Date: April 1, 2019  
Time: 3:00 p.m.  
Location: Holliday 1st Floor Conference Room; 620 SE Madison

Attendance  
Committee members Present: Tony Emerson, Brendan Jensen, Jeff Coen  
City Staff Present: Brent Trout (City Manager), Lisa Robertson (City Attorney), Liz Toyne (Council Assistant)

1) Call to Order  
Councilmember Jeff Coen called the meeting to order. Councilmembers and staff introduced themselves.

2) Elect 2019 Committee Chair  
Councilmember Emerson nominated Councilmember Coen to serve as Chair. Councilmember Jensen seconded the motion. A vote of 3:0 approved Councilmember Coen as the committee chair.

3) Introduction of Governing Body Term Limits; Discussion  
Lisa Robertson introduced the information provided to the committee members with regard to research done. Committee members were provided a list of the top ten (10) cities in Kansas, as well as Kansas City, Missouri. Of those cities: Hutchison, Wichita and KCMO have term limits. The language of those ordinances was provided for committee members to review. A second document provided to the committee was a more comprehensive list of cities to include many from Kansas as well as the capitol city and cities of a comparative size from the Border States: Nebraska, Oklahoma, Colorado and Missouri and Iowa.

Councilmember Jensen inquired if research was done into the form of government with the cities that have a term limit ordinance. Lisa Robertson stated it was not.

Ms. Robertson noted that for the state of Kansas, that research is fairly easy to find, however research had not been done for the cities listed from other states.
Ms. Robertson stated that some information regarding the past discussion by City Councilmembers regarding term limits was included in the packets that committee members received.

Councilmember Coen inquired if staff had information regarding if the proposed ordinance from 2010 listed out a three term or a two term limit. Ms. Robertson stated that she did not have that information.

Councilmember Jensen asked Ms. Robertson to list out the steps of this process, should the committee decide to move forward. The steps are as follows:

- An ordinance to amend the charter would be put together. The particular provision is A2-22. A §C would likely be added. §A discusses elections, §B talks about terms of office. A new §C would include the information regarding term limits that the committee would review and propose to the Governing Body for a vote.
- The committee would determine what the term limits would look like, and when those would be effective.
- Legal would draft the ordinance and submit it to the Governing Body for a final approval. A special election is not necessary for that amendment.

Councilmember Jensen inquired if the item could be brought to the public as a special election item. Lisa Robertson stated that the item could be placed as a special election item. Ms. Robertson will speak to the Shawnee County Elections Office and report back to the committee on what that process, timeline, and cost associated would be.

Councilmember Coen included that he would want to leave the option open to allow someone to serve again after sitting out a term. Councilmember Jensen noted he would want to include a caveat to discuss the process of allowing a senior member to stay for a third term should there be a number of new councilmembers.

Councilmember Coen opened the floor for public comment.

Clark Trammel spoke to the committee about being opposed to instating term limits noting an appreciation for the historical leadership that comes with some of the longer-serving councilmembers. Mr. Trammel noted that JEDO (Joint Economic Development Organization) has three voting members who do not have term limits. Mr. Trammel cautioned that if the City Council had new members, the seasoned veterans serving on JEDO would then be in control of what decisions were made and how the meeting would run. Mr. Trammel does not agree that placing term limits is an appropriate step and noted that elections serve as an avenue for the public to decide on term limits. If constituents want to see change, they can vote for a new representative. Mr.
Trammel closed by stating he feels having the continuity with longer serving council members and the relationship established with those members and the City Manager are beneficial.

Brent Hall addressed the committee and stated he feels as though the current policy of not having term limits is appropriate.

Councilmember Coen inquired if there were other items before the committee. Councilmember Emerson stated he felt that having some of the longer serving councilmembers to provide history and leadership has been helpful for some discussions. Councilmember Emerson reminded the committee that the majority of the city staff were fairly new, within the past five years.

The committee discussed a few pros and cons of instating term limits as well as inquiring with Lisa Robertson about the possibility of submitting the proposal to the public in an election. Committee members were in agreement that putting the proposal on the next major election ballot would be an option. At the current time, Councilmember Emerson would not vote to establish term limits but is open to hearing testimony and having more discussion over the topic. Councilmember Jensen stated he would like to let the public vote over whether they would like to place term limits on Governing Body members. Councilmember Coen inquired what a timeline for placing the item on the November ballot might look like. Lisa Robertson was not sure but would find the information out and report back to the committee. Councilmember Emerson noted that perhaps waiting for the next major election in 2020 would yield a larger turn out for voters as well as lowering the cost to the City for placing a special item on the roster.

Mr. Trammel suggested holding an interim survey to gauge the public’s interest in the matter before deciding writing up the ordinance or paying to place it on a general election ballot.

Lisa Robertson clarified that when the issue came forward in 2010, it was not provided to the public for their input.

Brent Trout noted that the company who produced the City’s Citizen Satisfaction Survey would be an option as well for reaching out to the public. Mr. Trout will find out what the cost will be and report back to the committee.

Councilmember Jensen offered additionally to reach out to a group of community members who he frequently communicates with for advice to gather information as to if there would be an interest into placing the item on a general election ballot.
4) Other Items Before the Committee
   No other items.

5) Adjourn
   The Policy and Finance Committee will be meeting on April 22, 2019 at
   3:30pm in Classroom A of the Law Enforcement Center to begin discussing
   the City of Topeka’s Personnel Code.

   Councilmember Coen adjourned the meeting.

The video of this meeting can be viewed at:  https://youtu.be/4j4M7uFQxd0