



## District 2 Citizens Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 5, 2024 | 6 p.m.  
Haysville Community Library  
210 S. Hays Ave., Haysville, KS 67060

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**Board Members in Attendance:** Martha Pint, Tony Martinez, Dr. Susan Norton, Cheryl Hill, Gage Hunt, Jessica Atherton, Jeff Hersh, Max Tjaden, Nicole Rivera

**County Representatives:** Commissioner Sarah Lopez, Justin Constantino, MAPD, Mark Clark, Appraiser

**1. Call to Order:**

- a. Martha Pints called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

**2. Roll Call:**

- a. Board members identified themselves by saying, "Here." Nicole Rivera joined the meeting by Zoom, soon after roll call.

**3. Approval of Minutes from 2/6/2024:**

- a. Tony Martinez made a motion to approve the Feb. 6 meeting minutes. Cheryl Hill seconded the motion. It carried unanimously.

**4. Public Agenda:**

- a. Resident Leroy Bosch handed out a population map for Sedgwick County and said there is so much growth that policies regarding solar energy systems need thorough regulation moving forward.
- b. Resident Marilyn Fields believes current zoning regulations for solar energy projects are insufficient and need to be stricter.

**5. New Business:**

- a. **Unified Zoning Code + Solar Update Presentation by Justin Constantino, MAPD**
  1. Sedgwick County is under a solar moratorium and not considering any solar applications as part of this process. It allows legislative review and would be for Sedgwick County and the City of Wichita.
  2. As part of the Unified Zoning Code, the Metropolitan Area Planning Department (MAPD) is reviewing the policy regarding solar energy conversion system by seeking feedback from citizen advisory boards, the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) and the Sedgwick County Commission.
  3. The comprehensive plan regarding solar energy conversion systems needs to establish design and performance standards, criteria for appropriate locations and how to protect the viability of existing cities and their ability to grow.
  4. To gather feedback, MAPD had conducted a survey and town hall meeting, received letters, emails and in-person comments and discussed the issue with elected and appointed officials.
  5. Some themes of discussion: Urban development & growth, decommissioning, groundwater contamination and water quality, and setbacks/size and configuration.
    - a. Decommissioning requires county notification if a project is sold or ownership changes. Also, solar panels needs to be disposed of properly, not left in Sedgwick County.

- b. Water quality concerns demand pre- and post-construction testing and appropriate groundcover to prevent erosion.
6. The process involving Urban Areas of Influence:
  - a. City planning commission is notified by MAPD that a proposed project is located in area of influence.
  - b. City planning commission reviews case and makes recommendation to MAPC.
  - c. MAPC hears the case with Small City Planning Commission recommendation.
  - d. Board of County Commissioners hears the case. If denied by small city recommendation, BOCC needs super-majority (4/5 votes) to approve.
7. Some feedback from the BoCC:
  - a. Wants specific rules in Unified Zoning Code where solar is allowed – less complex and more rigid
  - b. Not in favor of solar in the urban growth areas
  - c. Not in favor of 1- or 3-mile solar ban
  - d. Solar provides economic opportunity for property owners
  - e. Current 40-foot setback is not sufficient
  - f. Concern about setback distance from residential properties and battery storage
8. Recommendation for size limits is a height of 25', based on best practices research. Conditional Use process could allow taller solar panels.
9. Additional topics include small – large categories for solar energy conversion systems, fire protection and its fiscal effects on a district, battery storage and legal issues.
10. Martha Pints asked what could happen at the next BoCC meeting, could the solar energy moratorium be extended? Justin Constantino said yes.
11. Jeff Hersh asked if the 40-foot setback was not enough for the BoCC. Justin Constantino said that is correct. Several commissioners were concerned about solar energy projects being too close to residential areas, hampering growth and affecting residents' quality of life.
12. Jeff Hersh asked what a solar farm consists of, and Justin Constantino described a typical setup. He said groundwater contamination is a concern, but when MAPD looked at research, they didn't find evidence that solar farms harm the water quality.
13. Jessica Atherton asked if only one change is recommended, and Justin Constantino said the BoCC has several concerns, including the height of solar panels and fire protection needs. They want a lot of new language in the regulations.
14. Gage Hunt asked what concerns have been voiced by other CABs? Justin Constantino said they have questioned possible glare from the solar panels, wildlife harm, aesthetics and groundwater contamination.
15. Jessica Atherton asked how current rules regarding solar projects compare to other countries. Justin Constantino said Sedgwick County is one of the first to have language regarding large scale projects so it's hard to compare.
16. Max Tjaden asked if energy would be exported from a solar farm? Justin Constantino did not know.

17. Gage Hunt asked if that could be a condition, but Sarah Lopez said no, that would be overreach.
18. Max Tjaden commented that the compensation to farmers affected by solar projects is not always fair over the long term.
19. Martha Pints asked what the process is, does the CAB need to make a recommendation? Justin Constantino said no, he only needs feedback.

**b. 2024 Annual Real Estate Mass Appraisal Report by Mark Clark, Appraiser**

1. Real property value notices are mailed each year around March 1. Informal appeal meetings start March 19.
2. Parcel growth is increasing, but residential sales activity and new construction are decreasing.
3. Residential property represented 62% of total assessed value in Sedgwick County.
4. Commercial property represented 28% of total assessed value in Sedgwick County.
5. 67.4% of land in Sedgwick County is agricultural, which represented less than 1% of total assessed value.
6. Seniors, veterans, low-income and disabled residents can apply for property tax relief through three Homestead Refund programs, funded by the Kansas Department of Revenue and facilitated by the Sedgwick County Clerk's Office.
7. The Appraiser's Office will only mail value notices to property owners who experience a change in the appraised value or classification from 2023. Approximately 147,750 real property value notices will be mailed for 2024, which is about 63% of all Sedgwick County properties.
8. For information and assistance, call 316-660-9000 or go to the Appraiser's Office at 271 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> St., Suite 501, Wichita.

**c. Future Agenda Items by Stephanie Birmingham, Strategic Communications**

1. Dawn Shepler, Executive Director of the Mental Health & Substance Abuse Coalition, is scheduled to speak at the April 2 CAB meeting. We also have a zoning hearing that night.
2. Election Commissioner Laura Rainwater has agreed to speak at the May 7 CAB meeting. Susan Erlenwein of Environmental Resources was tentatively scheduled for the June 4 meeting, but we also need to have a budget presentation at that meeting.
3. Because Commissioner Lopez has a conflict on the first Tuesday of the month, we will go back to meeting on the second Tuesday of each month, starting in July.

**d. Commissioner Update/Other Announcements**

1. Sedgwick County and the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) held a town hall meeting about the new mental health hospital that will be built in southwest Wichita at MacArthur and Meridian, likely with 100 in-patient beds. Both supporters and opponents turned out for the meeting. The hospital will provide new jobs, but safety is a primary concern for residents. Sheriff Easter confirmed the facility will be secure, like a jail, since inmates awaiting competency hearings will be housed there, along with people in mental crisis.

2. Commissioner Lopez will travel to Washington D.C. soon to discuss the federal legislative platform with Sen. Jerry Moran.

3. Exploration Place is breaking ground on the new riverfront amphitheater.

**6. Adjournment**

a. The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.