywcaneks.org>
Sent: Tuesday, February 8, 2022 4:28 PM
To: Brenda Younger <BYounger@Topeka.org>
Cc: City Clerk <cclerk@Topeka.org>
Subject: Re: Feb 8th Zoom Meeting Log In Information

Thank you, I have already sent them.
Behavioral Health Care Needs and Areas of Concern – Adults

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Presented by:

Bill D. Persinger, Jr., CEO
Valeo Behavioral Health Care, Inc.
(Submitted in Written Form Only)

2/8/2022

Honorable Mayor Padilla and City Council Members,

Thank you for reviewing the following highly-summarized and brief list of areas of need and concern:

1. The methamphetamine addiction problem is of crisis proportion and continues to be a major concern and area of unmet needs.
2. The opioid addiction problem is of great concern, and is an area of growing acuity and prevalence.
3. Un-sheltered adults experience many immediate challenges, including behavioral health concerns, access to safe and affordable housing, access to food, medicine, employment, and hygiene services.
4. Un-insured adults with severe and persistent mental illness have multiple challenges relating to access to increased services, employment, healthcare, and social services.

In deepest appreciation for your public service, Respectfully,
February 8, 2022

Mr. Mayor, City Council members, and Mr. City Manager,

Thank you for this opportunity to come before you and share some information about the state of child care in our community and the impact COVID has had on the industry. My name is Reva Wywadis and I am the executive director of Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas. Our agency is a child care resource and referral agency, licensed through the Kansas Department of Health & Environment. We operate the parent resource center, assisting families from the entire state of Kansas with their child care search, and working directly with child care programs in our region offering workforce training and consultation services. As part of the state Child Care Aware® of Kansas network, we collect and have access to lots of data related to child care in our state.

For some time, many communities in Kansas (including Topeka) have acknowledged that there has not always been enough child care to meet the needs of the working families in the community. Infant care and care during non-traditional hours (typically defined as before 7 am or after 6 pm, or on weekends) has always been in short supply. However, the pandemic has had a direct and very significant negative impact on the child care industry and we have seen a record number of facility closures--- making the challenge of finding child care exponentially worse for the families that need it.

Here are a few numbers to put this into a context. In January 2020, Topeka had 46 child care centers, 151 family child care homes (licensed for 10 children), and 81 group family child care homes (licensed for 12 children). In the last two years, 7 child care centers closed and 2 opened, leaving us a total of 41, a reduction of 5 child care centers. Family child care numbers saw the same trend: 40 closing and 14 opening, resulting in a total of 125 (a net reduction of 26). Group family child care saw 21 programs close and 8 open, resulting in a total of 68 (a net reduction of 13). Overall, this shows a loss of 44 child care facilities, representing over 700 lost child care slots in our city. (Please note: additional data points for can be accessed here: https://stage.worklifesystems.com/Kansas?county=shawnee.)

As dire as these numbers are, I would be remiss if I didn’t mention that they likely would have been much worse without the local child care sustainability grants that were offered in late 2020 through Shawnee County SPARK funding. These grants were truly a lifeline and helped many child care programs stay afloat during a time of significant uncertainty. These local grants were followed with a series of sustainability grants offered at the state level, all focused on retention of current programs.
And while retention of existing programs continues to be critical as we consider child care capacity and we certainly don’t want to see more closures, it is now time to take action to build additional child care capacity in our community by supporting new business start-up and workforce issues that have some programs functioning at less than their license capacity.

In order to rebuild the local economy and our workforce, parents with young children have to have access to reliable, safe child care for their children. Current data indicates that in Shawnee County the extent that desired capacity meets potential demand is 57%. What that means is that only 6 in every 10 families that need child care actually have access to a slot--- and this doesn’t account for other important factors like location, cost or quality. On a daily basis, our staff speaks with families who are desperate to find child care to help them accept or retain their employment. We hear from mothers who are sobbing on the phone, being forced to decline a job offer because they cannot find child care. On social media, we read stories of families willing to leave their children with total strangers in order to keep the job they have because licensed child care is not available. The lasting and ongoing impact of COVID on our community continues to force many families to make very difficult and sometimes unreasonable decisions as they navigate these unprecedented times.

An investment of ARPA dollars focused at addressing child care capacity building should be seen as a critical and necessary “next step” in positioning our community for economic growth and success as we move forward. Local financial support is required to meet this vital need for families with young children in our workforce. An investment of ARPA dollars at the local level could make a swift and meaningful impact as we collectively work to meet the child care capacity needs in Topeka, a need that surfaces repeatedly and is on the minds of families and businesses throughout our community.

Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas stands ready to join with others in addressing this need.

I am happy to respond to questions or supply additional data as you consider this need. I can be reached at 785-440-4507 or by email reva@east.ks.childcareaware.org.

Thank you for this opportunity to address the council.

Respectfully submitted,

Reva Wywados, Executive Director
Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas
Recommendations from Erma Forbes

- **Elimination of Food Taxes.**

  It seems counterproductive to try to solve the issue of starvation by providing soup kitchens and food boxes and yet have taxes on food items making it more difficult for residents to obtain fresh groceries.

- **Bus Shelters for both school children and the general public.**

  Children of working parents in low income neighborhoods are faced with the choices of battling inclement weather: rain, snow or other fierce conditions, while waiting for their buses in the wee hours of the morning, or not attending school that day. In more wealthy neighborhood the kids are dropped off at schools and those that bussed would more likely wait in the parents vehicle thus avoiding challenging weather conditions.

  Older citizens wait at bus stops with no shelter or even a bench or a minute paved area on which to stand.

- **Crime prevention and Promotion of safety**

  In the less affluent neighborhoods the street lights are more limited, visibility is less. It leaves to reason that criminals are less likely to choose a well lit area to commit crime or break into a home or business.

- **Sidewalks especially in areas that facilitates programs for programs for children and the elderly.**
The elderly has limited mobility due to a number of circumstances. However, they too would like to take walks and enjoy the neighborhood and what it has to offer. The children should be able to walk or ride their bikes safely to and from their destination.

- **Educational programs** for kids and young adults in diverse areas. Including health and wellness including proper mental health, finances etc.

- **Grant opportunities** for active productive non-profits

Several of the smaller not-profits provide wonderful programs in the community, but are not known or recognized and year after year the larger organizations receive grants and other funding even when they mismanaged funds.

- **Commonsense incentives for small business.**

For example the small real estate/housing developer. For example the small companies who buy smaller homes and buildings which are eyesores in the neighborhood could be incentivized in repairing these homes and renting them modestly to low income citizens. The eyesores would be eliminated and the city will save by not having to destroy them at the city’s expense

- **Startup incentives for motivating new small business.**

Elimination unnecessary redundant requirements and make clear and precise requests.

THANK YOU!
Public Comments on February 8, 2022 by Scott C Gowan

Thank you, very much, for the opportunity to speak with you tonight in support of Digital Inclusion on behalf of the Topeka Shawnee County - Get Digital team, and I will keep my remarks brief.

Collectively we represent a partnership among the city, county, school district, library, and other community organizations sharing an important common vision for our community:

Improve our neighborhoods, institutions, economy, and quality of life through affordable digital inclusion and participation.

Tonight, I am here to share with you that roughly 47 percent of our neighbors’ households qualify as low-to-moderate income. As such, many lack the resources

1. to participate in our digital economy,
2. to seek out online healthcare,
3. to participate in online learning,
4. to socialize with friends or family, or
5. to explore burning questions or curiosities.

Many of us who are digitally advantaged and experienced with these tools take these activities for granted; however, for those who lack a broadband connection or computing device to engage in these activities, these disadvantages grow year-after-year, leaving whole families, whole neighborhoods, and whole populations within our community behind.

Our team has established four core pillars of success to achieve our mission in support of our shared vision.

1. Equitable Access
2. Affordable Devices
3. Digital Literacy & Citizenship
4. Sustainable Technical Support

Using grant resources we have secured thus far, we have hired a half-time person to begin pointing our neighbors to equitable access and a half-time person to scratch the surface of sustainable technical support; however, as you can imagine, we will need a lot more resources to fulfill these needs for 47 percent of our neighbors.

Your support thus far has been greatly appreciated. We can already see progress. Although the path before us appears to be a challenging one, with your continued support, we can achieve this mission.

Imagine Topeka being the first community in which all of our neighbors can connect their household device to a broadband connection to engage in our digital economy. Only when we reach this vision, can our whole community grow to its full potential.
If you have any questions, I'll be glad to answer any that I can on behalf of this initiative.
Public Input Opportunity – American Rescue Plan Act Funds
Erica Garcia Babb

There's nothing in the world like the peace of mind you get from good quality childcare. When my son was just 5 months old, we were introduced to the wonderful world of Manchester School for Young Children, and countless times since then they have shown me that sending Evan there was one of the best decisions we ever could have made for him.

It's been a magical, irreplaceable setting that we'll never forget. Unfortunately, however, after the last two years of the pandemic with no end in sight, the director has made the incredibly hard decision to close Manchester at the end of this month and quite honestly, as much as I've actually cried about this, I don't blame her one bit.

Since the start of the pandemic childcare centers have been forgotten, left out, given little relief (if any at all), and nothing but mountains to climb. Licensing regulations they have to continue to follow have also added a layer of difficulty in maintaining the ratio of teacher-child as well as not “mixing” ages together as teachers and students have both been affected by the virus. Childcare workers were never deemed “essential” in any phase of the pandemic even though there is no way I could have been able to stay gainfully employed if I didn't have a safe place to send my son. Since they weren't considered essential, they were left them to figure things out on their own-including guidance of mitigation, funds for cleaning supplies and masks, and no way to make ends meet when they had to close for quarantines.

Countless months went by with staffing shortages that caused an entire classrooms to be closed, causing families to be without care, children unable to move to their new classrooms when they reached a certain age, and causing childcare staff to be stretched thin with pay that was less than they could make at other jobs with half the level of responsibility.

But many childcare centers don't have much more to give-running a childcare center is costly, and families are already paying on average over $10,000 a year in Topeka per child-IF you can find an opening. Pre-pandemic statistics showed that there were 12 children per childcare spot-not opening-per spot.
Manchester is actually one of several centers that have had to close their doors these last 2 years.

But it doesn’t have to be this way. Manchester is and has been a magical place to send my son for the past four years and I’m clearly heartbroken to see its doors close, and the frustrating thing to me is the fact that I don’t believe it ever should have gotten this difficult, and it may be too late for Manchester but I’m here tonight to talk about what we have remaining and what we can do to support the childcare facilities as well why it’s so important for the city of Topeka to thrive.

I am pretty positive I’ve heard almost every single one of you speak on population decline here in Topeka and in the most recent elections, I’m pretty sure this was something many of you said you wanted to work on. Well, in my eyes, here is your chance. If you want people to live and work and move here, you have to be sure to maintain quality child care facilities in every way possible.

Since we received the announcement of Manchester closing, I, of course, have been on the hunt for childcare as my son will need to be in daycare for another year and I have another on the way. As part of my search I talked to one facility that said, sure I’ll have room for your kids if you can find me 5 new teachers in a month. Another one said they have a waiting list and they don’t have openings for another two years. Every single one of the facilities has shared challenges they have faced with staying open and avoiding the virus amongst an age group that is not yet able to be vaccinated. Currently guidelines state that unvaccinated individuals have to quarantine for 10 days. That’s 10 days where the kids and the teachers are not at daycare and 10 where parents don’t have childcare and cannot go to work. Childcare facilities are absolutely the backbone of our economy.

Now, I’m not sure of all the red tape that will come along with these ARPA dollars but if you are able, I think it would be a real investment in our city and our youth to contribute to childcare facilities so that they can stay open, pay their workers a living a wage, perhaps even have benefits, have testing and cleaning supplies, and perhaps even a way that the cost of the facility staying open can decrease.
The other thing to consider is the families here. Childcare alone costs an average of $1,000 a month in this city. That means that unless someone makes this much on top of what it takes to put a roof over their head, these costs phase them out of the job market. You want people to live here. You want people to work here. You have to find a way to make childcare affordable. An individual working a full time job at $10/hr makes $1600 a month before taxes, a home or any utilities are paid and unfortunately that's a few dollars above minimum wage, and it's actually what some daycare teachers make at some facilities. The issues here really do come full circle.

I could go on obviously but I think you get the point. Childcare workers were never deemed essential throughout the pandemic by our federal government but they couldn't have been more wrong about that. And I want you to know that we are losing a real Topeka treasure in Manchester. We're still on our journey to figuring out where we will go, but I beg you to please help us make sure that the lack of quality childcare doesn't remove anyone else from our workforce or the city of Topeka. Investing in our childcare facilities is investing in our future. It's investing in the future of our workforce.
Public Comment to Topeka City Council  

February 8, 2022

My name is Joan Wagnon and I am President of the Topeka Performing Arts Center Board of Trustees – TPAC. Thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Trustees on possible uses of the approximately $45 million in American Rescue Plan money. We would like for you to spend part of that money on repairs and deferred maintenance to our part of the City’s building.

I viewed the council’s January work session. The consensus that emerged for two broad goals of debt reduction and community projects seems appropriate for this one-time money.

TPAC also supports the notion expressed by some council members that community funds should focus on capital improvements or infrastructure and be directed to established programs, not new ones. We understand there will be an application process and will submit the specifics of our request at the appropriate time.

For my remaining time, I’d like to make 3 points:

1. **TPAC’s building is a city responsibility.** TPAC’s board of Trustees operates under a contract with the City of Topeka. Under that contract, the city pays utilities and should provide repairs and upkeep of the building. Recently the city approved 2 items from the capital outlay fund for roof and HVAC repair. Since then, a recent wind storm further damaged the roof and the city is making temporary repairs.

We appreciate your paying the utilities and your contribution to our operating budget. We hope to see the roof repairs made soon, But the truth is there are many more things that need to be repaired to make our building usable and desirable.

The council approved repairs to the outside of city hall—tuck pointing, windows, etc—and stopped when they got to the exterior of the portion of the building TPAC uses. We have HVAC issues throughout the building that need the City’s attention, to name a few.
2. **TPAC Needs a Facelift!** The 1991 renovation of the old Municipal Auditorium into a new, state of the art performance hall is now 31 years old and needs attention to continue to attract the top-notch touring acts. Our meeting rooms are shabby and everything needs a coat of paint, maybe new carpeting. We keep the building clean, but it’s time to renew these spaces with ARPA cash so these expenses don’t fall to your capital improvements budget.

3. **TPAC is an asset to Downtown and the City of Topeka.** Looking at building usage 2017-2019, both downstairs and upstairs rooms were used **80% of the time by the Topeka community** for their programs—everything from dance recitals, Nutcrackers, graduation ceremonies, weddings, etc.—and only 20% for touring shows, plays and concerts. In fact, prior to the pandemic **average annual attendance all events was 74,725 per year.** That is much lower now after 2020 and 2021, but the **audiences are returning.** Now is the time to fix up the place and attract those audiences to downtown instead of to the casinos, or Lawrence or Kansas City.

I’d like to close by **inviting all** of you to come to the other side of the building and let one of our Trustees take you around and show you the needs. If you want to **see a show,** Larry Gawronski can find you tickets and you can experience for yourself the **value of the City’s investment** in the Topeka Performing Arts Center.

Joan Wagnon
President, Topeka Performing Arts Center Board of Trustees
Attachment B
I believe we need much greater oversight of Utilities. Every project and every contract and large change order needs to be approved by the City Council with attached bid doc summaries. This Departments additional inability to perform on adequate waterline replacement timelines, and the escalating breaks, and out of control overtime tells me it is time to change leadership. To me that department is a disaster and their Ridiculously high reserves tell me the public has been mislead about the need for the high rate increases passed in December 2019. Until the past couple of months it has been hard to get truth about this Dept and their Ridiculously high Rev Bond borrowing ( $370,000,000)! Their budgets are not off limits to the Council or the Public! We need absolute oversight of this Department asap in my opinion. Joseph Ledbetter JD. MPA.

Sent from my iPhone