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CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD, DISTRICT 5 – MEETING MINUTES

Friday, March 1st, 2024, 4:00 PM

2937 E Oaklawn Dr., Wichita

Board Members in attendance: John Nicholas—Chair, Denise Meirowsky—Vice-Chair, Liz Loera—Secretary, Joseph Elmore, Olivia Hayse, Brad Smith, Rebecca Tang

Excused: Bryan Porter

Absent: Christopher Wyant

County Representatives: Commissioner Jim Howell, Principal Planner Justin Constantino—MAPD, Election Commissioner Laura Rainwater—Elections

Attendees: Chaplain Dave Fulton, Faith Martin, Jim Groff, one other member of the public (no sign-in)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. **Chair John Nicholas called the meeting to order at 4:04 PM.**
2. **Invocation:** Rev. Dave Fulton—Chaplain, Robert J. Dole VA
3. **Flag Salute:** Members stood for the flag salute.
4. **Roll Call – Determine quorum**
 - a. John Nicholas, Denise Meirowsky, Liz Loera, Brad Smith, Rebecca Tang
 - b. Joseph Elmore and Olivia Hayse arrived after roll call, establishing a quorum.
5. **Public Agenda**
 - a. Rev. Dave Fulton shared about the VA’s Building Wellness for Good program in partnership with local churches.
 - b. Faith Martin shared concerns about meeting times, accessibility, and civic engagement. CAB 5’s meeting time at 4:00 PM on Fridays is difficult for working people to attend. She is asking this board to reconsider the time and potentially the day of their meetings to increase public involvement and hear what the community’s issues and needs are.
 - i. Olivia Hayse proposed meeting at 6:00 PM next month. Chair John Nicholas did not entertain a motion.
 - c. Jim Groff shared concerns about an application for rezoning of a property near Harry Street and 43rd. He lives near the property and is concerned about the impact that rezoning would have on the area.
 - i. Commissioner Jim Howell said that the case is going through the process with the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission.

6. Approval of Minutes – February 2, 2024

- a. Motion to approve minutes made by Joseph Elmore.
- b. Motion seconded by Liz Loera.
- c. **Approved 7-0.**

7. NEW BUSINESS

a. Unified Zoning Code and Solar update—Justin Constantino, MAPD

- i. Justin Constantino shared a presentation (attached) detailing proposed updates to the Unified Zoning Code in relation to large-scale utility solar projects in the County.
 - 1. Olivia Hayse asked for a general idea of the amount of positive and negative feedback. Justin said that there was a lot of feedback in both directions.
 - 2. Brad Smith asked about the height of solar panels. Justin said that current code allows for 35 feet, but 25 feet is the industry standard.
 - 3. Faith Martin appreciates the work done on this topic and believes that it is important considering the expanding use of broadband and current strain on the energy grid.
 - 4. Olivia Hayse asked for clarification on how this impacts Cities. Justin said that this code only applies to the City of Wichita and unincorporated areas of the County.
 - 5. Olivia Hayse also encouraged outreach to Butler Co-op for insight about solar concerns.
 - 6. A member of the public shared that the County will need more electricity for economic growth, and we are already warming the climate by burning fossil fuels. He believes that there needs to be a change in how people live and renewables can provide a constant supply of needed energy. He said that banning solar projects in areas of influence or 1-3 miles outside of them will kill most projects. He cited several examples of Counties and states that do not have such limits. He believes that all can work together to ensure that the economy can grow with renewable energy.
 - 7. Chair John Nicholas asked what chemicals people are concerned about in relation to groundwater contamination. Justin said that there are many chemicals people are concerned about; environmental staff will review information on materials presented by applicants. All projects must meet federal Environmental Protection Agency regulations. Justin said that there was concern about driving posts into the ground and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The department has not found any research showing that solar panels cause water contamination.

b. Elections update—Election Commissioner Laura Rainwater

- i. Presidential primary election on March 19th
 - 1. There are around 330,000 registered voters in Sedgwick County; 111,000 are unaffiliated and cannot vote in the primary unless they affiliate with the Democratic or Republican party
 - 2. 17 new polling sites added this year

- 3. Kansas legislature requires this primary election
 - 4. Recruited 600 poll workers; currently about eight openings
 - ii. Election office will be moving soon
 - 1. Walton's building near K-96 and Rock Road
 - 2. In move-in condition; will need to move some walls for offices
 - 3. Elections warehouse will be co-located with administrative offices
 - 4. Some complaints about location
 - 5. Wichita Transit has bus routes that run near building; will have extra routes on Election Days
 - 6. Should move into office around June 2025
 - iii. Election security
 - 1. Kansas elections are extremely secure; nothing tied to Internet except Poll Pads which connect to secure Intranet
 - 2. ExpressVotes are only ballot-marking devices; DS200 has media stick; laptop at Election Office tied to secure server
 - 3. Post-election audit: randomly select 1% of all precincts to hand-count the day after the election
 - iv. Commissioner Howell voiced some concerns about the cost of the upcoming presidential preference primary. Olivia Hayse shared these concerns. Olivia is also concerned because those who do not want to affiliate with either party are unable to participate.
 - v. Four special elections are scheduled for May.
- c. **Commissioner Report—Commissioner Jim Howell**
 - i. Potential event center: barn property near residential properties
 - 1. Neighbors have some concerns about traffic and noise
 - 2. County does not have a sound ordinance
 - ii. Commissioner Howell voted against new standards for defining nightclubs in the zoning code.
 - iii. Multi-Agency Center for homelessness services
 - 1. Potential interest from the City of Wichita in building a facility at the site of former Riverside Hospital
 - 2. County has been a leader in the effort to obtain state funding for the facility
 - 3. House Bill 2723 has a hearing on March 5th; would create statewide homelessness infrastructure grant program
 - 4. Facility would be owned by City of Wichita and privately operated
 - iv. Faith Martin asked about the application process to join the Emergency Communications Community Advisory Board.
 - 1. Commissioner Howell said that there are several ways to be appointed to the Board, including by County Commissioners or the Sedgwick County Association of Cities.
- d. **Update on Youth Mental Health subcommittee—Rebecca Tang**
 - i. Rebecca Tang shared a report (attached)
 - ii. Rebecca conducted several interviews with youth. She noticed trends including concerns about mental health hospitals contributing to feelings

of isolation. Youth experiencing mental illness shared that they need support, understanding, and information.

- iii. Rebecca shared several ideas:
 - 1. Creating individualized education plans (IEPs) for students experiencing mental illness
 - 2. Free, accessible support and opportunities for people to talk about their experiences
 - 3. Publicizing the 988 suicide hotline, raising awareness, holding fundraisers
- iv. Commissioner Howell suggested that Rebecca attend a Board of County Commissioners meeting to share this information. He also suggested research on KVC Children's Hospital and Johnson County's Adolescent Center for Treatment.

8. Meeting adjourned at 6:15 PM by Chair John Nicholas.

BOARD ACTION ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS:

Review of future subject matter – determine priority and interests.

- Kansas 911
- Long-term plan to address homelessness
- ICT-1 Follow Up
- County fines versus State Allowance Resolutions
- Driver's License Suspensions etc.
- SGCO HR
- LAVTR – Local Ad Valorem Tax Reduction Status
- Blake Carpenter – Bill Presentation
- K15 Corridor
- SGCO EMS

ADJOURNMENT

The next Citizens Advisory Board Meeting will be April 5th, 2024 at 4:00 pm.

Commissioner Howell Events:

- 2nd Monday of each Month – Bullet Points @ Range 54 (5725 E Kellogg Dr S., Wichita) 4p-5:30p
- Last Friday of each Month – Cuppa Jo with Jim @ Calvary Baptist Church Gymnasium (1636 E. Patriot, Derby – enter through the glass doors on the East side of the Building) 7a-9a.
- 3rd Tuesday of each Month - June 20, 7a – 9a – Coffee with the Commish; The Grill, 222 N. 2nd Ave., Mulvane