

Speaker 1 ([00:06:46](#)):

I

Speaker 2 ([00:06:47](#)):

Think we're ready. Are you guys ready?

Speaker 1 ([00:06:48](#)):

Yep.

Speaker 2 ([00:06:49](#)):

Okay. We'll go ahead and start since we're dismissing ourselves. Good evening everybody. Welcome to the Tuesday, July 8th, 2025 Lawrence City Commission meeting. Our first item on the agenda is going to be to recess into executive session to discuss some employee employee related matters.

Speaker 3 ([00:07:10](#)):

Move to recess in executive session. Approximately 15 minutes. Discuss employer-employee negotiations pursuant to the employer-employee negotiations exception as set forth in KSA 75 dash 43 19 B three. Justification for the executive session is to keep employee employee negotiation matters confidential. At this time, the city commission will resume at your regular meeting in the city commission room at 6:01 PM after the executive session is concluded.

Speaker 2 ([00:07:36](#)):

Okay, that's a motion. A second. Second. Okay. That's a motion by Vice Mayor Finkel, seconded by Mr. Littlejohn. All in favor say aye.

Speaker 4 ([00:07:45](#)):

Aye. Aye. Aye

Speaker 2 ([00:07:46](#)):

Was opposed. Motion passes five zero. We'll be back in about 15 minutes, which would be approximately 6 0 3

Speaker 1 ([00:07:56](#)):

I Since we're all here, I think I'm just going to go ahead and

Speaker 2 ([00:21:55](#)):

Gavel us back in at 6 0 2. I'm going to go ahead and move on to the next agenda item, which is item B, which is to approve the agenda. City commission reserves the right to amend, supplement, or reorder the agenda during the meeting. Is there a motion to approve the agenda as is?

Speaker 3 ([00:22:15](#)):

Move to approve the agenda.

Speaker 2 ([00:22:16](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 3 ([00:22:17](#)):

Second.

Speaker 2 ([00:22:18](#)):

Okay. That motion by ye second by sellers. All in favor say aye.

Speaker 3 ([00:22:23](#)):

Aye

Speaker 2 ([00:22:23](#)):

Was opposed. Motion passes. Five zero.

Speaker 3 ([00:22:26](#)):

Mayor, would you like Sherry to read?

Speaker 2 ([00:22:28](#)):

Yeah, actually I want to mention a couple things at this time. Two things Sherry and I wanted to mention that with the number of people in here, any private conversations get kind of reflected across the room, so it's hard to hear when we can hear you there. So please keep those conversations in the room to a minimum or step outside. And then Sherry, can you read the rules in the meeting please? Thank you. Of

Speaker 5 ([00:22:49](#)):

Course. Thank you Mayor. Good evening everyone. If you would please silence your cell phones. The primary format for accessing the meeting is in person at City Hall. Virtual access cannot be guaranteed due to potential technology issues. When the mayor calls for public comment, please approach the podium to indicate you wish to speak. Virtual participants should use the raise hand function. When prompted, select join as panelists. There will be a brief delay as your role changes. Once your name is called, please unmute and turn on your camera to provide your comments. Please state your name and zip code before providing your comments. All comments will be limited to three minutes. The city reserves the right to turn videos off or mute participants. Thank you, mayor.

Speaker 2 ([00:23:39](#)):

Okay. Thank you very much Sherry. Alright, we'll go ahead and move on to item C, which is a recognition tonight of excellence in traffic safety for the year 2024, which is going to be presented by the Kansas Department of Transportation. How are you this evening? Good.

Speaker 6 ([00:23:59](#)):

Please introduce yourself. Dawn Hughes and I'm a law enforcement liaison for kdot and I'm here to recognize the Lawrence Police Departments for their community traffic safety efforts. And we get applications from a lot of departments across the state of Kansas. There's four different levels, platinum, gold, silver, and bronze. And tonight we're going to present Lawrence Police Department with a platinum award. That's awesome. You have any questions? Anything you'd like to ask me? Yes,

Speaker 2 ([00:24:37](#)):

Please tell us a little about that recognition if you could. Yeah,

Speaker 7 ([00:24:40](#)):

Sure.

Speaker 2 ([00:24:40](#)):

Thank you

Speaker 7 ([00:24:41](#)):

Mayor Vice Mayor of commissioners. I appreciate your time. Sergeant Miller with Lawrence Police. I'm also the supervisor of our accident investigation unit. The chief reached out to me last year and saw this award, said, Hey, can you look into this, see if we can participate. After going through some of the questions, I knew this is something that we do every year and we have since I became a part of the traffic unit back in 2001. So this is a great opportunity for us. We have 11 person accident investigation unit that solely does a lot of different things. It does the high injury accidents, the fatality crashes, they're all expertly trained in forensic mapping, reconstruction, all the mass stuff. So not only do they do that, they do a lot of community events outside. They do child safety seat check lanes. We participate in step and then we do some other things as far as we have a couple Dres, corporal Skyler Richardson's a instructor for it, but these 11, not only work patrol, but they actually are very passionate about the traffic safety. They're out running selective enforcement, DUI checks. They're very passionate about what they do in regards to traffic safety in this community. So this is their award. They've worked very hard for this and I do appreciate your time tonight.

Speaker 2 ([00:26:13](#)):

Thank you. Thank you Sergeant. I appreciate you speaking to this. Well, great job finding these applications then being successful in receiving this platinum award. Thanks for the award and for bringing it to us tonight. And thanks for your words. Thank

Speaker 6 ([00:26:26](#)):

You, thank you,

Speaker 3 ([00:26:26](#)):

Thank you,

Speaker 2 ([00:26:27](#)):

Thank

Speaker 6 ([00:26:27](#)):

You.

Speaker 2 ([00:26:30](#)):

Alright, the next item is item D, which is the consent agenda. And all items on the consent agenda are considered under one motion and approved by one motion. Members of the governing body may remove items for separate discussion if desired, members of the public may remove items identified as quasi-judicial for separate discussion if desired, members of the public on these items will be limited to three minutes per comment. Is there an item that a member of the commission would like removed from the consent agenda? Okay. Seeing none, no quasi-judicial items that I could see. Is there a motion to approve?

Speaker 3 ([00:27:06](#)):

Move to approve the consent agenda.

Speaker 2 ([00:27:08](#)):

Second motion to approve the consent agenda by Vice Keldi. Seconded by Commissioner Lars Sinal in favor say aye. A. Aye. Those opposed? Motion passes five zero. And then today we're going to move on to our regular agenda items, which is item one, and that is to consider conducting a public hearing for the vacation of a public easement located at 5 2 7 5 West sixth Street. Consider adopting on first reading ordinance number 1 0 1 4 3 to vacate the easement as described and consider acceptance of easement dedications at 5 2 7 5 West sixth Street.

Speaker 8 ([00:27:47](#)):

Good evening, mayor Commissioner. So I'm going to present this item. Dave Cronin. I'm city engineer in the municipal services and Operations Department. So the applicant for this property has submitted a final plat and an application to vacate existing permanent easements along the north and the west property lines. Back in March, they came to city commission with a preliminary development plan that was approved and now they're going through the final steps with this final plat, which is typically administratively approved and the city mission accepts dedications of easements. In this case there were existing permanent easements that were purchased by the city and state back in 2004 when sixth street was improved, expanded to four lanes. And so we've gone through the application processes we typically would for a vacation of easements, we've notified utilities and there's no opposition to the easements that will proposed to be vacated. And I'm going to, I'll share my screen real quick and bring up the area that's proposed to be vacated. Sherry, can you allow me to do that?

Speaker 5 ([00:29:26](#)):

Try it now.

Speaker 8 ([00:29:28](#)):

Thank you.

([00:29:37](#)):

Alright, so with the application the applicant is proposing to vacate, like I said, the easements that were purchased for the sixth Street project. They are also proposing to dedicate new utility easements via the planning process. So typically when staff is supportive of vacating easements, that is done at no cost. In this instance, the easements were purchased with public funds. We've asked the applicant to offer reimbursement of those costs that were expended to purchase the easement. So they have done that and had offered about the amount that they were purchased with. So the net area of vacated easements is about 8,068 square feet and they've offered a compensation payment of a dollar per square foot for that area. When the easements were purchased, they were purchased at 98 cents per square foot, so a very similar cost. So with that being said, the staff was supportive of their offer and their staff was supportive of vacating these easements with also the understanding that they're dedicating new utility easements via the plat. And that plat is also attached to the agenda item here. And so there's two action items. The vacation easement requires a public hearing, so after conducting the public hearing, we'd ask to adopt on first reading the ordinance to vacate the easements as described, and then take action to accept the easement dedications that are proposed on the plat.

([00:31:47](#)):

And with that, I would stop for any questions that you may have.

Speaker 2 ([00:31:53](#)):

Very good, thanks David. Any questions? Commissioners? Doesn't sound like it. Okay. Well I'm going to go ahead and if it's okay with you, David, unless you have anything to add, I think about opening up the public hearing at this time. Any comments relative to this request?

Speaker 4 ([00:32:29](#)):

Have

Speaker 9 ([00:32:33](#)):

Good evening Commissioner Dean Grove with Grove Engineering. I'm the applicant for this and send over there, so if you've got any questions for me, Andrea Ley, I'd be happy to answer 'em, but I think David and the staff report does a pretty good job of explaining what we're going through, so thanks Dean.

Speaker 2 ([00:32:49](#)):

Alright, any other comments in the room? Sherry, can you check online, see if any would like to speak to this issue?

Speaker 5 ([00:33:00](#)):

There are no comments on.

Speaker 2 ([00:33:01](#)):

Okay, I'm going to go ahead and move to close the public hearing.

Speaker 3 ([00:33:07](#)):

Make a motion.

Speaker 2 ([00:33:08](#)):

Okay,

Speaker 3 ([00:33:08](#)):

I move to adopt on first reading ordinance number 1 0 1 4 3 to vacate the easement as described. Second,

Speaker 2 ([00:33:14](#)):

Okay, is that's a motion by Finkel Dye, seconded by Larson. All in favor say aye.

Speaker 3 ([00:33:19](#)):

Aye.

Speaker 2 ([00:33:20](#)):

As opposed, motion passes five zero.

Speaker 3 ([00:33:23](#)):

I move to accept the easement dedications at 5 2 7 5 West sixth Street. Second.

Speaker 2 ([00:33:28](#)):

Okay, that motion by Fle Dye seconded by sellers. All in favor say aye.

Speaker 3 ([00:33:32](#)):

Aye.

Speaker 2 ([00:33:33](#)):

As opposed, motion passes five zero. I think that does it on this item. Yes sir.

Speaker 10 ([00:33:38](#)):

Yep.

Speaker 2 ([00:33:39](#)):

Alright, we'll move on to item F, which is a work session and today we're going to receive the 2026 city manager's proposed budget and the 2026 two 2030 capital improvement plan.

Speaker 11 ([00:33:54](#)):

Good evening, mayor and city commissioners. It's my honor this evening to present my recommended budget for the 2026. As you're aware, the city manager is responsible for recommending a capital and operating budget each year. This initiates a process of your review, official notice and publications, public hearing and eventual adoption. Much of what we do each year is guided by state statutes, city charter, as well as guidance by the Government Finance Officers Association. This content of this plan is built by the participation of budget teams in every department of the city and ultimately comes recommended by me with the support of our entire executive team. Though we are very proud of this plan, I always consider this a starting point for the conversation and deeply believe that it can only get better through public participation in your own contributions as elected leaders of our community and we look forward to that journey over the next several weeks. Our budget is a financial plan, but is also an operating plan that implements our strategic plan and outlines what resources our city will need to deliver a wide array of services to a diverse and active community 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. Before we dive too deeply into the details of the budget and the many resources it takes to keep vital services and operations going, we want to provide a quick video to help provide an overview of the services provided to the people of this community by people of this community and organization

Speaker 12 ([00:35:25](#)):

In Lawrence, we believe in building a community where everyone can enjoy life and truly feel at home. As we look toward 2026 and beyond, we are focused on how to bring that vision to life, balancing all the needs of our community with a limited budget and that means we have hard choices to make. We are prioritizing what matters most, the programs and activities. Our city is responsible for bringing to this community. Together we are building a safe community that is protected by a team of trained specialists, including police, fire, and medical experts who are always there for you in an emergency. We've enhanced partnerships and programs community-wide to provide rapid, skilled and appropriate response to serious critical incidents. We are promoting prevention information and resources and providing rapid and skilled emergency response. Whether it's emergency medical services or controlling the spread of fire. We are efficiently utilizing resources by focusing on officers who are on the streets with specialized tactical and deescalation training to help keep you safe in times of crisis.

([00:36:40](#)):

We are building a community that is connected by critical infrastructure that you may never see, but you can always depend on. We're working on updating the streets and underground infrastructure throughout

Lawrence. You recently experienced the complete reconstruction of East 23rd Street, which included new concrete pavement, curbs and gutters, storm sewer, traffic signals and shared use paths on both sides of 23rd Street. This roadway is a beautiful new entrance to our community. One of our current projects is the complete Iowa Street reconstruction. The redone Iowa Street will feature a rebuilt roadway with new pavement, curb and gutter, a new sidewalk and a new shared use path, updated streetlights and new water lines and storm sewer infrastructure to enhance drainage and reliability. Critical infrastructure around Lawrence goes beyond just the street repairs throughout town. Did you know we have two water plants in Lawrence and our teams treat 10.5 million gallons of water per day As a part of our water treatment system, we maintain 343 miles of water distribution lines and 117 miles of water transmission mains

Speaker 13 ([00:37:54](#)):

Knowing that what we do has a direct impact on the quality of life for the citizens of Lawrence. I have kids and I want to make sure that they're drinking water is safe and healthy for them to drink just like every parent in Lawrence does. Being part of a team that makes all that possible is really important to me. It's something I take pride in for our jobs. We're not always in the spotlight, but we are essential and that's something that I really find rewarding. The city budget is a big part of what helps us do our job. Everything, staffing and training, maintenance and upgrades to the facilities. We're able to stay ahead of the maintenance, be able to do preventative maintenance as opposed to reactive to make sure that we maintain clean, safe, reliable drinking water to the community.

Speaker 12 ([00:38:47](#)):

We are building a vibrant, thriving community with recreational and cultural opportunities available to all people. In Lawrence

Speaker 14 ([00:38:55](#)):

Sports Pavilion helps with community impact by offering different diverse programming. It can be gymnastics for youth, it can be super senior circuits for the seniors. We also have the wellness area that is open from five 30 in the morning until 9:00 PM at night, which is really nice for people to come in here at all times, either before work or the retired folk they come in here in the early mornings. We also have the facility full of kids and usually in the evenings and on the weekends on the tournaments. So we have a range from youth to adults and we have a diverse programming for everyone.

Speaker 12 ([00:39:32](#)):

We are building a community with opportunities to grow, whether it's your family heading to a new neighborhood or your business going in new and exciting directions. We're making it easier for businesses to expand in Lawrence because we know the future we envision is only possible with greater economic development in our community. Downtown development is booming with the press yards project located on the east side of Massachusetts Street between sixth and seventh Streets, the turn hall building at ninth and Rhode Island and the redevelopment of several city parking lots on New Hampshire and Vermont streets. Finally, we're building a welcoming community that offers safe and affordable housing and essential services that help our neighbors thrive.

Speaker 15 ([00:40:17](#)):

I work to create more affordable housing throughout the city of Lawrence, which advances economic prosperity, safety, and security, and ultimately is the only solution to homelessness. There are two that I am particularly excited about and proud of. One is called Harper seven and that was through a partnership with Tenants to homeowners who oversees the community housing land trust. The city invested \$200,000 and with those funds they were able to significantly leverage them to purchase a large lot that had one

house on it, which they rehabbed. And then built six new homes, all of which have been sold in for eligible home buyers to create new affordable housing for our community. Another project that I'm really excited about is called Delmar Place that is being built right now by the Lawrence Douglas County Housing Authority and that will provide new affordable housing for seniors in our community. The city investment in affordable housing is what enables affordable housing to be built. It provides the public subsidy that is necessary to build housing that meets the diverse needs of our local workforce and children and families. Without the city investment, that type of housing cannot be built or would not be built. So a city investment in affordable housing is really an investment in to families and our entire community.

Speaker 12 ([00:41:56](#)):

Tonight is one step in a larger community conversation about creating a budget that fulfills as many priorities as possible. This budget is everyone's budget and it's everyone's opportunity. This is our future, so let's build it together. Let's create a community where all enjoy life and feel at home.

Speaker 1 ([00:42:22](#)):

This presentation

Speaker 11 ([00:42:24](#)):

Obviously is partially designed not just for tonight but for access on our website in the future. So we'll count on everybody going and taking, getting a chance to see the video that we produced

([00:42:37](#)):

For that. As you will see some great people doing great work in this community, which is why we've worked so carefully to find the right balance in this budget process. This year we started the budget process about nine months earlier than normal. The budget adopted last year left us with a known imbalance that we all understood would be uncomfortable and challenging to correct the early policy guidance and parameters that you gave us in January and again in April, kept our attention and options focused. The commission challenged us to maintain a flat mill rate, maintain market-based pay, continue our planned investment in infrastructure, and you also gave us latitude to consider and propose additional fees to support programs which are primarily in parks, recreation, and culture.

([00:43:33](#)):

Our use of balancing act to gain a different perspective and more useful perspective from nearly 700 community members was a significant help as well. Participants couldn't just say what they liked or didn't like, they had to make the real life choices of how to achieve what they wanted through trade-offs and compromises. We hope this will set a new standard of participation in inviting people to be as created and invested in suggesting solutions as they are passionate and advocating for their specific interests. We also invited frontline employees and community members to sit with us in building and prioritizing our options. Unlike how we ended the process last year, this is a sustainable plan for our general fund. Less for less was a guiding phrase through the development of this. It isn't fun, but it is a healthy reality that is required to achieve a sustainable budget for our community.

([00:44:29](#)):

We're using reasonable conservative revenue projections and believe we can sustain this lower but still high level of services across the departments in several years ahead. For the remainder of the presentation, you'll hear from our department directors and strategic plan champions. They worked with great care, compassion and professionalism, build these plans and in most cases did so with a widely collaborative team in their departments. I'll first turn it over to our budget and strategy manager, Allie Porter, who along with our budget analyst, Mary Bisby, have led our budget efforts, their dedication, innovation through this process has made it what it is. Allie, thank you and take it away.

Speaker 16 ([00:45:11](#)):

Thank you Craig. Good evening commission. So tonight before you have a total proposed budget of \$431 million. That is across all funds, so general fund utilities, internal services, grants, et cetera. At the bottom here you see a note and it says Previous budgets aligned with the CIP, which shows cashflow. The 2026 proposed budget has changed to show only new budget in the fiscal year for capital projects. Now if I were reading that, I'd say, what the heck does that mean? And that's a valid question. So I've told people before, when I look at the budget, I don't see a numbers document. I see a values document, it is our vehicle to deliver on our strategic plan, but setting that philosophy aside for a second as a numbers document, as a mechanism, the budget is really an authorization. We have authority to spend X amount of dollars.

([00:46:09](#)):

So a few years ago the City Commission asked that we in our CIP, that we show anticipated cashflow so that folks could get an idea of when they could expect projects, the design, construction and completion. But that anticipated cashflow does not equate to budget authority. So example of this is if you're looking at our CIP and the geo portion, there's the city hall reconfiguration project in there and if you look at 2026, you see a dollar amount of \$8 million. So in previous budgets we would just program \$8 million, but that accounts for budget authority that we've gotten in previous years. The only new budget is about \$500,000. And so that's what we've included in the 2026 budget. That new authority that we are requesting two major revenue sources for the city property tax and sales tax. You see a 10 year look back here in assess valuation, a spike in 2023 of about 12% and continued to see growth but more normalized rates and in 2026 5% growth. I've talked quite a bit about sales tax over the past year or so. You see the large increase post COVID and the quick stabilization of those numbers in the tune of two to 3% in the out years. Our projected 2026 budget is about 2% above the 2025 revised. I do want to note that this does not include anticipated one-time growth from the World Cup and this was deliberate. Our aim was to build a structurally balanced budget which pairs ongoing expenses with ongoing revenues. So we did not factor that into these numbers.

([00:48:05](#)):

So again, total budget of 431 million, but this presentation focuses on the general fund, which is about 117 million. It funds more traditional services like police, fire, parks and recreation. The city has 42 other funds with specific purposes and statutory requirements, but we do, the bulk of this presentation is focused on our general fund as our primary operating fund. We also have significant capital investment, so the CIP is a separate work session that we've already had and we'll continue to have some of those conversations throughout this process and then our utilities or another big piece of our budget and those come later in the year.

([00:48:51](#)):

As Craig mentioned, we began the budgeting process months ahead of schedule, which allowed us the opportunity to really engage with the public to shape budget priorities and we leaned into our public engagement tool known as Balancing Act. So this tool was open February one to March 7th. In that time, we hosted multiple community and employee engagement events where those folks were able to complete the exercise together we received over 600 submissions and from that data we took the average service level submission and created four prioritization levels or tiers and you see those tiers in front of you here. Tier one is our maintain tier. Tier two would be an approximately 6% decrease Tier three, approximately 13% decrease in tier four, approximately 20% decrease in a new initiative. We also established two budget committees, a employee budget committee and a community budget committee. And these folks got to see the entire budget process, ask a lot of thoughtful questions and provide valuable insight as the departments were building their budget. So on behalf of myself and other staff, I just want to thank those committee members for dedicating their time, volunteering their time and their insights.

([00:50:22](#)):

At the start of this process, we asked ourselves, how can we set this organization up on a sustainable path forward? And so we have proposed \$2 million for fund balance restoration. I've talked to the commission before about the importance of fund balance to maintain our credit rating to protect us against economic downturn, but you can see here that in addition to those things, it's also a way to start seeing positive movement instead of downward. Again, these are forecasts, a lot of assumptions, a lot of unknowns, but you can see just looking at the trends, this was a viable way to set us up sustainably going into the future.

(00:51:07):

The proposed general fund budget in revenues 118.7 and expenditures of 116.7, about 60% of those costs are personnel costs and in at the bottom there you see the revenues over expenses of the \$2 million from the tiers and Balancing ACT departments were given an overall department target to develop their proposals that would fund the various priorities and initiatives while also recognizing the reductions that would be required to balance the budget. There was a reduction in personnel, but because we were proactive in our work and implemented policies such as the Volunteer Early retirement program, we are eliminating only vacant positions. I don't think that would be possible have we not started our work months ahead of schedule. This has been an extremely difficult process, a lot of hard work, a lot of hard conversations, and there will be service level impacts from the reductions and I don't want to sugarcoat that, but as an organization we do look forward to delivering promise levels of service in the areas the community has prioritized and resourced. Here are those targets by department. In addition to reductions, some departments have the opportunity to raise revenue to meet that target number. The City attorney's office and Parks and Recreation are proposing fees that you will see at future meetings and L-D-C-F-M budget proposal reflects the county's current proposal that has additional county revenue to maintain service levels in EMS. I am now going to hand this off to the departments to highlight the priorities and reductions in the budget proposals.

Speaker 2 (00:53:04):

Thank you Allie.

Speaker 17 (00:53:20):

Good evening Mayor and commissioners. Mike Lawless, deputy director for municipal services and operations and I'm here tonight to present our budget in the connected city outcome of the strategic plan. That's kind of where we fall under because of the infrastructure that we have and kind of a high level overview of how we built our budget, how we put that together in terms of priorities. It was investing in the existing infrastructure we have and in that process moving towards basically the lowest cost of ownership through asset management as well as the corridor approach so that we're not just doing individual projects and then having to go back with a different utility or fund at a later date. So trying to consolidate all that and do it at one time using additional or enhanced sustainability measures as we do those projects as well as ensuring that we're in regulatory compliance through the process of doing projects and then using the Balancing Act tiers.

(00:54:35):

We are just highlighting some of the higher tier programs, street maintenance, the A compliance as well as our facilities maintenance. And then after we look at those priorities, it's like, well, where did we reduce in order to meet the requirements of the 1.1 million in our budget reductions? And so the ones that are listed here are kind of the major items that we use to achieve that. Certainly it's not all of them, but rather than trying to go through that exhaustive list, we did kind of an administrative reorganization, re-shifted some of the responsibilities and eliminated a vacant FTE position there. We did a program shift out of the general fund to the stormwater fund and so that was Levy maintenance has been in the general fund as long as I've been here and it's kind of one of those head scratchers where you look at it and you go, really that's a stormwater function and why can't we just put it there?

(00:55:45):

And so that's what we did. We believe that the stormwater utility can absorb those costs and not have a great impact on the rates. It may work on our fund balance a little bit, but I think we are in a comfortable position and we're in the process of reviewing the rate models right now, but we think we're in a good position with that. And then finally we're looking at some revenue enhancements, so charge back some of our staff's time to the debt funded projects and then also looking at some revenue increases from fiber and right of way management and that's kind of the big overall picture, but there's a lot more detail and effort that went into it than my quick explanation here, so thank you for your time tonight. Thank

Speaker 2 (00:56:40):

You very much, Mike.

Speaker 18 (00:56:54):

Good evening mayor and commissioners. Brandon McGuire, assistant city manager. I am supporting our economic development function as we recruit for our director position, which is currently vacant. You'll see on the screen our priorities. These are references to a few of our KPIs and we are committed to continuing to make progress in these areas of our building permit. It review an approval process for commercial development as well as continued collaboration to ensure support for businesses in our community and economic development at all levels. The proposed 2026 Economic Development Office general fund operating budget for next year is \$1.13 million. This is a \$177,000 reduction compared to fiscal year 2025. I'll also note that the 2025 budget includes the reduction of a full-time economic development analyst position. As we made that reduction just to continue helping to work on the structural imbalance and correct that in the general fund, the economic development office performs many functions to support, incentivize, including supportive, incentivized development of commercial industrial and even in some cases residential properties. We are seeing a major uptick in incentivized development requests. This is a very positive trend for our community and I think will ultimately be one of the key drivers to help us as we correct or as we obtain long-term sustainability in the general fund budget.

(00:58:40):

The budget reduction will impact the office's ability to procure contracted services from external agencies. We do procure services in the areas of support for entrepreneurs in small business development, marketing and business attraction and business retention and workforce development contracts for those functions are awarded through a competitive procurement process each year and just as a reminder, in 2025 out of this year's contracts, the agencies that receive funding are the Lawrence Chamber and Economic Development Corporation, KU Innovation Park, Peasley Technical Education Center, Douglas County Core, which is an entrepreneurship support organization, the Lawrence Music Alliance and the KU Small Business Development Center. So that reduction will come out of those contractual, that contractual line item. Any questions before I hand it over to our next director?

Speaker 19 (00:59:43):

I don't think so.

Speaker 18 (00:59:44):

Alright, thank you. Thanks.

Speaker 20 (01:00:05):

Good evening, mayor, vice Mayor Commissioners. My name is Joe Hardy. I'm our acting fire chief here for L-D-C-F-M, so thank you for having me here. Speak tonight. L-D-C-F-M appreciates the cities city of Lawrence and the Douglas County's collaboration recently over this large time duration of what we're trying to figure out, what we're going to do financially with our budget and very much appreciate the collaboration that we've been able to establish but also keep strengthening. And so I want to thank both parties for that. In March of 2025 L-D-C-F-M, along with other departments within the city, were given the status of our City of Lord's budget shortfall of \$6.5 million. We shortly found out that we were given a \$1.9 million deficit that we were going to have to do a reduction to and so shortly after that we were able to start gathering up groups of teams to start working on this task at hand.

(01:01:01):

We went as deep into the department as possible to get as many options that we could look at and the only thing that we could agree with that we were looking at was four person staffing that was very similar to what the commission was last year as well at this last commission meeting with multiple groups that were going on. The challenge that we had and we still have is that we're talking about expansion and reduction in the same sentence and so that's the challenge that we are falling into as we speak. Over the last few months we've had a lot of meetings with our governance committee, our governance meeting with the city and Douglas County and L-D-C-F-M, so we've been able to make a lot of progress on where we're going at and looking at that agreement that we have, which is up for renewal as well.

(01:01:46):

And so with the leaning in of Douglas County, and we are still finishing that process up with county right now with budget, but with how things are looking, we were able to save eight positions from the Fire Medical department to prevent our original 18 positions that we were talking about in reduction. And so that's a big deal, especially for our department of our staff across the board. Looking at the balancing act is what we were basing it off of, the results of the balancing act and the amount resulted in cuts and so the reductions, I'll go through that here shortly. The reductions that we're talking about here for L-D-C-F-M falls upon a fire apparatus, so it's talking about reducing one fire apparatus out of our fleet. That fire apparatus has four personnel in there. We would take those four personnel, take one of them off of that firetruck Upst staff our ladder, which is currently staffed with three, so we would upst staff that ladder to four people. We would reduce our minimum staffing at that point from 39 to 36 with the remaining three positions. And so that's where our minimum staffing goes from 39 to 36 with this target reduction that we were asked to meet. This proposal has the least impact while maintaining four personnel staffing and generally aligns with the results of our balancing act.

(01:03:25):

Future discussions that we have to look at is the City of Lawrence has prioritized expansion with our capital improvement for station Station six expansion, but our future conversations are going to have to deal with how we're going to staff that. So funding for staffing in closing, we are committed to working together for smart, safe and Sustainable solutions. Thank you for your continued leadership and your trust in L-D-C-F-M.

Speaker 2 (01:03:57):

Thank you Joe.

Speaker 21 (01:04:09):

Good evening mayor and commissioners. Rich Lockhart, the fire chief, the police chief in Lawrence. I always wanted to be a fire chief I guess. Yeah, this was a tough budget year for us for the second year in a row. Last year we lost three positions and we did a lot of cuts on commodities this year with the cuts we were facing, we were not able to find cuts and commodities to be able to do it, so we were having to dip into personnel cuts. We are going to be cutting nine full-time positions in the department. Eight of those

are vacant positions that we have not filled, but what we're trying to do is maintain current staffing levels in patrol and investigations. That was one of the things that was a very clear message from the commission and also from balancing act. One of the areas that was targeted for a pretty significant cut was our information services division.

(01:05:02):

I think a lot of that was maybe a misunderstanding of what that division does. It's our records unit, it's our property and evidence and it's IT support. All of those groups support patrol and investigations and most of them are filled with non-sworn employees that if we were to cut there, it would also significantly impact patrol and investigations. We did end up cutting a command staff position, a majors position, and a record supervisor position from that division, so we did try and do as much as we could. A lot of the costs in that division are also equipment. Things like our body cameras, things like our evidence.com is where we store all of our electronic evidence and so there's not a lot of places to cut in that division, so we didn't meet our goal in Balancing Act there. We are going to continue to partner with organizations to support valuable community events.

(01:05:57):

One of the things that I read about frequently is how building trust in the community with the police department means we have to get out in the community and be visible. One of the things that was noted in balancing Act to Cut was community engagement, and it's one of those things that we have to do if we're stuck in a station or stuck in a police car and only meeting people when we get a call for service. We're not going to build trust, we're not going to create partnerships that help us reduce crime and keep our community safe and secure. As I mentioned, information services among the cuts there, not just to personnel but also resulted in a reduced upfront office availability. So we were closed on Friday probably in 2026. We'll be closed on Monday. One of the things we've noticed though is we're still able to deliver the same level of service to our community despite being open only four days a week, and so we've been doing counts for how much lobby traffic we have.

(01:06:54):

We believe that it will be sustainable to close on Mondays as well. The people can still come in to speak with an officer. We've got a phone that when they come into the lobby they can phone dispatch and they'll dispatch an officer to meet 'em. So we feel like we can make up for those fewer hours that were available to the public, but again, it's something we can adjust if we need to. The demands on our records folks are really high. They distribute all of the reports for all of our court cases, so when the prosecutor needs reports or video evidence, which the video evidence is really getting larger and larger in these cases, talking about phones, you're talking about computers. People have their entire lives on phones and so when we uncover a criminal enterprise, we're having a lot of digital evidence. Our front office staff are the ones that send that to the prosecutor's office and there's only four of them there right now.

(01:07:45):

There used to be as many as six with a supervisor, so that's going to impact what they're able to do as well. So we feel like having that extra day where they don't have to deal with window traffic coming into the lobby will give them an extra time to be able to provide that level of service. Additionally, over the weekend, there's a lot of charging that goes on with weekend criminal cases and on Monday all those reports need to go over, so they're going to be really busy. The nine full-time positions, these eight of them are vacancies that aren't filled right now. Right now we're running about eight vacancies. We have a lot of turnover in our department. A lot of it's because policing isn't an easy job. A lot of it is because people get into the job and it's not what they thought it was, so they end up doing something else.

(01:08:31):

We just lost one of our recruit officers for academic reasons this week, so it's a tough time to be able to hire and retain police officers. We work with hr. Megan Dodge is our engaged and empowered teams co

champion to try and make sure that we're creating a workplace where our folks like coming to work. We pay our officers pretty well, so that's not a concern as far as retention goes, but we continue to look for ways to make our employees feel valued. We look for a way to make 'em feel like they're doing a great job, but it's hard to find folks that want to work 24 hours shifts or 24 hours a day overnight shifts and deal with people when they're at their worst. But we're doing the best we can, so thank you for your time. Appreciate it. Thank you,

Speaker 2 ([01:09:18](#)):

Chief.

Speaker 22 ([01:09:42](#)):

Do I push that?

Speaker 23 ([01:09:48](#)):

Good evening, mayor and commissioners. Misty Bosch Hastings. I'm the Homeless Solutions Director. The proposed general fund budget for 2026 is 2,496,000. This budget reflects continued commitment to addressing homelessness in Lawrence and Douglas County with compassion, efficiency and proven outcomes. Our two highest priorities for the year are maintaining our multidisciplinary homeless response team and continuing operational support for our emergency shelter system. Our homeless response team is a highly effective group made up of substance use disorder clinician, A PRN, peer support specialists, veteran support specialists, and a benefits navigator. Together they form a model of care that is both person-centered and results driven. Each member plays a critical role. Our peers are often the first to build trust using lived experience to walk alongside those we serve. The SUD clinician delivers assessments in the field and connects people to immediate treatment. Our A PRN ensures urgent health needs are addressed with dignity and speed.

([01:11:00](#)):

The veteran specialist helps unhoused veterans navigate the VA system and reclaim their benefits, and our benefit specialist ensures that no eligible resident misses out on the income or healthcare they qualify for. Thanks to these coordinated efforts and our partnership with MI Inc, we're seeing a very high level of treatment engagement in the community. To date, we've been in about a year in the works and we've seen 30 assessments for treatment completed. 18 individuals completing treatment and about five awaiting beds right now of the 30. In 2025. We also launched an aftercare program to compliment our homeless response team, ensuring that individuals we house receive case management for at least one full year after placement. This improves long-term stability and prevents returns to homelessness. The team is carrying out the values of Lawrence Douglas County community. They lead with compassion and they work towards resolution person by person.

([01:12:04](#)):

As a result, we've seen a 70% reduction in chronic and unsheltered homelessness. We believe we've established a new best practice for Indian chronic homelessness and to our knowledge, this level of success is not currently being replicated anywhere else in the country. It's also proving to be a cost-effective model for long-term impact. Our second priority is sustaining our emergency shelter system. In 2024, we launched our first non congregate shelter system in Kansas using 50 pallet shelters that immediately increased capacity for dignity, capacity and dignity for residents. At the same time, the Lawrence Community Shelter has made major strides in transforming its operations so far this year they've housed around 80 individuals the most they've ever housed in any single year since their founding. We're also preparing to launch Pallet 24, which will be the first low barrier non congregate shelter in Kansas. Once it opens, we will be able to transition all 125 beds in the LCS main shelter building to

programmatic beds, meaning that every person will receive a deeper level of support focused on ending their homelessness.

(01:13:24):

We're already seeing people who previously avoided shelter now voluntarily engaging in services and that's an incredible shift. Our plan reductions for 2026 are not the result of scaling back services, but they're a reflection of system success, increased efficiency, and a shift from crisis management to long-term recovery. We anticipate a natural reduction in regional transportation assistance as the number of individuals experiencing homelessness continues to decline with fewer people in crisis, this becomes more manageable with core services. We are reducing encampment cleanup resources as we will have resolved all large encampments before the start of 2026. Outreach shelter access and sustained engagement have made these large scale cleanups largely unnecessary. There is also a planned reduction in the city funding to the Lawrence Community Shelter aligned with our 2025 contract. This reflects their strength and operations and the launch of new fundraising efforts to support long-term sustainability.

(01:14:31):

These reductions are strategic and not reactive. They demonstrate that the system is working, more people are being housed, fewer people are in crisis and our resources are being used effectively. That said, there are real limitations. We do need to acknowledge the budget reduction while concerning should not cause us to lose any ground. We are confident that we can maintain the progress that we've made and continue operating at our current level of service. However, I want to be clear, we currently still do not have emergency shelter for families in Lawrence or Douglas County. While we have secured commitment from the county to fund the purchase and repair of a facility for emergency shelter, the expectation was that the city would provide funds for operations and at this time, no clear path to obtain those funds exist. As a result, families in Crisis continue to go without adequate emergency shelter.

(01:15:35):

In addition, our 2024 budget included funding for rapid rehousing, deposit and rental assistance, as well as the ability to place families in hotels for the length of time needed when no shelter was available. These resources were removed and reduced in 2025 and will continue into 2026 further limiting our ability to provide flexible support to families. While we're at a point where we cannot expand services further, we will maintain our current progress. Our focus in 2026 will be on stabilizing the system we've built, sustaining the progress we've made and continuing to lead with compassion and innovation. Thank you.

Speaker 4 (01:16:16):

Thank you, Misty.

Speaker 24 (01:16:32):

Good evening Commissioners. Jeff Crook with Planning and Development Services. We want to highlight the priorities that we put into our budget this year and really kind of see them on the screen there. We wanted to highlight an ongoing holistic approach to ways of combining housing initiatives and code compliance, which are two of our four divisions that we have in planning and development services that are outward facing. This is to continue to support the place for everyone and that synergy that we have going with that progress. So as you saw in the balancing act code compliance and housing initiatives were in that upper tier, the tier one portion of that, and so we've tried to respect and honor that as much as we could as part of the process. To that end, we are also highlighting reductions in the planning division, which is the least of loss of a planning technician.

(01:17:13):

It is not one of our planners per se. It's one of the administrative support that helped guide some of the work that the planners do. So the filing of applications, the handling of plats and fees and those things. So it takes a little bit of administrative burden off of the planners, but we think that may also be gained a little bit as part of the recent changes that we saw with the new software system EPL. So we're hopeful that that may materialize as part of the conversation. We're also recommending the reduction of the senior code compliance officer. That was a vacant position that was funded last year and we never filled that position and that was an opportunity that we had. But we think there is some of that effort and energy that could be picked up through the housing initiatives code compliance combination that would carry us forward and meet those goals for both the strategic plan and the place for everyone. I do want to highlight that we are also maintaining as much as we can the service levels inside of our building safety division and our planning division. That's the two divisions that generally work through development applications, so building permits, site plans, plating, annexations and those coming forward. So we wanted to make sure that we were supporting those teams going forward as they're both pretty heavily worked divisions. We want to make sure that we had the support for the staff in those.

Speaker 2 ([01:18:19](#)):

Thank you. Thank you Jeff.

Speaker 25 ([01:18:28](#)):

Mayor, you have distracting activity.

Speaker 2 ([01:18:31](#)):

Ma'am, I'm sorry you're distracting me right now by coming in here. I apologize, but let us proceed. Thank you. I

Speaker 5 ([01:18:44](#)):

Mayor. That's the only place some of these folks can hear what's going on because the room's full. So I wasn't clear. Do we just need to turn up the video or sometimes the audio's an issue. I

Speaker 2 ([01:18:56](#)):

Think she said it's, there's a disturbance out there. I don't know what it was, but I can't hear it. So thank you.

Speaker 26 ([01:19:03](#)):

Good evening, mayor Commissioners. I'm Luis Ruiz. I'm the director of Parks recreation and Culture department and I am here in advance of a presentation that I'll be bringing to the commission next week talking about in more in depth about our 2026 budget, the reductions that we were asked to do as a result of the balancing act and a proposal that includes the exploration of fees, both new fees and increased fees for our programs and our facilities that will allow us to minimize some of the impact of the 10% budget reduction that is being requested of our department. Out of the \$18 million, our target was a \$1.8 million reduction, approximately 10%. And while that may not sound like a lot in the park system, it is a lot in our programming. It is a lot. So our proposal that you will be seeing maintains as our priorities are stated here, one is exploring new revenues.

([01:20:07](#)):

This is out of order on this one because that should be the first thing in order to maintain our core services in programming and even in facilities. So while we have a plan to follow the balancing act in its raw order of budget reductions, we also have a plan that we will be proposing to enhance or actually maintain some

of the services. In both scenarios. You will see that there are reductions. It will be felt, the department, the question is how deeply will it be felt fees that we are able to generate will allow us to minimize some of the reductions in services even in our parks. Those are free services that we provide to the entire community. Fees that are charged within the department can be used for some of those things that we have been eliminating little by little. I know you get the complaints about just a few parks that we were able not to maintain because of budget reductions this year.

(01:21:15):

So in the full \$1.8 million reductions, that will be increasingly more common. So our attempt is to preserve not just the programming, which will come with some of those fees that we're discussing and talking about increasing and making sure that we're doing correct calculations on what it costs to do certain programs for us and doing some cost recovery analysis and planning so that we can plan on those, but also to maintain those assets that are not generating revenue on a regular basis but that are appreciated by the community as a whole. So in all cases, in both cases, we will reduce park trails and fields maintenance. Again, it could be slight or it can be a greater amount depending. And I'll give you a brief indication of what these numbers look like. Recreation center hours, we are looking at reducing some of those in both scenarios.

(01:22:23):

One is we're open on holidays. We have very few visitation and we're paying for those. So we're considering these things and we'll bring these questions to you. And then of course, three full-time positions that are slated to not to be filled next year, which is on top of two positions we lost last year. So again, we're trying to diminish the level, the speed with which our systems are taking cuts and trying to make a turnaround so that our department is somewhat more sustainable, self-sustainable rather than just depending straight on sales tax and property tax. We do have a generous amount of revenue that we get from programs, from sporting, from fitness programs and all that, but we can look at a potential 20% increase in our revenues next year with some very conservative numbers that we will be proposing to you next week.

(01:23:30):

So that is in a nutshell what we will go into detail. We'll be discussing proposed fees and get some feedback from you as far as if we're heading in the right direction, if we should continue to consider fees. And we'll also be presenting what this list would look like if we do not include some of those fees. I want to say that in both scenarios we do have some planned increases as well. So there are some revenues. We are in the unique position as parks and recreation that we are able to offset some of the cuts through revenues. So that's going to be a part of the plan. Moving toward 2026 regardless, and we'll let you know what those numbers are, but we're talking about new generated revenue through spectator fees and new membership fees. The difference that you'll be seeing next week is a reduction of \$1.8 million in service and that results in lower service levels or a combination of reductions to the tune of about \$675,000 and new revenue and increased revenue of about 1.12 million. That allows us to defray some of those expenses that it takes to run. So we will come back with a more thorough analysis of what our plans are for next year and gain some direction as to which way to proceed. What's in front of you now is assuming that we will include some of those fees in next year's budget. So that's what we'll be looking for as far as direction.

(01:25:17):

Okay, thank you. Thank you Luis.

Speaker 16 (01:25:34):

Just a quick recap on the capital improvement plan. There have not been too many changes since our June 16th meeting and there is a link in the presentation to that work session. There were two options on the

capital sales tax fund and we have gone with the option that prioritizes street maintenance. There was an increase to the solid waste vehicle replacement program and those costs are still in alignment with MSOs anticipated rate model. So no additional changes at this time. To the CIP looking at the debt service fund, this supports the general obligation mill levy debt and is funded by property tax. This chart shows the principle and interest costs with the proposed CIP and that intentional draw down of fund balance to add more projects, but still within our policy requirement in the five-year forecast, a lot of work has gone into stabilizing the general fund, but there are other funds that will need attention here in the future.

(01:26:50):

We've highlighted some of them here. Transit Limited Outlook on federal dollars coupled with growing contractual expenses, has this fund negative in its five year forecast. Transient guest tax, also known as TGT is currently using reserves for its funding gap and there are no identified funding for support of the World Cup and our healthcare fund. We did increase our employer contribution to this fund, but there are increasing healthcare costs that we are being outpaced with the revenues. So we're needing to evaluate employee premiums, the capital sales tax fund. We've highlighted some of those unmet infrastructure needs and then to close on our general fund structurally balanced, but it does not currently include any funding for staffing of L-D-C-F-M expansion.

(01:27:52):

See your next steps before you tonight, July 8th and then we will be back before you next week in advance of the July 20th deadline to notify the County Clerk of Intent to exceed the revenue neutral rate. I just want to emphasize that once notified of the intent to exceed revenue neutral, the mill levy rate can be reduced but it cannot be increased. We will have our public hearings on September 2nd with expected adoption on September 16th. And again, you see our budget, Lawrence ks.org commission and folks watching this, please send any questions there and we will those and share those for everyone and that's all we have.

Speaker 2 (01:28:38):

Thank you Allie. Craig, do you have anything else to add? Okay, commissioners, I'm going to go ahead and open up public comment on this item.

Speaker 21 (01:28:50):

Questions first?

Speaker 2 (01:28:51):

Oh, you want questions now? Please go ahead.

Speaker 3 (01:28:55):

I have a few, Allie, while you're up there, I'm sure I'll have a few. Couple folks. The numbers, I think we're going to get the audit in August, are the 2024 numbers that are in the budget. Is that a final number? Those final,

Speaker 16 (01:29:16):

They reflect our Yes audit, yes.

Speaker 3 (01:29:19):

Okay. And I know we're only halfway through 2025. I know we're estimating to spin down 2 million. Any update on where we stand in the year? I know we made some changes. Are we on track? We worse off, better off about the same. Do we know yet?

Speaker 16 ([01:29:40](#)):

I wouldn't say we have the strongest tracking mechanism at the moment. We have implemented some, pretty sure some folks would call it strict hiring where the city manager approves those. So that's where we're looking for to get most of our savings there is through slowing the hiring process of vacant positions. It's hard to capture a dollar amount for those.

Speaker 3 ([01:30:03](#)):

Understand, appreciate that. I know there's been some questions, I'm sure we'll hear some comments tonight about the payment of the CIP and you put the graph in there about the intentional spin down. Can you talk a little bit more about how we calculate that CIP and how we, excuse me, the principal interest and then the plan to use that fund balance?

Speaker 16 ([01:30:31](#)):

Yeah, I'll let Relle come and add anything. I guess just more broadly that we recognized last year that to add some projects, the increase with the MSO Campus Fire Station six and some of those things, we were pretty transparent that we would be spending down fund balance to do so. I think we have been proactive in managing that fund. That's why you saw station six, or sorry, station seven that was funded in the previous year now has fallen to the unfunded list. So we have been proactive in making sure that we're managing that difference there. Rochelle, I don't know if you have anything to add. Okay,

Speaker 3 ([01:31:14](#)):

That's good. Thank you. I have a question about the loop and I don't know who wants to answer that question if Mike or Dave Cronin or

Speaker 16 ([01:31:26](#)):

I believe Jake was online.

Speaker 3 ([01:31:28](#)):

Jake's on, okay, let's bring Jake on.

Speaker 5 ([01:31:31](#)):

Tried to let him in earlier, but I will try again.

Speaker 3 ([01:31:53](#)):

Thanks Jake for jumping on. There's been some question about the Michigan de Sandra Shaw, the 564,000 that we awarded a couple years ago from kdot. Can you give us an update on where that project stands?

Speaker 27 ([01:32:13](#)):

Sure. Jake Baldwin, engineering program manager with municipal services and operations. So kind of where we left off was attempting property acquisition for that project and that has not been successful. So

staff really is looking at putting together a memo for the city manager's office to explore options and actions that may be necessary to move forward

Speaker 3 ([01:32:34](#)):

At the moment, are those kdot funds still available or have they've been withdrawn by kdot?

Speaker 27 ([01:32:41](#)):

Well, KDOT has made it clear that those funds would be available for this alignment and this alignment only. So if we were to try something else, would the trail alignment then we would have to turn the money back.

Speaker 3 ([01:32:53](#)):

Okay. And the last couple of times, most of the segments of the loop, maybe not all of them, but most of them have been kdot matching funds. Remind me, is it 10%, 20% of what do we match usually as it varied quite a bit?

Speaker 27 ([01:33:11](#)):

Usually we have a 20% match.

Speaker 3 ([01:33:13](#)):

20%. Okay, thank you. That's the questions I had on that. Have a question

Speaker 19 ([01:33:20](#)):

Mayor. I had a question about street maintenance. The slide that says proposed capital improvement plan, it says per the city commission feedback, the capital sales fund prioritizes street maintenance during our meeting in June during of the CIP, it was brought up by staff that we were actually on a downward trajectory of improving our PCI. So does that mean that has changed now or are you funding putting more funds towards the street based on that?

Speaker 16 ([01:33:58](#)):

I dunno if there's anybody from MSO that wants to answer but, and I apologize, I don't have the CIP in front of me, but we staff made the, from hearing feedback from City Commission, we had those two options. One that would prioritize the street maintenance, so there was X amount of dollars, the other option had the loop and so we heard that we were going to attempt to not fall back as much as we could on street maintenance, although I suspect that's still very much a reality, but that we would have those dollars in the capital sales tax fund dedicated to street maintenance.

Speaker 4 ([01:34:33](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 3 ([01:34:41](#)):

Jeff, I think I had a question for you Jeff, quick, Jeff, if you could, can you talk a little bit about, and you mentioned a little bit with the housing division and code enforcement, but I know there's been some discussion about raising code code enforcement fees or fines in certain areas to increase the number of code enforcement officers. Is that still being looked at or thoughts on how we might address that issue going forward?

Speaker 24 ([01:35:23](#)):

It is something we're still trying to get our heads around, but typically most of our stuff doesn't get to fees and fines. It typically resolves as just a part of the process. So even if there was to get to that stage, it would be very rare in all honesty to get to that stage also is a very time intensive process. It would take a lot of staff hours and effort to get to that stage, so even increasing it may not result in recouping of a fee. It may actually end up costing some degree. We've also found in previous is most of the time when we have discussions with homeowners, they're just not aware of the issues or what the code is and they can be quickly corrected with a conversation and not really having to go through the formal procedure of notice and order and going through the core process.

([01:36:04](#)):

But it's something we're still taking a look at and getting our hands around, but also kind of looking at is there ways that we can combine that with housing initiatives to bring a benefit to it to some degree. Is there some of that availability that we could help a homeowner who's in need of a property improvement to get out of a code situation that's maybe a few hundred dollars but gets to the solution at the end and helps someone stay in their house. So we're trying to find some different ways to pursue that with a don't always come with a penalty or a cost too.

Speaker 3 ([01:36:35](#)):

Appreciate that. Okay, thank you.

Speaker 28 ([01:36:40](#)):

Yeah, sorry,

Speaker 29 ([01:36:42](#)):

I was just wanting to ask something real quick before, so Jeff and go, just to further extend on that, when you're talking about that, you talked about the holistic approach, which I do appreciate around housing initiatives and code compliance, but it seemed like in your answer you're still leaning a little bit more towards the residential code compliance piece and I'm not hearing much about the housing initiative piece or how are you differentiating the two because I know we had that conversation with the development code and how yes, there is one piece of enforcement as it relates to building codes and permits, there's a difference between enforcement as it relates to current inspection or rental properties and inspections. So how are you hoping or wishing to meal those two together? I can see where you can build synergy in consolidating both of them, but it seemed like most of what you're speaking to is more on the code compliance as it relates to building code, not so much the inspection of rental properties.

Speaker 24 ([01:37:43](#)):

Yes. Yeah, inspection of rental properties is a little bit of a different one and to your first question there, I wish I had a very detailed answer to it, but it's one of those things we're still kind of developing and it's evolving as we kind of understand funding mechanisms and availability and those resources,

Speaker 4 ([01:37:57](#)):

But

Speaker 24 ([01:37:57](#)):

We're hoping to get to a point where you would have a situation that there is a supportive program that kind of moves people in. The phrase that jumps to mind is towards compliance, but that's not the one that I would think of. But like I said, it may be a minor issue, but it may be a high financial hurdle for that

individual where a few hundred dollars may solve the issue and we're hoping to get a program that's built around that first where it's try to address the issue, then not have to go towards a more strict approach, but is something we're going to be bringing forward. We just don't have a lot of built around that detail for that one yet.

Speaker 28 ([01:38:34](#)):

Thank

Speaker 29 ([01:38:34](#)):

You, Jeff. Sorry.

Speaker 28 ([01:38:35](#)):

No, that's fine. I didn't have any for you, Jeff. Not that you're not. Great. Brandon, economic development. I had a question for you. I know that you said we're still on the lookout for economic development director and I was just wondering if any of the reductions would preclude us from that activity or being able to fill that position? I'm sorry, I cannot hear you. Oh, okay. I know you said we're still on the lookout for economic director and I was wondering if the reductions would in any way preclude us from filling that position or anything

Speaker 18 ([01:39:13](#)):

If there's potential budget reduction from having the vacancy this year?

Speaker 28 ([01:39:19](#)):

Yeah, yeah. I just wanted to make sure that we're still able to go ahead and fill that.

Speaker 18 ([01:39:24](#)):

Yes, we have the resources to fill the position. We are starting a recruitment actually started last week.

Speaker 2 ([01:39:36](#)):

Okay. Any more questions?

Speaker 3 ([01:39:39](#)):

One Chief Hardy, if you could come up the real fire chief, not the police chief wants to be a 5G doled. Thank you. Fa, you work on this and thank you for working with the county, getting to jump back and forth and appreciate the county's work on this. I know there was a recent presentation on EMS fees and the increase in those fees. Is the county still talking about that and what they might do with those increased fees or is that conversation still ongoing or have they made a decision? I followed that exactly

Speaker 20 ([01:40:19](#)):

Just to make a short, we are still moving forward with that process. We had to go through ordinance changes and get the approval. We got the rates approved through the county recently and now we're still in progress with communications with them now what they're going to do with it, I can't answer that, but the numbers were given to the county and we gave them options to look at and so yes, it is moving forward and that's where we want it to go.

Speaker 3 ([01:40:45](#)):

Okay, and I know this is certainly one of our issues is putting a firetruck in station six when it comes online in 2027 or so. Am I right? Is that 13 firefighters, 14 firefighters? It's 400 truck, three shifts, 12 plus a factor of 1.2 or something

Speaker 20 ([01:41:11](#)):

Based off of where we're sitting now and where we'll be in 26, it would be an additional 24 firefighters to staff that station with a fire truck and a medic truck.

Speaker 3 ([01:41:22](#)):

Yeah, yeah. I guess I was talking about fire only, not

Speaker 20 ([01:41:25](#)):

Fire only. Yeah, if we'd eliminate the could do the math and eliminate the fire or the medic truck out of there.

Speaker 3 ([01:41:32](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 20 ([01:41:33](#)):

Just to go along with that though, our talks have been our EMS demand has gone up and we've had communications with the city and the county on that and so if we chose to go only firetruck, which that's not my plan, then we would have to do the calculations for that.

Speaker 3 ([01:41:51](#)):

Appreciate that. Okay, thank you. Those are all my questions.

Speaker 2 ([01:41:54](#)):

Okay, great. Thank you. Any questions before we open up the public comment?

Speaker 29 ([01:41:58](#)):

Brandon, just real quick for ps, I know you spoke on the reductions I in those three areas, and I know that has to do with our competitive RFI process as the RFI process as it stands now, how often do we receive applications from entities or organizations outside of the ones that you mentioned as being some of the more prevalent ones that we fund

Speaker 18 ([01:42:32](#)):

Applications in which the city would provide funding to an external agency. It's just that one process each year.

Speaker 29 ([01:42:41](#)):

Okay. So do we have agencies that are not within the city? Have we not created a space where, because I mean we posted in the paper and whatnot, but I mean how often do we receive applicants that are not within KUIP chamber or

Speaker 18 ([01:43:03](#)):

Whatnot? It's a competitive process, so if there are agencies outside of Lawrence or Douglas County that are interested in doing this work for us, we would entertain their proposals also, but we would need to do that through the RFI process. Right, right.

Speaker 29 ([01:43:22](#)):

Have we received any in the last two years, two, three years?

Speaker 18 ([01:43:26](#)):

I don't know. I haven't been involved in the process. This will be my first year doing it, so I don't know what applications we've received in the past. I do know there's at least one organization outside of Douglas County that I'll be notifying about this process. I know that there are groups within the region that do this work and it's a competitive process, so it's just like any other type of service that we're procuring a consultant agreement for recruitment for a position or a study. It's the same type of process that would be used for those types of procurements also. So it is competitive and open.

Speaker 4 ([01:44:12](#)):

Thank

Speaker 18 ([01:44:12](#)):

You

Speaker 11 ([01:44:13](#)):

Sellers on that. We've only been doing this a couple of years and my recollection was Brino who was the former director, she really built this program and my recollection is that we did have some even national interest, but it was off the charts from our budget, so I do remember there was some interest, but we're still figuring out how do we tap the market that's out there in addition to our traditional partners that have served us well and have continued to adapt to our processes.

Speaker 29 ([01:44:50](#)):

Yeah, thanks Craig. And then I have one more question for Allie. Going back to the slide deck, slide 13, the updated forecast, just wanted to reiterate, confirm that when you compare without the 2 million fund balance restoration and width, that second one on the right that is showing a, that's a 2 million that's pulled out across here, so that's not a one time. That is a continuance investment of \$2 million.

Speaker 4 ([01:45:45](#)):

There you go.

Speaker 16 ([01:45:50](#)):

So our chart on the left is yes, if we did not make that 2 million restoration, the chart on the right is an assumption that we make 2 million in 2026 proposed budget. It wouldn't be an additional 2 million in the next budget and the next budget, what is assuming is that they are permanent reductions, so it's one time but it's permanent going into the out years.

Speaker 29 ([01:46:19](#)):

Okay, just wanted to make sure of that.

Speaker 2 ([01:46:27](#)):

Any other questions? Thank you, Allie. I think that'll do it for now. Go ahead and now open the public comment period of this work session.

Speaker 30 ([01:46:46](#)):

Maybe if your cops didn't show up five deep for a girl with a sign at the library, they might not expend so much money on bullshit. Literally five cars sitting in the middle of the street running for 35 minutes over a lady with a piece of paper. How do you think that helps our budget? How do you think it helps the chief recruit cops when his cops are constantly being directed to put their careers on the line by a siloed command structure that caters to feelings. Those are things that are costing you guys money that shouldn't be spent. You're running around catering to Brad Allen's feelings. You're running around catering to Kelly Jones's feelings. They've even catered to Bart. Little John's feelings in here.

([01:47:44](#)):

Instead of just doing their jobs of law enforcement, they're running around catering to everybody's feelings coming in five deep for a lady with a piece of paper, five cars sitting in the middle of the street running for 35 minutes. Think that's an effective use of resources, guys, I don't think it is. I don't leave my shit running for 35 minutes when it's not being used, when it's not doing anything and I drive diesel equipment that should be left running when it's going to be used again or could be, but he comes up here and talks about how hard it is to recruit. He can't get good officers. He can't pay 'em enough to stay because they're risking their careers here by not knowing the difference between public and private property. There's where the rest of your budget issue is and you two and you. I sat in a Mexican restaurant with this one over here and watched her shove food in her face while she tried to tell me all about how much she knew about the processes and how much I didn't know and still nothing's been accomplished.

Speaker 31 ([01:49:16](#)):

How are we doing? Good. My name's James Killian. I see a lot of familiar faces in here. We got Mr. Murray investigator, we got Chief Wickham sitting over there hiding and the reason I'm here, I am asking for pressure to be applied to the chief of police, to everybody that's involved. I'm writing to you not as a citizen, but as a father, a homeowner and a deeply invested member of this community. I never imagined I would have to pin a letter like this to ask those sworn to protect us to confront wrongdoing within their own ranks, but here we are. I have in my possession audio evidence that directly contradicts the official statements spa by Detective Nik and witness victim, good old Mr. Af Walter.

([01:50:08](#)):

Those statements have carried life altering consequences and I have been truthful from the beginning and only their story has just recently changed. I've abided by the law honored my obligations and have held fast on the belief that truth would matter, but as the facts pile up, it's clear that deception not justice has guided the process. My family has sacrificed everything to live here and contributed to the city. I've spent nearly \$40,000 defending myself and including therapy for my daughter and myself. I've been denied due process, coerced into treatments and legal arrangements against my will and surrounded by institutional failures and I'm talking about from here to Chief Lockhart's Police Department to the county.

([01:50:58](#)):

I'm urging you to take this evidence seriously and pursuing charges that are warranted, be it perjury, interference, falsification, reports, obstruction of justice, the public trust demands it. I demand it as a father and a taxpayer. I fucking demand that shit. I earned it. So I'm asking for the following people to be investigated and fortunately I got one on the hook that's Mr. Falter. Mr. Murray has kind enough to listen my story and there's a police report L 2 5 0 3 3 3 0 6. That's where I'm getting Mr. Af water, some hot water. I'm also calling for an investigation into Patrick Naughton, Phillip Mitchell, Lauren Mitchell. Also

Dr. Jennifer Smith, the principal at Liberty, Philip, everybody because it's bullshit. I told the truth from day one and what I got after I made a complaint to an integrity board. I got warrants from my arrest one felony at eight misdemeanors, but fortunately that felony is a hook for Mr. AF water because that makes his charges that much more damaging. I've already put one cop in prison in Louisiana for 25 years. I'm looking for another one, so I appreciate y'all's time. I know I emailed y'all those videos and everything so y'all know what the fuck I'm talking about. Good luck. Have a good day. Thank you. See you.

Speaker 2 ([01:52:17](#)):

Thank you very much. I'm going to go ahead and clarify. These comments are supposed to be made directed towards our discussion relative to our proposed 2026 budget. We'll have a time for general public comment at the end of item Aye.

Speaker 5 ([01:52:46](#)):

Can you have a couple images? Yes. You'll just have to state your name and then Kurt will know which image to put up because they were sent by the name of the comment

Speaker 25 ([01:52:55](#)):

Here. Mandy Infield.

([01:53:08](#)):

Okay. All right. For the last five months, the Coalition for Collaborative Governance has researched the city budget. Our findings show that the city's financial choices over the last five years have contributed to budget deficits. The sustainability of the city's debt and our community members finances. The city's budget doubled in the last five years from 260 million to 519 million and it appears the city is proposing another 6% increase. Although this isn't easy to assess because the proposed budget before you tonight has removed millions of dollars of expenditures previously disclosed in the annual budget. Some of these increases are due to inflation, 22% in the last five years, but city expenses have increased well beyond inflation and even beyond the 40% rise in our property taxes during the last five years. Sherry, would you display my second image or Kurt?

([01:54:20](#)):

The largest increase has been in capital expenses, which have risen 445% in five years since most of these have been financed with debt, the city's debt payments have increased 228%. The city's total debt is now one and a half times what it was in 2020. Operating expenses have increased an average of 10% and personnel expenses have increased 7% per year. During the same five-year period, our community experienced a 40% increase in property valuations. This is an unrealized gain because property owners don't receive money from having a more valuable house, but they pay substantially increased property taxes. A median Lawrence House sold now owes about \$300 more in city property taxes and close to a thousand dollars more in total property taxes each year than five years ago. A thousand dollars is significant because Lawrence residents have a median income of \$63,000 during these years. The city also chose to increase our utility fees 8% last year, 10% this year and is planning to raise them comparably again in 2026. The city has absorbed this added revenue all while making decisions that led to budget deficits and hundreds of millions in new debt. Additionally, our nation is facing reductions in federal assistance and grants that will affect Minnie and Lawrence, including the Haskell community, those who rely on food banks and Medicaid and our school district. We ask that you fully honor your commitment to the sound fiscal stewardship and evaluate the city's finances, especially debt more thoroughly. Thank you,

Speaker 32 ([01:56:26](#)):

Ms. Reman. I believe I have two slides. Our addition, north Lawrence capital expenses account for the largest changes in the city's recent budgets. Prior to 2024, the city spent less than \$33 million a year in capital expenses, but over the last two years, they have allocated well over a hundred million each year. If the proposed 2026 CIP has passed, the city will have approved over 300 million in debt in three years. We estimate this would bring the city's total debt to about 550 million, which would be a 56% increase in three years. This means that our city would be indebted at \$5,700 for each Lawrence resident. The city's operating costs have also increased an average of 10% a year for the last five years. This is partially due to higher inflation in some industries. One example of increased operating costs is the newer Homeless Solutions Program, which is now financed by the General Operating Fund plus a state special alcohol fund. Yet that board anticipates that their budget of 4.7 million will not still fully cover needed expenses while the new affordable housing tax will help fund that program. It's an example of a large addition to the budget. Could you please show the second image? Thank you. The city's personnel costs have also increased substantially.

(01:57:44):

The city has added almost 150 full-time equivalent employees. A 17% increase in five years. At the beginning of 2025, the city had 999 employees with benefits. The city pays an average of 109,000 per full-time employee, which means that the 150 employees, additional employees might be costing the city up to \$16 million a year. The City Commission started implementing market rate pay and annual wage increases for employees in 2020, which also increased personnel costs. Our research indicates that on average, Lawrence may be paying their employees well over market rate pay. We assess this by comparing the number of city employees making over a hundred thousand dollars per year with other major cities in Kansas to account for the differences in city population size. We compared the number of employees for every 10,000 residents. Lawrence has around 23 city employees who are paid \$100,000 or more for every 10,000 residents.

(01:58:39):

This is 27% more than all of the Johnson County cities, 55% more than Wichita, 65% more than Topeka and more than double Manhattan's numbers. Our coalition is advocating for greater transparency in the city's budgeting information. We have provided a five-year longitudinal perspective to increase transparency because the city's budget books only provide numbers for the previous two years. A significant point is in 2023 at the beginning of the city's steep budget increases the city's budget book stopped, including the expenditure expenditure totals from the previous years. That means that the commission had had less than transparent comparative data to inform your budgeting decisions. Thank you.

Speaker 26 (01:59:25):

Thank you.

Speaker 33 (01:59:31):

Christina McKenna, 6 6 0 4 6. The city's sound fiscal stewardship commitment states the city will build and maintain public trust and provide transparent, easy access to relevant accurate data for budgeting and decision making. For the last five months, the Coalition for Collaborative Governance and Christine Poon, a municipal finance expert have researched the city budget. Unfortunately, our research has uncovered significant emissions, inaccuracies and changes in reporting practices in the city's budget book, state budget form, and in some answers from the city's finance department. We believe the most significant decision before the commission this year is choosing to borrow another \$126 million in debt as this decision will affect our community for a generation. But after spending many hours studying the city's financial documents, asking many questions, and even consulting with municipal auditors, it's still

not clear how the finance department is bookkeeping the city's debt proceeds and payments nor how they're paying for the new debt.

(02:00:27):

An example of an inaccurate answer we received from the finance department is about their most up-to-date debt numbers in mid-April. The answer stated the city's debt was 57 million less than the actual amount that was published two weeks earlier in the city's official statement, we never received an accurate amount from the city. An example of changes in reporting practices is before you tonight the city completely changed how they report their capital expenses in the proposed budget that was just released five days ago, which further obscures the city's debt and debt payments city staff has removed most of the capital expenses from the total budget numbers. When this has previously been one of the biggest expenditures, it makes it as appear that city budget is close to \$90 million less than last year, and in actuality, we believe you're being asked to pass a budget that's almost \$30 million more than last year.

(02:01:15):

The proposed CIP says the city's capital projects costs about 157 million in 2026, and the city will take out 126 million in debt for these projects next year. This does not align with the proposed budget before you. That now shows only 39 and a half million in capital expenses. In fact, a fund summary before you shows over 177 million in miscellaneous revenue, which is mostly debt, finance revenue, and then shows 78 million in excess revenue. It's not clear why they're proposing taking out an excess of 70 million, 78 million in debt that won't be spent in the same year. We ask for much clearer data about the city's debt, debt, payments, and capital project funding and expenditures. We believe the data is necessary as the commission and the community clearly understand the long-term consequences of the debt decisions on the health of our community. Thank you. Thank you.

Speaker 34 (02:02:05):

Hi, Katie Brown, 6 6 0 4 4. Could I please have the water and Wastewater Fund budget book slide displayed?

Speaker 5 (02:02:17):

What was the name? Oh, I mean, did you provide slides?

Speaker 17 (02:02:21):

Yeah, just need

Speaker 5 (02:02:22):

Your

Speaker 17 (02:02:22):

Name. Got it.

Speaker 34 (02:02:25):

Katie Brown. Yes. Oh, here we are. Okay. The largest inaccuracy the coalition discovered is regarding a fund reserve that the city's policy requires that they use for capital expenses. The city's 2025 budget book and state budget form indicate that the city had over a hundred million dollars in funds that were unencumbered and available for use. This picture shows the water and wastewater fund information from the 2025 and 2024 budget books on the left. You can see that in 2025, almost \$106 million was available for use. The city's fund balance policy states that this reserve shall be transferred to the cash funded

capital project fund. This information suggests that the city could outright pay for over a hundred million dollars of capital expenses it is proposing to finance through debt. When the coalition discovered these numbers, they asked the finance department for more information and the city's response was fund balance, also known as net position for utility funds is not all available. Much of that fund balance is made up of not liquid assets like buildings and equipment. However, the budget book states that the fund balance is money that is available for use and this should not be included in this amount. We believe the 2024 budget book on the right accurately reports the funds that were available for use, which were more than a hundred million dollars less than what the budget book reported for those exact same years. This means that the numbers were changed retroactively between 2024 and 2025. We can scroll the next image.

(02:04:15):

The city made similarly significant changes in their accounting with the state. As you can see in these state budget forms, the 2025 form on the left shows the utility has well over a hundred million dollars in unencumbered cash balances for the last three years, whereas the 2024 state budget form reported that it only had between 30 and \$35 million in this category for two of those years. This research suggests that the 2025 budget book and state budget form inaccurately claimed that the city had over a hundred million dollars available in reserves that were available for use. Since the city's policy requires that the available funds pay for CapEx expenses, this information would lead the commission to believe that it had up to \$106 million to directly pay for capital improvement plan when the money actually wasn't available. Fortunately, the finance department has corrected this error in the proposed 2026 budget and is now presenting the available funds which are less than half of what they reported last year. However, the commission did receive the inaccurate data last year when they chose to take out over a hundred million dollars in debt. Thank you.

Speaker 4 (02:05:31):

Thank you,

Speaker 35 (02:05:31):

Kate. Hey, Sherry, could you pull up the bonds and interest page in q and a section? Holly sent it in.

Speaker 5 (02:05:41):

Yes, she sent 'em under your name, so we need your name too.

Speaker 35 (02:05:44):

John Martin.

Speaker 5 (02:05:45):

Okay.

Speaker 35 (02:05:45):

6 6 0 4 6.

Speaker 5 (02:05:51):

Is that the correct one?

Speaker 35 (02:05:52):

I believe so. Thank you. So the city issues debt to pay for specific capital projects, but we've also learned the city is also taking out new debt to pay off old debt. Our research also leads us to believe that some of this debt is not being properly issued or reported to the commission or the community revenue in the city's bonds. That interest fund is used to pay off the city's debt, but this fund's two biggest revenue sources are ambiguously titled miscellaneous in transfers. In through our repeated questions to the finance department, we finally learned that the transfers revenue is short-term debt that is being used to pay off old short-term debt. This is occurring because of the city's practice of repeatedly issuing one year temporary notes for multi-year projects rather than taking out multiple year temp notes. The \$32 million transfer in 2025 was the city's biggest transfer between funds, but these transfers were not accurately reported in either the 2024 or 2025 city budget books or state budget forms.

(02:06:52):

Additionally, the municipal finance experts, we consult believe this is not standard bookkeeping for temporary notes. Our coalition has also asked for months about this funds second ambiguous revenue source called miscellaneous. The city told us last month that this was debt financed revenue, but this fund is not supposed to receive debt revenue. The answer indicated there was a second source of new debt rather than temporary notes being used to pay for old debt. Now on the city's new q and a document confirms this stating that in 2025, \$14 million in miscellaneous revenue and this fund is from new long-term debt called Go Bonds or Go Bonds, and it then states that this new long-term debt is being used to pay off old long-term debt from other geo bonds. If this answer is accurate, it means our city is unsustainably taking out new debt to pay off old debt.

(02:07:46):

It's like taking out a credit card to pay off an old credit card because you don't have the cash in hand to pay for your existing debt. The city appears to have done this every year since 2023, taking out millions of dollars each year to pay off old debt as can be seen in a miscellaneous category of revenue for this fund. There are very specific circumstances where a city can legitimately do this to lower the interest rate on previous bonds. Much like a family might choose to refinance a mortgage, what a lower interest rate is available, but interest rates are currently equal to or higher than all the city's existing bonds for city bonds. This refinancing process is called refunding, but a refunded bond must be taken out for this overt purpose of refinancing an old bond and must be recorded with the state treasurer. This type of bond is not documented in the city's recent issuance documents. Thank you.

Speaker 9 (02:08:38):

Thank you.

Speaker 36 (02:08:42):

Hello, Melinda Ball. May I have the official statement image to be displayed? Thank you. Our coalition is concerned that the commission has not received adequately accurate, complete and transparent information about the city's debt and debt management practices to inform your very important budgetary decisions. For example, the city's budget book and their finance department's answers indicate that they have been paying off old long-term debt with new long-term debt for the last three years, but the official statement gives no indication that the city has been using the official refunding process during these years. For comparison, you can see that this process was used and documented in 2020. This suggests that the city may be reallocating debt funds that were taken out for specific projects to pay off old debt. Rather than spending that money on the projects, our commission agreed to invest our communities money into paying off old debt.

(02:09:47):

With new debt, especially repeatedly is the beginning of what is called a debt spiral, which means you fall deeper and deeper into debt in spite of keeping current on your payments. Debt spirals can lead to reduced

credit ratings, which make it harder to take out additional debt and if not controlled debt spirals leads to bankruptcy. In addition to the lack of clarity about how the city is financing debt payment, the commissions has also received inaccurate information about your debt limit. At your June 17th meeting, you were told that the city is only 24 to 28% of your debt limit, but actually as of April one, the city is at 43% of your debt limit. Based on the city's plans to take out additional 84 million in go bonds next year, we estimate that the city would be at 54% of its debt limit in 2026. If we live in Missouri, this would be more than three times their city's debt limit.

(02:10:42):

The state puts a cap on the maximum debt a city can take out, but this is not a number a city should use to determine how much debt they can take out. A city government should determine their debt capacity based on what our community can financially sustain. Given all the economic changes of the last five years, we suspect our residents cannot sustain more. We believe it is time to reevaluate the city's current financial practices in this potential debt spiral and take on debt at a sustainable level that better matches our community's financial capacity. We also want to guarantee that the city Commission makes these significant decisions about the city's debt with clear, complete and accurate financial data. We have consulted with municipal finance experts, advisors, and auditors, and our research leads us to believe that the city should perform a transparent financial analysis possibly with the help of outside financial experts to better understand the city's current debt situation before you consider approving debt additional debt for our community. Thank you.

Speaker 37 (02:11:56):

Good evening commissioners. Christine Poon, you probably heard my name mentioned. I have been working with the coalition in helping them research, explore debt, explore budget. I've got over two decades of city management and finance experience. I've worked in Kansas predominantly so I know statute well, but I've also worked in Texas and in California. I have issued millions of dollars in debt in all three states and I want to talk less about the numbers that you've heard. I want to talk about best practice and remind our commissioners what our role is, what your role is. You guys have been maintaining a constant mill levy in your bond and interest for quite some time and then you shot, you're going to shoot it up in two years, \$230 million. I don't know how that's sustainable. What I like to see as someone in public finances, I like to see a financial plan that ties debt to exact mills and the property tax and debt to the exact utility rates necessary.

(02:13:13):

You guys aren't getting that information. You know what the uses and sources are, but you don't have the specifics. May I recommend you ask for that. You've heard referenced that you guys are issuing one year temporary notes for projects that exceed one year. This is unheard of. I don't understand why you're doing it. You're paying cost of issuance for every year. Staff indicated that interest cost is the reason you're doing one year instead of say three year statute allows four. You guys have consistently, and I'll only go back the last five years, you've consistently issued one year temporary notes. The fact that they stated interest cost is the reason you're doing it. That does not make any sense. If you issue a one year temporary note versus a three year temporary note, your cost of interest is nominal. Alright? But what you are paying when you issue one year, temporary notes every year is a cost of issuance.

(02:14:19):

That includes paying your municipal advisor, your bond counsel, CUSIP fees, state fed fees. Those are a couple of grand, but every single year you're doing this and I don't understand why. An example 2021 temp note was a one year temp note. 22 projects on it, 18 carried over to 22. Okay. You don't have to do that and I believe it's costing the city more interest is not the reason you stay away from multi-year temp notes. Alright, looks like you're cash following possible debt or cash or your operations. Speaking of and

my time is up, you need to ask for a treasure's report every month that outlines cash statute requires it. Thank you. Appreciate

Speaker 2 ([02:15:06](#)):

It.

Speaker 37 ([02:15:07](#)):

Thank you.

Speaker 38 ([02:15:11](#)):

Hi, I'm Bonnie Johnson. The coalition has identified multiple examples of inconsistent accounting practices and changes in public reporting that reduced transparency. The lack of accuracy and transparency in our city's financial record keeping is significant because our governing body uses this information to make decisions critical for our community's financial help. The city's auditor has direct access to the city's accounting data, which they use to audit and confirm accuracy of past budgets, but no one audits the city's budget book or the state budget for the main documents that provide up-to-date information to inform the commission's decision-making. Since no one audits these documents, the city commission is the only authority responsible for guaranteeing that our city's finances are controlled accurately and responsibly. We believe the information we have discovered brings into question the accuracy of the information the commission is receiving about the budget before the commission passes the 2026 budget.

([02:16:13](#)):

We ask the commission and finance experts to guarantee that the city's accounting and financial projections are based on accurate numbers and best financial practices. Some examples of reporting practices that have reduced transparency include the city's financial documents Do not indicate if debt revenue comes from temporary notes or from long-term debt. This makes it impossible to accurately assess if the city's debt proceeds align with the appropriate payments. This is challenging because the city has been using one year temporary notes for multi-year projects since at least 2007 is repeatedly refinancing their temporary notes for certain projects, but appears to have repeatedly changed the way they report these funds in different years. The city's budget q and as say that the general fund is not impacted by the bonds the city takes out, but this is inaccurate because the general fund is supporting debt payments with about \$400,000 annually.

([02:17:10](#)):

This payment used to be clearly labeled as debt service in the budget book, but now it is lumped into a category labeled transfers out, so you can only learn that the general fund is financing debt payments by researching transfers in the state budget form. The city budget book uses the term miscellaneous to indicate debt finance revenue, but the description of this category in the city's official budget book lists six small sources of revenue and doesn't mention debt at all, even though it was 93% of this category in 2025. Transfers between funds are supposed to be recorded in the city budget book in the state budget form, but the city's largest transfer in 2025 of 32 million is not accurately recorded in either of these documents. Similarly, a 2.6 million transfer into the utility bonded construction fund is not shown in the budget book. Finally, the city budget book stopped recording their total expenditures for past years, so one can't easily compare total budgets from year to year.

Speaker 39 ([02:18:08](#)):

Thank you.

([02:18:12](#)):

Mike Courtney. 6 6 0 4 6. I want to continue on what Mr. McGuire, commissioner Littlejohn and Commissioner Sellers were discussing earlier. As part of the budget, there's also a need to bring in more revenue to the community as you all know. We currently have a 70 to 30 residential to commercial split, which puts more pressure on property taxes. One of the key positions that needs to be filled is the director of economic development. This position is not on the city's job website. I was able to find it by searching through other job sites. The job description reads like someone will have a nice desk here at City Hall. This is not what we need. We need to think differently about this position. This position needs to be a hunter, sales driven and focused, someone incentivized to bring in deals and who's plugged in at the commercial and private sector level in the Kansas City region.

(02:19:00):

This person should be the bridge between the city chamber and EDC. They would also work to update the city's economic development information. The reports and information on the city's websites haven't been updated in the past two years. This person sole mission should be to deliver tangible wins. For Lawrence, they should work on landing marquee businesses from the Kansas City region like Garmin, Honeywell, A MC, A FinTech company like h and r Block, S, S and C or Jack Henry, a tech company like Google or Oracle or an animal health company like Merck Hills or decra. This would provide our high school and college students rich internship possibilities and provide a private sector career path. For Ians. This person would be key to the long-term goal of bringing the residential to commercial split into a more appropriate 60 40 range, which in itself would provide property tax relief to all Ians. Thank you.

Speaker 40 (02:20:01):

Hello, Pam. 6 6 0 4 4. So part of the coalition, they've done a great job, but as I'm sitting here, I'm also thinking about one of your two largest employers, which is the University of Kansas, and I wanted to give you some facts as you talk about increasing debt and increasing costs to your residents. So we talk about affordability, food banks and stuff. Think about this. Five out of the last 10 years, 2016 to 2025, KU did not give their faculty and staff any increases. Zero in the last five years, two years were zero. One year was 2%, one year was two and a half, and in 2023 it was a bonus year, 5%. In 2025, they raised their minimum full-time staff rate to 1720 an hour, which is 35,000, \$36,000 a year. I want you to think about that. KU cannot afford to do market study. I commend the city for doing it. KU has done surveys at least twice the years that when I was there. So I want you to think about what you're doing to your residents when you talk about affordable housing and you talk about need for assistance, your major employer is not funding their increases, thus hurting as you increase prices. Thank you.

Speaker 41 (02:21:36):

Marc Francisco 1101 Ohio. Thank you very much for the work that you've done thus far on the budget. The staff, I certainly appreciated the information that was given this evening, but it seemed to me it was by departments or segments and I would like to include and have you ask for some more holistic information about that and I think that reflects much of what we've heard from many other citizens this evening about looking at debt or looking at what's happening in the city manager's office or how can we deal overall with insurance costs and employee costs for the city.

(02:22:32):

I also would want to say that I believe that public health and safety are the two most important things that the city can give us after clean water and a good sewer system which are paid for in a different way. So I would hope that you look at carefully how we can, if we need another fire station in the years to come, try to keep one of those fire engines and that staff here with us this year as that increases. Certainly we've invested a lot in affordable housing. We have a lot of residences and businesses. We all appreciate that protection. Thank you.

Speaker 42 ([02:23:28](#)):

Good evening. I'm Michael Hallman with Sustainability Action Network. I commend the commission and staff for your commitment to traffic safety by right-sizing ninth Street with buffered bicycle lanes, one motor vehicle lane in each way, claims comm traffic and is safer for all road users. Having initiated the ninth Street right-sizing project, I am proposing that you name it, the John Hermes Memorial Bikeway in honor of the bicyclist killed by a truck in 1997 at ninth and Mississippi Streets. Because of his death, citizens mobilized for safe bikeways. Ninth Street merchants supported them and Chuck Soles agreed to Stripe ninth Street for bicycle lanes. Unfortunately, only three months later, another bicyclist was killed only a few blocks away. Rachel Leak was killed in the 1,000 block of Tennessee Street in October of 2009. That of course, is one of the high speed paired couplet streets, which we were proposing be right-sized to one lane each way and striped for buffered bicycle lanes just like ninth Street.

([02:24:49](#)):

Three weeks ago, you seemed interested in right-sizing Tennessee and Kentucky for safety, but you said, let's wait to see how Massachusetts Street works. Waiting really isn't an option. It's a vote for denial because the chance won't come around again for 10 to 15 years after repaving it. Everyone already knows how right-sizing a street works, particularly David Cronin who has said cars travel at the slowest speed of the slowest driver. That's it. Valla self-enforcing traffic coming. You have several existing examples of right-sized streets. There's ninth Street from Avalon to Illinois right now, soon extended to Vermont O'Connell Road from 23rd to 31st Street is right sized Peterson from Iowa to East 1130 Road and Mass Street from 11th to 14th already. Would you have funded these if you didn't think right sizing works. There's no quota for Safe Streets and Bikeways. We can't have enough safety. Lawrence turned a corner for Safe Streets design with projects like WUSA East 23rd and right sizing ninth Street and Mass from here on out. All street design should be safe street design. A safe Massachusetts won't mean bicycling is safe at 10th and Tennessee. That's the message from your Vision Zero action plan zero future deaths. Thank you. Do this for Rachel Leak, please. Thank you. Thank you

Speaker 2 ([02:26:37](#)):

Very much, Mike.

Speaker 43 ([02:26:45](#)):

Good evening. My name is Samuel Carter, 6 6 0 4 6. I'm a member of the Lawrence Coalition for Safe Streets and I'm asking you to fund the Kentucky Tennessee Street Reconfigurations for buffered bicycle lanes, Kentucky and Tennessee. As you may know, two of the most dangerous roads in the city. This has been recognized by the state and by city staff about two to three pedestrians and cyclists are struck on these roads by vehicles every year, even after the targeted interventions that have been made such as pedestrian hyper beacons. But the reason why this is is because the roads are overbuilt and they're one way. So you have a relatively low capacity which allows for high speeding even though you kind of race the stoplight, right? It doesn't actually get you anywhere faster, but it encourages people to speed and in fact, a 2017 traffic study done by the city found that on Tennessee in particular, 91% of vehicles exceeded the posted speed limit.

([02:27:51](#)):

They also found that time dozens of vehicles traveling over 50 miles per hour. The solution to this problem is to dedicate one of these lanes for non-motorized traffic on each way. The effects of this will be to reduce the severity and the frequency of crashes while increasing mobility, giving people options and livability. It would also connect two schools quarterly in St. John's to the pool downtown, the library, and just downtown in general, which would be a huge boon to those schools and also to the neighborhoods. So I think of course it is fair to ask how do we fund this? One thing is that I'll note that the estimates for funding this come in to be about \$295,000 per mile. Now, that also includes the street reconstruction that

was already planned, but even then when you look at other buffered bicycle lanes, and as I've done it for Tulsa and for Wichita and Overland Park, the cost is about half as much.

(02:29:04):

So there's other cities are able to do this with far less, but also I think you could also find the funds to fund this and also Lawrence Loop projects by deferring the expansion of Bob Billings west of K 10. I think there's been a lot of commentary recently about sprawl as well as just the costs that sprawl creates. So that's one of the reasons why we have so much debt right now is to service just the size of the city, but giving people choices and options I think is really important for safe streets. Thank you.

Speaker 2 (02:29:48):

Thank you very much, Samuel.

Speaker 44 (02:30:07):

Good evening. My name is Seamus Al Albert and I'm the current president of the Lawrence Firefighters Union. First comments, I want to show some gratitude that the proposal in front of you maintains and puts an emphasis on keeping our frontline fire apparatus staff before people. We appreciate your ears and it is evident to us that all of you, as well as city management, we're mindful of that priority of ours when building this budget. However, I would encourage you to reexamine any proposals that are asking you to cut operations positions for the fire department. The proposal in front of you will eliminate a firetruck that is on duty every day. I understand that cuts are needed and when this is needed, it's commonly spread across departments. However, this very same budget in the CIP and in previous budget and the previous budget before that budget City staff have indicated the need for more fire trucks and more stations as well as ambulances to meet the increasing demand on our firefighters and paramedics.

(02:31:11):

So if that is true, and the evidence that's been presented in these chambers on numerous occasions indicated is then cutting operations positions in this budget process does not make sense, but I get it. Finances have in a pickle, right? So examining that budget document, looking at the general fund from which public safety is often funded or is funded within our community, we are still proposing on page 37 to spend roughly \$2.5 million on homelessness solutions. That is in line with what we've done in past years. I would ask for some conversation on that because we passed a ballot initiative last year as a community that was meant to decrease the burden of General Flynn dollars for those programs. These are important programs, but perhaps there is room to shift the burden more on the special tax. Additionally, city manager Owens has been fairly direct about the need to identify some different funding sources. If we're going to move forward with the needed expansion stations of seven, excuse me, six and seven.

(02:32:18):

If there's really nowhere else to make cuts within our budget to keep the firetrucks that we have now, perhaps it is time to have that conversations conversation about those funding sources a year or two early versus trying to have that conversation next year. Whether that is what's been suggested in previous budgets of a mill increase or some sort of ballot initiative to pay for these, we're struggling to pay for what we have now. So let's move up that conversation and have some flexibility as a community. I would note that cuts to fire department that is decreasing in its ability can often lose points on its ISO score. A loss of ISO score will move insurance rates up on our citizens about three to 5%, what does that math against a tax increase. Thank you,

Speaker 2 (02:33:15):

Seamus.

Speaker 45 ([02:33:24](#)):

Good evening. My name is Simon Stevenson, engineer paramedic for L-D-C-F-M, as well as Secretary for Lawrence Professional Firefighters IFF Local 1596. I want to touch on something really fast that city staff has said. The motto for 2026 is do less with less. I want to ask the commission one thing. How is doing less with less possible with the call volume increasing from roughly 12,500 in 2020 up to 17,500? In 2024, A person who experiences a cardiac arrest will have irreversible brain damage within six minutes. If oxygen isn't delivered, a unchecked fire will double in size every minute. So I ask you to do less with less. What do we do? Do we not answer 9 1 1 calls? Do we not respond to your family member who's having a cardiac arrest in a timely manner? Do we not get on scene of a fire in a timely manner to rescue your family?

([02:34:22](#)):

How do we do less with less when our community relies heavily on public safety? I know you've been talking a lot about station expansion and yes, that is true, that once it comes online fully staffed, which Commissioner Finkel die includes with the relief factor 16 for a fire apparatus and seven for an ambulance that there will be some relief, but what happens? Until then, I urge you to reconsider this proposal put forth to you in 2026. It's not a building that saves lives, it's professional, well-trained, and ultimately available first responders who save lives. Thank you.

Speaker 46 ([02:35:08](#)):

Good evening. My name's John Inman. I am the president of the Lawrence Police Officers Association to follow up with the IAFF guys, we have this feeling that we would also like you to reconsider this proposed budget. I think you guys would be shocked at how few police officers are on duty at given times and especially given the size of the city and because of the size of our department in the city, these cuts are devastating. Not only is this proposal an officer safety issue, it is a community safety issue to demonstrate where we stack up the Benchmark City surveys looking through those to get some data. I can compare us a little bit to Olathe and Overland Park. They're right down the road and also they are pretty similar communities. As of 2024, Olathe has 212 sworn officers, which is 60 more than we are authorized for. Overland Park has 278, which is 126 more than we are authorized for.

([02:36:16](#)):

What's most surprising about this is Olathe actually fields less calls for service than we do. Again, that is with 60 more officers. Overland Park Fields 10,000 more calls for service than we do. They're at 55,000. We are about 45,000. Again, they're 126 more police officers than we have in the last decade. Olathe has grown 39 officers. Overland Park has grown by 28 officers and if we go through with this proposal, we will have lost nine police officers in the last decade. Why is it that? Why the other cities grow? So do their police departments, but when our city grows, we shrink. We do appreciate the community input. As far as the balancing act comes. We are concerned that less than 1% of the population has engaged in that and that we would be making catastrophic cuts based on such a small sample size.

([02:37:14](#)):

It is our belief that we should be trending the opposite direction like our neighboring cities and we are currently having to regularly staff over time just to meet the bare minimum. And I do not believe that this community deserves anything less than that and I believe they expect and deserve more. At the end of the day, you are a safety net. You support us in keeping the city safe. With the large events coming up in the horizon, resources are more important than ever. Thankfully though unfortunate we've been incredibly lucky. Now it comes with the safety of this community. My question to the commission is how long we're willing to take away these resources in hopes of being lucky and how important really is public safety? Thank you.

Speaker 47 ([02:38:07](#)):

Amer Commissioners. Sean Coffey 6 6 0 4 9. I'm asking you tonight to not accept the recommended budget staffing levels proposed in the 2026 budget. Those levels are at the same level as when I worked on the fire department in 1985. We had four engines in one ladder. It had 19 people on it. You're proposing 40 years later in the same city to run four engines and one ladder with 20 people. I don't think that's acceptable. The call volumes increased considerably. One of the trucks that they're proposing to Upst staff Ladder five is not designed as a primary attack fire suppression vehicle. Those people that live in the Schwer neighborhood, I hope they're aware of the impact it'll have on them. Also, I'd like to remind you in 1995 we had four engines, one ladder and two squads for a total of 23 people on duty. So this proposal is going back even further and reducing service in the city of Lawrence. As Seamus indicated, I expect to see an ISO decrease from one to two. The fire department barely obtained one in the last evaluation and I expect now with the reduction in services, they'll go to two over 75% of the residential and commercial insurance companies in the US use ISO for the public protection classification. So people are going to pay for this one way or another.

(02:39:42):

I had also like to say that public safety is like having a form of insurance. None of us like paying for it, but when that we need it, we're grateful that we have it and we've seen that right now with what's happening down in Texas. A year ago at Brandon Woods COVID, when the first responders stayed at work daily adapting whatever changes were there and are always available and ready to respond. I also think public safety is an infrastructure and we've talked about infrastructure over and over. It's the infrastructure to protect our community. If you don't mean it, the entire community suffers. Public safety is the backbone of all programs rely on and bring available. You think of Maslow's hierarchy of need right above physiological need is safety and that's what public safety is providing. Law enforcement, fire and EMS. I'd also like to thank the county for the additional funding in 2026 to help ease some of this pain. But I also want everybody to remember that this is on top of rejected 2.1 million, the county provided in 2022 with the new EMS agreement. So I think there's been a lot of infusion into the city to help the Fire Medical Department and I don't think this is the time that we should be making those cuts and that with a 519 million budget that we can find room to retain that staffing level. Thank you

Speaker 4 (02:41:07):

Sean.

Speaker 48 (02:41:25):

Patrick Ross. 6 6 0 4 9. The Coalition for Collaborative Governance analyze the results of the balancing act and the research suggests that the rating system used in the balancing act questions produced some biased results. Each city service was assigned a current service level between one and five. Level one represented the lowest level of service that the city can reasonably provide and level five represented the highest. Most of the services in the balancing act questions were rated at a service level three right in the middle. While others were rated at service levels two and four. Our research suggests that the level of service designations the city selected influenced our community's input. Participants indicated support for maintaining or increasing the budget for 12 to 13 services rated level two, whereas participants indicated a willingness to reduce the budgets of five of the six services rated level four. Therefore, rating of service at level two made it more likely that the community would support a services budget and made those services appear to be higher priorities for our community.

(02:42:20):

Rating of service at a level four increased the community's willingness to reduce its budget and made those services appear to be lower priorities. And then I'd also like to take the time to address the Tennessee and Kentucky bike project that Michael Alman and Sam both spoke to. And first I just want to start off and say that Paris is full of bicycle paths everywhere. It works great. And a couple of meetings

ago when we were talking about this plane, we were saying, Hey, we want to see how the bike paths go on mass and ninth. There is nothing left to study. These studies have already been done. If you have more bike paths, it improves the rider experience to make it safer and it gets less people. It keeps people from driving, sorry, it makes less people drive cars if you have a safe bike lane to use.

(02:43:16):

So if we're talking about really wanting to see how things go, then why don't we put a infrastructure in place that significantly improves the safeness for people that want to ride bikes in this town and then study it that I know the city upcharge the estimate for what the project would cost to \$800,000. We're talking about just putting lines down on concrete that you're already going to be reconstructing in a couple of years. So it's really not that much of an ask. If people are dying and we can do something to save lives, we should do it now. It's not going to cost a lot of money. And then I'd also just like to say that I think the public walked away with a lot more information from the advocates that have spoken tonight and it shouldn't be that way. We shouldn't just come up with talking points from each department's director when we have a lot of in-depth detail and problems that you guys should be addressing First. We shouldn't be having to do this for you guys and I think that's really something that the public would like to see in place. Let's not dance around these issues. Let's actually address them. And lastly, if we have a \$6 million shortfall, I know we have a 6% increase in city employees that would cover that budget right there and finance your police and fire Patrick.

Speaker 4 (02:44:30):

Thank you.

Speaker 10 (02:44:40):

Good evening. David Collins 6 6 0 4 9. I just wanted to speak in support of the general remarks made by our first responders who have come in and asked you not to support that element of this budget. But specifically I like to refer to and remind you of the remarks made by Mr. Coffey when he spoke about the problems that can result from not paying attention to what your responsibilities are regarding public safety and specifically to the terrible circumstances we've witnessed in Texas because of floods and the resulting deaths that resulted because various people in charge of the responsibility for public safety weren't willing to spend tens of thousands of dollars which could have saved hundreds of lives in this incident. Please think about that. Please recognize the importance of supporting our first responders. Thank you you, David.

Speaker 2 (02:46:11):

Any other public comment on this item in the room? Okay. Sherry, you want to get the ones that are online please?

Speaker 22 (02:46:21):

Okay. Julie Jones.

Speaker 49 (02:46:36):

Hi, Julie Jones, 6 6 0 4 7. I'd like to share some examples of inaccuracy that was shared by the city and their finances. The city's official statement shows that the city owes about 8 million more in debt payments this year than the city's budget book expenditures indicated. The city's homeless solutions program is funded with the general fund and a special alcohol fund. The budget book shows that this program received 2.1 million from the special alcohol fund, but this funds page only shows about 900,000 going to the program. It is unclear where the additional 1.2 million in funding comes from. City staff says detailed up to date information is available on their portal. However, this site says that the city's 2025

operating budget is 659 million. Where the 2025 budget book says it is 519 million. There is 114 million discrepancy. This discrepancy occurs in two funds that finance capital expenses. The portal says the Capital Projects fund has 55 million more than utilities.

(02:47:55):

Bond construction fund has 86 million more in revenues and the city's budget book says it's unclear where these additional funds come from. This portal is supposed to provide full transparency by showing the city's checkbook, but we have not been able to identify personal personnel payments, which makes up 109 million of their 2025 budget for their main utility fund. The city's required to hold 68% of this fund's annual operating expenses. The city's budget book indicates that the city was only holding 58% to or less for the last four years. They have corrected this error and the proposed 2026 budget documents. Examples of questionable financial practices are the city is refinancing one year temporary notes for many capital projects. So it's mean they are paying repeated issuance fees for funding multiple year projects. Kansas law allows cities to take temporary notes out for up to four years and close those notes when the projects are finished. The city budget q and a document says that these one year notes because of their interest rates are typically lower than the multi-year notes, but our research shows the opposite. The city reallocates bond money from one project to another, which is not standard practice. This suggests that the city is using temporary notes as flexible cash flow. The city finance department projects 8% sales tax revenue increase in 2024 when average increases are two 3%. And finally, the city doesn't produce detailed cost benefit time.

Speaker 2 (02:49:40):

Thank you Julie.

Speaker 5 (02:49:49):

Steven Watts.

Speaker 50 (02:49:57):

Hi. Hopefully we've got video running around here. Excellent. Let's try this. Alright. Hey, it would be really great if both the police union and the firefighters union would respond to emails. They're not interested in what Joe public out here thinks. They don't respond to diddly squat. I don't know what they want or what they need. They just come to you and start saying we need more. And every time I turn around they're making more money than Tom has got. Pills is incredible. However, it could be functional, I don't know. But because these guys and girls don't want to respond to emails to the general public to try to support them in their endeavors with you guys, it makes you think, wow, they don't care about me. They're just in it for the money.

(02:51:03):

Is that a fair thought? Not what I was calling in to talk about, but after listening to these guys go on and on and on, yeah. How about you guys start responding to emails? All right, now with the budget, it's such a curious thing. I'm reading notes here as I look at this and we're going to hold back on that for you guys. I sent a couple of emails out, how about making the purchase of bonds a simple process to help fund this budget for John Q Public to go and do it. I sent you some emails in relation to how to do it and what was done in the past by Mr. Kitney in 2014.

(02:52:07):

The budget's, the budget, and their bonds are the bonds. How about saying if you believe so much in this, how about saying, Hey, you live down the street. How about putting 15, \$15 into this project just like a savings bond. It can be done if the staff are willing to do it. Your market rate paid staff who are too good to look into, finding ways for regular people to be part of the money aspect of what is going on here in

Hill. Billy Boy Lawrence, Kansas. Let's see the bike lanes. Unless the bike lanes are protected, they're useless. Don't think what these other people are saying. A little white line. What

Speaker 2 ([02:53:02](#)):

Steve?

Speaker 50 ([02:53:03](#)):

Okay, thank you.

Speaker 2 ([02:53:04](#)):

You sheet it.

Speaker 22 ([02:53:10](#)):

Chris Flowers.

Speaker 51 ([02:53:19](#)):

Aye. Hi, this is Chris Flowers and I just wanted to share some thoughts. I appreciate what the people talking about transparency with our budget said earlier. I hope you take into consideration some of their points they were making because it is kind of concerning what they say and if what they say is true. I definitely would be looking into some of that stuff. Also, I just thought it was kind of funny how it sounds like you're cutting fire and medical yet wasn't a few weeks ago you adopted, what was it? That traffic plan, the operation Zero or whatever where it's the plan designed to get traffic deaths down to zero. It's just weird that you adopt that and then when it comes to fire and medical, you decrease the safety there. So I would be, I'm hesitant about cutting fire in medical and I'm someone who says safety's overrated.

([02:54:30](#)):

So I just want to throw that out there that I do understand when we have an emergency we need them and some of the other stuff we spend money on, well that people can avoid that themselves, but it's harder to avoid a heart attack. And also when it comes to the Kentucky and Tennessee, I think a better, an alternative would be to close Mass Street off from traffic from downtown and just have it be open to bikes and pedestrians that way. Mass would be bike friendly all the way from sixth to 23rd. I've heard people bringing up that, oh, we need downtown to just be closed off to cars, so why not look into that first? Because then you wouldn't have to have the Tennessee and Kentucky because mass is only two blocks away from Kentucky and I think it'd be cheaper just to cut that off to traffic from downtown than it would be to redo all of Tennessee and Kentucky.

([02:55:42](#)):

So that's just something to throw out there. And also, I don't want more stuff spent on bikes when making the street safer. I mean some of it's okay, like the ninth street that you're going to redo, I'm perfectly okay with that. I can see the benefit, but then when you did 21st, the 21st Street Bike Boulevard, that's a bike boulevard that's not earning. Its keep for what we paid for it. So I hope you all think things through better and do better designs at how the bike stuff works and I would look at trying to make masks all the way bikes friendly instead of having two different streets, right, so close to each other. Just thank you. Thanks

Speaker 2 ([02:56:29](#)):

Chris.

Speaker 22 ([02:56:38](#)):

Linda, Linda,

Speaker 5 ([02:57:09](#)):

This is the last public commenter mayor. Do you want to,

Speaker 2 ([02:57:13](#)):

Did they

Speaker 5 ([02:57:13](#)):

Go

Speaker 2 ([02:57:14](#)):

Okay,

Speaker 52 ([02:57:14](#)):

I think I got it. Did I get it?

Speaker 2 ([02:57:16](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 52 ([02:57:17](#)):

I've never it on this system anyway. I had a couple questions. How much of the increase of police, fire and emergency rescue calls is due to the homeless population because the years seem to coincide right with that and then if we're going to decrease the ability of them to take care of the masses of the population while responding to the homeless is a huge concern, especially when you're retired, like my husband and I, my husband has a severe heart condition and it's very concerning. I would like to applaud that coalition work. I have learned more about city finances with their work. It is time you commissioners get a handle on this and let the public know what's going on because to me it appears that there's a lot of mismanagement and fraud going on in the city and it's really scary to hear those numbers. Also, a number I heard was about we're second to Los Angeles in number of home ownership, but I'm afraid this city is going to enter into bankruptcy. And I know the bike lanes is not part of the budget, but it is part of my budget because I'm in the Queens Road benefits district and I have counted two bike riders on Queens Road and all the time it's been there. Thank you.

Speaker 2 ([02:58:55](#)):

Thank you, Linda.

Speaker 5 ([02:58:56](#)):

It's all the comments. Mayor,

Speaker 2 ([02:58:58](#)):

Right?

Speaker 53 ([02:58:59](#)):

Excuse me. Pardon me. I was online and I was having

Speaker 2 ([02:59:04](#)):

Oh sure. Please come on in. Jeff,

Speaker 53 ([02:59:06](#)):

Thank you.

Speaker 2 ([02:59:06](#)):

I saw you up there earlier.

Speaker 53 ([02:59:07](#)):

Appreciate it. Good evening, commissioner Mayor, vice mayor. Thank you public. My name is Jeffrey Heppler, 6 6 0 4 4. I just wanted to comment that I'm seeing a lot of sacrifices that our city is having to make to seemingly essential services and it's concerning. I've heard some ideas of revenue generation, I'd like to hear more. I saw a priority of street maintenance and I would suggest that if we want to be economically sustainable, even better resilient, then we will focus on that climate resilience. That's all I have. Thank you. Okay, thanks Jeff.

Speaker 2 ([03:00:07](#)):

Alright, I think that'll do on the public comment at this point, this item commissioners, since this is a work session, I'd like to either get any feedback you'd like to provide or give staff some questions and or feedback from the comments we've provided before next week. So if you have any, please jump in.

Speaker 28 ([03:00:34](#)):

I had a quick one just to start us off with it. I think I saw on the future agenda we have an audit coming up. Could we get a little bit more information about that since probably relevant to questions that people have brought up?

Speaker 54 ([03:01:00](#)):

Good evening. Rochelle Matthews, director of finance and yes, our 2024 audit has been completed. Our 2024 annual statement is available on the website and we will be bringing the city's independent auditor on August 5th to do a full presentation and summary of that process in that report.

Speaker 28 ([03:01:23](#)):

Just wanted to confirm. Thank you.

Speaker 2 ([03:01:32](#)):

Anybody else want to ask any questions or provide any guidance for staff at this point in time?

Speaker 29 ([03:01:49](#)):

Allie, by next week's meeting, will you be able to identify to us the cost of the mill? I know we do this every year. I'm trying to get us ahead of the game here so you don't have three people asking you the same question in one presentation.

Speaker 16 ([03:02:04](#)):

Yes, with our 2% delinquency it's approximately 1.5 7000001.57.

Speaker 29 ([03:02:10](#)):

Thank you.

Speaker 2 ([03:02:17](#)):

Ellie, we've had a lot of comments regarding our borrowing capacity and our ability to borrow, including our geo refinancing annually. I know this may not be one something you want to answer, but some people mentioned the long-term process that we've been doing over 18 years or so. We've been doing these annual reissue. Can you speak to that comment because I remember this specifically, but I want to make sure everyone's clear on this issue.

Speaker 16 ([03:02:47](#)):

So I'm going to actually ask Rochelle our finance director. I'm not the right person to answer

Speaker 2 ([03:02:51](#)):

That. I figured I just wanted to make sure I got that out there since it was on my list. Sorry, Rochelle?

Speaker 54 ([03:03:00](#)):

Yes. So the city issues one year temporary notes and then anywhere up to 20 year annual debt. It is true that we pay cost of issuance every time we issue, but we do feel like it's in the best interest of the competitive sale to achieve a lower cost of interest by borrowing at the one year rate versus the longer term rate. It also allows us the capacity to react with our fellow colleagues and MSO to the real needs of the project. If something needs to slow down or speed up, we can adjust more easily with having a chance to redo that every year. We also avoid something called arbitrage or attempt to avoid it. The IRS gives us tax exempt bonding status, which means we don't pay as much on our debt as a corporation would in return for that benefit. We are not allowed to earn more in interest than we are paying in the bond. So I can't borrow money, stick it in a high yield account and keep the IRS's money. So the longer we borrow without having spent those proceeds on a project that takes several years, we increase our risk of interest, fines and penalties from the IRS

Speaker 2 ([03:04:13](#)):

And when do we start this program of annual reissuance with geos

Speaker 54 ([03:04:18](#)):

As this is, I'm completing my first year with the city, I would have to confer with some of my colleagues in finance and mso. I don't have that answer with me, but we can include that in our q and a update.

Speaker 2 ([03:04:27](#)):

Right, that's something I'd like to get an answer for next week that was not for you to answer today, but I know that it's been going on for many years and I'm just shocked at how people are shocked at our processes that have been manifesting themselves for so long and I want to make sure that I'm clear on why they're so uncertain. Thank you. Anybody else?

Speaker 3 ([03:05:10](#)):

I guess lots to think about that people gave us. I think next week we have to set the revenue neutral rate and then continue to work on this and then adopt, consider the budget again on September 2nd and vote on September 16th. So

(03:05:30):

I appreciate the woke Craig all and the whole team has done getting this to us and I think as Craig said, it's a great starting point, but it's a starting point for us to consider, but I feel pretty good about most of it, but certainly those, whenever you're cutting \$6 million, those things that make you pause, but just like balancing act when we did it to begin this, if it was easy to find a way to balance it, we would've done it. So continue to think about some of these options as we go forward. And I think though, I guess one question I am interested in is on the loop we have the 584,000 still, at least at the moment out there for kdot. If we remove all funding from the CIP, is that the same as just telling kdot we don't want that money or could we put the 164,000 into the CIP until we make a final decision on the loop? I think in the past, as was mentioned, we've carried the total expenditure on the CIP, the 846,000 and we've often carried 1.5 million on the CIP for other sections of the loop, but that's not what we actually spend on it. We always spend, we haven't been doing those projects unless we've been getting a state fund for that. So I guess I'm interested a little bit on considering putting the 20% back in, so at least we have a placeholder there without necessarily cutting back on too much on the street maintenance but leaving that possibility open,

Speaker 2 (03:07:31):

You mean to go somewhere else?

Speaker 3 (03:07:33):

Well, yeah, I mean the question last week or the question proposed was street maintenance versus the loop. But when we were comparing those two, we had 856,000 in 2026 and we had 1.5 million or something. That obviously is a lot of street maintenance, but what if we have a smaller number in there, 164,000 in 2026 and 200,000 in it for 2028 to hold a place for that. Maybe I'm misunderstanding that. So at least a little more information on that coming forward. I know we've had this discussion before. I know Jeff talked about it. I would like a little more information at some point about the idea of rental inspection and code enforcement and how we might, the timeline, we might look at that on a fee basis, a rental registration fee. I think I wasn't real clear with my question about code enforcement versus rental inspection.

(03:08:48):

I understand what Jeff was saying, that if you double a fine that no one pays, it doesn't give you much revenue. But we do have the rental inspection fees that we could consider raising those inspection fees, registration fees, fees, not only for AALS but for short-term rentals and how those affect affordable housing I think is something I want to look at. Again, not necessarily as part of this budget I understand, but just getting an understanding of where we're going on that. So those are a couple of things I'm interested at least understanding better the rest of them funding, police funding, file the conversation next week on Parks and React or all things to continue to consider how we address those.

Speaker 28 (03:09:39):

Yeah, mayor, I would go ahead and jump in. I'd be interested in that conversation about potentially funding Loop and street maintenance. I don't think it has to be an either or. I think we can hopefully figure out a little bit of both. Obviously more speed maintenance than Loop, but some towards the loop's direction. But yeah, and of course furthering the conversation regarding fire and police, figuring that out a little bit more. And also I know that somebody mentioned in one of the comments about the neighborhoods and kind of funding the associations for that. I know that's fallen off in the recent years, but maybe having a conversation about not necessarily this budget cycle, but in the future if we can kind of formulate a plan for that going forward. So I'd be interested in hearing something about that.

Speaker 2 (03:10:41):

For which part? The last one.

Speaker 28 ([03:10:42](#)):

Neighborhood associations. Okay.

Speaker 2 ([03:10:44](#)):

Thank you.

Speaker 28 ([03:10:45](#)):

But yeah, I think that's all in my head right now and I would definitely like to learn a little bit more about the economic development part as well. Just a little bit more clarification on that. Okay. Can I, development coordinator.

Speaker 19 ([03:11:05](#)):

Mayor, I got something I'd like to bear.

Speaker 29 ([03:11:08](#)):

Go ahead.

Speaker 19 ([03:11:09](#)):

So I'd like to get some more information on the street maintenance program and how the spending that we're going to allocate or project and allocate for 2026, how it meets our sustainability goal of lowest cost of ownership as well as you've indicated in your slides that you're prioritizing street maintenance. So how are you doing that? What can you show me in numbers what that looks like? I appreciate that. I am most interested in the loop situation to see how we can potentially maintain any funds we might get from another entity, the state essentially.

Speaker 29 ([03:11:47](#)):

Mary, real quick, just glad that we had some good healthy conversation with the commission and comments around economic development. I know that was a tier three I think based on a lot of the conversations that we've had and how a lot of these pieces do tie in and connect with economic development, whether EE or presenters meant to present it in that way. I think it just was the fact that yes, while economic development was measured to be in a tier three, I do believe it should be in a tier one and a tier two, tier two and minimum tier one. I think it should be. And I think that's just because of not the optics, but sometimes how we may not do a good job of telling the story of how economic development infuses into the other operations and pieces that we do. I think we're starting to see that.

([03:12:33](#)):

And so I think that is another reason why we as a commission should look at where there's value in increasing, where in that tier piece economic development is right now it's at a three. I think it should be out of a one, possibly a two. So I'm glad we had that. In addition to the conversation around code enforcement, code compliance, things of that nature to the points that Commissioner FDI brought up there is continuing work that's being done. I know staff is slowly getting the ball rolling on that and I do appreciate that acknowledgement, but there is work that is coming in true fruition around healthy homes that truly speaks to that piece about what do we look at a whole reform. And I shared before, I mean I liken it to reform that we've seen in childcare. It's the same thing. How do we create a system that looks at fees at the inspection process capacity and whatnot.

(03:13:36):

And so we, we've had some opportunities to work with some, now I shouldn't say consultants, they're more like an accelerator that is available to staff to be able to start that. And again, this is not things that are going to be addressed this year, but could definitely set us up if we can stay consistent with those meetings, I think can set us up quite nicely for this conversation next year. So I do appreciate us keeping that elevated because that does play a role in a lot of our housing initiative pieces that we talked about. And then the only thing I would say is that I think we've all, as commissioners shared in different aspects of where we see things or where we hope to find funding or we can look into opportunities to address funding for different type of projects. And I guess my question to the commission as we move this conversation forward to next week, what lens are you looking at in regards to those? Where do you want staff to pull that? Because if we're looking at it from a revenue neutral lens, then you're asking for unicorn type results and I don't think we can get that here. So I think I just want us to be mindful of what lens are we using when we say, can we find this, move this arrange this, and if the capacity is actually there to do it. So look forward to next week.

Speaker 2 (03:15:00):

Yes, thank you. I think has everyone gotten their direction for this evening? Everyone pretty much touched on some of my thoughts. I just wanted to point out on this loop conversation, let's just remember that the land acquisition, indoor real estate that we would need isn't even in our position and we don't really have the funds to acquire that either. So I think it's realistic to think that if we can maintain and hold onto those funds, it'd be nice, but based on where we're at, it just doesn't seem like something we can do right away anyway, unless we come up with another, whatever that large sum of money is to buy the land. But that would be all that was coming at me as far as things that haven't already been mentioned. So thank you very much on that one. Should we take a break? Yes. Yeah, I'm sorry. Sorry for going this long, but there really wasn't a good stopping. You're good. So we're going to take a 10 minute break for a restroom and then we'll be back at, let's see, what is it? Nine? That would be nine. Nine,

Speaker 1 (03:16:01):

Yep. Thank you. Nine o'clock. We're back

Speaker 2 (03:25:37):

To our meeting.

Speaker 1 (03:25:39):

There

Speaker 2 (03:25:40):

You go. Next item. Sorry. Okay, lemme go ahead and start back to item G, which is the commission items. Commissioners, do you have anything to bring up this evening relative to this evening or the future? No commission items. Okay. We'll go ahead and do a review of the future agenda items next week. We know what we have in store and then we have to discuss our fees related to parks and rec, anything we need to talk about on this. Okay.

Speaker 29 (03:26:29):

Just remember I'll be an hour ahead of you next week, so

Speaker 2 (03:26:32):

On the 15th you'll be out.

Speaker 29 ([03:26:35](#)):

No, I'm here. I'll be virtual, but I'll be here.

Speaker 2 ([03:26:37](#)):

Right, you'll be visiting virtually.

Speaker 5 ([03:26:39](#)):

Yes.

Speaker 2 ([03:26:40](#)):

Got it.

Speaker 5 ([03:26:41](#)):

I was just going to mention, mayor, that we are going to try to balance out August a little bit better

Speaker 2 ([03:26:47](#)):

As

Speaker 5 ([03:26:47](#)):

We can. So I've reached out to staff, but I wanted to at least list them as they are now. So

Speaker 2 ([03:26:54](#)):

Right balance would be good, but we have to get things done, then we need to get things done. Any other comments on item G? Number two? Okay. We're going to go ahead and move to the city manager's report, anything to offer to us this evening?

Speaker 11 ([03:27:16](#)):

Just the notice of your upcoming ex parte requirements.

Speaker 2 ([03:27:21](#)):

Okay, thank you. Any public comments on the city manager's report?

Speaker 5 ([03:27:30](#)):

We do have one online here.

Speaker 2 ([03:27:32](#)):

Okay. Thank you. Sherry.

Speaker 5 ([03:27:34](#)):

Steven Watts.

Speaker 50 ([03:27:39](#)):

I have to make all kinds of computer adjustments in order to get the screen correct as a webinar participant. Now that I've got that in there. We need a city manager report on the police department's utilization of the Department of Justice two week workshop that took place in August, 2024. Lockhart said at the end of the meeting that he wanted the community to hold him accountable for the department to accomplish some of these tasks over the next well, et cetera, et cetera. You know what? The police department has so much, I'm going to say it. Fucking money for facial recognition software, spy software developed by the Israelis. Can I say that or I'm going to be viewed as an antisemite because I see the Israelis as a problem. They have provided software to our police department, which allows them to do all manner a nonsense, which people have all voted on to take and pay for.

(03:29:13):

Going back to the 2024 meeting, Lockhart said that he embraced, that ain't the word he used. I don't want to be misquoted or have a cop come to my door and kick it in and come and take me to ICE Heaven. Anyway, Lockhart said that he wanted the people to say, Hey, what's going on? And here I am asking what's going on? Where are the people in establishing police priorities and police policy? I need the city manager who in the final analysis, and according to city law, is the police chief of this town. I could go on and on forever about this, but I only get three minutes and I don't see, oh, there it is. I'm two minutes, 30 seconds. I actually get to see it. What else can I see here? Oh man, you guys heard the meeting a couple of months ago where Lockhart brought his dog and pony show here to talk about the community group coming in to talk to create policy. Where are we on that? We had a ridiculous presentation two weeks ago. Go screw yourself two weeks ago. Thank you, Steve. Go ahead. Thank you.

Speaker 5 (03:30:48):

That's all the comments?

Speaker 2 (03:30:50):

That's it? Yes. Okay. Go ahead and do the commission calendar. Anybody have any questions about the calendar?

Speaker 3 (03:30:59):

I found out today that I need to be in court on Thursday afternoon, so I have a ribbon cutting at four o'clock. I don't know if anyone is available to cover that for me, but I'm going to be in the where I represent someone. I'm not going to quote myself. Right, right. Just to be clear,

Speaker 28 (03:31:20):

None of my business, I'll be in Iowa. I'm sorry.

Speaker 3 (03:31:25):

Well, we'll check and maybe let the chamber know. If no one's available,

Speaker 28 (03:31:29):

You might check with me. I might be able to swing it. Yeah, lemme give me a chance to check my schedule.

Speaker 3 (03:31:34):

Okay, thank you.

Speaker 5 (03:31:37):

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Thank you. I'll check with you tomorrow. We'll get it figured out. Sounds

Speaker 2 ([03:31:41](#)):

Good. That gives us one day buffer. Thank you. Okay, anything else on that.