

Speaker 1 ([00:04:06](#)):

And Mayor, I usually do you just as a reminder, quiet in here right now.

Speaker 2 ([00:04:23](#)):

All right. Y'all ready? Yep. Okay. Good evening and welcome to the Tuesday, March 4th, 2025 City Commission meeting. I think we're going to start with an executive session this evening and the executive session is to approve a motion to recess and the executive session for approximately 30 minutes to discuss privileged legal communications from the city attorneys regarding pending litigation pursuant to KSA 75 dash 4 3 19 B two. The justification for the executive session is to keep attorney client privilege matters confidential. At this time, the city Commission will resume the regular meeting in the city commission room at approximately. Did we decide 30 minutes on this one?

Speaker 3 ([00:05:14](#)):

Yes.

Speaker 2 ([00:05:14](#)):

Okay. In approximately 30 minutes, which would be 5 31, is there a motion for this?

Speaker 4 ([00:05:21](#)):

I would make a motion saying the

Speaker 2 ([00:05:22](#)):

Same. So

Speaker 4 ([00:05:24](#)):

Moved.

Speaker 2 ([00:05:25](#)):

Motion by Littlejohn, seconded by sellers. All in favor say aye. Aye. Aye. Motion passes four zero. And I didn't hear Lisa's, but I presume she's Yes. Okay. Okay. Welcome everybody. We're back from our first executive session and I think we didn't take any action in that executive session, but we may have a motion to discuss.

Speaker 4 ([00:35:26](#)):

Yes, I move. We direct staff to prepare and submit testimony consistent with our recent discussions in the matter of the petition of ever g Kansas Central Incorporated, et cetera. Docket number 25 dash EKCE dash 2 0 7 dash PRE, currently pending before the Kansas Corporation Commission.

Speaker 5 ([00:35:46](#)):

Second,

Speaker 2 ([00:35:47](#)):

The motion is by little John. Second by sellers. All in favor say aye. Aye. Those opposed?

Speaker 5 ([00:35:57](#)):

And I need to recuse myself from that to vote so not vote one way or the other because of a conflict of interest.

Speaker 2 ([00:36:03](#)):

Okay. Very good. So we've got a motion that passes for four zero with one. Well,

Speaker 6 ([00:36:10](#)):

Comm Commissioner Larson has not voted.

Speaker 2 ([00:36:11](#)):

Oh, I'm sorry. Commissioner Larson. I thought I heard that.

Speaker 7 ([00:36:17](#)):

Yes. Yeah, I vote for it.

Speaker 2 ([00:36:19](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 7 ([00:36:20](#)):

Thank you.

Speaker 2 ([00:36:21](#)):

Thank you. So the motion passes 4 2 0 with one in abstention. Okay. The next item on the agenda is this another executive session.

Speaker 4 ([00:36:34](#)):

Alright. And I want to make a motion to recess into executive session for approximately 20 minutes to discuss privileged legal communications from the city's attorneys regarding potential litigation pursuant to KSA 75 dash 4 31 9 B two. The justification for executive sessions to keep attorney-client privileged matters confidential. At this time, the city commission will resume its regular meeting in the city commission room at approximately what time is it? 5 52? No, 20. Yeah. 5 52 after the executive session is concluded.

Speaker 2 ([00:37:13](#)):

Second. Okay. So motion, excuse me, by little John second and by Finkel Dye. All in favor say aye. Aye.

Speaker 3 ([00:37:20](#)):

Aye.

Speaker 2 ([00:37:22](#)):

Okay. Motion passes for

Speaker 1 ([00:37:24](#)):

Aye. There

Speaker 2 ([00:37:25](#)):

We go. Five zero. Thank you. I think we're ready to go. We're back from our second executive session and we had nothing to report. The next item on the agenda is for us to read the rules of the meeting. Sherry, would you please do so?

Speaker 6 ([00:56:38](#)):

Yes. Thank you Mayor.

([00:56:40](#)):

Good evening everyone. Please silence your cell phones to minimize distractions. During the meeting 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 to indicate they wish to speak. 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 speaking. The city reserves the right to turn videos off or mute participants. All comments will be limited to three minutes. The primary format for accessing or participating in this meeting is in person at City Hall. Virtual access to view or participate in the meeting cannot be guaranteed. The chat function will not be monitored. If you have any trouble, the meeting can be viewed on the city's YouTube channel and cable channel 25. Thank you Mayor.

Speaker 2 ([00:57:39](#)):

Thank you very much Sherry. Okay, the next item on the agenda is to approve the agenda. The City Commission reserves the right to amend, supplement, and or reorder the agenda during the meeting. Is there a motion to approve the agenda as is

Speaker 5 ([00:57:51](#)):

Move to approve the agenda.

Speaker 2 ([00:57:52](#)):

Second. Motion to approve the agenda by Finkel D. Seconded by Littlejohn. All in favor say aye. Aye.

Speaker 3 ([00:57:58](#)):

Aye.

Speaker 2 ([00:57:59](#)):

Motion passes. Five zero. Okay. The next item on the agenda is to proceed with some recognitions and proclamations. The first one is a proclamation for Kevin Wilmont this evening, and I think today, I think Anna Neil is here today to receive this proclamation. Would you like to speak at all before I read this proclamation?

Speaker 3 ([00:58:26](#)):

Sure I can.

Speaker 2 ([00:58:26](#)):

I would appreciate that. Thank you.

Speaker 8 ([00:58:31](#)):

Last week the KU film and Media Studies Department hosted a festival of Kevin Wilts films at Liberty Hall to honor him at the time of his retirement from the university. Despite the weather, this was extremely well attended and the audiences enjoyed talking with Kevin about his distinguished career as an independent filmmaker and about the stories that his films tell of our times Kevin has given much to this community through his art, his teaching, and the many events and organization he supports and participates in. He's put Lawrence on the map nationally and globally for the making of provocative and community building independence cinema. The film and media studies department is delighted to see him recognized by the city through this proclamation. Thank you.

Speaker 2 ([00:59:21](#)):

Thank you very much. That was kind. Alright. I'll go ahead and read the proclamation. Whereas Kevin Wilmont, screenwriter director and KU professor emeritus of film and media studies known for his work related to African-American, excuse me, African-American history and underrepresented stories, grew up Injunction City, Kansas. And whereas Kevin Wilmont has represented independent film in Kansas through the pioneering works like CSA, the Confederate states of America, the only good Indian Jay Hawkers, bunker Hill and Destination Planet Negro. And whereas Mr. Wilma's catalog of work includes film such as the only Good Indian Chirac, the five Bloods, the 24, no place like home, and the heroic true life adventures of Alvin Brooks. All bodies of work that tackle the untold stories of historical and social injustice in our country. And whereas Kevin Wilmont has received international honors, including an Academy Award for best adapted screenplay for co-writing, the black KK Klansman, a critically acclaimed film directed by a collaborator Spike Lee, and based on the memoir of Ron Stallworth, a black police officer who infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan.

([01:00:28](#)):

And whereas Kevin has fostered a practice of community-based filmmaking, allowing him to fully realize his vision on the screen and help students plan and initiate career paths in independent cinema. And whereas Kevin generously gives back to the community sharing his time and talents with Liberty Hall, the free state festival of Lawrence Arts Center, van Gogh, the Lawrence Public Library, the Watkins Museum of History, and many others. And whereas the city of Lawrence honors the achievements of Kevin Wilmont through his history making and trendsetting bodies of work, his films elevate and expand conversations around racial and social justice and black cinematic representation in America and globally. Now therefore, I Mike Dever, mayor of the city of Lawrence, Kansas, to hereby proclaim Tuesday, March 4th, 2025, as Kevin Wilmont Day in honor of the artistic excellence and international recognition of his past and present work and the inspiring stories he continues to tell. Thank you very much. Well, that was a lot, but he has done a lot for sure, having him in our city and to know him as a person and a friend. So thank you so much for that. The next thing on the agenda is another proclamation. This one is related to the St. Patrick's Day parade. And would I have someone from the committee come up to speak to this or any of you? Yes.

Speaker 9 ([01:02:02](#)):

Hi, I'm Kay Traver. I'm one of the board members. I'll actually probably have Roger Browning speak and in the past when we give you silly things, we were able to go up to you, but I think we can't now. So if you would come up and pass these out to everybody who's here, a couple really appreciate that. But Roger, do you want to speak to anything or Michelle, would you rather? Yeah. Okay. One for

Speaker 10 ([01:02:27](#)):

Want to say thank you to the community of Lawrence for all the years since 1988 that we provided a parade and how we believe in Irish heritage and what we do is to raise money for children's charities in Lawrence and Douglas County. We've raised \$1.6 million over the years for over

Speaker 9 ([01:02:49](#)):

55 different children's charities in the Douglas County area.

Speaker 10 ([01:02:52](#)):

We're looking to continue that again this year.

Speaker 2 ([01:02:55](#)):

That's exciting. Awesome. Do you want to add anything else to this?

Speaker 10 ([01:02:59](#)):

I like it.

Speaker 2 ([01:03:00](#)):

Any other shameless plugs? This is your

Speaker 9 ([01:03:05](#)):

Chance

Speaker 2 ([01:03:07](#)):

Auction.

Speaker 9 ([01:03:07](#)):

Happy Mardi Gras. And there's an auction on Friday. Please come because there's cool stuff and really good food.

([01:03:14](#)):

Oh, so our three charities this year, two of which are brand new, which is really nice for us, are the ecumenical Campus ministries, which is kind of cattycorner from the Orid. And then we also have the children's program through Theater Lawrence, which has a wonderful program called Penguin Project, which has kids with disabilities who are partnered up to do shows where they can perform, but they have a partner who can help them out in case they have any problems or issues with that. And then 100 Good Women, which is another umbrella charity program that, as you probably know, does a wonderful clothing exchange in April, but they do work throughout the year to help families with children who need a little extra boost in different things. So those are our three main charities. We've got two more events, the auction this Friday, obviously the parade, but then also Irish Road Bowling the week after the parade, which we love and it's a great time to get outdoors in rain, snow, or shine. It's wonderful. So

Speaker 2 ([01:04:24](#)):

Well we appreciate all you do for the community through your collection, through this fundraising, so thank you. And it's a lot of fun too, and that's the best part of it. So I'm going to go ahead and read the proclamation

Speaker 7 ([01:04:34](#)):

In the honor of one of our favorite committee members who's no longer with us. Hank Booth would say it's going to be partly cloudy 57 and just a beautiful day have parade on actually March 17th, but just there's a Monday at 1:00 PM

Speaker 2 ([01:04:47](#)):

Awesome. Great. You would say that every year that's the official weather forecast. Thank you for that. Whether it's real or not, that's what we're saying, I guess. Alright, we'll go ahead and read it. Whereas in 2025, the Lawrence St. Patrick's Day parade committee is celebrating its 38th year as an organization in Lawrence. And whereas the committee focuses on four main themes, honoring Irish Americans and their contributions, celebrating St. Patrick's spirit through a traditional parade promoting an atmosphere of benevolence and cooperation during event and exemplifying the idea of charity and goodwill within the Lawrence community. And whereas this year's parade will be decorated, or excuse me, dedicated to honor the founders of the Lawrence St. Patrick's Day parade committee, bill Sullivan, Mike Rebeck, Wes Cabler, Mike Jones, Mike Wilson, and Jean Shaughnessy. Additionally, as always, the parade will honor the military, Douglas County law enforcement and emergency services, and whereas the Lawrence St. Patrick's Day parade committee is self-supporting and relies on the resources of local businesses and citizens who generously donate their time, talents and good humor to sponsor charitable causes each year. Now therefore, I'm Mike Daver, the city of Lawrence, Kansas. Do hereby proclaim March 17th, 2025 as the day of the city of Lawrence's eighth 38th annual St. Patrick's Day parade. And thank you to the citizens of Lawrence for supporting the committee's charity. Fundraiser events during the St. Patrick's Day season, October through March. That's a big season. Thank you.

([01:06:22](#)):

Thank you so much. Sherry, did you go on? Do you guys want, oh yeah, thanks for the ducks. Always good for a thank you. We got a lot. Thank. Thanks for coming and good luck on the weather and all the attendance is great, I hope.

Speaker 6 ([01:06:38](#)):

Thank you so much. No problem.

Speaker 2 ([01:06:40](#)):

Erin. Go bra as they say. Okay, the next item on the agenda is the consent agenda. Item 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 discussions if desired, members of the public will be limited to three minutes. Four comments. Okay. First of all, is there any items that a commissioner would like removed from the consent agenda?

Speaker 4 ([01:07:14](#)):

I would like to remove D seven D

Speaker 2 ([01:07:21](#)):

Just for clarification. Sure. D seven. Which one?

Speaker 4 ([01:07:23](#)):

It's the general obligation and improvement bonds. Very good.

Speaker 2 ([01:07:27](#)):

DE seven D. Very good. Anything else from commissioners? Commissioner Larson?

Speaker 7 ([01:07:36](#)):

No, I'm good.

Speaker 2 ([01:07:37](#)):

Okay, thank you. Any members of the public want to remove an item from the consent agenda? I think there's a quasi judicial one there. Two doesn't sound like it. Okay. So is there a motion to approve the consent agenda minus item D seven D

Speaker 5 ([01:08:00](#)):

Move to approve the consent agenda with exception of D seven D

Speaker 3 ([01:08:03](#)):

Second.

Speaker 2 ([01:08:04](#)):

Okay. Motion by Finkel Dye, seconded by sellers. All in favor say aye. Aye.

Speaker 3 ([01:08:10](#)):

Aye. Aye.

Speaker 2 ([01:08:11](#)):

Okay. Motion passes. Five zero. Okay, let's move on to item D seven D, commissioner Bartle, John. Bartle, John.

Speaker 4 ([01:08:21](#)):

Yeah,

Speaker 2 ([01:08:21](#)):

That works too. This is the hardest part.

Speaker 4 ([01:08:25](#)):

Combine them both. I wonder if it It's

Speaker 2 ([01:08:29](#)):

All right. Bartle. John. I've said it before, so I'm going to,

Speaker 4 ([01:08:33](#)):

Okay. Yeah,

Speaker 2 ([01:08:34](#)):

It's all right.

Speaker 4 ([01:08:35](#)):

I was wondering if we could have someone from staff come up and speak to this just in terms of the reasoning why and behind it. I think we had some questions regarding it, so thank you.

Speaker 11 (01:08:49):

Absolutely. Rochelle Matthews, director of finance, happy to talk about this item. So what's before you? Tonight is our notice of sale for our annual geo bonds and temporary notes. So what this really is, is an extension of our CIP process where we're following through with the funding mechanism. I think we've had some questions before about how this impacts our operating budget, and I think it's important to know that we do not budget debt service in our general fund. We have dedicated funds with dedicated revenue streams for this long-term debt service. We have a debt service fund for our general obligation projects like streets and roads and buildings. And then my MSO business partners have funding inside our utilities for those utility funding projects.

Speaker 4 (01:09:36):

Awesome. That's kind of what I wanted to ask, clarify the reason, and I think I was able to see and the 2025 budget book, is there a place where people can see our policies and procedures regarding the budget process and also debt service or anything like that?

Speaker 11 (01:09:58):

Absolutely. The debt service fund is a budgeted fund and the city managers fund just or proposed budget like any other fund. So you can look in there, our budget page does have our budget process and timeline on there, and as we get to developing documents, those will be linked there as well. And a shameless plug for finance, we have a couple tools available. Spoiler alert to my presentation here in a minute where people can go to our City of Lawrence finance page and we have links where you can go look at our bonds from both a geo perspective and a utility rev perspective on the internet.

Speaker 4 (01:10:35):

Good deal.

Speaker 2 (01:10:36):

Thank you. Exciting. Okay, is there any other questions tonight? Right now on this? Okay. I don't have any. Nope. Commissioner Larson, any questions?

Speaker 7 (01:10:52):

No, I don't.

Speaker 2 (01:10:53):

Alright, thank you. Any questions from the public or public comment on this?

Speaker 6 (01:11:06):

Another one lying.

Speaker 5 (01:11:08):

Okay.

Speaker 2 (01:11:09):

Is there a

Speaker 5 ([01:11:10](#)):

Motion just real quick, because I responded to a couple emails today. So if you go to our budget online and you go to page 1 66, it's the entire CIP and it lists on there every place how we fund each one. So it'll tell you which one. So when we pass this, that was clear. Page one 90 is the debt management policy that sets that Commissioner Littlejohn asked about and then page, excuse me. Yeah, 2 39 is the page that has our legal debt limit on it. And then the revenue side that was just mentioned, I think that's page 77 and page 81 that sets forth those funds how we pay for these bonds. So anyway, if you check out the budget book, you can see all those pages and with that I would move to adopt on first street ordinance number 1 0 1 1 9 authorizing and providing for the issuance of general obligation improvement bonds series 2 0 2 5 A of the city of Lawrence, Kansas, providing for the levy and collection of an annual tax for the purpose of pain and the principal injuries of said bonds as they become due otherwise certain documents and actions in connection they're with and making certain covenants with respect thereto.

Speaker 3 ([01:12:33](#)):

Second.

Speaker 2 ([01:12:34](#)):

Second. Okay. Motion by Finkle dice. Second by sellers. All in favor say aye. Aye.

Speaker 5 ([01:12:39](#)):

Aye.

Speaker 2 ([01:12:40](#)):

Motion passes five zero. Thank you for reading that. Okay. The next item on the agenda is a work session item and we deferred one related to the tenant experiences report, the Douglas County Tenant Experiences report, and we're moving on to receive a strategic plan update from the social sound fiscal stewardship committee team. And I can't read this tonight, that's why I got glasses. So they're just not quite right from this distance right now. I'm sorry. Hey

Speaker 4 ([01:13:10](#)):

Rochelle. I'm just glad it's just not me

Speaker 2 ([01:13:12](#)):

Written a love. Yeah, for sure. Sorry about that. Yeah,

Speaker 11 ([01:13:16](#)):

It is all good. We'll get our slides going here. All right. And again, I am Rochelle Matthews. I'm your director of finance and I am also your sound fiscal steward commitment champion. So tonight I kind of wanted to walk through an overview of this commitment area and some of our KPIs, but where I really want to spend the bulk of our time is walking you through how we do this work to support our outcome areas. Also talk about a few accomplishments and opportunities we have coming up and then as I alluded to before, talk about some areas of how to engage with this area. So sound fiscal stewardship is the efficient use and sustainable management of resources that align with our community priorities. We build and maintain public trust while using our resources to achieve high value. We provide easy access to relevant accurate data for budgeting and decision-making.

(01:14:18):

I would like to highlight this as our utility billing team at a recent red carpet event. So we have multiple KPIs across our outcome areas. These are more than just our financial data. We're talking about measuring our infrastructure, our economic activity, and even our budget efficiency across every outcome area from strong, welcoming neighborhoods, unmistakable identity, secure and safe prosperity and economic security, and our connected cities team. So let's talk about how we do this work. How does our area bring the bang for the buck for our colleagues and for the community? Our first area is financial reporting here in a few months, I'll be before you again with our annual financial audit. So that is our annual comprehensive financial report. We also produce a popular annual financial report, which is our annual data in a more consumable, easy to read format without having to have an accounting background.

(01:15:21):

We also have several data portals available for this. So all of those documents come from our audit process, which is completed by an independent outside auditor that issues our final financial statement. And why is this important? So these financial reports underpin so much of our activity from grant applications to issuing debt. Similarly talked to tonight, the independent market rating for our bonds when they're sold, as well as comparing ourselves to our peers both regionally and across the government finance community. Next up we have procurement services. So this is how we buy goods and services to support our programs and staff to ensure safe and effective operations. This is really an area that supports all of our outcomes. On average, we bid or let a hundred unique events a year to find the best service and best lowest cost for this services that we need. We also have access to 18 different cooperative bidding agreements or group of agreements.

(01:16:28):

So what these are contracts or agreements from another government that we can leverage to enhance our buying power or take advantage of rates that have already been negotiated. A really good example of this is the state of Kansas. They have any number of public contracts that we're allowed to piggyback on or leverage from to obtain their benefit from their immense buying power. These also have the benefit of reducing the administrative burden on staff of having to do a full bid event if there's a co-op with attractive pricing ready. In 2024, we issued over 580 purchase orders and 521 contracts to get the goods and services into the hands of our outcomes and our internal service departments to be able to do their jobs. We also participate in accredited organizations to stay up on best practices and learn from our colleagues. I think I would like to highlight that March is National Procurement Month as reported by the NIGP, which is the National Institute for Public Procurement, which we are members of.

Speaker 5 (01:17:41):

We need a proclamation for that. Okay, great.

Speaker 2 (01:17:47):

German parade.

Speaker 11 (01:17:49):

Next up is utility billing. And I think this is one of our more recognizable areas because it is so customer facing, but this is where our staff really interact with the citizens on a day-to-day basis with anything account billing and service related for things like water, sewer and trash services. This really intersects with our strong welcoming neighborhoods and connected cities teams. Now here are some numbers I want to share with you. Our team issued more than 425,000 utility bills in 2024. They started service for over 8,500 customers and handled 38,000 customer service phone calls. So I would like to take some time

to appreciate the tremendous amount of work that they have done and I have some exciting achievements and some opportunities coming up later.

(01:18:38):

So next up is investment management. This is maybe a lesser known one where the city has funds and what do we do with those funds? They don't all just sit in a checking account. So as sound fiscal stewardship, it's our duty to make sure we have funds on hand on time to be able to fulfill the needs of our departments and the expectations of our citizens. So again, this one crosses all our outcomes. Everybody has bills to pay as stewards. Like our first priority is that timing of making sure funds are available when needed. Our next priority is safety and security and making sure we're investing in things of high quality with safety and backing. And finally after that, we will look at yield and earnings as a revenue stream for the city. I think it's important to remind people our deposits are fully collateralized. So for every dollar we have invested or in a bank, we have \$1 or more of collateral on hand to replace that money should something happen.

(01:19:40):

We also have a policy as approved by the governing body about what we are to invest in. So we as a city choose to invest in certificates of deposits for banks that locally reside inside our city limits. We will invest in other municipalities bonds similar to what we saw earlier tonight on the agenda and then federal US treasuries. And so that is where we invest our portfolio to make sure we're having those timely payments and having security. Next up is accounting services. So this is really where we get into the language of business. This is where a lot of data lies. These activities look like timely payments to vendors, timely reimbursements to employees, accurate billing and receivables grant management, and really generating that data that then feeds into our financial reporting. In 2024, we paid over 25,000 invoices as a city generated 400 billing documents and generated 15,000 journal entries.

(01:20:47):

So our outcomes really rely on this data to be able to be accurate and timely and in the system so that they can make their budget decisions and they can perform their forecasting and other important tasks that are critical to their operations. And lastly is debt management. And we've talked about this before. Debt management really is that issuance of short-term and long-term debt to support the CIP and capital asset planning needs of the city. So we do for governmental purposes, we also do for utility purposes, we do this through a competitive sale process. So we go out into the market, we have people bid on the opportunity to issue our bonds to achieve the lowest cost of borrowing as possible. We also regularly, annually evaluate our current portfolio to look at interest rate savings for refunding, opportunities to achieve some savings there. And we also then work on the backend with our connected city folks and our unmistakable identity folks just to name a couple to help them manage and forecast their debt service obligations. Kind of like we talked to earlier.

(01:21:57):

Now, successes and milestones, I think a big one that several of you have noted before in the last year and a half the city transitioned ERP systems and payroll systems. This transition was a major milestone and a huge achievement for staff. I don't think some of those statistics that I have rattled off in the previous slide would be possible without that investment in our sound fiscal stewardship in our efficient and effective processes. I would like to take a moment to thank that implementation team as well as the rest of the champions for making that a successful process. The next one up is A GFO Triple Crown winner. The Triple Crown Award is for governments who achieve awards of excellence across their annual comprehensive financial report, their popular annual financial report and their budget book. So just for context, there are about 350 organizations nationwide that achieve this status and only seven in Kansas. And for 2023 fiscal year we were the city of Lawrence was a triple crown winner. So I think that's a huge achievement for us and it represents the hundreds of hours and months of work that go into the audit and our financial data management.

(01:23:14):

Next up is our audit, which we will be coming around to shortly. The city of Lawrence has a 10 year history of an unmodified audit opinion. Well what does that mean? That is the highest opinion a government can achieve for a clean audit. And so that value also feeds back into our audits are looked on favorably in those grant applications in our borrowing to the general market of having those clean opinions. Next up, the A MI, the advanced metered infrastructure. This is for my utility billing folks. So this is software that provides hourly reads at meters and it really has enhanced our ability to have timely and detailed information at hand when we're working to assist customers and our colleagues in the field with issues as we, this has been a huge improvement to the efficiency in our areas. We've also launched a new dumpster rental software in 2024 that was very successful and very well received by the public.

(01:24:18):

You can now go online, see the availability, schedule your dumpster pay for it without having to sit in the phone queue. Staff has visibility to that. And so I want a huge thank you for the utility billing for getting that up and off because I think that's been well received by all. And last one is my favorite. In 2024, we had two finance employees complete and graduate the lead program. And we have two more slated to be part of the 2025 class. And we are so excited to support and continue their journey as city of Lawrence employees and as engaged employees ready to move into that next step.

(01:25:01):

So what do we have as upcoming opportunities? One item our procurement staff is really excited about is moving to a web-based platform for our bidding portal. This upgraded experience will enhance the efficiency for both our bidders and our city staff who are working on their bids. It has an enhanced question and answer feature. It is we're able to incorporate templates to try to reduce administrative burden on staff who maybe don't bid all the time or just need some of that extra help and just having the information in one place to have access to both procurement staff and our department. Similarly, our utility billing department is also working to launch a new and improved customer service portal. This is feedback that we've gotten that people would like to be able to do more online.

(01:25:49):

And so please stay tuned in the flame and our announcements in our bill that we anticipate this coming off in 2025. We encourage participation in our peer and our professional groups. We're members of GFOA, which is the Government Finance Officers Association. We're members of NIGP and several other professional organizations. So this gives us access to peer communities and benchmarking data, think tanks and conferences and trainings that we can help bring ideas as we're working through challenges or opportunities in our department in our city. And the last one is our friends, the accounting rules standards folks, GS B are always keeping us on our toes. And so for this fiscal year and next we have three new pronouncements, which is a big word for accounting rules that you will hear from us as we start walking through the next two audits.

(01:26:53):

And finally, as promised, I've provided some links here. So we have three different transparency portals. We have a revenue budget transparency portal, operating budget, which is your expense side, and then a vendor payment portal. All of 2025 data is loaded in here and these are excellent ways for people to watch budget to actuals. I've also linked to our fer and our PR for anybody that's interested in looking out there. Our act for goes back 20 years if you are so inclined. And then also our City of Lawrence finance page, which has the links to our debt and several of our policies and other forms of reporting. So with that, I would stand with any questions you have.

Speaker 2 (01:27:37):

That was great. Thank you very much. Commissioners, do you have any questions?

Speaker 5 ([01:27:43](#)):

Just thank you for the presentation. Thanks for all you're doing. And your staff, obviously you're fairly new to the city. From your experience in Topeka or other experiences, anything you see we should be doing or thinking about differently going forward?

Speaker 11 ([01:28:01](#)):

I would say I regularly attend peer groups both regionally here on the eastern side of Kansas. And then I'm a member of the statewide, the state board for Kansas, GFOA. I think I would like to point out we are well ahead of the budget process of almost all of our peers and I want to encourage a continued engagement in that and continued work on you guys that doing this work early and often is going to set ourselves up for long-term success.

Speaker 3 ([01:28:30](#)):

Great.

Speaker 2 ([01:28:37](#)):

I had a question about the program. Was it lead program? You mentioned

Speaker 11 ([01:28:40](#)):

Lead. Yes.

Speaker 2 ([01:28:41](#)):

Yeah, tell me about that.

Speaker 11 ([01:28:43](#)):

So that is, and this is my HR friends might have to help me, but it is an internal leadership program that's developed where team members from every department across the city have the opportunity to apply and they do a nine month leadership process where they have a mentor to them and work through a series of exercises. They're one of the groups that does our balancing act and then at the end of that, they get to graduate as they've learned more about the city, made new contexts maybe in departments they hadn't previously worked for and then pick up some leadership skills.

Speaker 2 ([01:29:18](#)):

Understood. Thank you. That's interesting. And then you talked about the software and the platforms that you have and then what you'd like to acquire. But can you tell me, has this technology really helped? Is it really providing any benefits that are unexpected? Those kind of questions?

Speaker 11 ([01:29:41](#)):

Absolutely.

Speaker 2 ([01:29:42](#)):

And using it,

Speaker 11 ([01:29:43](#)):

I think there's some acknowledge that needs to go to that. Implementation is always hard no matter how good the software is. And so I will pull an example from our world. I have Jennifer Wirth, my assistant

finance director here with me tonight. We are deep in audit already and easily where we are with this software and with our staff. We are two months ahead of the audit process from where we were last year because we've learned the tool, we've adapted to its capabilities and its capacities to use them to our advantage to work quicker, faster, and more efficiently.

Speaker 2 ([01:30:17](#)):

Interesting. So it's actually doing what it claimed to do and reducing your overall labors, hopefully time-wise, spending on or 15,000 journal entries that you mentioned. That's pretty impressive. And to the last one to that point is this technology and the influence of other platforms that we're using, is that going to help in your quest to audit and to provide even better numbers or even more sincere or faster results on those queries now that you need it and may have it in electronic format more readily?

Speaker 11 ([01:30:52](#)):

I think I love this question. That's an excellent question of yes, there are things that we're finding that we're automating or that we can do better or maybe that weren't their legacy processes that we no longer need to do. So we've been really looking in the accounting stack and even some of our other divisions of what have we automated, what can the system do for us that maybe a person was doing before so that we can move them onto that next level task doing more analysis and less of the data entry. And so I think that's going to come with iterations as we learn the software, as the software continues to upgrade and provide enhancements.

Speaker 2 ([01:31:34](#)):

And that bidding platform you talked about, I don't know how you're doing it now per se, but I can't believe it's all paper at this point in time, is it?

Speaker 11 ([01:31:44](#)):

No, but it's electronic email, so it's a lot

Speaker 2 ([01:31:46](#)):

Of annual.

Speaker 11 ([01:31:47](#)):

Yes, it is still, it's an electronic manual process and it's very incumbent on humans and making sure if I'm out of the office, then I have my delegate in place to be able to handle that workflow for me. With the system, we'll be able to automate some of that and have it all in a single place so that it's all, and every bid will follow the same process. It won't be in someone's inbox. We're very excited about that. It'll

Speaker 2 ([01:32:11](#)):

All be consistent. You'll have templates you reach of these requests and it'll all be there pretty soon. There'll be no missing words or in the same error repeated kind of thing. So how do you feel about that? Do you think it's worth the money or do you feel like it's something that is nice to have but we don't necessarily need?

Speaker 11 ([01:32:32](#)):

I think this one is something we need because we are in a budget reality that we are. I think it's ever more important to get the bang for our buck. And if we can be better with our bids and more consistent and use clear language and be more accessible to our vendors, could we get more bids? Are we going to get better

bids? Time will tell on that. There are market conditions at play that factor into how we buy things, but I think being easier to do business with will open a lot of opportunities for people to come to us to provide their goods and services.

Speaker 2 ([01:33:05](#)):

That's great to know. Thank you. Any other questions from y'all on this? You, sorry, I got a frog in my throat tonight. Thank you so much for the presentation. That was very good. Do we any public comment on this item in the room, right Sherry, any public comment?

Speaker 6 ([01:33:35](#)):

No,

Speaker 2 ([01:33:38](#)):

It's quiet. Okay. Scared.

Speaker 4 ([01:33:44](#)):

I would just quickly like to say thank you, Rochelle, to you and your staff for this presentation. It was really informative and I'm just encouraged, especially when you mentioned our budget, but we're not alone. Other municipalities are kind of in the same boat as well. But what I'm really, really happy about is the accessibility of some of these tools and the efficiencies that the mayor mentioned as well earlier that it will create and then hopefully we'll be able to do, as you said, have a little bit more bang for our buck. So thank you.

Speaker 2 ([01:34:17](#)):

Yeah, it's encouraging to hear how highly regarded we are in the auditing eyes as well. So thank you for that. I'm sure there's a lot of 10 years of data says we're good, but thanks for highlighting how well we're doing and of course the award that we get for being better than most people. Thank you. Okay, I think that's it for now. Any commission items? Okay. Anybody I might check with Commissioner Mr. Anything from you? No, I'm good. Alright, great. Thank you. Alright. And then the future agenda item report. We're not having a meeting next week. That's a note to everybody. And anything on the item upcoming here that we need to talk about

Speaker 5 ([01:35:20](#)):

April 1st? Preliminary budgets. Exciting times? That looks good.

Speaker 2 ([01:35:30](#)):

Okay. Alright. I think at this point in time we'll go ahead and end the live broadcast.

Speaker 5 ([01:35:35](#)):

We have city managers. City manager's report. Is it in there?

Speaker 2 ([01:35:38](#)):

Yeah. Oh, sorry. I was looking forward to there. Sorry, I scrolled down too far. I didn't see it. Sorry. City manager's report.

Speaker 10 ([01:35:44](#)):

Thanks Mayor. The only item on there is a regular utility billing report. Okay. I To answer any

Speaker 2 ([01:35:50](#)):

Questions, public comment on the city manager's report,

Speaker 3 ([01:35:57](#)):

Comm,

Speaker 2 ([01:35:59](#)):

Sorry. There's none. Great. Any commissioner comments on the city manager's report? Thank you very much. Okay. At this time we're going to end our live broadcast.

Speaker 4 ([01:36:12](#)):

Oh, commission calendar.

Speaker 2 ([01:36:14](#)):

Didn't we do that already? No, no. Oh man, I'm so sorry. My eyes are really, I worked this on here. Yeah, that's my fault. Sorry. It's

Speaker 4 ([01:36:23](#)):

All good.

Speaker 2 ([01:36:24](#)):

So commission calendar. Nothing for me on this end.

Speaker 3 ([01:36:31](#)):

Looks

Speaker 2 ([01:36:31](#)):

Good. Okay. Very good. Anybody else?

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

Nope.

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

Okay.

Speaker 5 ([01:36:38](#)):

Now finally,

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

Yeah, go ahead and end our live broadcast. Okay. We'll go ahead and have open public comment at this time.