

May 11, 2020
Volume 1, Issue 5



DUNCAN

 **City Council**
SERVING DISTRICT 8 & TOPEKA

UPDATES & INFO

On Monday, we honor those who sacrificed their lives in service of the United States. Many have family members who died serving our Country. Please take a moment on Memorial Day to remember their sacrifices.

ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

The City Manager recently eliminated three positions: Deputy City Manager, Neighborhood Relations Director and Emergency Management Coordinator. I support this action.

A clear directive to the City Manager during this time is to make decisions that are not quick fixes that only assist the short-term but look at long-term answers to our budget constraints.

In regards to the Deputy City Manager, the duties of that role can be absorbed by others, including the City Manager. Many cities our size do not have a Deputy City Manager.

In regards to Neighborhood Relations, let me be clear: the department will continue to operate, fulfill its duties and serve neighborhoods. We are not eliminating services or resources. Many duties of that position were being done by other staff. It was determined the position could be eliminated and not harm services.

In regards to Emergency Management, that position is relatively new. It was created by previous City Manager Jim Colson. While it seemed a reasonable idea at the time to create the position we have realized the prior system used for decades is just as effective. Under this system, departments work together to manage areas of emergency management where they specialize and during an emergency work together as a team. No services will be cut, no programs will be slowed. We have learned during the Covid-19 pandemic that our departments work together well and coordinate effectively with the County to serve all citizens.

These decisions are not being made rashly or without serious discussion and consideration of their ramifications to city operations and how it impacts Topekans. Our budget shortfall is serious. While eliminating positions in administration is difficult, it will create efficiencies and ensure we do not have to trim the pay of frontline workers.

I will monitor the impact of the changes and be the first to step in and ask for re-evaluations if there is any indication they are not having the desired outcomes.

**Contact me with
comments &
questions. Your
input matters!**



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February 21, 2020
Volume 1, Issue 3



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CIP DISCUSSION

The Council approved the Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) plan by 10-0 this week. I voted yes, but proposed and supported several important changes.

The Council approved my proposal to require City staff to present us with options for leasing vehicles and equipment beginning in 2021. Currently, the city purchases all of these items, and in most cases uses debt bonding to do so. While we are unlikely to be able to lease all vehicles and equipment, there is no doubt likely to be savings by exploring these options.

The Council approved a measure presented by Council member Neil Dobler to bring any project with spending of more than \$250,000 for individual approval before it is placed into the CIP budget. This provides better oversight and allows for more community engagement as projects are proposed. I was glad to support this proposal and help work on it.

You can see the Capital Improvement Projects plan at <https://www.topeka.org/finance/capital-improvement-projects/>



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BUDGET SUGGESTIONS & INPUT

The Governing Body and city staff is in the process of developing the 2021 City General Fund Budget. I want to hear your thoughts and ideas on how we can craft a budget that meets the needs of our city, while also dealing with the challenges of a shortfall related to Covid-19.

I will take any of your thoughts and ideas, in any form. I do ask that you try to provide me with specific areas where you would like to see adjustments.

Simply telling me to “Make cuts” or “Put more money into a program” is not as constructive as providing me with specific cuts that can be made or suggestions on how we provide additional funding to programs.

You can email your suggestions and comments to me at sduncan@topeka.org or duncanfortopeka@yahoo.com

You can view the full budget at <https://data.topeka.org/>

Please provide me with your comments by July 11, as that is when the Governing Body will be holding an all-day budget workshop.