

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

I'm going to bang away. Good evening everyone. Welcome to the July 15th, 2025 Lawrence City Commission meeting. I'm going to start out by asking Sherry to read the rules of the meeting.

Speaker 2 ([00:00:15](#)):

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 panelist. 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 and all comments will be limited to three minutes. The city reserves the right to turn videos off or mute participants. Thank you Mayor.

Speaker 1 ([00:01:02](#)):

Alright, thank you very much. Sherry. First item on the agenda is to approve the agenda and the 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 ([00:01:15](#)):

Move to approve the agenda.

Speaker 1 ([00:01:17](#)):

Second. Okay. A motion by Fing. Second by Littlejohn. All in favor say aye. Aye.

Speaker 4 ([00:01:24](#)):

Aye.

Speaker 1 ([00:01:25](#)):

Okay. Motion passes. Five zero. Alright. The next item on our agenda is to proclaim July 15th, 2025 as American with Disabilities Act Day. And I think I believe Mr. Ray Petty from the Great Plains a DA is here to receive our proclamation. And I'd love you to speak out and talk to us about this.

Speaker 5 ([00:01:53](#)):

Do you want to look at you on the camera? Yeah, on the tv. It's a real pleasure to be here to receive and represent the disability community. I was involved in getting the A DA passed, getting it written into a bill form and working with, at that time all five of our Kansas representatives and senators do and Cas Baum who were all proponents and very helpful. And I appreciate the language that's in the proclamation about continuing on with this because there's many things to be done and things have improved, A lot of barriers have been tackled and there's more to go. So thank you very much.

Speaker 1 ([00:02:43](#)):

Well thank you very much for being here and I appreciate your words and your efforts for this important act and I look forward to reading the proclamation. Okay. Whereas the American with Disabilities Act A DA was passed in July 26th, 1990 to ensure the civil rights of people with disabilities. This legislation established a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities. And whereas the A DA has expanded opportunities for Americans with

disabilities by reducing barriers and changing perceptions in increasing full participation in community life. However, the full promise of the ADA will only be reached if we continue our efforts to fully implement it. And whereas on this day, we in the city of Lawrence can to celebrate and recognize the progress that's been made by reaffirming the principles of equality and inclusion and recommitting our efforts to reach full a a compliance. Now therefore, I'm Mike Dever, mayor of the City of Lawrence, Kansas. Due, hereby proclaim July 15th, 2025 as Americans with Disabilities Act Day. Thank you very much. Okay, the next item on our agenda, we have another proclamation, which is to proclaim July 26th, 2025 as Arts and Health Day. And I think we have some members of staff to speak to our proclamation this evening

Speaker 3 ([00:04:07](#)):

On the chair of the board.

Speaker 1 ([00:04:09](#)):

How about that?

Speaker 3 ([00:04:12](#)):

Let's see. Howdy. Just hold the button there Daniel. It'll come up. Just give me a second.

Speaker 6 ([00:04:27](#)):

Alright. Good evening, commissioners. My name is Neil b Smith. I'm the chair of Lawrence's Cultural Arts Commission. I am here today in recognition of Arts and Health Day, acknowledging that while it is important for people in our community to have long and healthy lives, those lives must also be rich and full of meaning. And that those two things are not wholly unrelated. I'd like to share my gratitude that the Lawrence City Commission continues to support parks, recreation, and culture staff so that we can see our many longstanding and innovative programs benefit all people in this community. These include the community arts grants, the unmistakable public art exhibition, city public arts programming, many community events, and the Phoenix Awards. Studies show that participation in art can have health benefits on par with weekly exercise. And I'm proud to live in a city which strives to enable residents to have long, rich, healthy, and meaningful lives. Thank you.

Speaker 1 ([00:05:22](#)):

Thank you. Those are great words. I'm going to go ahead and read the proclamation. Whereas the National League of Cities recognizes that arts and culture have a tremendous impact on cities, towns, and villages across the country. And whereas the National League of Cities recognizes that the impacts of arts and culture span economic development, community and individual health housing and the built environment, workforce development, civic participation, education and social cohesion. And whereas participation in arts experiences has been shown to reduce depression and anxiety, improve physical health outcomes, reduce social isolation and build strong community networks. And whereas through the National Initiatives Arts for everybody, the National League of Cities champion the work of cities of all sizes to increase community wellbeing through partnerships with artists. And whereas the city of Lawrence, Kansas is a proud member of the National League of Cities and has benefited from the organization's research, technical expertise, federal advocacy, and opportunities to learn from other local governments. And whereas Lawrence values the contributions of the arts and culture sector to our city and how the arts make our community unique, engaging, and robust. Now therefore, I Mike De mayor of the city of Lawrence, Kansas due hereby proclaim July 26th, 2025 as Arts and Health Day.

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

Okay, thank you very much for you guys showing up. And we're going to go ahead and move on to the consent agenda. 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 identifies as quasi-judicial for separate discussion if desired, members of the public will be limited to three minutes. For comments. I had one request to remove item CAD. Are there any other items for commissioners that you'd like to remove for separate discussion? No, commissioner sellers. Okay. Alright. So seeing none, do we have a motion to approve the consent agenda minus C eight D

Speaker 3 ([00:07:37](#)):

Move to approve the consent agenda with the exception of C eight D

Speaker 1 ([00:07:40](#)):

Second? Yeah, that's a motion to approve by Fin Dye. Second by Littlejohn. All in favor say aye. Aye.

Speaker 7 ([00:07:46](#)):

Aye.

Speaker 1 ([00:07:48](#)):

Those opposed? Motion passes. Five zero. Alright, item C eight D. Commissioner Finkel.

Speaker 3 ([00:07:56](#)):

Yes. I pulled out the request of Mr. Flowers, so I'll just let you go ahead.

Speaker 8 ([00:08:02](#)):

Hi, this is Chris Flowers. I saw that, I saw this item on today and I'm not necessarily against the proposal. I don't think you've all have done enough looking at the issue. I kind of did a map. I think what the thing is, they want to put a stoplight here at Michigan and 31st, but I was going to say we already have a stoplight at Dale, a stoplight at the Best Buy and then a stoplight at Iowa. And then even past that there's a stoplight at Target. And if it's just for this new development, it's at 3,100. So I'm guessing it's this side of the street, but they could simply go down here, go to 33rd, go up Dale and make a left turn there and people down at the loop, if they're going to make a left turn, they would most likely be able to go down 33rd to do it anyway.

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

Because when I deliver, that's what I do. Rather than make a left where there's no stoplight, I'll take the route that has the stoplight already. So if you're going to put a stoplight, it's really just benefiting these people. And I think what I would do if it's a safety thing, just put a thing where it keeps people from turning left, then it would force them just to go the extra block or two out of the way. But that's not that unheard of because at KU when you did the Dale intersection, you wouldn't let them go straight through Dale. So now they have to go down 19th and Nas Smith or you go to Stewart Avenue. But my point is you're having them drive blocks out of the way anyway. So I'm just wondering if there's a cheaper alternative because this is redundant to have this many stoplights and I think the better thing is make this left turn only now than when this one needs to be replaced.

([00:10:05](#)):

I think it'd make more sense to do it here maybe, but that would be an option. So is there any way you can say, we'll take on the cost of whatever gets put there, but we're not necessarily for a stoplight at this time

because has the multi transportation looked at this? Has there been any community survey? And if there is talk about doing traffic signal coordination that's adding another one. So will that add cost to that? I don't think this should have been put on consent. The date said the 15th, so I think you all need a little bit more time. I wouldn't, don't know. I don't think we need another stoplight there though. I think there's other alternatives. So I just want you to throw that out there. Thank you. Alright,

Speaker 1 ([00:10:57](#)):

Thanks Chris. Any other comments on this item? How about online?

Speaker 7 ([00:11:11](#)):

I'm here.

Speaker 1 ([00:11:12](#)):

Alright, thanks Commissioners. Do you have any comments or questions related to this item or things were brought up this evening?

Speaker 3 ([00:11:26](#)):

Well, I would note that I certainly hear what Chris is saying on this, but this is just an agreement not to protest the formation of the benefit district. And so I think this helps move the project forward. We would still have to form the benefit district and so that would be the time we take a vote on whether or not to actually build it. This just allows them not to protest it if we go that route. So for now, I'm comfortable moving forward with this. And of course at the time of the benefit district, I think we'd be able to see the traffic studies and so forth. But for now, I think move this one ahead, how I feel.

Speaker 1 ([00:12:09](#)):

Yeah, I concur. Anybody else have anything to add or I think that's kind of where we're headed. Lisa, you good?

Speaker 3 ([00:12:17](#)):

Okay. Did I make a motion?

Speaker 1 ([00:12:20](#)):

Yes, please

Speaker 3 ([00:12:21](#)):

Move. We authorize the city manager to negotiate and execute an agreement not to protest the formation of a benefit district slash escrow deposit with Castle Rock Ic or any success or an interest or signee related to the traffic signal improvements at West 31st Street and Michigan Street

Speaker 1 ([00:12:37](#)):

Second. Okay, that's a motion by Finkel Dye and second by Littlejohn. All in favor say aye.

Speaker 3 ([00:12:41](#)):

Aye.

Speaker 1 ([00:12:42](#)):

Aye. Aye.

Speaker 3 ([00:12:43](#)):

Aye.

Speaker 1 ([00:12:44](#)):

Okay. Motion passes. Five zero. All right. The next item on our agenda, sorry, my mouse is going really slow. Alright. Alright, next item is a work session and today we're going to be discussing the presentation from the Parks and Rec related to our membership fees. And the work session provides an opportunity for the city commission to discuss items in greater detail. The commission will take no bidding action on these items presented during this time. Work session topics are eligible for public comment. Members of the public will be limited to three minutes for comments on this item. Thank you.

Speaker 9 ([00:13:34](#)):

Okay. Give me just a minute to set up here.

Speaker 10 ([00:13:43](#)):

Just do your intro. I'll help.

Speaker 9 ([00:13:45](#)):

Okay. Good evening, mayor Commissioners. My name's Luis Ruiz. I am the director of Parks, recreation and Culture. Lindsey Hart, our Assistant Director for Recreation, is going to join me for a portion of this presentation. What we're here tonight to do is talk about the 2026 budget with specific focus on membership fees and how those two interact. The proposal is a product of of work, getting feedback from the community, some scenario scenarios to see how we could potentially produce a budget that produces some of the impacts of what we've been asked to do in this coming year. So today we're going to be discussing, give you a little context and background of why we're here, budget, numbers, expenditures, and we'll go over those, what those look like without any additional revenues from new fees as well as the preferred approach, which has a combination of membership fees and other generated revenues and a lower level of reductions that we'll be working through the purpose of the new fees community engagement summary, the fee structure overview. This is when Lindsay will join, she'll talk about the market comparison, our 2026 numbers and how we came to the numbers that create the budget that we're proposing, and then the implementation plan. And then I'll come back and for discussion and to gather some feedback from you so that we know how to proceed through the remainder of this budget process.

([00:15:34](#)):

So a little bit of background. Our budget is for parks, recreation, and culture from the general fund is approximately 18 million through the balancing Act and the budget process that began early this year. We were given a goal or a target of 10% reduction in our budget, which equates to approximately \$1.8 million. And as you recall, budget has come up here and several times and explained how those tiers broke down and what those reductions were. So our 10 programs that we have within Parks and Recreation varied in what the reductions were as a result of the balancing act and the prioritization. Youth and adult sports was tier one, so they had no effect on their budget for reductions. Tier four Recreation and Wellness and Eagle Bend Golf Course had a 20% reduction target and then every other program also had targeted reductions between 6% and 13%. Some of these programs are revenue generating, so we're able to look at some additional fees to help support some of the reductions that were proposed and others that would be used potentially to help the department as a whole to minimize some of the impact of non-revenue generating activities that our parks department is responsible for.

(00:17:03):

Alright, so let's go over what the \$1.8 million looks like with some minor increments in some of the fees that we charge in our programs such as, and they're at the bottom of this slide, we're looking at approximately being able to, we are estimating about \$370,000 in additional fees from aquatics admission fee. We're looking at a dollar for admission increase from \$67. They did have a target to reduce a hundred thousand dollars or so. That's about the number of visitors that we had last year. That a hundred thousand dollars or so will have a tremendous impact on our ability to maintain those pools open for an appropriate amount of time. So by doing that, we minimize the impact of that program. And facility rental increases, they're regularly programmed into our cost recovery and how we estimate what we're going to charge from year to year. And rental fees are shelters and some of our historic buildings that we rent the depot and others.

(00:18:11):

And then the golf course fee increases as well. So with that, we're looking at to balance our \$1.8 million reduction target, we're looking at approximately \$1.4 million in reductions within our department. Different combinations as I mentioned earlier of those target tiers, but it totals about that. So I have a list that breaks it down a little bit better for us. It's not on here, but of that \$1.4 million, approximately \$1 million is in the Parks Division. So parks, trails, open Spaces, golf course, right of way, maintenance, mass Street and things of that nature. And then a bit over \$400,000 is from the recreation program. So more what happens inside the facilities as opposed to the facilities or the assets themselves. So in this scenario, we're looking at approximately or we're looking at eliminating six positions in total.

(00:19:15):

Now we already have three that are vacant this year, which is in scenario two. When we go to that, you'll see there's only three positions here. This would mean three additional positions. We would be talking about reducing hours and services at our recreation centers. And I do want to say that this was early on when we came up with these numbers from 1.8. So we came up with some figures that we're pretty confident with, but our focus over the last two or three months has been in balancing the budget with these new revenues. So while we have high level details of these, how this happens would be more detailed process throughout the remainder of the year before the budget is approved. But we're looking at potentially closing. And in both scenarios, if you see here we're talking about, actually we'll go back to that, but in both scenarios we're looking at opening the community building for programming. So that would be for if we do the afterschool play for free, that would include that, it would include basketball leagues on Saturdays, it would include yoga classes, it would include lifelong classes and all that. It would just not be open during the day for just drop. In the event that we do admissions, it's impossible to maneuver in that building with that business model. So we're looking at that as a cost saving measure in both scenarios, whether we initiate fees or not.

(00:20:53):

Then another reduction in the service in hours at the rec centers would be closing on holidays. Right now we're open on holidays, 8:00 AM or whatever time, five 30 at sports va, 8:00 AM till 9:00 PM at all the facilities. And I'm not saying that there's not necessarily use, but it is an expense that we're looking at potentially reducing in this scenario we will see impact to our department and those are just examples we'd be looking at closing the indoor and outdoor pools half an hour earlier. Right now it's seven 30. We'd be looking at some cost savings of reducing that. And then potentially, depending on what the final numbers end up in our budget is Hokum and East Lawrence opening up either in the evenings and weekends only or when we have scheduled programming in their fitness classes and the like, but reducing the number of hours that we're open. We're also looking at fewer fitness and sports and recreation classes. Some of these reductions will require us to reduce part-time and we depend heavily on part-time for our recreation instruction, our coaching and all that. So some of those impacts, even though we're not reducing specifically in sports, might be felt through some of the other reductions.

(00:22:16):

Let's see. Okay, moving over to parks. We'd be looking at potentially right now in this year, and I think I mentioned this last week, we're receiving some certainly feedback from the community about some cuts that we did last year and mostly in personnel that is kind of directed us at doing some less maintenance in some of the parks and we see how it affects the community. This would be multiples of that. We're looking at potentially in the scenario that we presented in the balancing act, we were looking at a reduction of some of the parks in neighborhoods. So not that we wouldn't maintain them or mow 'em, but we would remove some of the amenities as they aged out, mow 'em less frequently. So there will be some visible effects of this. And I'm just saying this because I just want to be clear of what could be expected and what \$1.8 million really represents less mowing and trails. Again, as things age out due to age or they just become obsolete. Playground shelters, they become disrepair, they deteriorate. We would not have the funds necessarily to replace those as we do now. The number of budget dollars for budget, reduced budgets for projects would be reduced parking lots and asphalt repair at parks would also be reduced in that scenario.

(00:23:53):

Now as I mentioned, there would be some revenues of \$370,000 potentially without increasing any or adding any additional fees in this model. So we can talk about this and I'll ask for feedback as we go, but what we're going to go now is what the budget looks like with the \$750,000 that we are estimating we would be able to make from the membership fees, which we'll discuss later. So in this scenario, the target budget still reduction, still \$1.8 million, but the reductions in expenditures are about \$690,000. So about half of what it is in scenario one. This case, as I mentioned, three positions which are currently vacant and some restriction, some reductions in park trails and maintenance, but it would not be as severe. And then reduction some reductions in hours at the rec centers. As I mentioned earlier, the community building would, in both scenarios would be used but for specific purposes rather than open 12 hours a day.

(00:25:02):

And then the new membership fees, as I mentioned, we're estimating at \$500,000 and spectator fees are those paid by those tournament or tournament attendees coming primarily to SPL. And then the remainder are the same three increases that we're talking about in scenario one. We can move forward with those as planned and we see little effect or with minimal effect on the new fees or with no effect on the new fees, which are really what we're wanting to move forward with or to present to you. Alright, so here's just a brief revenue comparison. Between 25, our budgeted revenues, which we don't know yet, toward the end of the year we're tracking along the lines of our expected revenues, but right now we're budgeted for \$5.2 million. And if we did not do the membership fees, we're looking at about a 7% increase year over year in revenues with the new membership fees.

(00:26:10):

That revenue increase year over year is 20% roughly. And then the cost recovery, you can see from year to year. Right now we're targeted at 28% department wide. Adding these fees would raise it to 34% or approximately a 21% increase of cost recovery. Just to give some of the scale and some of the numbers behind the budget reasoning. So again, I want to reiterate that the purpose of initiating or even presenting these fees is not for profit for the department. It's to try to maintain as many services as we can. Understanding that we have a target reduction of \$1.8 million and it's either those reductions alone or reductions in combination with revenues. There is an opportunity here based on the numbers, that we have to initiate some of these fees and they will prevent deeper cuts in our services and in our facilities and allow us to maintain acceptable service levels.

(00:27:20):

At most parks, there still would be some reductions with that \$360,000 or \$660,000 that we're stating, but it would not be as severe. And of course retaining staff that allows us to keep our facilities open as well as

program. More losing staff means losing revenue as well because staff we're using them for as lifeguards, we're using 'em as gymnastics coaches and fitness coaches. So they are generating revenue as well. So that's kind of a balancing act that we also need to pay attention to. Not all do some mow the trails, right? So they're not generating, but some of our part-timer and seasonal do generate directly invoice income by being in those positions. And then finally, one of the things that was in specifically in our comprehensive master plan that was I think finally brought to the commission two years after March of this year. It talks about charging appropriate fees for our facilities and for our services.

(00:28:28):

It compares us to other cities in the nation that are receiving revenue through a facility usage. So it just brings us, it makes this attempt is to be consistent with what some of the recommendations and there are are many others. And those ideas have come up throughout the public engagement. What about sponsorships, naming rights, and those are all things that we need to explore. Those are long-term plans for us, but those will actually add more revenue to our system and make it more sustainable. The more cost recovery we can achieve, the better it is for the city, the less subsidized services that we're providing to the community. So those things are still on the table and in our middle and long-term plans. Alright, so then finally I want to talk about the community engagement and what we partnered with our communications office. So the team that you probably all know very well, we created a webpage to push out information to the community as well as invite them in for a survey.

(00:29:37):

The survey which we put out for about three weeks, gathered 2,600 responses. And within those 2,600 responses, 1300 of those or so added freeform comments. And those are all on that website as well. People can sort through this and see what the messages were and we'll talk about what some of those overarching messages were in a minute. But in addition to that, we held four or they held alongside us, four pop-up events, one at each of our recreation centers. And the totaled about 52 individuals, some were individuals. And that last one we did, I believe we had 22, 23 people in the room at once. So they took different shapes and then three focus groups. One was with a combined budget committee, which included the employee committee as well as the community members. And then two other focus groups again managed by our communications office and they're feeding us those responses so that we implemented this into our proposed fees and program.

(00:30:48):

Alright, and I think next is some of those results. As I mentioned, we had approximately 2,600 responses. What our initial hope was with the survey, pricing wasn't out. We hadn't proposed any specific fees or anything like that at that point. But what we were trying to gather was two things. One was community use of our facilities and the purpose for which they used and how frequently they used them so that we can start to create packages around that, right? And it's a high number of daily users, a high number of several times a week. So we're looking at what type of membership packages can we offer that fit all that flexibility and where are you going most SPL is the heavy hitter here, so how do we create a package that represents that use? And then of course, the other thing that we wanted to understand was sentiment about fees. We were not surprised that we had a high level of respondents saying that they strongly oppose fees.

(00:31:55):

One of the reasons is we sent the survey link out to 27,000 recreation center users within our database. So we know that these are users that are using our facilities and for the most part outside of programs are using for free. So we weren't surprised that we were going to get this kind of feedback, but we wanted to see it. What is that sentiment? How can we measure this? Even if it's self-selected, it's not a random statistically valid survey, but it does give us feedback directly into our inbox, if you will. And then if you have these feelings towards fees, what are those major concerns that make you feel a certain way? And that's what we try to capture and that's what we try to address within our program and how it's being presented today with access low income families and seniors and access for children. So with that I'm

going to turn over to Lindsey and at the end I'll come back with questions that either of us can answer for you. Thanks Luis.

Speaker 11 ([00:33:09](#)):

Good evening. I'm Lindsey Hart, assistant Director of Parks recreation and Culture. I'm going to review the fee structure and a little bit further detail with you this evening. And so to start, just wanted to talk about just the overview and some of the things that we kept in mind as we were coming up with the structure. And so from the beginning, as Luis just mentioned, we did listen to feedback from the community and their concerns and we wanted to address that as much as possible as we created the structure. So we started with flexible options. We understand that there are all different types of users. Some people use our facility on a daily basis, some use it a couple times a year. Some people have family that come in from out of town and want some options to bring their family with them. So we will be offering day passes and punch cards, which gives some flexible options to the occasional users.

([00:33:59](#)):

And then for the regular users, we'll have monthly memberships for those who may just use it seasonally or just depending on what they plan to use it for. And then we'll have annual membership options, which will in essence be the best deal. And as far as I believe you've seen the fee structure, but we're offering two membership types. One will include three of our facilities and the other one will include just the two neighborhood rec centers, east Lawrence Center and Holcomb Rec Center. And we understand that some members of our community may not use SPL, so we wanted to offer two options. The second option with neighborhood rec centers will be at a lower price, a lower fee. So then as far as the pricing structure, we're offering an adult membership and then a youth senior membership rate as well as a household rate. The household membership will cover up to five people. And then I will go into detail here in just a minute about we are offering an affordable, we're calling it a qualified rate, which is basically a scholarship rate. And then we're also proposing resident and non-resident pricing.

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

A couple of the really big concerns that we've heard throughout this entire process is access for youth. And so we wanted to try and build into the structure some free time for youth. So ages five through 17, we have proposed that Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday from three to 5:00 PM after school youth can get into free to all of our facilities, including the community building on Wednesdays is an early release day, so we will offer that from one to 5:00 PM at this time we're planning on offering it year round even through the summer and understanding, as Luis mentioned, there are some logistics that we're still working out and so we could look at adjusting those times in the summer if there's different hours that might work better. So then the next item is the qualified resident rate. So again, another one is affordability and accessibility. So for residents demonstrating a financial hardship, we're offering a qualified rate which is 60% lower than the standard resident rate.

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

And we are doing everything we can to make this a simple low barrier application process. The plan is that we will use our current scholarship criteria and application process for those who want to qualify for this lower rate. And it will be based on programs such as CanCare, school, lunch, housing, snap, and we've also been speaking with members of our advisory board. We will continue to work with them if there's other criteria or qualifications that we should consider. We will consider that and continue working on our process. We are also working on an online application process, which we currently don't offer. Again, we want to make this as easy and low barrier as possible. So as we start to get into the fee discussion, we've heard some questions just in the last week, over the weekend as people are seeing these fees. And I want to address just a few things to help answer some questions upfront before we start going into the actual fees.

([00:37:08](#)):

But again, just wanted to clarify that the community building will not be included in these membership options. So the option one will include Sports Pavilion, Lawrence Holcomb Rec Center, and East Lawrence Rec Center. And then the second option will be just East Lawrence Center and Holcomb Rec Center. Again, the community building can't support a membership model at this time due to just logistical challenges. And so we did not include that in this membership structure. Also for all of our program participants who have paid for a fitness class, a basketball league, any type of paid program, if you have it at our facility, you will not have to pay to get in for that program. If you've already paid for your fitness class, you will check in at the front desk. We will work with staff and train. We will have rosters and information at the front desk.

(00:37:58):

So when you're coming for your fitness class, you'll just check in and you can go to your class. You do not have to pay an additional entry fee. In addition, parents who are coming to watch their child play in the basketball league or a practice, parents will not have to pay to do this as well. So we will work out those logistics and make sure that we help control that. So the only thing that we will be charging an additional fee would be the spectators for tournaments at SPL as we mentioned. So I just wanted to clarify that there were some questions and concerns, but if you've already paid for a program or a birthday party or a gym rental, you will not have to pay again to enter to go to that activity. So looking at the membership fees here on this slide, you can see option one and it shows the breakdown between the monthly and then the annual fees.

(00:38:50):

It shows here that we will have the resident, the qualified rate and then the non-resident rate. We've also shown on here underneath each fee we're listing the per day breakdown and we calculate it on the monthly rates is based on 30 days. The annual rate is based on 365 days, but it just shows you what that looks like on a per day basis. And also wanted to note that a household annual rate, keep in mind that's for five people to split that fee. And at the bottom we have definitions, which I already mentioned and it shows the breakdown of the ages. So adults will be 18 to 59, seniors will be ages 60 plus and youth will be ages five to 17. So for the second membership option rate, it's roughly a 50% reduction from the first membership option. And again, you can see the qualified resident rate for senior youth goes down to as low as 8 cents per day when it's broken down. And then at the bottom you see that we have the day passes and the punch cards. And this also shows the spectator fee that we plan to charge, which would be \$5. But it also shows the day pass rate for sports p and Lawrence is \$5 or \$8 for non-resident. And we did offer a lower day pass fee for the two neighborhood rec centers, which would be \$3 or \$5 for non-resident.

(00:40:21):

And then the market comparison, we've had this information up early on and we recently updated it to add the Lawrence fees to the graph. So if you haven't seen it, this has been updated, but we just wanted to give a snapshot of what a lot of other agencies in the metro area across Kansas, what their fees look like and then as well as across the country. And one thing that we want to mention is it's really hard to compare apples to apples and everybody does it different. Some cities have multiple facilities, some facilities have pools. Those are going to be your higher latha is quite a bit higher. Lenox is quite a bit higher, higher, they have pools included inside their rec centers and so their fee structures are set up a little differently. So we understand this is not apples to apples, but we still wanted to be able to show a comparison. And we also understand and identify that there's private gyms in the area and our pricing may be a little higher, maybe pretty close to it. Where we differ is we have gym space walking tracks and we offer pickleball and basketball and things like that. So there's always going to be a difference. And again, it's very difficult to compare apples to apples across the board, but we wanted to try and provide as much information as possible.

(00:41:46):

So as far as our year one goals and targets, typical membership rate, we looked a lot at the national averages within NRPA, which is a National Parks and Recreation Association, a typical membership rate would be three to 5% of a community. And so we're starting off very conservative. Again, this is all an estimate, we don't know what to expect, we don't know what the turnout's going to be. And so our goals are set with a conservative approach, it's less than 2% and so the annual goal for membership would be 2000. And then for the punch card day passes, we're hoping for 500 in our first year. And with this we do believe that there's going to be a minimal implementation cost.

(00:42:35):

So as far as the implementation plan, next steps. As Louise said, we've been working on this for months. We still have a lot of work to do and once we receive some direction and make sure we're going in the right direction, we will begin working this fall on awareness campaigns. We're working on preparing our registration system, making sure we have updates and new pay stations at all the facilities and make sure everything is set up to accommodate membership scans. We will also be doing a membership drive would be this fall and we want everybody try to get signed up before the January 2nd launch. So also this fall we would be working with staff on training, customer service, membership processes, protocols, things like that. And then just by December we hope to have all final logistics and materials ready to launch. And then we would set this in motion on January 2nd. With that, I will hand it back over to Luis. Thanks

Speaker 9 (00:43:37):

Lindsey. I what we're asking the commission to give us some direction as to proceeding. So I'll read through these and then you can open it up for discussion or however, but so we're looking at some feedback on membership and spectator fees. Should we continue to consider implementing these fees or make further reductions than what scenario two presents here? If we are moving forward with fees, are the proposed fees, transparent, fair, and aligned with community values? We want some direction on resident fees and how we should consider those. Some of our estimates are based on our estimates are based on the confines of homes within Lawrence. Right now, the way that we have until now considered residents is all county residents. So that would be a shift.

(00:44:41):

And again, I want to say that some of these came up through public engagement even in questions. Why are non-residents paying? So these are kind of the answers we'd like to be able to, or questions we'd like to get some answers to and some clarity. And then access and affordability. Does the free youth access address the concerns adequately of the community and of the governing body and also about the income-based or age-based? We did get some feedback that we shouldn't be giving discounts to the youth or adults or seniors unless they're qualified for the rates. Not all of 'em are unable to pay. So we also want just to get direction. Are these our understanding and the way we approach this is what the community is saying, but we still need some direction on if we're heading in the right direction. And then any other considerations that you would like for us to address these could include modifying some of the fees or programs to prioritize if we don't implement all the fees and which ones to potentially reduce. So any direction that we can put into play over the next three, four weeks would be helpful for us.

Speaker 1 (00:46:05):

Good. Thank you. Luis. Any questions for him immediately? I have a few. Sure, please.

Speaker 3 (00:46:14):

I appreciate Lindsay answered a few of them. I do think it's worth noting that you have the frequently asked questions and you've updated that that have a lot of these answers. But you answer two of the questions I've been getting the most, which is if you've already paid your class, you have to pay again and

the answer is no. And if you're just there dropping someone off or picking them up or a spectator, you don't have to pay, correct?

Speaker 9 ([00:46:39](#)):

That is correct. I want to go one step further. If you've paid for a class yoga class and you want to go work out after, you do not have to be a member if all you're doing is paying for the class once you've paid to get in, we're not going to be policing that. If you paid to act as our facility, you are free to use it that day. If you want to come chase Tuesday, then you need a membership or a punch card or some other access.

Speaker 3 ([00:47:03](#)):

Yeah. One of the questions I asked, I think you put on there was do we really know how many, oh, Douglas County residents versus Lawrence residents, do we have that breakdown? At this point?

Speaker 9 ([00:47:17](#)):

We do not because we haven't been using that as a boundary

Speaker 3 ([00:47:25](#)):

And I think the outside of Douglas County that use our facilities, what percentage is that currently? Yeah,

Speaker 11 ([00:47:34](#)):

It's less than 1%. So yeah, we do track through program enrollments and the access card scans that we do currently, if you're outside of Douglas County, you do have to pay to get an access card. So currently it's less than 1%.

Speaker 3 ([00:47:51](#)):

What about, there's been quite a few questions about operating costs to implement this. Do you expect increase?

Speaker 9 ([00:47:59](#)):

We don't expect much. One of the things we've always had staff sitting up front at the desk, we just have not trained 'em adequately to offer this type of setup. So we would be training 'em on that. We would be modifying only SPL for this purpose, especially during tournaments. And then we'd be hiring a little different, we'd have at tournament start times, we would have more staffing and then relieve them as we go. So implementation costs compared to the revenue that's generated will be minimal.

Speaker 3 ([00:48:32](#)):

Okay. And a couple other questions. The community building, you said of course there would be no charger into the community building, but there might be reduced hours under either scenario. Say a little bit more about that. Correct.

Speaker 9 ([00:48:58](#)):

The community building was still housed or 10 community or PRC staff, but it would not be open at eight o'clock and close at nine. It would be open for specific the classes. So if a class starts, well start at eight, so it will open at eight, but not for the general public. It would be for those attending these specific fitness classes, like I said, any of our programs. And that includes sports programs during the day, night and

weekends as well as the afterschool for youth. So it would vary day by day on what programs are happening in there.

Speaker 3 ([00:49:42](#)):

And I thought that was a good question. Someone asked how many total unique visitors we had across the system.

Speaker 9 ([00:49:52](#)):

12,968 or something like that last year? Yeah,

Speaker 3 ([00:49:55](#)):

I wasn't testing you. We answered but 12,000, yeah, 989. So perfect. Very close. I mean to me that's an interesting number. Unique of all the residents in Lawrence, 12,989.

Speaker 9 ([00:50:07](#)):

And I want to say and admit that we have not done the greatest job of making everybody scan. So we know those numbers are low. We identified that early on and said whether we charge or not, we need to know who's using our facilities. Next time we have the question, I want to be confident in our answer. So the training is going to happen whether we initiate fees or not. We are scanning, we're issuing cards, the swipes to everybody, whether it's a free membership or a paid membership. And we're going to start to track this so that we can make better decisions based on usage where, what neighborhoods people are coming from demographically and geographically and how to better serve them.

Speaker 3 ([00:50:52](#)):

Okay. That's

Speaker 1 ([00:50:53](#)):

My questions. Thank you Commissioner Sellers, do you have a question?

Speaker 4 ([00:51:00](#)):

Yeah, I had a couple, Luis, going back to the question that was asked in regards to the number of visitors to each other rec center, and I'm glad that in the notes you brought up about unique and non duplicated entries as far as those total numbers that are provided, was there, how can I put this? Were these numbers siloed out by, are these all people visiting to utilize the facility or were some of the numbers that were counted consist of folks who were there for a conference? I mean for a tournament or an event?

Speaker 9 ([00:51:50](#)):

No, these were either program participants that paid to come to yoga and they used that number of enrollment for a class as well as those swipes. So it did not include community members, it include birthday parties. It didn't include the spectators for volleyball or basketball tournaments at this point.

Speaker 4 ([00:52:10](#)):

Okay. Okay, wonderful. And then noting about to use, I wasn't sure, I don't know if you have this based on the scholarships, are most of the youth that present for scholarships, what is being used to qualify them? Is it that they're free reduced lunch? Is it based on income? What qualification are we using for

Speaker 9 ([00:52:35](#)):

Right now, what we've asked to provide is a free or reduced lunch and nobody has been denied that. Now we, as Lindsay mentioned, we are one of our key primary KPIs for this year in unmistakable identity is focusing on scholarships and how we implement them, how we communicate 'em, how this affects our scholarship rates, our applicants, and the percentage of applications we're able to fulfill. So this is something that is taking priority this year and it was in preparation for potential fees. So I'm working with Dr. Ferris Mohammed and we hope to get a work group together to come up with an all inclusive easy way for us to evaluate that we're not asking people to verify their income with us. We want to make it easy if it's been verified in another manner, we want to make it that easy. You've proven to another entity, whether it be governmental, nonprofit or something that there's need or it might be some census tracted or something of that nature. So we're open to all those conversations and as we move forward, if this moves forward, we will be developing that along with those community members who are expressing the most concern about this.

Speaker 4 ([00:54:00](#)):

And then my last question is, we're looking at this and a lot of the conversation around the reductions are built around service levels and early on in the presentation you did have the breakdown of percentages based on the different areas. And so I guess my question is based on those different percentage reductions to 20% to 10% and so on and so forth, how do those reductions impact service level as it relates to if we were to implement fees or not implement fees or the matrix of fees as it relates to spectator fees but not membership fees. But overall, what would be the impact to the different areas, service level areas? Are we seeing a one level decrease increase, plus or minus? What does that look like?

Speaker 9 ([00:54:52](#)):

Yeah, as you mentioned, each of our programs were scored separately in the balancing act and then the tiers that came out of that. But we'd be looking, and I have it here from a question that came up earlier, we would be reducing in scenario two compared to scenario one, urban forestry and right of way from a two currently, and it would remain a two in scenario one. And again, I want to remind that the reason we can, even though they said let's reduce that, the reason we can do that is because if we are able to generate some revenues through the fees, we're able to spread that out throughout the system. So again, the attempt is not to save SPL or to save the rec centers, it's to balance the budget of our department through those things that can generate revenue to support those things that cannot because otherwise those go away.

([00:55:52](#)):

So that is the fine balance that we're trying to create here. Some of them parks in scenario two goes down to a service level one where we're impacting 71 or what is it, 41 out of the 70 of 71 parks that would go down to a one and everything would be service level between 1.5 and two in scenario two in all our 10 programs. And some of them, as I said, are interconnected to others. So sports field maintenance affects sports. So if we're not able to maintain those sports fields, we're not able to program those as frequently. So there's an interconnectivity here that is difficult to separate strictly by program because they do overlap in some cases. I hope that answers your question, commissioner Sellers.

Speaker 4 ([00:56:52](#)):

Thank you, Louis. You provided enough context for us to have a more robust conversation about this last question. I know we talked about eligibility and opportunities and scholarship and to my knowledge it's a little bit rusty, so not with the state anymore, but to my knowledge, our KinCare MCOs typically have value add benefits and they vary a little bit different. There's a little bit of advantage between each one, but I do know that they typically offer financial incentive supports for members for parks and rec, or at least for recreational activities, to either take a class, multiple classes, there's usually some type of credit.

Is that something that Parks and rec and culture have been promoting? Are you aware of that? Have you seen utilization of that benefit with members who are on KinCare or Medicaid?

Speaker 11 ([00:58:03](#)):

I can answer that one. And there is a program called Silver Sneakers that's very common and the reason we haven't used it before is because it applies to memberships, which we don't have. So it doesn't apply to program registrations. And so we are aware of these programs and we have been looking into 'em as we've been going through this process and we will be prepared to share those with our members. And we do know that there are some insurance companies that offer those type of programs. I'm not familiar specifically with the CanCare programs themselves, but I know some of our staff have worked closely with that. But again, I do know a lot of those are specific to a membership and so we've never had to do that before since we haven't had the actual membership fees. But we will definitely look into those and be willing to look at all of those options.

Speaker 4 ([00:58:55](#)):

Okay. Thank you Louis. Thank you Lindsay. That's all of my questions for now. Thank you, mayor.

Speaker 12 ([00:59:00](#)):

Thank you. I had one thank you guys for the presentation. Really appreciate it. And I know a lot of hard work has gone into this. I had a question, I think Lindsay had mentioned a little bit earlier about the youth access free time play, that it had some room for adjustment in there, which I was glad to hear after the initial assessment and I was kind of curious with that and just a general overall assessment. When do you guys have a timetable of when you would be coming back to revisit this to see what we're doing right, what we're doing wrong, what could be of more benefit to the community, what's a detriment, things of that sort?

Speaker 9 ([00:59:42](#)):

I would say that from the beginning we said this is going to be an evolving initiative. We recognize that there's packages that we can put together, but we want to make sure it's going to be successful on the onset rather than trying to break it up into so many pieces that we will not be able to deliver this. We want to do it in a manageable way and be reactive to what the realities are. If we see that our best estimates based on what the budget needs as well as national averages aren't that we will adjust. So our hope is that it'll be successful, so much so that we underestimated it and then that opens the conversation up for other ideas. But as far as times and all that, as long as we can stay within the proposed budget throughout the year, we will remain flexible. We realize that this is a shock to what the community is used to and we want to just start slowly and grow it to what really the community needs. But that will take some time, but we remain open to that. Okay,

Speaker 12 ([01:00:58](#)):

Thank

Speaker 9 ([01:00:58](#)):

You.

Speaker 3 ([01:01:00](#)):

One other question I'd asked before, and this might come up later in my comments. So what if we just went with option two and did not have a higher level at SPL? What would be the difference in revenue?

Speaker 11 ([01:01:17](#)):

Yeah, we were able to run those numbers, and again, these are very conservative estimates, but we believe that it would drop at about 150,000. So we think that we could, if just went with the option two pricing, including SPL, that we could bring in approximately 350,000 in revenue versus the 500 if we offered both. Thank you.

Speaker 1 ([01:01:42](#)):

Lisa, do you have any questions for now? Okay, I think that'll do for now, and we're going to do public comment and we'll probably have some when we're finished. Thank you. Like to go ahead and open it up for public comment at this time.

Speaker 8 ([01:02:03](#)):

Hi, I am Chris Flowers. I just had some thoughts. First just came to my head watching it. They talked about what they offer is that's unique. I think it was like pickleball court and an indoor track. What happens if a business opens up an indoor track or a pickleball court? I don't know how likely that is or if that's possible, but back with Rock Chalk Park, a problem arose when I guess it wasn't getting necessarily the visitors, they thought because another city had opened up one, so it kind of created competition. So if there is competition created, what would the numbers look like? Also, if a city's going to charge for a gym, it shouldn't cost more than 60% of what private gyms are offering. I just think it's too much.

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

I just wonder if this is also partly the city trying to get people to quit using the facility so much so you all can close one of 'em. I am not trustful of this city right now. Also, something else I was thinking about is when it comes to permits, y'all are going to be doing that new parking system, and I think you all were talking about parking permits. I'm going to ask you, all right now, were we planning on charging for parking permits? If not, why don't we charge for that and reduce the cost of this permit? Because what those parking permits is doing, it's basically we're going to be giving public parking away to private and turning them into private parking for the residents that live there. I think that's something that should be paid more than someone just wanting to exercise for their health. I mean, come on, think about it. If we're going to be charging for something, let's charge for parking before we charge for access to these gyms.

([01:04:14](#)):

I'll see if I have anything else. Oh yeah, I think that's it. I don't go for this plan. There's got to be alternatives and at least I'd explore the parking permits because you've talked about that that's coming in the future. And also when the city showed us the date on that, I think at least half of those cities were charging for parking permits. So I just want to say that is definitely a source of potential income that you could use to, I don't know how far off in the future it is, but at some point that should be used to offset these costs because, come on. Thank you. Thanks

Speaker 1 ([01:04:55](#)):

Chris.

Speaker 13 ([01:05:04](#)):

Hi, I'm, I'm Fred De Victor. I'm the past park recreation director. I retired in 2007. It's hard for me to believe that that's 18 years ago. I'm glad I'm here. Okay, I have a few comments and I'll try to be brief Parks and Recreation has always enjoyed a high level of support for their quality parks and recreation programs and that's been verified over a every couple years. Citizen surveys have been held. They consistently rated parks and recreation services among the highest of all the services that the city provides. That's important. Several items in the recent survey that stand out to me shows that 40% of

folks use the park and recreation services a few times every week, 40%, two times every week and 47% visited the sports veterinarian regularly. 47% folks, that's the figure, which you should be proud, proud of. That's well above the norm that we have.

(01:06:21):

I personally am an pickleball player and I use the sports civilian three or four times a week in addition to attending grandkids sporting events and recitals and activities and so forth. I'll continue no matter what happens. I'll continue to do that because my health and my physical mental wellbeing are very important and I think lots of other people that's important to them as well. Budget concerns are not new, but addressing them is very challenging. I'm amazed at the work that the staff has done here on putting this whole proposal together, but they have very few options. Do they raise fees which aren't popular or they cut quality programs or maybe some of both and that's important. I want to use an example. Over the years, swimming pool fees were always debated and in there's a lot of things in this proposal to reduce the impact of those fees. At that time we folks scholarship fund was initiated. The staff reduced fees for youth and for seniors and they worked with people and they'll continue to do that. I'm sure from what you heard, people that can't afford those but they're in the proposal. Another thing to note is Lawrence isn't alone in this. There's lots of other communities, the nationwide and in the state and that charge fees, membership fees and so forth and both large and small

Speaker 2 (01:08:07):

Time.

Speaker 13 (01:08:09):

I want to just urge you, we all recognize cuts are needed, but thank you sir. Make sure you understand that the fees are part of this proposal and they're rather than cutting quality programs. Appreciate you. Thank very much Fred and all your work.

Speaker 14 (01:08:32):

Christina McKenna 6 6 0 4 6. There's an image that goes with mine.

Speaker 7 (01:08:43):

Do you recognize it? Is it that one?

Speaker 14 (01:08:45):

Yeah,

Speaker 7 (01:08:46):

On the screen right in front of that,

Speaker 14 (01:08:47):

Yeah. Okay, very good. Okay, prior left. All right, thank you. The agenda item report before you includes a market comparison chart for recreation facility fees in other communities as justification for implementing fees in Lawrence. Unfortunately, the data presented to you in our community is biased and misleading. The chart includes information about recreation facility fees for six other cities in Kansas, Eudora, Merriam Lenexa, Al Zaa, Overland Park and Derby, and states that it compares what other communities charge for similar services. Alex Fitz Morris Sorn researched some membership packages for each one of the listed Kansas cities and discover that all these cities include access to their swimming facilities with their recreation facility passes. The fees proposed for Lawrence only include access to our

non aquatic recreation facilities and Lawrence charges for access to the aquatic facilities, but they're not included in the chart. This means every single data point on this chart regarding similar Kansas cities is misrepresenting facility offerings for what's actually being proposed for Lawrence, substantially misleading the commission in the Lawrence community, Baldwin City and Douglas County and Norman, Oklahoma, a comparable college community offer free recreation facilities to their community just as Lawrence currently does.

(01:09:57):

The parks and rec department included these in a market comparison chart that was previously presented to our community and can be seen in the picture on the left, but those communities were eliminated from the chart the commission received this week, which you can see on the right. This current chart is a biased presentation of data that makes it look like all communities charge fees for the recreation facilities when in actuality the only Kansas community including the original comparison, it doesn't include access to aquatic centers, Baldwin City whose recreation facilities are free while access to the Baldwin city pool is charged separately like we do. Therefore, Baldwin is the most accurate comparison to Lawrence yet it was removed from the most recent comparison data. Unless Lawrence decides to combine access to the aquatic centers and parks and rec facilities, then they're not comparable data points upon which to base membership fees.

(01:10:41):

When charts and data points are misconstrued to mislead the public and commission members, it makes you wonder about the reasoning. Not only has your very own polling proven that over 80% of Lawrence does not approve parks and rec fees, but the advisory board also opposes a why due to not being able to present to represent the opinion and desire of the people otherwise according to the Lawrence Times article. So why are we still discussing it as a way to cover the mishandled budget? I also know there are plenty of people who are planning to boycott the fees if they do get implemented because our taxes have already paid for many of the facilities.

Speaker 7 (01:11:15):

Okay, thank you Christine.

Speaker 15 (01:11:30):

Good evening commissioners. Let me get myself up here. My name is Eric Sartorius, 2300 Vermont Street. I would encourage you not to dismiss this proposal out of hand and before I forget, I would also say if it is instituted, it should be Lawrence Residence only that are considered residents, not residents of Douglas County. I'd also quickly say some of the comments with respect to the SPL. It is not akin to anything else in Lawrence currently there's full turf field there, more basketball courts than any other facility that I know of has. It was discouraging to see few if any alternate or alternatives offered in any of the public comments that you or the recreation advisory board have received. It's all don't cut these programs and that just doesn't cut it under our current situation. Should the commission leave the same framework in place that is proposed in the budget doing nothing that's really distracting, doing nothing on the revenue side of the ledger is actually going to make more significant cuts and be more detrimental to people's recreation opportunities than any fee increase would do understandably, if given the choice, very few of us will choose something other than free.

(01:12:55):

Free is always nice, but free in city budgeting doesn't mean free. It means that a public good or service that is provided by the city is then going to be what is cut or taxes will be raised to make up that difference again, I guess to clinging to the promise of free forever that it seems like lots of people are doing doesn't reflect change circumstances and it's actually a disservice to the fiscal health of the city. We hear a lot about the physical health, but it's the fiscal health of the city that matters as well and its

residents who will pay the brunt for any lack of additional revenues for this. To me, as I was thinking about this, it's akin to me to parents that have maybe promised their child, when you turn 16, I'm going to get you a car so you can get around so you can do things and the parents lose their job. Was a promise made? Yes, a promise was made. Is it fiscally wise or responsible given the family's fiscal situation to go ahead and buy a car because a promise was made at some past time? It is not and I think that as you look through this and consider whether this is appropriate, you need to look with a broader sense at your budget, not just simply everybody thinking that free is great, which it's Thank you all.

Speaker 1 ([01:14:15](#)):

Thanks Eric.

Speaker 16 ([01:14:25](#)):

Hi, my name's Katie Brown. 66.044801% of the survey respondents do not support the proposal to require payment to use our community's recreational facilities and their main reasons seem to be concern about access for low income individuals and impact on community health, even if there are scholarships and et cetera, to bridge a financial gap application to such opportunities still present an unfair burden to some of our citizens reduced use especially with local gyms which include classes as part of their fees and then cost to the city to implement, collect fees, enforce and administrative fees, especially with the proposed personnel cuts. I also question if the numbers presented today are based off of a historical use over recent years or if they allow for a reduction in use. My parents wanted me to note that they are retired and live at six in WUSA and we'll discontinue to use Rock Chalk Park so we can take two off of the use list. Our coalition for collaborative Governance has done extensive longitudinal research into the city's expenditure and our research indicates that multiple places in the city's expenses to consider that do not directly impact citizens' pockets even further. I would also like to note the comedic timing of this conversation being today as I was on a walk through my neighborhood today and our neighborhood splash pad, which I assume would continue to be free was closed. Thank you.

Speaker 7 ([01:16:03](#)):

Thanks Katie.

Speaker 17 ([01:16:17](#)):

Good evening. I'm Bob Shum. I live at 1720 St. Andrews Drive. It's good to see you Fred. I know many of you and the ones that I don't know I would like to have a chance to meet. So last night I sat here and listen to the planning or not the planning commission, the Parks and Rec commission agonize over the project and after quite a discussion and quite a bit of interaction between themselves, they really didn't see that it was worthwhile for them to continue to back this project during the 11 through 15 years. I was on this commission and that was a time when we planned the Rock Chalk Park and Sports Pavilion Lawrence and we consciously made a sales pitch to the people that it would be free because of how we financed it. We financed it with a sales tax revenue that was designated for recreational purposes and that fund had enough capacity to bond for the construction of it and the ongoing maintenance and upkeep through all the different avenues of revenue such as naming rights of concessions, program fees, et cetera.

([01:17:49](#)):

There's plenty of money to keep it going and that's been the case for 10 years. So it's not the fault. It's not that the facility is slipping behind and it's not keeping up with its financial obligation. It is quite the opposite. It's because the city made some errors a few years ago in calculating different sales tax revenues and hires, hiring a number of people that we are in this short position today. So I would say that it's not fair to go back on our word. I think it doesn't speak very highly for the city's reputation when we make a promise and we don't carry through on the promise. I think it'd be one thing if that facility wasn't

maintaining itself on a fair and equal basis, but it is and so because there was a shortfall somewhere else and then we've pushed a number of dollars and requirements onto the park and recreation department, I think that's unfair. So what I would like you to consider, it looks like we're \$500,000 short. You've got a line item in your budget that's \$2 million to reduce or a reserve fund and I don't exactly remember what it was to basically bolster your resources. You could cut that by \$500,000, just make it one and a half million dollars and then you'd have the 500,000 you need in order to continue to offer this program as it is. Thanks your

Speaker 1 ([01:19:29](#)):

Time, Bob. Appreciate you.

Speaker 17 ([01:19:32](#)):

Anybody

Speaker 1 ([01:19:32](#)):

Else in the room?

Speaker 18 ([01:19:37](#)):

This is why I need the public, the services. I'm Marguerite Erling and I have submitted a note and I have not a conclusion as to whether membership is something that may need to be a part of a whole total thought package on it, but I do think it's coming at the wrong time. I feel very strongly that there's other considerations that are out there for the community to look at for you to look at that should look at where additional money besides what Bob was saying, but I don't know why there's not parking charge for the venue uses that are happening both at KU and at the SPL. Now why isn't that like a primary place to find \$500,000? It could and should be. We've got a World Cup possibility of a team coming up here. Why is that not a part of the landmass that the city actually owns out there, which is the majority of the parking that exists out at Rock Chalk and at the SPL.

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

So for me it's if we just need \$500,000 look to something that is more sustainable and not in conflict with the people of the community that make use of these facilities. In addition to that, just to go to the people and community problems, there's conflict here with charging membership and my thinking also belonging to other gyms myself that there's conflict with saying you can't use the gym today because we've got camp for the next week or two or we've got a tournament here for the whole weekend so you're out and that's not cool if you're paying membership fee, so I'm not sure how you can even balance that conflict. The other thing that makes me feel that they have other resources to get to this 500,000 if that's what they're looking at, we're in my note to you all and it certainly why Chris also said there's probably some bigger more sustainable things without this consternation of whether there should be membership fees at the head of the consideration to recover or make available this \$500,000.

([01:21:52](#)):

I think people of this community love park and recreations as a department and they love what they have access to. We love what our city looks like and how it is in support of them. I get it what they are trying to crunch to make happen, but it does seem that the cart is not in the right alignment with the horse in terms of who's being considered and what's being considered first as the prime item and it should take a step back and look at possible other revenues out there. I would appreciate that. Thank you.

Speaker 1 ([01:22:25](#)):

Mary Ray

Speaker 5 ([01:22:36](#)):

Petty 39 14 Astor 6 6 0 4 9 in the same 35 years that we just talked about celebrating the A DAI who had polio when it was the fashionable thing to do in 1950, have been a wheelchair athlete since 1990 and now play with and again shred the victor at SPL, but I will say this one thing I heard mentioned tonight that I would encourage not to be allowed to happen is a recreation center being closed. I will tell you that East Lawrence Center, which is not running the same pickleball program that it runs during the time when school is not out of session Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays from nine to 11, we have an average of 20, 25 people there every day filling four pickleball courts and if you look at that over a period of 50 months or 50 weeks a year, it's thousands of people serving and while I don't live on that side of town anymore, I do regularly congregate with people whose average age I'm going to guess is 50 and they're there for fitness and health and community and it's certainly something that would be a real shame to lose. Okay,

Speaker 10 ([01:24:23](#)):

I am Chris King. I live at nine 20 Alma Court, 6 6 0 4 9. I'll add to this gentleman's comments here. Years ago before SPL was there, people used to go and get their exercise walking in Walmart when they built this one out here, target and there may be a few others for those of you that attend or go to SPL today and I go four times a week. There is a tremendous senior community out there and you've got the pickle ballers, you've got the aerobics. This facility is not like anything that there is in a 50 mile range I would have I guess, and it's something that for all of these seniors, this represents a huge community and I would bet their health is a lot better than it was 20 years ago because of the capability of this. I don't think you have to worry about other competition. Sure, there's tournaments for volleyball and basketball and all those kinds of things, but that's the youth. That's the younger generation, but look at what Lawrence is. It's a great retirement community and you've got something really to brag about with this facility so we can still keep working the spreadsheets. We'll get something worked out there. Thanks.

Speaker 1 ([01:25:53](#)):

Thanks Chris. Any other comments in the room? All right, go ahead and go online.

Speaker 2 ([01:26:16](#)):

Julie Jones.

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

Sherry, could you pull up the slide for Julie Jones please? The city has repeatedly asserted that their current debt decisions do not affect their general fund, the fund that parks and recs facilities would support. The second question is in the city's recently published 2026 budget q and a states that the general fund is not impacted by the debt finance bonds the city takes out, but this is not accurate. The Coalition for Collaborative Governance Research indicates that the general fund is supporting the city's debt payments with almost 400,000 annually, which is four fifths of the revenue expected to be generated by parks and recs fees. The debt payment from the general fund used to be clearly labeled as debt service in the city's budget book, but now it's lumped into a category called transfers out. Now one can only learn that general fund is financing debt payments by researching transfers into the state budget form to see that this fund transfers 398,000 to the bond and interest fund, which pays the city's debts.

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

Therefore, the city's debt decisions go due directly impact the general fund deficit that the city is trying to solve. With these proposed fees, our residents are already paying 40% increase in property taxes over the last five years and an 18% increase in utility fees in the last two years. These proposed recreation fees would be an additional burden on the community that is already paying substantially for the recent increases in the city's budget. Our coalition asked the city to fully examine the past and proposed debt

decisions to better understand how the city's sustainable increase in debt is affecting our community's finances. As changes in debt decisions may be able to change operating expenses. Additionally, many community members remember promises to always keep the sports pavilion free for residents while Director Ruth says that the promise was never codified. One month after the sports pavilion opened in October of 2014, David Corelli, the city manager at that time released a memo clearly stating that City of Lawrence does not charge city residents for use at a community and recreation centers. Our community invested over 22 million in rock chalk park through debt financing that we've been paying off for years. The commitment to free admission at our recreational facility honors the community's long-term financial investment in this facility. Thank you.

Speaker 1 ([01:29:04](#)):

Thank you. Julie.

Speaker 2 ([01:29:15](#)):

Kurt, can you Thank you.

Speaker 7 ([01:29:16](#)):

Sorry.

Speaker 2 ([01:29:17](#)):

That's all right. Just Steven Watts.

Speaker 20 ([01:29:27](#)):

Thank you. The commission made a big mistake. What was it? Heck, I don't know. Seems like just months ago, but it was more than that. When you let Craig change the rules so that anybody and their mother can work for the town of Lawrence, there are no parietal rules. Don't both of the administrators for the Parks and Recreation district not live in Lawrence? That's just a question. I could be wrong. I don't know. It's what I've heard or been told though for a second there. I thought I was in Trump land kind of when these people are coming in here talking about revenue, yada, yada, yada, yada yada. We are almost in Trump land because some of a good number of the employees got an answer to the town executive team for these massive increases in pay that they got. So they're going to do whatever they need to do in order to get along with the junta. How about asking the University of Kansas, our good partner to pay up, start doing a little bit more, paying for the stuff that we allow them to do here in this town, let them belly up to the bar and pay for a while. I mean significantly pay something else is these programs are not free at present and anybody that says that they're free are wrong.

([01:30:56](#)):

The reason they're not free is they're paid for by public monies, tax dollars if you will, by the taxpayers or by a sales tax or by a property tax. They're not free. Stop saying they're free. They're not free. This stuff about a qualified resident, how about taking their word for it and not requiring people to go through an onerous or even an income eligibility factor if they present themselves and say, I ain't got the money to pay for that. Let's see what happens. Let's see how honest people they are. This problem has been going on for some how many years? 10 gazillion. So a little while, several months, a year, whatever. Let's try to take people at their word and just go, I can't pay for this, so let's see what happens and how much revenue can get generated. Oh, I use that Trump word revenue. It is just incredible that we're here in Lawrence and we don't understand that this is Lawrence, Kansas. It is not the Ravinia Festival in North Shore Chicago. It's Lawrence, Kansas. It's okay. It's great. I enjoy the parks just to look at them. Our recreation, I'm not going to say it's a cultural department because hey man, that thing out by the police station and I'm a lover of abstract art, that thing out by the police station, which costs what? \$350,000. Thanks

Speaker 1 ([01:32:34](#)):

Steve. Give me

Speaker 20 ([01:32:34](#)):

A break. Thank

Speaker 1 ([01:32:36](#)):

You. Thank you very much.

Speaker 2 ([01:32:38](#)):

Emma.

Speaker 21 ([01:32:45](#)):

Hey, my name's Emma Dorst. I live at 6 6 0 4 7. I just had a few things I wanted to mention. So I visit the sports billion a few times a week with four of my friends and I know that if the fees are implemented, I can say with total confidence that none of us are going to be able to use the facilities anymore and we probably won't qualify for the lower fees either. I was thinking if we had to implement some sort of fees then maybe a sliding scale would be a better option based off of income. That way there would be more options because someone making 35 KA year versus like 80 K, like \$25 for the same people making different amounts, that 25 for me is a lot, but 25 for someone else it might be nothing.

([01:33:43](#)):

I also did want to say that I think the cost for the child fees are too expensive, especially for the ages starting at five because whenever I go visit I always see parents with their children walking the track. A lot of the times it's mothers with a child or two and it seems like they just got off work. They need somewhere to go get a walk-in and they have their kids and they can't just go get a babysitter every time they want to go on a walk. So they bring their kid to run around the track with them while they enjoy a nice walk in the afternoon or the evening. And I think having to pay not only 25 for themselves but then 15 on top of that for a child, six years old, I don't think that's very fair because it bumps up to \$40 and they're just trying to get a nice walk in and a little bit of exercise in a safe place and place that the weather works for a young child and works for them.

([01:34:47](#)):

Or if it's a woman trying to walk, not walking outside as a woman isn't always safe and trying to walk your child at the same time. I think those are important things to consider that the community needs to, or the city needs to provide us with spaces that we can be together and be safe and better ourselves through exercise. I think it's the city's responsibility to give us a reason to want to live here and a reason to or a way to be able to do things and better ourselves and our health and we don't have a lot of places in the public that are free or cheap to go to. We have the library, but the library and a sports billion are very different places and depending on the weather, we can't always just be outside in regular parks, especially in the winter. So I think those are all very important things to consider that sometimes the city needs to do things for its residents even though it might not be the best for the city time.

Speaker 1 ([01:35:47](#)):

Thank you. That's all the comments mayor. Okay. Thank you Sherry. Alright, commissioners, come back to our conversation. Any further comments or questions after the public input that we just received? I

Speaker 12 ([01:36:14](#)):

Had a question. I think something was brought up about Norman and Baldwin City. I'm wondering if you had any additional information on that and I had another question on top of that. I think I might've remembered. Did City of Manhattan, did they recently, Manhattan, Kansas, did they recently institute recreation trees as well?

Speaker 9 ([01:36:35](#)):

I think they attempted to. I'm not sure that they were successful in it. If I recall, we did have a conversation with the director of KRP.

Speaker 12 ([01:36:45](#)):

I was just curious because I thought I saw something where

Speaker 9 ([01:36:48](#)):

I think they were definitely trying to, I'm not sure that it succeeded over there. I am not a hundred percent certain.

Speaker 7 ([01:36:54](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 9 ([01:36:55](#)):

Can't tell you. Baldwin City, I was there on Friday for a meeting of directors, parks, recreation across Kansas and the metro area, Kansas of Kansas City, which includes us and I was in the facility. It is a new facility with a court and that is it. There are no activities to be had there and they recognize that they are not able to charge for the facility that they have. This comes from the director of the parks department over there and as we mentioned, we disclosed it. No cities are the same, right? So if you compare potentially three facilities for us or even just one SPL to that facility and what the exchanges for value, they're not really comparable. And we recognize that every city has a different setup, different ways they package their programs and all that. And we're willing to look at those as time goes or as need arises, but to compare to say we're going to do it exactly like this because this is what Eudora is doing or another city, it's impossible because of our assets and how they vary from city to city. I don't know about the other city that you mentioned outside of Baldwin City,

Speaker 12 ([01:38:21](#)):

Norman, Oklahoma.

Speaker 9 ([01:38:23](#)):

Okay. I don't know the details about

Speaker 12 ([01:38:24](#)):

Norman. Yeah, I wouldn't, I was just curious if, yeah, so thank you.

Speaker 9 ([01:38:28](#)):

Okay,

([01:38:37](#)):

Any other questions for Luis? Kurt, can you bring up that, not the new slide but the last slide on the full presentation? You got it. Thank you. Okay. The other one actually this is a follow-up. Okay. So is that

right? Yes. Thank you. So are there any of the questions here that you would be able to give us some directions on at this point? And again, we are open to any ideas that you might have. This is a work session. We're hoping to continue listening to the community and listening to the commission to determine how to best proceed from here. Either way, we need to plan either for with fees or without fees. And so the direction would be critical at this point for us. So

Speaker 1 ([01:39:44](#)):

The question related to membership and spectator fees need to be answered yes or no. If the majority of the position commission is

Speaker 9 ([01:39:51](#)):

In or think about it this way, bring it back to us, we're willing to do that. I mean we have the formulas out. We know we can modify some scenarios. There are some things that will be practical, others that may not be, but we're open to any and all suggestions at this point.

Speaker 12 ([01:40:18](#)):

Well

Speaker 1 ([01:40:18](#)):

I jump out and say that. Yes, Amber, go ahead. Sorry.

Speaker 4 ([01:40:24](#)):

Oh sorry I had my hand up. I just didn't know if I was being recognized or not.

Speaker 1 ([01:40:29](#)):

Go ahead please.

Speaker 4 ([01:40:31](#)):

Okay, I'll go through these real quick. And I know to leave space for other conversations for the first bullet point, I know I went through, I think there is an appetite for looking at spectator fees. I think looking at membership fees, I'm going to put a pin in that and come back to it because it's kind of a if then type of scenario in regards to the resident versus non-resident rates of the mind that resident rates should only include Lawrence residents in the event that there is, and this goes back to the membership piece. I did have a little caveat that said outside use should be free with if they could produce the school ID or if they're just a use outside use. And again, that'll go back to the membership fee structure piece. If we were to do that, do the free use access address concerns. I said I do believe it does with limited recreational attractions in our community, it provides an outlet for youth in the community and then does the proposed income base and H based rates address concerns? And I did say partly I said I would be interested in waiving fees for qualified individuals and families. So I wanted to start with that.

([01:41:57](#)):

One of the things, and I think someone for going back and saying in regards to the survey results about whether I'm not too terribly worried about the statistical significance of this. We go back and forth about that and I think if we're getting to a point where we want survey results to be statistically significant, that is across the entire board of all surveys we do. And that's a conversation to be had. But this, and I do that, others have noted in emails about 80% of residents and it's 80% of the individuals who took the survey. And so just wanted to make sure to note that. But what I feel like we're at right now is the pavilion is

there was a conflict of use and it was a conflict of use when it was sold to the community. And we're trying to rectify that imbalance.

(01:42:59):

ISPL is not a rec center. It is a glorified multi-use complex that was sold to our community to be a place for events and tournaments and at the idea that it would sell itself. And a lot of things are coming to the service about who made this promise, this memo and a shape 15 years ago and a week in a not and all these things that don't account for inflation ongoing use salaries, revenues, expenditures for all of these things. And we did have a presentation of that and I do appreciate that, but I do believe that SPL, it is a sports complex that has a value add to being a rec center for folks who go out there or who live out west who participate and utilize it. I've utilized SPL, they don't utilize it anymore. I've gone to a gym because of equipment use, all the things in that I pay to be able to use equipment to have access to that.

(01:44:21):

And so my thought process, I can pay for that. Therefore that opens up space and opportunities for someone else in our community to use SPL. So I think as we continue to have these conversations, I think this is always going to be a sticky point because FPL is not East Lawrence, it's not the community building, it's not Holcomb. It was built, it was sold to this community to be a sports complex as a revenue generator with a value add to help the community. And now we're at that impasse right now and I think recognizing that will help to give some grounding to conversations as we talk about fees I'm of the mind not to implement fees not because it is an inequity or it's a cost burden because those are things that we can control for if we wanted. It was the appetite of the commission to look at a sliding fees scale for membership fees.

(01:45:22):

We can task staff to do that and set those parameters. So to say that instituting fees would be an overall general inequity, that's not necessarily true. We can put provisions in place to address that and if that's the appetite of the commission, I would say for fees, we could do that, we should do that. But I would say anyone that would be a qualified resident that they would just not pay anything to the very point that one of the EE made that depending on one's income, \$25 hits someone differently, \$20 hits someone \$10 currently hits someone differently as it relates to the price of food. So if that is a conversation to be had and we want to be mindful of our community members who may have limited income, they may have a set amount of income that they bring in or they're low income or they qualify for Medicaid, Medicare, so on and so forth, just make it free for them if that's the conversation.

(01:46:29):

If we're going to look at fees, where I say not going with fees is that we've heard conversations in the community about the value understanding, the value of service, the balancing act. We talked about service levels and the different service levels and what they give us. And so if it is the mind of the community and the Willow community that what is generated through sales tax and property tax is to be used to fund activities within parts and rec, then that means you hold for membership fees and you create, then we address and we adjust the service levels based on that funding and the monies that are allocated for arts, rec and culture.

(01:47:28):

Does that mean doing more with less? No, we don't do more with less. We need to take that out of our length of time, but we do what can be done with that funding and we allow the community to experience that and understand that and engage in that. So then at the next budget cycle we can have that discussion. Is this what this looks like? This is the level that is paid for through taxes, is this what you want? Are you comfortable with this? Are you satisfied with this? And if not, then let's have the discussion then. So I think there's two ways, or at least I am looking at this from two different ways of holding membership fees and allowing the natural cost of what is coming in, what revenue is generated, and adjust those

expenditures to reflect that. Yes, as we can see the service levels may go down that is reflective of what is being allocated to that and if there is a conversation to be had, which we need to have that conversation.

(01:48:45):

So I just don't want to, I think we're kind of just depositing these things together and there are things that we need to continue to look for. I think we had these same conversations around the pool where we got very tunnel vision on what we were doing with one pool and we're not envisioning the opportunities of do we need an additional pool to support the needs that we have in our community or do we look at other options to or lesser options if that is what the community agrees upon or do we start saying, yeah, we need a second pool. What does it look like to fund and bring that online? Same thing with our rec centers. They are aging infrastructure. We need to address that. What does that look like? And so these are all conversations, these are all points that feed into this as we look at fees and what it means and what we pay for and what it means for what we pay for and the actual level of service that you get for what you pay for and that we're not conflating that or we're not inflating that to be something that is actually not.

(01:49:57):

So I'm not of the mind of us trying to do more with less. If there's not an appetite to impose fees, then we create a budget that provides the service that it does knowing that service levels would go down or could go down and we need to sit in that space for a while to be able to understand what that looks like and for the community and for commissioners to come back and have that dialogue and have that conversation around it. So I think that kind of hit all of those points, but those are my thoughts, my feedback for the different bullet areas as well as my concerns for where this is where we go with this. So multiple options, but I'm of the mind of us not doing fees right now. We can continue to look through this, but I think not going with the fees is from a basis of us understanding what this current budget gives us based on a service level and allowing the community to recognize what that is. Could we lose programs? But that's part of the learning and the planning of doing and studying of this concern in our community and how do we make it right, how do we write it and what mechanisms do we use to make that right? So that was all. Thank you.

Speaker 1 (01:51:25):

Thank you.

Speaker 12 (01:51:30):

Yeah. Yeah, I was just going to say that whatever we do before I run into this, we need to make sure it's sustainable because I think the last couple years we've made reductions to parks and recs last year, the year before, maybe the year before. So it seems to be one of those that it's continually being addressed and I think it's getting close to being bone on bone at this point, but I just definitely wanted to mention that. So spectator fees, I'm definitely interested in membership fees. I could explore that conversation because I don't know if us making reductions this year is a great idea, not only this year but the upcoming year where we have the World Cup and we have a lot of activities and we have a lot of things going on. So I think we probably need to figure out a little bit more of a solution if possible.

(01:52:32):

Are the fees fair and transparent? Yeah, I think you guys have done a good job of trying to do that, so I commend you on that. The resident rates I would probably lean to actually, since we've included Douglas County to include Douglas County continue to do that. The youth concerns youth, that is one that's kind of pinging my interest a little bit. I almost lean to the mindset of just making it no cost for youth just to go ahead and make sure that they have an opportunity to go ahead and use the facility. Then everything else make up the rest. But that's just my opinion. And then proposed, I think you're on the right direction with that. And then any other factors we should address? I don't really have any at this time.

Speaker 1 ([01:53:25](#)):

Awesome, thank you. Bart, you want to add anything? Lisa, you want to?

Speaker 22 ([01:53:31](#)):

I guess with the fee structure, it came in higher than I thought it would. The option one, I thought it would be lower than that. I'm open to entertain fees for sure. I am interested in the sliding ski possibility, sliding fee possibility. As far as the youth goes, it seems to me like you've done a good job of considering times when youth can be free and I think that's important on that end. But again, I guess to go back to is just I would be interested in sliding fee scales. I am interested in that there be some fee base. I don't think we can continue to sustain our organization without some level of fees. And I know there's been a lot of talk about sports Pravin was paying for itself, but Sports Pravin, from what I've read and delved into has really never paid for itself. It's been supported by quite a bit of taxpayers money with fees I should say with fees. It has not supported itself and so that's something to consider when I'm thinking about fees. So I am open to that. Again, the big one, the sliding potential for sliding scale of fees.

Speaker 1 ([01:54:51](#)):

Douglas County residents. Oh,

Speaker 22 ([01:54:52](#)):

Douglas. I would prefer just keep to Lawrence residence and charge Douglas County residents.

Speaker 1 ([01:54:58](#)):

Thank you. I think they got that. Brad, do you want to chime in on any of this?

Speaker 3 ([01:55:02](#)):

Yeah, a couple things. I mean, again, it doesn't surprise me that when asked the question, do you want people to pay a fee that some people say no to that. What I think is interesting about the survey is when you look at why they said no and consistent with what I've heard a lot of is, well I will pay the fee. I'm happy to pay the fee, but I don't want that person to pay the fee. I don't want low income person to pay the fee. I don't want a to pay a fee. I don't want somebody who can't afford you to pay a fee. I've talked to quite a few people who are willing to pay the fee, but they want to make sure it's open and accessible. And when you have a survey that says Do you support fees? Often they say no.

([01:55:45](#)):

And then they say, why? Because I don't want low income people to have to pay the fee or whatever. So again, I put that out there and of course as we've talked a lot about with balancing act, it's easy to say, do I want a fee? No. Do I want less firefighters? No. Do I want less police officers? No, but you have to find the balance of where you're going to balance that out. That's the hard thing is making that balancing decision. So I do think that implementing fees is a way to help balance that budget and a way to do it fairly. I mean I do think it's interesting. I mean we've always paid for the pool when we built a new pool, we charge for the pool, we pay for the golf course, we pay for classes. And when you talk to people who've come here from other places, they're like, you don't pay for the rec center.

([01:56:53](#)):

I pay for the rec center where I'm from. Not necessarily small towns around Kansas, but if they're coming from Chicago, they're coming from St. Louis or they're coming from Dallas, there's a lot of people who are used to that. Now if you've been in Ilois, and this is all, of course it's a new thing and change is hard, but I do think we need to move that direction, I think it would be much more detrimental as a few of the speakers said and others to close CentOS to reduce hours to instead of opening up at five 30 to have to

open up at eight o'clock, I go to the sports pavilion when it's raining or it's cold because I'm a runner at five 30 in the morning, but on the days they open at eight, well it doesn't work for me to open at eight.

(01:57:48):

So when you start to think about changing hours and closing, that I think is much worse than having some fees. That being said, I like Commissioner Lawson. Option two is kind of the fee level I thought we were going to see and which is why I asked the question, what if we did option two across the board? And I say that for a couple of reasons. One, I think it's a lower level that people can afford easier for one, but two, I think as we're trying to get people, and we even heard some folks here tonight, I'm not sure I'm going to join. I'm not sure I'll come if I have to pay. I think we would rather get this set up with fees that really will have far less people. I think resisting it when if a senior has to pay under option two, \$8 for the month, well qualified residents \$3 for a month.

(01:59:00):

I think that as opposed to the \$6 a month, I think we can get more people to sign up. And I know the staff is using the conservative estimate at 2%, even though the natural average is 3%, well 2%, that's 2000 people signing up. We know we had 12,000 users. I mean I think we can get a lot more than 2000 and I appreciate using the conservative numbers, but I think if we had go at the lower rate, I think we can get four or 5,000 people to sign up for that and actually generate more income.

(01:59:35):

So I'm interested in that, looking at the lower rate and being ready. If staff doesn't think we can do that rather than having cuts, we will talk about how we can make that up. Because I think the cuts are deep enough as they all. I also think having the community building open, when I first heard that we weren't going to charge for the fees, I thought, oh well that gives somebody an option. And then I heard that, well, it's not going to be open that much for drop-in. Again. I guess I'd want to explore that a little bit more. Maybe. I mean, having a place that people can go O that is free at least part of the day like you're doing with the students, at least something to think about, especially if we're going to have classes there anyway, is it that much harder to open it up for the recs or I just throw that out there.

(02:00:34):

Two other smaller things, the family of five and so Catholic, Joe Ke, but a lot of my friends have families of seven or eight. They have lots of kids and I don't know, the five kind of seems arbitrary. I understand the point. Obviously it's not to get one person to have 20 people on the one call, but at least think about that how we could for family. Now again, if there's some movement to eliminate charging kids at all, well maybe that solves the problem, but I think somehow having a husband and wife and five kids should be able to have a family pass. I just dunno how we can make that work logistically. But something to think about. And the other thing I think is the punch cards. I do think if we keep the two levels, we need to have a punch card level that's open.

(02:01:50):

I know it's going to be more complicated, but I think there's a lot of people who will use that punch card because they only use one of the places when it's rainy or cold. And so something to think about having a variety of those punch cards. Then the other thing related to the punch cards is I know we have with swimming passes, like when the housing authority buys swimming passes or Family Promise buys swimming passes, I think they can get a discount or maybe they can get some, I don't remember exactly how that works mean. Can we have something like that with the punch cards? Boys and Girls Club wants to bring 20 people to, I don't know, play basketball. I don't know if they do that or a family promise or I know we got something from the housing authority that they sometimes bring kids, have something worked in there on allowing them to have a discounted punch card system.

(02:02:55):

And I lean towards including Douglas County as a resident, one because they pay the sales tax that we're using to pay off the bonds. And two, I think it's going to be pretty complicated to figure out where people live and find their house and instead of using zip codes and stuff like that. But again, maybe that's something we reevaluate after the first year, but I would lean that way. And then I think the last question, did I get all the questions? Yeah, I think the rest of them I'm good with. I think we're making the right progress though. I think

Speaker 1 ([02:03:53](#)):

Commissioner Sellers, did you have a question?

Speaker 4 ([02:03:57](#)):

Yeah, I guess my question to other commissioners who have an appetite for answering it is I've heard several folks say I'm interested and us looking at reduced rates for qualified folks or reduced rates for kids. And when I look at these different options, the most equitable thing to do, if we're saying that folks in our community have the desire to make sure that there is opportunity and access and that it's low barrier for low income individuals, whether it's children, seniors, families, then just waive the fee for them. I guess why not just say waive the fee? I mean we have the ability to tell staff, if you're going to look at creating a fee structure, create a fee structure that ensures that families that qualify or have these specific parameters don't have to pay. And if that's an appetite for the commission, then I think it's best that we articulate it and say that now. But I would be curious to say instead of trying to again, find a sweet spot for low income individuals to pay for something when it's nominal in the bigger scheme, why not just can we commit to say that we waive the fee for youth and that youth don't have to pay?

Speaker 22 ([02:05:35](#)):

Sure. Yeah. I would be interested in that.

Speaker 3 ([02:05:38](#)):

I would

Speaker 1 ([02:05:39](#)):

Think we all would.

Speaker 3 ([02:05:40](#)):

Yeah, I mean if they have the, yeah, I'd be interested in looking at that, how that might play out.

Speaker 1 ([02:05:50](#)):

Anything else to add there? Amber?

Speaker 4 ([02:05:54](#)):

So much more to add, but this is a work session. So that is all I have for today.

Speaker 1 ([02:05:59](#)):

All right. I think you've got a majority of what you need from us. I'm definitely in favor of looking at membership and or spectator fees, specifically spectator fees for sure. Membership fees based on all the conversation we discussed, long-term sustainability of our properties and our community is at stake if we don't reinvest in these assets and use them, I really want to see us take a look at the resident versus non-

resident rates. I'd be open to allowing Douglas County residents, as you said, since they're paying the sales tax, that're paying the bonds. But I also understand how we would want to make sure we draw the line and talk about that publicly. So we either say we want to include them or not and see what the negative consequences or the financial impact might be from excluding them specifically or including them. What percentage of 'em are outside the city already.

(02:06:52):

And we may not have that data, but I'd like to know that. And then, yeah, I agree with everything else on the accessibility and affordability. I think we need to trudge down this road unfortunately because we have really failed to grow at the rate that we expected when this place was constructed. And I feel like we're seeing some impact from some of our planning that didn't foresee this need. And I think we need to be honest with the community and with ourselves and talk about how great this facility is and how great our facilities are. But all of them are great and I want to see them age with the best possible scenario. And with low dollars available and low use through neglect, we will end up having to spend more money down the road. So I really feel like we need to seriously talk about how we're going to sustain the parks and rec department in the longterm so that other commissions or other costs that come up don't take away from these opportunities for our community.

(02:07:53):

So I don't really want to go any more to that, but I think you've got everything you need and I think lower fee rate as well. After talking and listening to this, I think I've heard some commissioners are interested in a lower fee rate and then also subsidizing the difference somehow. I don't know how that would be. And finally, I want to talk about naming rights on the pavilion. I think if we don't address that immediately, I think it's 10 more years of discussion and there won't be a name on it. And I think that kind of revenue would be something that we could have used over these years and we should have probably jumped on when we have the opportunity. And I feel like we need to explore that as an opportunity to maybe fill this gap that we have right now if we do go with lower fee rates.

Speaker 9 (02:08:37):

Okay. I do appreciate all that. I do have some follow up questions and maybe some comments as well. We've thought about the sliding fee scale. We believe that that would add complication to the process. So at that point, we're asking for verification of income. So now they're going to have to show us you can't, unless we're saying youth waive all the youth. And so I just want to address some of these things that we have thought about and how that's no longer a low barrier to entry. Now you have to show us the income tax return or something like that where our intent was, let's make this easy, let's find what those verification processes are out there already so that we can minimize the process in which we need to go through to approve somebody to a scholarship. So just to address that and some of the complications that might come for that.

(02:09:31):

Well, we will certainly explore it and see what we can come up with that in addressing the Douglas County versus non Douglas County, we don't have that data. The way we expect to implement it is through using GIS addresses in the city of Lawrence and importing that into a rec track system who can then say, here's your address. You are a city of Lawrence versus not. We have not been doing that. And I'm not saying we can't back into that. We could probably look at some of these things, but again, we haven't been charging for access. So people would maybe coming in at different times or different. And we haven't necessarily been tracking,

Speaker 1 (02:10:08):

We haven't scanned them in either.

Speaker 9 ([02:10:09](#)):

Yeah, exactly. Not everybody. Exactly. So it'd be difficult. But that's how we would plan on doing that if it were just Lawrence. And we can look at what those numbers kind of, kind of generally. You could probably guess. Exactly. And then one of the other things, again, what we brought to the table today or to the podium was a proposal based on what we heard from the public. The public as well as from the budget committees. One of the things they said, and I want to be frank here because this is why we put in our proposal, is we are Lawrence owners. We are paying property tax that Douglas in City of Lawrence, that Douglas County residents are not. We're enjoying the same benefit of this facility. Why should a Lawrence resident be paying property taxes and a Douglas County not? So that's why the question, and maybe a little clarity on why we brought the question to you is because we've heard it as a concern, we didn't want to ignore it. We wanted some guidance on how should we address this potential disparity, at least in the public's eye

Speaker 7 ([02:11:16](#)):

Of

Speaker 9 ([02:11:17](#)):

We're paying more than somebody that lives in the Compton.

([02:11:22](#)):

So again, we can look at what those numbers might look like, but that is, that's the reasoning behind putting that question out here. And then final for clarification, it sounds from the conversations that we're hearing that we want to prioritize recreation centers, recreation programs, that does mean that as we reduce rates, we reduce fees, we reduce free access for youth that we're going to still have to make up that \$1.8 million, which means parks, trails, cemeteries, levies. So I want to be prepared for what we will come back to you and saying, this is now what our standard is going to be for 2026 if the budget is approved accordingly. So again, my hope for our staff, for the city, for the public is to walk out of here with some clear direction as to this is what you want us to further explore so that when we come back, we have the right formula to move forward into 26 and in the future.

([02:12:27](#)):

And then finally, yes, we will look at every revenue. I know Steven Watson said he doesn't like to use that word but opportunities. That is the background I came from in the city of Mesa, commercial operations for the parks and rec departments. So there are opportunities that we look at including naming rights, including of revenue generation through concession contracts and all that that we will continue to look at. These are longer term, these take focus, these take and in the meantime we need to still sustain. It's hard to do that when we're reducing \$1.8 million of our budget and trying to bounce back the other way at the same time. So this allows us to focus our energies at least include a little bit more sustainability in our modeling so that we can then continue to explore other ways of increasing our revenues and minimizing subsidies to parks and rec. So we do have enough information. I just wanted again to offer this to you and we will at some point discuss with city manager's office of coming back and giving you an update prior to the final budget. Thank

Speaker 12 ([02:13:33](#)):

You. I would jump in and add to follow up on Vice Mayor Finkel DA's point about the community building in terms of free youth. If the community building has wider access and a little bit more expanded time, maybe something could be thought of to incorporate some of that idea as well for youth or to have some sort of expanded time where they could go ahead and recreate there or something like that. Just to be creative and just to go ahead and use the facilities that we have at a capacity that we probably need.

Speaker 9 ([02:14:14](#)):

And I will say again, and I appreciate all this and we have looked at this, the community building is the one least visited by youth.

([02:14:24](#)):

They're going to the other centers, they're going to SPL. So not to say that it has a geographical purpose, right? It's in the middle of town and certainly we see it but it is the least visited during the timeframe that we're talking about. But we can certainly look at expanding and see if it does have an effect. Again, we still have dollars to work with, right? We still have to reduce 1.8 and try to all that, but this is enough direction for us to dig in a little deeper and see what we can come up with.

Speaker 12 ([02:14:55](#)):

Okay,

Speaker 9 ([02:14:57](#)):

Thank

Speaker 1 ([02:14:57](#)):

You.

Speaker 12 ([02:14:58](#)):

Good. Thank you.

Speaker 1 ([02:15:00](#)):

Got you. Need Luis? Take a break? Yeah, I think we're going to take a 10 minute break and we will read adjourn here at eight 10.

([02:15:19](#)):

Amber, Amber, looks like she's ready. Okay, I think we're going to go ahead and get started here. It's about eight 10. I'm going to move on to our next item, which is our first and only regular agenda item, which is to consider notifying Douglas County of the intent of the governing body to propose a tax rate of 33.186 mills, which exceeds the revenue neutral rate as defined by state law for the 2026 budget and then schedule both the public hearing to exceed the revenue neutral rate and the 2026 budget hearing on Tuesday, September 2nd, 2025 at 5:45 PM or soon thereafter as the matter can be heard in the city commission room, first floor of the city hall for the purpose of considering exceeding the revenue neutral rate and the hearing and answering of the objections of the taxpayers related to the proposed 2026 budget.

Speaker 23 ([02:16:14](#)):

Good evening city commission. I'm Mary Bisbee budget analyst and tonight we're going to talk about our revenue neutral rate process and our maximum mill levy rate for the 2026 budget. And so the revenue neutral rate process is dictated by state of Kansas law and essentially it's saying if the city is wanting to collect more property tax revenue, then they need to add some additional steps to their budgeting process. And so the actual revenue neutral rate would be the mill levy that the city needs to set in order to collect the same amount of property tax as the prior year with our current year's assessed valuation. So this would be collecting the same as we have in 2025 with our 26 assessed valuation. And this assessed valuation is provided to us by the county, which you can see listed on your screen. And this is what we've used to develop the proposed 2026 budget. The county also calculates what our revenue neutral rate would be and for 2026 it would be 31.379 mills. The proposed 2026 budget that was presented to the commission last

week does include a flat mill levy rate of 33.186 which would require the commission to exceed the revenue neutral rate.

(02:17:32):

So the city's total mill is levied for three purposes and this is general debt service and for our library. And so on this table you can see the 2025 budgeted mill rate and then you can see what was actually levied for 2025. And so these small changes are due to us receiving our final assessed valuation in November, which is after the budget has been adopted. And so those changes are made on the county side and then in comparison you can see what is proposed for 2026, which is flat compared to our 2025 budgeted rate. You can see a small decrease in our library mill and this is due to when we put our numbers into the official state form, there's some calculations and rounding on those in and so it did result in a little bit of a decrease in their mill. However the library is aware of this in this proposed mill for them does incorporate their full 2026 budget request to the city. And so again, the 2026 proposed request is that 33.186 mills.

(02:18:37):

So we did want to provide a brief update on our general fund budget. Again, when we were inputting our property tax numbers into our state form, there was just a small change in the anticipated property tax revenue collection and so it recognition of that we also lowered expenditures to match with the commission has seen previously. And so this still does include the \$2 million of fund balance restoration and so there has been no other changes since you've seen this last week, but we did just want to provide this small update. And so it's state law that the city needs to notify the county by July 20th whether they intend to exceed the revenue neutral rate. And so this notification would include the intent to exceed information about our public hearing as well as what the proposed tax rate for 2026 would be. The county would then use this information and they would send out a notice to taxpayers so that they're aware of any public hearings happening.

(02:19:40):

If the commission does intend to exceed the revenue neutral rate, we would then hold a revenue neutral rate public hearing in addition to our budget public hearing. And so these are two separate hearings that will happen, but they can't happen the same night by law. They have to occur between August 20th and September 20th and ours is currently slated for September 2nd and then just by October 1st we certify our budget with the county. So this is an example of a notification that a taxpayer may receive regarding this intent to exceed revenue neutral as well as our general public hearing notice that will be published.

(02:20:24):

So going into our next steps, so tonight the commission would establish the maximum mill rate for the 2026 on September 2nd would be our public hearings for the budget process and then anticipated adoption of the budget and CIP on September 16th. Again, the maximum mill rate that would be set tonight and we would notify the county on July 20th. This can be reduced prior to that adoption on September 16th, but it can't be increased after we notify the county of the rate. And then you can also see our budget email. We'd welcome any questions from the community or the commission as we continue to work through this budget process and feel free to direct them to the budget@lawrenceks.org. But just a short presentation tonight commission. And so that's all we have and here to answer any questions.

Speaker 1 (02:21:13):

Thank you Mary. Any questions right away Mr. Sellers? Any questions? Okay, thank you. Alright, so I guess we're going to open it up for public comment if people don't have any questions of our staff at this point,

Speaker 24 (02:21:45):

John S 6 6 0 4 9. This fits either in now or later in general public, so I'll just do it now. Lawrence has received substantial federal funds in the past according to your own comprehensive financial report, at least 39 million a year on a regular basis and those dollars from a budgetary perspective have been spread far and wide throughout the services of the city. General operations, public safety, public works, health, social services, culture, recreation, Lawrence Memorial Hospital, Lawrence Public Library, nearly a hundred percent of Lawrence Douglas County Housing Authority. Now of course you're losing a lot of those grants and you're losing 'em either all at once. In some cases HUD has been very difficult for you and the county, but I don't think the citizens understand what has been received from the federal government and how it's been used systematically to grow the services that the citizens have been enjoying.

(02:22:55):

I think they need to understand the cost of the services that they value and that with the Fed backing out, if they still want those services, they're going to have to be paid for. Now you can see, I mean I understand the problem you're facing, you can see how you're jumping through your budget looking, the whole thing with parks and such that people are upset because fees are being raised so you can kind of see as you're trying to solve this problem, the cutbacks with the police, the cutbacks with the fire, which by the way I personally do not agree with, but it's not a good approach when we work this problem line item by line item and the citizens are not aware of the overall consequences for what they value. They need to see it as a system, not just as individual insults to the things that they value.

(02:23:52):

You. Even to me, you're sort of hiding what you're doing because you're not even telling the county your partner that you're cutting back on fire. I go to a hundred percent of the county meetings, that's where I spend my time and I was there when the fire department showed up and emergency management showed up and said, Hey, we are underwater. And even today in the county meeting they talked about again partner and they hope that communication gets better. You need to be out in the community, you need to be with your partner talking about the cuts that you think you need to survive. I know you can't operate the city without the benefit of the federal government and even the state government is going to be cutting back, so we have to raise fees on a lot of things. That's really all I had to say.

Speaker 25 (02:24:49):

Good evening. John Edmond, president of the Lawrence Police Officers Association. I mostly just want to talk about when we talk about this mill increase, although it's not something we necessarily want, my concern is that if we set a limit that's too low, we're going to miss out on some of the core services that we need. Obviously that can be adjusted later. Just to kind of talk through the last three years, we've been asked to cut over \$2 million in some of the services we provide commodities as the chief talked about last week, all while some of our external contracts, internal service fees and general operating expenses have gone up so our budget has shrunk for our use though it may seem like it's going up with that. If this does go through, we'll be under our 2012 operating sworn capacity then we were authorized for 1 47.

(02:25:40):

This would put us at 1 45 and us as a body, the Lawrence Police Officer Association, we rarely speak publicly, but we are at a dire time. We feel like alarm bells need to be raised. I do believe that citizens deserve to walk downtown without fear that they should be able to go to school without worry. I feel that they need to feel safe driving home from work and throughout town we respond to calls for service and emergencies as a core function, but ultimately what's more important is we relentlessly and aggressively pursue those that mean you and their citizens harm. There are people right now that are trying to sell our children fentanyl. There are people right now who are putting families at risk, driving under the influence. There are people who prey on victims walking around at night. There are people that are trying to steal the things that our citizens have worked hard to earn. There's people that will randomly attack others as

they're walking down the street. Our goal is to prevent those things. Do not want to empower your police department to go out and fight this crime and fight this evil. Ultimately, police and fire or insurance policies, nobody necessarily jumps for joy when they have to pay the premiums, but thank goodness when something bad does happen, you've got it in place. Thank you.

Speaker 1 ([02:27:06](#)):

Thanks John.

Speaker 26 ([02:27:23](#)):

Good evening. My name is Shamus Bert and I'm the current president of Lawrence Professional Firefighters and I wanted to speak to encourage the commission to give yourselves some flexibility in the decision you make tonight because there are still numerous factors and numerous policy questions to be answered over the next couple of weeks concerning this budget. There's absolutely no shame in putting a higher ceiling on the mill tonight. Even if you are intending to settle lower, one may say it's actually prudent. As firefighters, it's normal. As we approach a home fire and prepare to go in and make a push, we estimate the length of hose we need in feet. The running philosophy on the fire ground is to always bring 50 feet more hose with you than you think you need because it is more dangerous and more shameful to do the opposite, right? So this budget this year is certainly a fire, a house fire and if so, the five of you charged with putting it out, I would advise you to bring that extra 50 feet of hose with you.

([02:28:27](#)):

You may realize over the next few weeks that you do need that extra mill to fit in the community needs. Also, I want to point out for the year 2025, we have six fire trucks on duty and if the budget passes as written, we will have five. And the CIP program as written indicates that there's potential for a mill conversation in the future to come back to six. Why are we waiting to have that conversation if we are saying we are willing to have that conversation for six in the future, why not have the conversation tonight to maintain that very same firetruck? There has been a tremendous amount of conversation at the county commission level as well about LDC FM's budget last Wednesday, Friday, Monday, and even I hear this morning and I am under the impression that there's a consensus from that group to add an additional ambulance starting in the year of 2026. Our commissioners at the county level are choosing leadership over politics. They are choosing to prioritize public safety and the science that says we need more resources, not less and that we need those resources now and not years in the future. I'm asking the five of you to do the same. Thank you.

Speaker 27 ([02:29:52](#)):

I don't get to stick around to the city commission much. I work early on Wednesday mornings, so here I am sort of alert, it's kind of late for me. My name is Shirley bro and I live in the zip code 6 6 0 4 4. I enjoy owning a home but I have a mortgage and every year I see my property taxes go up, my homeowner's insurance isn't going up. Thank goodness I don't have a fancy home. I have a tiny home, but it's comfortable if property taxes are going to keep going up, I'm going to be spending more and more of my emergency savings to pay that.

([02:30:43](#)):

I'm getting worried. I have a friend that lives in my neighborhood who's shared with me with her retirement and owning her home outright and not having to pay a mortgage anymore. That property taxes are a really big deal and she's afraid that she's going to get taxed out of her home. So just, yeah, we need to pay for the things that we enjoy as a community, but it's also appropriate to think about those of us that are just getting by and it's still ringing in the back of my head the memory of coming to a commission meeting last year talking about renters versus who likes to own a home and hearing some of you all say that evening that for whatever reason more Lawrence people like to rent than to own. That is not true.

What it is is that people can't afford to own, they can't afford to buy a house because of the housing stock. You all know how short it is. It's been in the news recently mostly what's available to buy. The landlords are buying and turning around and renting to my friends, that is not an equitable economy. Thanks for listening.

Speaker 7 ([02:32:23](#)):

Thank you.

Speaker 15 ([02:32:34](#)):

Good evening. Back again. I don't know if we get punch cards or anything. I will sign up for the app Eric Sartorius. Good evening again. 6, 6 0 4 6. Don't cling to a mistake just because you spent a long time making it and that is a quote I came across a couple of years ago and has been really a good prompt for me to use for myself when thinking about decisions and courses of action before I jump into my prepared. What I had written down though, I did want to draw attention because I thought it was very appropriate to public comment during the parks and rec budget debate and the recommendation was just take a half a million dollars out of that 2 million that's been proposed to refill the reserve fund and that'll solve the problem. And quite frankly, that's the epitome, epitome of making the same mistake again and again and again and it's what has caused some of these budget issues as I'm sure you all have recognized because you've had all of the preparation briefings, you'll have a truly real budget issue, six and a half million out of \$120 million general fund.

([02:33:54](#)):

To put that in perspective, I don't know if you all have seen this or not. The city of Wichita also has a budget deficit they're working on. They have a \$2 million deficit in a \$320 million general fund budget. You'll have difficult issues to tackle. I appreciate that. The staff recommendation is to leave the mill levy steady. You will exceed revenue neutral rate and we're still looking at about a 5% tax increase based on appraisals. So whether you've been part of the commission during all this time or not, the city over the past several years has taken on several projects. I think some due to ARPA funding and not really projecting out what the long-term consequences of saying yes would be. And you're now in a true issue and true challenge. I heard a commissioner somewhere earlier this spring say they were uneasy with not following through on commitments that the commission had made and the reality of local government, and I know some of you, I've been around local government for most of the past 25 years, the reality is local government situations are always changing. So true leadership is not just recognizing that but acting on that and sharing with your constituents the whys and what needs to be done even if it's unpopular. What I see much in the budget engagement process is we have a lot of folks wanting Johnson County level services without the recognition that we don't have Johnson County level tax funds and assessed values. I'm out of time but I appreciate your time. Thank you all.

Speaker 1 ([02:35:43](#)):

Any other comment in the room? Okay, how about online?

Speaker 2 ([02:35:51](#)):

We do have one. Jeffrey Heppler.

Speaker 28 ([02:36:02](#)):

Hey all. Good evening. Let me get the fan out the background there. Sorry, Jeffrey Heppler 6 6 0 4 4. I used to be a homeowner. I no longer am currently renting and I sympathize with both sides truly, but this is probably one of those hard choices that is going to have to be made and shoot, we might even need to go higher than this. We need money. That's all. Thanks.

Speaker 2 ([02:36:44](#)):

That's all the comments.

Speaker 1 ([02:36:46](#)):

Okay, thank you Sherry. Commissioners. So we think we know what our challenge is today. Any feedback or questions or how to approach some of the comments that were made about exceeding revenue neutral and going past the mill we discussed?

Speaker 3 ([02:37:08](#)):

I can stop. Yes please. We've been working hard to for a long time to get a budget that's flat and that's what we've directed staff to do and I appreciate that. But I do think we should give and I do, I think probably support. I think we need to do something to have a little wiggle room to see how things play out and I think again, I mentioned last week, I think three I'm interested in is one, to see how these rec fees play out. I think we talked about a couple options but for example, the one I was thinking about though, although I think maybe people have better ideas than I did tonight about just using option two, that'd be about \$150,000 that we'd need to make up and I don't think we need should take it out of reserves. So I think we want to have some flexibility to consider that.

([02:38:18](#)):

I'm interested in at least thinking about police and adding a couple police officers back to patrol and I do appreciate, I've been watching the county meetings as well. The county commission has not made a final vote yet. They do look to be leaning towards adding an ambulance as Seamus said, and adding about a little over a million dollars to their side of the budget to add that additional ambulance. And given the number of, as I understood, at least from what they said, I think given the number of early retirements we have, we'd actually have to hire people to fill that ambulance even going into next year. But a couple of the county commissioners said they wanted to look at the city and see if the percentage breakdown between 36 and 38. If they put some more in that goes to 39 40% sent, they might want to talk to us about an if then scenario of we will do this if you do that, if you put some more money in, we'll do this. We understand we'll pay for it this year because, so I think we need just to have a little flexibility there to have that discussion. And I will say for the record that I believe in station six, I do believe we're going to add, I do believe I will support adding firetruck six when we get ready to open station six. That means we're going to have a mill levy increase probably at some point to make that happen.

([02:40:09](#)):

The county commission is saying we're adding ambulance number six four station six. They also predict we're going to eventually open station six and they're going to have an ambulance ready to go. We're going to have to be ready to have that firetruck ready to go. And so I think we want to be at least have that option to have some considerations this year to plan for that and work with the county. And so I would recommend we do a half a mill and at least give us some wiggle room to talk about those three issues.

Speaker 1 ([02:40:49](#)):

Okay, so a 0.5 mil greater than the number that's on the page currently?

Speaker 3 ([02:40:54](#)):

Yes. Amber?

Speaker 1 ([02:41:01](#)):

Oh please Amber, go ahead.

Speaker 4 ([02:41:10](#)):

Sorry about that. So thank you for starting the conversation around the idea of increasing the mill. I do believe I appreciate our, that kind of state that we do. I think we have, we're in the beginning stages of understanding our funding relationship with the federal government and as well as with the state government through pass through dollars. And my hope, and I do believe that the commission has shared that we are getting to a point that more information is becoming more and more clear to us in regards to that and we do need to do our due diligence to share that with the community. I don't think anything is being, I know nothing is being hidden. No one being misled. This is literally a movie target that is, it is painful to watch as it is to try to come up with the different scenarios of loss and how do we make up that loss.

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

And so I think these are real conversations. Yes, we as commissioners have had with staff limited in how we've had those conversations collectively, but we do need to start having those conversations with the community. I would propose giving us a little bit more wiggle room to possibly increasing adding another mill for those very things. I think commissioner fin vice mayor does make a good point in regards to ongoing conversations in wiggle room for L-D-C-F-M, whatever that is. I've watched a couple of the presentations from the county and I think there is an appetite there to support what it's going to take to make a poll for 2026 but prepare us for expansion and so making sure we at least commit to having a revenue neutral rate a that exceeds revenue neutral that speaks to that so we can have those conversations are key. The only other thing that I would add at this current junction, and there may be something else as the conversation as we continue to have conversations before we make a decision in September, is to look at possible utilizing a mail increase to for some one-time infusion of dollars for World Cup infrastructure dollars.

([02:44:01](#)):

There had been no clear a answer from our delegates, our congressional delegates as well as from local and from state electives as far as what the state is going to provide, communities who have the potential to be a practice site, the host site who are going to see an increase in demand during World Cup barring any natural, unnatural or presidential disaster that we have that influx of people in and we need to be prepared for that. I know we've talked about utilizing TGT, that's a whole nother conversation, but there may be a delay in those funds if we go that route and this allows us to have funding in the conference to be able to address those insulates and needs and capacities that are going to be stressed during that time based on understanding and what we're hearing. So I would propose that we at least at a minimum go up a mill to 34.186 that gives us 1.57 million to if there are things that we need to identify that commissioners believe would benefit from that brief, that infusion of dollars for that and I'll kind of end it at there. Other things are ancillary, but no, I think we should go up to at least a male to 34.186.

Speaker 1 ([02:45:42](#)):

Okay, thank you.

Speaker 22 ([02:45:47](#)):

You

Speaker 7 ([02:45:47](#)):

Good?

Speaker 22 ([02:45:47](#)):

I'm comfortable with staying at the 33.186. Okay.

Speaker 7 ([02:45:51](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 12 ([02:45:57](#)):

I mean we could always reduce it afterwards. So I'm comfortable with Vice Mayor Finkel.

Speaker 1 ([02:46:03](#)):

Yeah,

Speaker 12 ([02:46:03](#)):

With

Speaker 1 ([02:46:04](#)):

Half a mill is six \$700,000. I'm trying to remember what a half a mill is. Somebody

Speaker 4 ([02:46:12](#)):

Would \$785,000

Speaker 1 ([02:46:14](#)):

Seven.

Speaker 4 ([02:46:15](#)):

So we're giving ourselves a \$700,000 wiggle room.

Speaker 1 ([02:46:18](#)):

Yeah,

Speaker 4 ([02:46:19](#)):

I don't know why. I guess I want to understand what is the hesitancy from commissioners to, I mean I don't think anyone's asking for us to add five mills, but why are we trying to hams screen ourselves on something that we may not commit to? I mean we can say 35 mills and vote on 33.186. I just thought, are we afraid that if we open the door more that people will ask for more or we will get more pushback? I guess I'm trying to understand why are we shortening the rope for ourselves on this?

Speaker 1 ([02:47:05](#)):

Good question,

Speaker 3 ([02:47:07](#)):

Allie, were you going to say something before?

Speaker 1 ([02:47:08](#)):

Yeah, you're going to tell us the number?

Speaker 29 ([02:47:10](#)):

Yes. So the commission is correct, \$1.57 million. However, when we add expenditures, we are required to add approximately 90 days of operating expenses. If we don't do that, we're going to be right back in the situation we are now. So if you take that 1.57 for expenditures, you're looking more at 1.18 million approximately. So a half million, about \$590,000.

Speaker 1 ([02:47:38](#)):

And that's because why? Because

Speaker 29 ([02:47:40](#)):

We are adding a buffer for a fund balance policy

Speaker 1 ([02:47:43](#)):

Or 90 day. Correct. I want to make sure. Got

Speaker 3 ([02:47:45](#)):

It.

Speaker 29 ([02:47:45](#)):

Thank you.

Speaker 3 ([02:47:45](#)):

Alright, so how much would a half mill be

Speaker 29 ([02:47:48](#)):

Approximately, and I don't like to do math on the fly, but 590,000,

Speaker 1 ([02:47:57](#)):

But that includes,

Speaker 4 ([02:47:57](#)):

Thank you for the fuzzy math alley,

Speaker 1 ([02:47:59](#)):

The 90 day out, that's what the 90 day taken out of the formula.

Speaker 4 ([02:48:03](#)):

That is correct.

Speaker 3 ([02:48:09](#)):

That's a bummer but a good point, A good point. I mean commissioner sells, to your point, yes, I guess I am worried that if we just throw a number out there that's not reasonable, then we have, I mean a lot of staff members, a lot of people hanging on our roads listening to us saying, oh, they said a mill. Okay, let's figure out how to use every part of that and if we're not really going to do it, it seems like it's a, yeah, it opens the door to something that's not realistic. But I guess I would say with that consideration of the five 90 maybe, I mean 0.75 mils maybe, I don't know. I guess I'm reluctant even to say that just because not, I

think we might have two. I mean I don't know how many votes we have to do it, so I just don't want to send the wrong message. I guess that's my thought.

Speaker 1 ([02:49:28](#)):

Understood. Do you want to add in around 0.5 to 0.75 to one is what I've heard so far and it took me quite a bit to get to 0.5. I understood, understood. And I feel that way. And

Speaker 4 ([02:49:45](#)):

So what are we doing with that? What are we trying? Because I mean I brought up a mill because I want to look at infusing infrastructure dollars for us for World Cup. That's part of the discussion. We were talking about giving us ourselves wiggle room for LDC fm and so out of that everyone's saying, oh, a 0.5 is fine. So that totally dismissive everything that I've said. It doesn't take anything into consideration that I said because we want to do 0.5, knowing that 0.5 is only giving us so much so we're not. So even knowing that what we initially thought a half a mill was going to give us has actually given us less. Folks are still holding the door on it, they're holding ground on that and you're still limiting the amount of what we have to work with or opportunity to have discussion about.

([02:50:40](#)):

I think that's the part that's a little bit disheartening to me and it's also frustrating as a commissioner that we've done this now for four cycles and we, I'm trying not to use a rope analogy, I just don't want to use that. But we are selling ourselves. We're giving ourselves such limited opportunity to have this session. I get it that we may have one or two commissioners that don't want to increase the mill levy, they want to keep it flat and they're going to vote on a flat one, that's fine. But what I'm saying is for the next 30, 60 days, what is it? It's not competing values. We have multiple values of what commissioners want to bring and discuss about what we want to fund. And all I heard was yeah, let's do a half a mill to have some WL rooms for something.

([02:51:35](#)):

No conversation about anything else. And that's fine. We don't want to discuss it, but I think it's very disingenuous for a commissioner to bring something up and it just gets dismiss. Say, oh, we're going to keep with a half a meal and we'll just do that. We'll just use that and we're going to go on no conversation. But I still want people to be nice to me because I'm trying to make a difficult decision, but I don't want to make too difficult of a decision because I don't want people to think I'm getting in their pockets. This impacts everybody.

Speaker 1 ([02:52:07](#)):

Sure.

Speaker 4 ([02:52:08](#)):

So I mean if it is the will for everybody to do 0.5 and we're going to shortchange and say we're using a half a million dollars to negotiate something with fire and medical, so be it, but then do 0.8 mills, so at least the conversation then includes a little bit of money to the tune of \$230,000 for us to provide funding for infrastructure and capacity building for World Cup because to date we have not received any notification of funding. If there will be funding, if the state's going to fund us or there's be any, we know there's no money earmarked right now federally, so I just don't understand the committee. But if that's the consensus of the commission, so be it. But I'm just like a mill. We're not saying we're going to vote on a mill that gives us a little more broad plus minus \$570,000 roughly to have a conversation about the things that we need to have a discussion to be able to discuss that amongst for commissioners to have that discussion and not have it with the usual folks

Speaker 3 ([02:53:28](#)):

On the World Cup. Maybe this commissioner fellows or staff, are we still talking about the TGT increase to go into effect? Is that still a possibility?

Speaker 30 ([02:53:43](#)):

It is something that's been discussed, yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 4 ([02:53:48](#)):

Oh, go ahead Craig. I was just going to say, Craig,

Speaker 30 ([02:53:51](#)):

It is something that's been discussed there is lead time on getting that adopted and implemented and collected getting the collection device in place in time for next June.

Speaker 3 ([02:54:06](#)):

Meaning we need to move quickly or

Speaker 30 ([02:54:08](#)):

Yes, if that's what we're going to do, we do need to move quickly on it.

Speaker 3 ([02:54:13](#)):

Yeah, well I'm interested in it to

Speaker 30 ([02:54:17](#)):

Talk to some about it

Speaker 4 ([02:54:18](#)):

And we may be interested in it. There's a lot of hoteliers who are not interested in it. So I mean there's a more bigger, more broader, I don't say complex, but I think just like we had, especially about the fee structure, there's several pieces that go, it's not just about increasing the TGT, either the bigger conversation around C-V-B-T-G-T dollars because that increase is not, there's nothing that says that we're going to dedicate that increase to solely be about one World Cup if at one time there's more conversation and that's fine. We still need to have that conversation. But I'm also requesting

Speaker 7 ([02:55:05](#)):

Just

Speaker 4 ([02:55:06](#)):

For us to have the conversation to put money in the general fund just in case.

Speaker 7 ([02:55:13](#)):

Okay,

Speaker 22 ([02:55:15](#)):

And you're talking about for the World Cup, is that what you're talking about? Yeah, commissioner sellers.

Speaker 7 ([02:55:20](#)):

Yes. Yes.

Speaker 3 ([02:55:24](#)):

Well, I guess side note, I think maybe we'll bring it up at commission items, but to bring the TGT stuff forward, at least make sure we have at least be able to discuss it where we have the lead time.

([02:55:40](#)):

Well, I guess my concern about a mill is that at the end of the day, I'm not sure I can support it, but I hear what Commissioner Sellers is saying. I mean, I don't know if there's three votes to it. I think we've sent the message pretty strongly. It's not open session for everyone to come to us and ask, do we store all the cuts we just made? But the 0.8 would be, obviously we know at one would be a 0.8 would be what, 33.986 that taking into account reserves might give us the little wiggle boom. I don't know. It's probably up to others to see what they're willing.

Speaker 22 ([02:56:30](#)):

Yeah,

Speaker 1 ([02:56:31](#)):

I don't know if you want,

Speaker 22 ([02:56:32](#)):

Yeah, if we're looking at a mill or so whatever, 8.8 wiggle go room, if it's the ideas for infrastructure for the World Cup, what happens after that? Do we remove that mill levy then next year or does that continue to stay on and then stay here?

Speaker 3 ([02:56:49](#)):

It stays Well, it goes to the five station six. Yeah, I mean that probably goes to station six after that. Yeah,

Speaker 1 ([02:56:58](#)):

I mean we can't pull down the mill levy anytime. We could choose to do that if we had the financial wherewithal to do so, but unfortunately we don't right now. I guess I'm really interested in exploring the idea of whether or not we're in a safe position relative to our staffing with police and fire. So I know that we are not quite sure where we stand for manpower and I know that we're being asked to cut, so we've received some feedback that says maybe if we cooperate with the county in their staffing of a six, that maybe if we can step in to do more, that would be a good team approach to how we want to serve the community and how we want to approach public safety as a team. If having this potential available to us in the future might assist us in that conversation that I'm open to, that we could actually negotiate in good faith with them to help.

([02:57:51](#)):

But I really wanted to get staff to try to do their best to keep things at a level, but I also understand the need, given the fact that parks and rec fees are still up in the air, we still need to figure out how we're going to bridge that gap. And so we're seeing a couple hundred thousand here and there that might be necessary to get us through while we do implement these long-term strategies. So I think I'd be open to

looking forward to an increase just opening up the idea to it once we've then kind of burrowed down into the weeds with the county and what they're willing to put up on funding for fire and then where we're at for staffing on our police. I know we're down a couple of sworn officers or we'll be, and then as far as the World Cup funding, I understand Commissioner Silvers is right.

(02:58:40):

I mean we may have some opportunities and we don't have any money. We can't participate. So I hate to put us in a position where we can't, but I also know that there's creative ways to come up with financing in a short time if we need it. I don't want to stick it on as a mil item, but I do want to understand that that could be a parks and rec value or some sort of thing associated with the parks and rec fees that we're trying to cover. So that's kind of where I'm at, so I'm not stuck. I think it's important for us to be thinking about the future and about there, maybe need a little bit of room, but I'm also very committed to trying to hold this level if we can. So I just wanted to be honest with you on that one. So I'm be open to something to increase to give us the room we need to negotiate with our partners and to move through our 2026 budget. I think that's important and is I think thinking forward. But I also don't want to send mixed messages to anybody in the staff. That's all I'm at. So that's where I'm at.

Speaker 4 (02:59:40):

Mayor, if I may ask, and I've said this for the last two or three years, and I know it's been a statement that some have utilized it to spend different narratives as well as all other things, but this whole entire process in itself is a flawed process. It is a process intended to create a sense of distrust that municipalities have not been fully transparent in budget decisions each year, and that could be the furthest from the truth. Does it happen in some municipalities? To some extent probably. So maybe who knows. But the very intent of creating revenue neutral has been a flawed bill. It's a flawed policy. It's a flawed law in our state that is perpetuated every year. The fact that we just had staff present to tell us that they have to do adjustments in November because of things that are passed prior to that.

(03:00:52):

And so it increases. We know that even if we were to be flat, that does not mean that because of valuations, it doesn't mean that people pay less property taxes. We did it last year and folks still had to pay. So it is a flawed system. It is a flawed policy within a flawed system. And so we continue to say things each year about, oh, I want us to stay as flat as possible and I'm curious to know if we truly understand what it means to be flat. And so this idea that we don't want, we don't want to send mixed messages, you don't send mixed messages when you state the very thing of what it is and you state the process, there is no message to be missed.

(03:01:42):

So if you say, I'm going on a trip and I may, and the person who's booking the trip says it's going to cost anywhere from three to 5,000, you don't say, oh, it's \$5,000. I'm not going to go, no, they send it anywhere between three and 5,000. It can come back and be 2,500, but because you decided to say, no, I'm not going to go. And now that you found out it's cheaper, but now you want to go, it's the same thing. It's just, it is not my goal to oversimplify this, but I think we kind of talk out of both sides of our next sometimes where we're like, oh, we don't want to mislead to community. And it's not misleading the community. It's giving ourselves the idea that we're not doing work, knowing that we're so close to the edge or we're so close to the cliff.

(03:02:30):

It's like we're literally giving our, it's like we're taking resources and tools away from ourselves to make a decision and not using the full toolbox to do it. But if that's the will of several commissioners on this commission, so be it. It's just not one that I prescribe to and it's just, I think that's the part that sends mixed messages. But we are all individuals and we have to find some type of consensus. I just think it's

disappointing that the commission found consensus for one commissioner but continues to not find some consensus for other commissions. And so therefore we continue to make work more difficult for ourselves.

Speaker 7 ([03:03:17](#)):

Okay. Well,

Speaker 1 ([03:03:27](#)):

Okay, so we need an action. Take an action. Any other comments from the commissioners on this?

Speaker 12 ([03:03:35](#)):

I'm holding fast and I'm half a mill.

Speaker 1 ([03:03:37](#)):

Okay, so Lisa sounded like we need three votes for anything's moving forward and I got a zero. I got a 0.5, I got a point and a one. Sorry. Did you go to 0.75 or no?

Speaker 3 ([03:04:02](#)):

Yeah, I mean I would eight

Speaker 1 ([03:04:04](#)):

Or whatever.

Speaker 3 ([03:04:05](#)):

I was thinking 0.8, which would 0.7508, whatever, something like that.

Speaker 1 ([03:04:19](#)):

Well, happy to give us the wiggle room we need knowing that I'm trying to stay as careful with our spending as possible.

Speaker 3 ([03:04:31](#)):

Well, I'll try a motion and see if it'll pass. It would be a motion for the 0.8, which would be 33.986. So I'd move to authorize the see to notify Douglas County of the intent of the governing budget to propose a tax rate of 33.986 mil, which exceeds the revenue neutral rate as defined by state law for the 2026 budget and scheduled for the public hearing to exceed the revenue neutral rate and the 2026 budget hearing on Tuesday, September 2nd, 2025 at 5:45 PM or as soon as thereafter, as the matter can be heard in the city commission room, first floor city hall for the purpose of considering exceeding the revenue neutral rate and hearing and answering objections of taxpayers related to the proposed 2026 budget.

Speaker 1 ([03:05:21](#)):

Okay, is there a second?

Speaker 4 ([03:05:25](#)):

Second.

Speaker 1 ([03:05:26](#)):

Okay, there's a motion. Motion by Ingle Dice, second by sellers. All in favor say aye.

Speaker 22 ([03:05:32](#)):

Aye.

Speaker 1 ([03:05:32](#)):

Aye. Those opposed?

Speaker 22 ([03:05:34](#)):

Aye. Aye. Nay. I'm sorry. Nay,

Speaker 1 ([03:05:38](#)):

Sorry. I'll go do that again. Make sure I've got that. I'm going to do okay. Motion? Yes.

Speaker 4 ([03:05:42](#)):

Can you do a roll call? Vote please.

Speaker 1 ([03:05:44](#)):

Sure. Commissioner Sellers.

Speaker 4 ([03:05:47](#)):

Aye.

Speaker 1 ([03:05:49](#)):

Commissioner Larson Nay. Commissioner Finkel Dye. Aye I an aye and Littlejohn

Speaker 12 ([03:05:58](#)):

Nay?

Speaker 1 ([03:05:58](#)):

Yeah. Okay. Motion passes three to at a maximum rate as described by Vice Mayor Finkle die. Okay. Next item are commission items, commissioners, anything you want to speak to this evening or bring up the public or us

Speaker 3 ([03:06:20](#)):

This might be the appropriate time just to make sure that T-G-T-P-G-T

Speaker 1 ([03:06:24](#)):

Is

Speaker 3 ([03:06:25](#)):

Put that on the record. That least three of us want you to bring that forward

Speaker 1 ([03:06:29](#)):

When

Speaker 3 ([03:06:29](#)):

You can

Speaker 1 ([03:06:30](#)):

Increase fee. Okay. Anything else? Commissioner Sellers, do you have anything to bring up commission items?

Speaker 4 ([03:06:46](#)):

Not at the moment, no.

Speaker 1 ([03:06:47](#)):

Okay. Future agenda items?

Speaker 7 ([03:07:01](#)):

Looks good.

Speaker 1 ([03:07:03](#)):

I don't think of anything here.

Speaker 7 ([03:07:09](#)):

All right,

Speaker 5 ([03:07:16](#)):

Manager.

Speaker 1 ([03:07:18](#)):

Alright, I'm going to get back to my page here. I was in the middle of our agenda item here. Alright, city manager's report.

Speaker 30 ([03:07:32](#)):

Thanks Mayor. There are two items are routine reporting now on police monthly report and also on our utility billing. Happy to answer any questions?

Speaker 1 ([03:07:46](#)):

I don't think so. Any questions for city manager? Alright. All right. Any public comment on the city manager's report? How about in the internet?

Speaker 11 ([03:08:02](#)):

Did you have one?

Speaker 1 ([03:08:03](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 11 ([03:08:04](#)):

Steven Watts. I

Speaker 20 ([03:08:11](#)):

Okay, thank you.

([03:08:15](#)):

The February 11th, 2025 town meeting had the police speak to the Department of Justice report, which they received in December, 2024. That's not covered in this police report that being presented, nothing has been. We were told the department received a report from the Department of Justice in December, 2024. We will be working with our committee that helped plan the initial event to draft an implementation plan. Upon completion, the committee will release the entire DOJ report and implementation plan to the community. Hopefully this will be completed by the end of March. However, there was nothing other than that, sorry. However, there was nothing after that until April 15th, 2025 town meeting where it was disclosed. There had been no meetings and there was no plan but one was forthcoming. Here it is. July 15th. And again, nothing, nothing from something that took place in August, 2024 and which had a good number of Ians subjected to propaganda and half truths spread by the police and the naacp, which seems to have lost its way. What meetings have taken place please, we need a city manager report about this.

([03:09:42](#)):

What is the status of citizen written policy for the police department? We need a city manager report on this. Why do you guys not ask for the city manager report to be meaningful, to have some hard data in it should the public just understand there was never any intent to follow up on the August, 2024 workshop and to sit down and shut up The police do not want public input and to again, shut up or you'll be deported to the South Sudan. That's enough for this city manager report. I hope that you will ask for something in the future, please. Thank you.

Speaker 1 ([03:10:38](#)):

Thank you Steven.

Speaker 2 ([03:10:42](#)):

That's all the comments, mayor. Alright,

Speaker 1 ([03:10:44](#)):

Thank you. I

Speaker 3 ([03:11:02](#)):

Ask it again.

Speaker 1 ([03:11:03](#)):

No, I just, I'm just responding to what I just heard. Make sure I make a point about getting a question on that. Alright, and the commission calendar items? I don't think anything we got open public comment at this point in time. Public is allowed to speak on issues or items not scheduled for discussion on the agenda. Comments should be limited to issues and items germane to the business of the governing body. The commission will not discuss or debate these items, nor will the commission make decisions on items presented during this time. Members of the public will be limited to three minutes for comments. Is there general public comment?

Speaker 24 ([03:11:35](#)):

Yes. John M 6 6 0 4 9. I just want to follow up on some earlier discussion. I know you all worked through a formula now with extra mill levy, get a little cushion going on. It's one thing of course to raise more money, probably Mill Levy gets you the most, but you're revenue hungry and I don't know, and I've never heard any discussion of raising alcohol tax more than it is. I mean, we're approving street vendors for various functions even tonight. How about cigarette tax? We could raise that. Heck, New York City has charges for people who drive downtown. You want to drive downtown, charge entry for the cars, make it a walking downtown only. That's going to be controversial. But again, to my earlier point, citizens don't know what these quality services cost because it's been hidden behind grants. So when you raise as what happened tonight with the parks, when you raise fees, you get some awareness. Maybe this might be too radical, but maybe we charge for false alarms on the part of fire and police.

([03:12:48](#)):

Maybe we charge more than that for police services. But again, I don't want to cancel police or fire. I think that's core services. So maybe we need to find a way for the public to pay for more of it. And finally, there's the saying no to partners and requests for funding. The county's been trying to do some of that. I don't think they've done enough, but you all could do it too. We've been, again, living off of grants and we've reached the point where we have to say no. Even if some of our services are favored, there is a real danger. It was mentioned earlier when we raise mill levies of turning people who own homes into homeless. And so we have this little churn going on, and I've raised this with the county several times. We don't know who the homeless are. We don't get that level of data.

([03:13:40](#)):

Even some of the affordable housing people, we don't know really much about them where they're, whether we're making them Lawrence people into that population or whether we're getting 'em from somewhere else. Our homeless population continues to grow. The need for affordable housing continues to grow. So something's not working and something's growing this population, maybe we're doing it to ourselves. I do know that that happens in Indiana to quite a high degree. We've had state representatives complain about it to their own states to watch out for that occurrence. So anyway, some ideas for revenue, some cautions on mill levies. The county has the same problems, so you all ought to talk to each other. Thanks,

Speaker 1 ([03:14:25](#)):

John. It doesn't look like anyone else is here. How about online?

Speaker 2 ([03:14:29](#)):

We do have a few

Speaker 7 ([03:14:44](#)):

I,

Speaker 2 ([03:14:49](#)):

Julie Jones.

Speaker 19 ([03:14:54](#)):

Hello. Julie Jones. 6 6 0, 4 7. Couple of things I would like to share with you. The train station, which I have a lot of students coming in from all over the United States to stay in my Airbnb before their apartments or their dorms open up and have shared with me that the platform lights are out. And a couple of the lights that say Lawrence Train platform or Lawrence Stop or whatever it says are out. And I don't

know who to contact for that. And then they've also shared, they asked me about homeless people were asleep on the platform and they were concerned about getting off the train because the station itself was locked up and these are people coming in at 6:00 AM or 12:00 AM And I didn't have an answer for 'em, but I was embarrassed because these are people who've never been to Lawrence before and this is what they're experiencing.

(03:16:04):

So any thoughts or anybody email me and tell me who do I reach out to about the homeless still camping at the station and how to get those lights repaired on the platform. And my second thing is we're short on money and it dawned on me that last December we did this massive forgiveness for people who had tickets. And I thought I looked that up and it was around \$20,000 that the city forego or let go of for people to pay their tickets. And I thought, that's crazy. Just either tack it onto their property insurance or put a boot on their car, but to just let the money go and say Merry Christmas, now it's coming back to bite those of us who don't have tickets and pay our taxes. I think that's all I've got to share this week. This has been very frustrating listening tonight and I'm just, I'm very concerned about the city and where we're going because I don't think the truth of where we are financially is being shared. Thank you. Thank

Speaker 1 (03:17:28):

You Julie.

Speaker 2 (03:17:32):

Steven Watts.

Speaker 20 (03:17:38):

Hi. In addition to the fact that we're being played for chumps out here in public land relative to our police department, I want to point out to you the reality that these people are making. We got \$180,000 a year administrators who cannot produce simple reports. The 2024 annual report from the police department is missing. The 2023 use of force report is missing. The 2024 use of force is missing. It is funny. I mean it makes me laugh when I think about it because, hey man, I don't believe much of the information in those reports anyway. They're just full of equivocal information and rah rah, look at us, our team. Did you guys seriously look at the June report and see? It's basically a bunch of crying about, oh, look how overworked we are. I don't think so. Not on the administrative side. You know what really was the straw that broke this camel's back was when I talked to you about the fact that \$26,000 was spent by two police people to go to Boston and have a happy time for a couple of weeks. I'm sure there was something beneficial from it, but in these times of no money and you're going to charge people to go to parks, we have money to send people to Kumbaya moments.

(03:19:12):

Oh, it's really kind of funny. There is no policy with respect to travel. You guys are supposed to establish that. I'm not saying that we just go inside and be insular and forget about everything going around us, but there are other ways to do it other than getting on an airplane and going and doing it. The police review board is a joke. There's a meeting tomorrow, but that thing is going to turn into just another sycophant rant. Not on this guy's part is a waste of time. At any rate, I appreciate the work that you're doing. I do. At the same time, I hope that you will take control of the city away from the town executive team and start running the show. These people run the show. I call it the \$100,000 per year club. And I've noticed over the course of 20 plus years since I came back to Lawrence from Maui, the reality that these people, as soon as they hit a hundred thousand dollars, they cop an attitude. Oh, a really bad attitude. They're better than everybody else. It's disappointing. It doesn't have to be that way. Town staff worked for the public. They don't work for each other. Thank you,

Speaker 7 ([03:20:30](#)):

Steve.

Speaker 2 ([03:20:37](#)):

Jeffrey Heppler.

Speaker 28 ([03:20:42](#)):

Hey y'all. Jeffrey Heppler. 6 6 0 4 4. Dang, Steve. Yeah, you've been asking for info for a long time and they gave you a little taste. They, I think we need some more of that info revenue idea. Agree with Ms. Julie that charging more for parking tickets would be risk because boy, the number of phone calls I make living in University Place neighborhood about illegally parked cars. And if we're not actually following up on getting that money, it's a missed opportunity. Having ridden the Amtrak and arrived in Lawrence and we hours either at midnight or a little after work between five and 6:00 AM It's not a welcoming place, and that's not because of any person that's there. It is just it, and you can't get in the building. It's not well lit, and it's really just that simple. And finally, thank you for giving yourself some wiggle room and increasing the mill epi, and it's no commitment to actually going that high. It's just opportunity. Commissioner Seller says, another idea I had for that was maybe in increasing the mill levy, there can be some exemption or subsidy for elderly, disabled people, folks who need that relief. That's all my comments. Thank you very much for your time. Have a great evening. Appreciate you all service.

Speaker 7 ([03:22:35](#)):

Thank you.

Speaker 2 ([03:22:44](#)):

That is all the comments.

Speaker 1 ([03:22:45](#)):

Okay. Thank you very much. That wraps it up for today. Is there a motion to adjourn? Move to adjourn.

Speaker 22 ([03:22:53](#)):

Second.

Speaker 1 ([03:22:54](#)):

Motion by Fin Dye. Second by Larson. All in favor say aye. Aye.

Speaker 22 ([03:22:58](#)):

Aye.

Speaker 1 ([03:23:00](#)):

Okay. Motion passes. Five zero. Goodnight everybody. Goodnight everybody.