

STATE OF KANSAS)
WYANDOTTE COUNTY)) SS
CITY OF KANSAS CITY, KS)

SPECIAL MEETING, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2024

The Unified Government Commission of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, met in Special Meeting, Thursday, November 21, 2024, with ten members present: Bynum, Commissioner At-Large First District (left at 6:37); Townsend, Commissioner First District; Burns, Commissioner Second District; Ramirez, Commissioner Third District (arrived at 5:41 p.m.); Hill, Commissioner Fourth District; Kane, Commissioner Fifth District; Lopez, Commissioner Sixth District; Stites, Commissioner Seventh District; Davis, Commissioner Eighth District and Burroughs, Commissioner At-Large Second District and Mayor Pro Tem; presiding. Garner, Mayor/CEO, was absent. The following officials were also in attendance: David Johnston, County Administrator; Alan Howze, County Administrator; Angela Lawson, Interim Chief Counsel; and Monica L. Sparks, Unified Government Clerk.

Mayor Pro Tem Burroughs said before I call the meeting to order I want to announce that we have individuals attending remotely as well as on-site. All participants joining by phone should please mute their phones when not speaking to avoid background noise. During the meeting, please make sure you announce yourself by name and title every time you speak so the public that is participating knows who is speaking. This is critical given the number of remote participants and current guidance from the Kansas Attorney General’s Office and please be sure to speak directly into the microphone to ensure your comments are heard and an accurate record can be made of this meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Burroughs called the meeting to order.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, to be conducted in a hybrid format on Thursday, November 21, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. in the fifth floor conference room of the Municipal Office Building for discussion of the draft UG Legislative Agenda. Roll call was taken and there were nine “Ayes,” Townsend, Burns, Hill, Kane, Lopez, Stites, Davis, Bynum, Burroughs.

CONSENT TO MEETING of the governing body of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, accepting service of the foregoing notice, waiving all and any irregularities in such service and in such notice, and consent and agree that we, the governing body, shall meet at the time and place therein specified and for the purpose therein stated.

Mayor Pro Tem Burroughs said I would like to welcome all the members of our State Legislative Delegation who have taken the time to join us this evening. We are very pleased that you are here to have the important conversation between the Unified Government Commission and the incoming State Legislative Delegation about legislative priorities for the 2025 legislative session as we know what happens in Topeka can have a big impact on Wyandotte County. In the discussion tonight we value input from the Legislative Delegation. We are joined by Paul Davis, my former office mate, our UG Lobbyist in Topeka. Before I turn it over to County Administrator David Johnston, I would like to ask each member of the Legislative Delegation to please introduce themselves and the district they represent.

Legislative Delegation: Senator Pat Petty, District 6; Representative Pam Curtis, House District 32; Representative Lynn Melton, House District 36; and Senator David Haley, District 4.

Mayor Pro Tem Burroughs said thank you again for participating and being here this evening. At this time I will relinquish my opportunity to David Johnston, County Administrator.

David Johnston, County Administrator, said every year about this time we have this Special Session with our Commission and our invited guests, welcome everybody, to go over a Legislative Agenda that would be used next year and that's under the guidance of Alan Howze, Assistant County Administrator, and our Lobbyist Paul Davis.

Paul Davis, UG Lobbyist, said thank you Mayor Pro Tem and County Administrator. Welcome to our Legislative Delegation. Good to see you and I know you've been out on the campaign trail for the past I don't know how many months and you can catch your breath for just a little bit before you're back in Topeka. I do want to just mention for the record Representatives Ruiz, Winn and Oropeza send their regards. They are not able to be here this evening, but they have had an

opportunity to look over our draft agenda. We do have one new member of the delegation. Of course, folks are not sworn in until January, but Senator Elect Jeff Klemp is taking the seat that was formerly held by Senator Jeff Pittman. We're very sorry to see Senator Pittman not be in the legislature, but we're looking forward to having Senator Klemp in the delegation.

I think members of the Commission are aware the legislature will convene the second Monday of January. Leadership elections are going to be held on December 2nd and there are some leadership races, House Democrat side, also looks like a race for the Senate Majority Leader on the Republican side, but we'll know the results of those after December 2nd and then we'll convene in January,

Alan and I have tried to over the past couple of years make our agenda a little bit more compact and concise. You may recall that we used to have a very lengthy document and that document still does exist for historical purposes, but we've tried to pare down the agenda so that the members of the delegation have a good opportunity to know what the priorities of the Unified Government are as they do their work in Topeka. Today really is an opportunity for the Commission and the delegation to have some dialogue and I know that the delegation has had an opportunity to look at the agenda and welcome your thoughts or if there are things that are on that draft that maybe shouldn't be on that draft, please let us know. If there are things that are not on the draft that should be there, let us know. Also, if you have thoughts on these individual issues here, we certainly want to hear them and certainly want to hear from members of the Commission as well as to things that may want to change on the list. I think what we have done in the past is really kind of walked through the draft agenda and the items here, so what I might suggest that we do, Mayor Pro Tem, is we'll just go ahead and go through those items and really open it up for comments among the delegation and the Commission here.

Mayor Pro Tem Burroughs said before you get started, I'm having copies made so that the Commission members will be able to follow along with you, but you can go ahead and get started and we'll catch up.

DRAFT Unified Government 2025 State Legislative Agenda

1 Provide Funding for World Cup preparations Appropriation
Provide funding to support preparations for the World Cup in 2026.

2 Expand Medicaid Legislation
The Unified Government supports expansion of the Kansas Medicaid program which will improve access to care for those most vulnerable in Wyandotte County. It is estimated that expansion would provide insurance for ~7,500 uninsured Wyandotte County residents who would become eligible for KanCare. It would bring over \$64 million in new annual healthcare spending to Wyandotte County and create hundreds of new healthcare jobs.

3 Allow Flexibility for Revenue Sources Legislation
Cities should be authorized to approve revenue sources which best suit the individual community in order to maintain appropriate levels of funding for the health, safety, and welfare of our citizens. This includes special highway funds, local earnings/income taxes, property tax, e-commerce delivery fees, and other local taxes and fees. Sales tax exemptions should only be applicable to the state portion of sales taxes.

4 Support Infrastructure Funding Appropriation
The Unified Government is strongly supportive of state funding for infrastructure needs. There is urgent need for funds to repair or replace bridges such as the Central Avenue Bridge.

5 Expand Child Care Access Appropriation
Strengthening and enhancing the child care subsidy program so that more families can access child care and more providers will participate in the program.

6 Pay Prevailing Wage Legislation
The Unified Government supports paying prevailing wage on public works projects and economic development projects where tax incentives are given. The Unified Government strongly urges the Kansas Legislature to repeal the law banning the use of prevailing wage on public works and economic development projects.

Mr. Davis said first and foremost everybody is obviously very aware of the World Cup and what a significant event that's going to be for this community. The impact of economically is what I think some have referred to is 37 Super Bowls, so it's going to be pretty big, and the legislature has appropriated some money for World Cup preparations and those dollars are in a two year phase, so those dollars still need to be—they're budgeted, but they need to go through the process again this year. I don't know whether there will be any kind of additional requests that are made, but we've had a lot of dialogue with the Department of Commerce and others at the State about making sure that those dollars are going to come here, help us for transportation, law enforcement,

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needs that we're going to have here, which are going to be significant. Any comments on World Cup dollars?

Representative Pam Curtis, District 32, said I can just share that part of the conversation was to do it in two years and part of that was to make sure that money was being spent in Kansas. So, I know when we return that's going to be probably top of mind just to make sure that the dollars that have been appropriated have been spent in Kansas and that will hopefully make the additional \$18M appropriation go smoothly.

Senator Pat Petty, District 6, said I'll just add that I think the more specific that you can be about—I mean I totally agree with the issues that you mentioned, but when it comes to costs and specifically how those dollars would be expended when it comes like for infrastructure, for transportation as far as the Unified Government is concerned, I think that's really helpful for us at the State level as we work towards making sure those dollars stay there.

Commissioner Townsend said I have just a couple of questions for clarification. You mentioned \$18M, that's the appropriation amount, and how much of that—or is that the real issue that would be allocated to Wyandotte County. Who would make that decision and when are they looking to make it? **Representative Curtis** said the appropriation actually goes to KC 26. It's part of KC 26's contractual agreement in hosting the World Cup in different services and things that they have to provide. So, since it's by State, when the legislature made the appropriation, they wanted to make sure that the money—and it's a total of \$28M. It was \$10M that was given last year and then contingent on that money having been spent in Kansas and an appropriation this year, there is I guess a commitment—would you call it a commitment Pat, for an additional \$18M. Does that make sense?

Commissioner Townsend said just a minute, the last part you're saying—**Representative Curtis** said the last part is that it's a total of \$28M, \$10M that we appropriated last year as long as, you know, the money was spent in Kansas and the legislature agrees to appropriate the additional \$18M, then it will be a total of \$28M. **Commissioner Townsend** said I'm still not clear about how that money would be spent among the counties in Kansas. I know that Wyandotte County will have some role in hosting some of the events even on a practice basis for the team, so how will it and who will determine what comes to the various counties?

Mr. Davis said that money first of all has to be spent in Kansas. There was some initial desire among, I think, those on the other side of the border that we were just going to contribute to

a pot that could be spent in Missouri, but the legislature made sure that those dollars are going to be spent in Kansas. As Representative Curtis mentioned, KC 2026 Committee is really the one that is charged, I think, with developing the plan for how those dollars are going to be spent. The Department of Commerce will be very involved in that process as well. Those dollars are essentially housed over at Commerce before they go over to the KC 2026, but you know the County Administrator is a member of that committee and I know that they've had a lot of discussions about what the different needs are.

I think Senator Petty's point is a very good one. We've certainly tried to get this across that we we're going to have significantly greater law enforcement costs, we're going to have significant transportation needs in being able to move people from the base camps and we're going to need those dollars to help with those things.

David Johnston, County Administrator, said I'll also add that security is a major focus as well that I envision that KC 26 will allocate a lot of the funds of how do we get people from the airport to the Kansas side of the river. They'll look at it from getting how do you pay to get people from the Legends and the University of Kansas to other sites, to Arrowhead or at least to the State Line and then on to Arrowhead with Missouri dollars.

You've got the security, you've got so many other issues that KC 2026 has to do to support the FIFA event to making this happen. There really isn't local involvement in use of that money. It's an allocation to KC 2026 and they have the responsibility. Given the guidelines that the Kansas Legislature have given them, they may not be happy with them, but it is what it is and they're going to work within those parameters. So, they're working on the 30 to 50K foot level to make sure that at least the Kansas side of the region is prepared to handle the event and all the people and all that needs to be done to make this event successful.

But, yeah, two of the three sites are here in our fair state so there's got to be support to make those two sites very eventful for our visitors and for the teams and for our general public because we still got to keep life going normally for people who are residents here as well.

Commissioner Townsend said that's helpful to know someone close in Wyandotte County will be part of that, so we know where to go to ask more questions, more dollars.

Mr. Davis said I'll just note that Senator Petty and Representative Curtis are both appropriators. Senator Petty is the ranking member of the Senate Ways and Means Committee

and so they played a pretty big role getting these dollars and hopefully we can get the additional dollars as well.

Mr. Davis said I'll move on to Expanding Medicaid. I think with the results of the election most people are probably aware that the prospects of expanding Medicaid are not very bright, but Alan and I have been discussing this. I know that this has been a priority for the Commission and obviously a priority for this community and even though sometimes things may not have great prospects of getting passed, we thought it probably ought to stay on the list in a high priority position. I welcome any thoughts on that.

Senator Petty said I would totally agree. I mean we can only wish that would move ahead, but the chances are not promising. However, there are so many ways that—just as your notes have mentioned about the \$64M, how it would impact healthcare in Wyandotte County, that it's important that the legislature continually be reminded of the impact for our county when it comes to providing healthcare and how that impacts the workforce and having good healthy workers stay at work and they're not a drain on the economy. So, yeah, when I looked through the list I got to number two and I immediately thought not going anywhere, but sometimes these things are important to just keep them as a reminder all the time.

Representative Curtis said one thing to note too is that we do keep funding things with our general dollars that otherwise would be covered by Medicaid Expansion.

Mr. Davis said I'll move on to Number 3. This is a place where I really would like some thoughts from the Legislative Delegation here. This has been a traditional part of our platform here just allowing flexibility for revenue sources and this kind of encompasses a lot of different things we've had discussions about. Earnings Tax that unfortunately has not gone very far at the legislature, but in terms of Highway Funds and I think in particular this year looking at the property tax discussion and I think this might be a good opportunity maybe for members of the delegation to give some thoughts about where you may see the property tax discussion going in 2025.

Senator Petty said I think there definitely will be brought forth again putting potentially a constitutional question out there that putting a cap on property tax growth per year. The Senator who chairs tax, who probably will chair tax again, that has championed this is back and I'm sure we'll move that forward. That is one tax issue. I think there has been and continues to be a lot of

interest in looking for how do we help specific populations to have some tax relief as well, which we have done, but last year the concentration was on other areas of tax relief. I do believe that this year there's going to be a lot of interest in property tax relief throughout the legislature. The big question is what is sustainable. I'm always concerned about what we do at the state level impacts what happens for us in Wyandotte County and that's a continual issue even though you are the closest to the residents and you hear from them the loudest before that cry comes to Topeka, you have to have the ability to provide the services. So, be on alert, that's all I can say.

Representative Curtis said I think there's a compelling story to tell though. When you talk about the shift that has caused the dependence on property tax and I think if we can tell more of that story that maybe we can further the discussion about what should we put in the toolbox, what are the tools that we give local government to fund local services and infrastructure and all the needs that are needed locally. So, there's over 20 years if you look at how many revenue sources the Kansas Legislature has taken away from our local governments, that really has kind of forced this dependence more on local property tax, so I think we forget about that. I think as legislators we need to be reminded like wait a minute, you know, you guys are screaming about property tax too and everybody wants to solve it, well this is what's kind of created it, so let's look at that toolbox. You know we can't just make local government totally dependent on property tax. We got to give them some other tools and you know in Wyandotte County, of course, we go back to a couple of things like earnings tax is an easy one because many of us have to pay that to support services in Missouri because that's where our jobs are. So, there seems to be like a fairness issue. It's like if 70% of the people that work in Wyandotte County don't live here, it seems like there should be a way for them to help contribute to that.

Anyway, I think there's a—if we like step back and maybe tell a bigger story, that maybe then you kind of get to maybe some tax solutions, so that's my thoughts.

Commissioner Davis said on that note, Representative Curtis, thank you for bringing that up. I just wonder if we can expand kind of this list. So one idea of what do we do about the private property where speculation is taking place all over our community, it's not publicly owned, it's privately owned. Can we look at a Vacant Land Tax or something of that nature that would incentivize those property owners to do something with that land because that has created a tremendous amount of issues for us locally where that speculation has created blight. It has created—it's made it very difficult for us to do beautification, it's made economic development

difficult, so I just wonder if it's not going to be an earnings tax or if it's not going to be property taxes, if it's not going to be Highway Taxes and if we're going to go revenue neutral, then how are we going to fund our government. How are we going to fund our share of our law enforcement and things and what have you, so I think if we can look at some of those other innovative ways. I know other communities have done something similar. We might be able to throw in some different tools to help solve this issue.

Senator Petty said I don't serve on tax, but all those issues all have a cost or revenue attached to them. So, like I haven't heard of a Vacant Land Tax before, so I do think that when there are issues like this that have been successful in other communities, that kind of information is helpful. If we're, you know, would consider moving forward on introducing a piece of legislation so we can show that it actually has made an impact in other communities across the country. I'm not sure—I mean there's nothing wrong with us thinking about introducing an earnings tax piece of legislation. We've done it before. As we all know it's just, as you mentioned, that's another tool in the toolbox as Representative Curtis said. It would not be mandatory. It would be discretionary for local units of governments to take it on if they wanted to have that happen in their communities.

Mr. Davis said, Commissioner Davis, your comment made me think of one thing I wanted to just point out for everyone. Recently there was a meeting between the local government entities in the big five counties. That has not occurred before and Mayor Pro Tem Burroughs and County Administrator and myself were at that meeting and that was a topic that did come up among a number of other topics, but I think there's some good that could come from those discussions. Everybody, I think, felt like there was a lot of commonality and if the big five counties would get together behind some issues and really put some muscle behind it, that we may be able to accomplish some things in the legislature. So, it was a very positive discussion in my mind.

One other thing I just wanted to note on this just so everybody's aware, these property tax discussions in the past have often centered around the Local Ad Valorem Tax Reduction Fund, LAVTRF, which hasn't been funded by the state for quite some time, but the LAVTRF statute was abolished as part of the final tax package that was agreed upon, so that is off the table for now.

Commissioner Davis said I also wonder if it's not a tax per se, what can we do. I know in Missouri they have a law where if you have just aggressively negligent private property owners that they make it a little bit easier, it's not eminent domain, but they make it easier for the

municipality or the county to take ownership of that. We have a Land Bank that is basically full of vacant lots. We don't have built structures, so a lot of the times that we hear from residents that are complaining they think oh, the UG owns that particular piece of land or that building with busted windows, which is not the case. I just wonder if maybe we can look at what Missouri has done to allow municipalities to work with the community to say we'll set a criteria and if you're a private property owner and you've had code violations for five years and you're not doing anything to improve and there's just no good faith effort for a very long time, what would it look like for us to take ownership of that and then put it to use. I'm particularly talking about vacant structures that we have all around our community that are privately owned that they're just not doing a great service to us in contributing to our tax base and really contributing to a higher quality of life for our residents.

Mr. Davis said I'll move on to Infrastructure Funding. We're in about the middle of the IKE Transportation Plan, which is a 10-year plan and obviously protecting the funding stream for that is very important. We all saw what happened to the previous 10-year plan, the T-WORKS Plan, which basically ran out of funding not even halfway through it, but it does look like the funding stream is hopefully going to be protected, but it's going to require continued diligence.

I do want to just make members of the Commission and the delegation aware that we had a meeting, Mayor Pro Tem Burroughs, Commissioner Bynum with KDOT Secretary and the Deputy Secretaries and had some very good discussions about the bridge issues here. I think that they are very interested and willing to be a partner and put some resources behind some of the things that we need to address the bridge issues. Obviously, the federal funds and the continuation of the bill funds is going to be very critical to that, but I'd welcome any thoughts on infrastructure.

Representative Curtis said I could go on forever on infrastructure. I mean everybody knows how impossible it is to get around in our area downtown and we just desperately need the help. I know KDOT is being helpful and we do have some dollars secured. They are going to fix I-70 that's closed. That'll be fixed and reopened. We do have the KDOT funds for the 18th Street Bridge rebuild. Unfortunately, it's going to be closed for two years and that includes the year during World Cup, which is a little distressing, but we're going to get a brand new beautiful bridge that's going to last us into the future. That's good.

I still see people trying to walk to get across the river and I know they're trying to get to work, especially over on James Street, and they are just walking in dangerous situations and we know that we had recently a death on the Central Avenue Bridge because there's not very many ways to get across the river. Like you have to find some structure to walk across and we are putting life and safety at risk and our infrastructure downtown just absolutely I would say needs to be a top priority and we can't do it alone and we have to emphasize that and we have to make sure that our federal partners are going to be there to help support it. When people say these are our bridges, meaning us Wyandotte County, these are our Wyandotte County bridges, we need to push back on that. These bridges have regional importance. These are bi-state connections. They move commerce, they move goods all across our regions. They get people to work and we have to be more aggressive about fighting for our infrastructure and making sure that people are not brushing us off saying oh, you've already got your allotment or you've already got your two bridges. No, this infrastructure means too much for our whole region and we need to fight for it.

Mr. Davis said I'll just note in terms of the federal partnership, Congresswoman Davids has secured one congressionally directed spending earmark and there is a second that is in the pipeline for the Kansas Avenue Bridge. She is very interested in that particular project. Congressman LaTurner who is going to be leaving office has also secured a congressionally directed expenditure earmark for the bridge that will go over the Union Pacific Railroad, which is a critical part of the riverfront there. Mayor Pro Tem, Commissioner Bynum, County Administrator, and myself are going to Washington, DC right after Thanksgiving to have more discussions and to meet with the US Department of Transportation as well.

Representative Curtis said can I say, just please let us know as the delegation anything we can do to help with those efforts. **Mr. Davis** said absolutely and thank you. I mean you've been vocal and I think the folks at KDOT have heard that and I think how receptive they were at the discussion that we had is a reflection of your efforts.

Mr. Davis said Expanding Child Care Access has been an issue. It's been on our platform. The legislature has made some strides on that issue. I think most of the discussion is probably going to be centered on just funding for the Child Care Subsidy Block Grant that's out there. But, any comments on childcare?

Senator Petty said you know Wyandotte County—Growing Wyandotte has been very active in trying to look for ways to expand access and to create more opportunities for affordable childcare in Wyandotte County. I would just say for us at the State level anything that the Unified Government can do to continue to work with those organizations here in Wyandotte County to look for new avenues. You know in some areas they are doing pilots, not in—it's not happening in the state of Kansas yet, but pilots where the employer pays a third, the family pays a third, and then the state or local government pays a third for the childcare. It helps with salaries. It helps—I mean just this week a presentation was made to students in Piper to give them an idea about what the workforce is like within childcare. You know it's multifaceted. One, it's too expensive. Two, we don't have enough available, and three, we don't have the workers. It's a crisis situation when it comes to childcare, so I hope the Unified Government continues to keep it at the top of their list.

Commissioner Davis said I wanted to bring up the Raising WyCo work and I know many of you on the delegation are part of that work as well. I was on a meeting yesterday where they talked about the Workforce piece which did include the presentation of Piper students and the hope is that pilot expands and that all of our schools and all of our students are getting access just—and exposure to the childcare profession and kind of dispel some of the myths about it and the value of that particular profession. Through our Community Benefits Ordinance there will be a draft, because childcare is one of the eligible expenses where we are going to look at what does it mean for us to put some fees that we get from developers to help childcare, particularly homebased providers that are licensed here in Kansas City, Kansas. It's a very, very complex and expensive issue and so we're trying to be both strategic, but also meaningful in that work so that we can do our part and there are other things that I think we can do here locally whether it's pre-permanent plans or looking at the different fees and things of that nature that childcare providers have to go through.

I know within that conversation with Raising WyCo, and I don't know all the ins and outs, but there has been some conversations on how we can better the relationship with the fire marshal and the state because they do a lot of the inspections. So, I think anything we can do to help there will be very beneficial.

Mr. Davis said we'll move on to Number 6, Prevailing Wage. I think most folks are aware a number of years ago legislature passed a law that banned the use of prevailing wage in Public

Works and Economic Development projects from local units of government. There have been bills introduced and I would say to the members of the delegation we would definitely want to make sure we get a bill introduced and see if we can get a hearing and get that moving. Some may look at this a little bit like Medicaid Expansion. That it's probably an uphill climb, but I know this has been an important issue for the Commission and for the community and I'd welcome any thoughts.

Representative Curtis said I would say that the labor unions have done an excellent job of trying to just go around and individually educate legislators on what prevailing wage and so I think they have made a little bit of headway in that regard, but it still is, especially with certain people, just as soon as you say the word kind of a non-stop. Most definitely we'll try. I mean we've tried every year and we will try again. I think—Commissioner Burroughs knows this very well, it probably won't go anywhere in Commerce and Labor, but if we could get a hearing in local government, because I really think it is a local government issue. It's like something that they used to have that we took away.

Commissioner Kane said okay, let's talk about Brownback is the one that jammed us. So let's just be really upfront and blunt about that. This has cost us more money and I work for a construction group and instead of our folks building businesses here in town they have to go out of town, out of state to build it because they bring these people in. How they pay them, they have a foreman, they pay cash and that foreman pays the individuals that are there, so we're not getting any tax money because of the cash that's out there. We literally paid for an independent survey that said what are the advantages of prevailing wage and what are the disadvantages.

We had a great big book, and Tom you were there and so were you Paul, and no matter what we did with that book it clearly spelled out that we're losing money and it's affecting our families. So yeah, Pam's done a great job, you guys did when you were up there on this issue. This issue is bigger than a little bit. It's sad that somebody has to go to Texas to do a job and somebody from Texas comes up and does our jobs for less than half price. They have no insurance, no benefits, no retirement, they have no apprenticeship program. Pam has really done a good job with this and you're right, it's a struggle, but it's one that we need to keep fighting for.

Representative Lynn Melton, District 36, said I would just like to say that on the flip side of that too, here we're trying to push apprenticeship programs in schools and I was on a committee yesterday as well as Representative Curtis and we were talking about housing and the

need for affordable and available housing. People don't feel comfortable buying a house if they aren't making a living wage, a decent wage, and so on one side we're saying we want you to buy houses, we want you to build our tax base, but on the other side we're saying go and do an apprenticeship program, but jeez, we're not going to pay. You're going to have to go to Texas or whatever to go to work and we need to all get together on this and be united with how these things work and how many different things that they affect in our community.

Mayor Pro Tem Burroughs said if I may, I would—you know given this plenty of thought and Commissioner Kane and Paul and the delegation we've all been through this on the prevailing wage and the angst we get from some of our member. I would—you know education is now starting to play into this. Our community college—well technical, we may want to look at carving some education policy and how we can marry those two and talk about how we raise the wealth in the community through our education prospects. It may very well be the fact that we have our community college is partnering with our labor unions on apprenticeship program, but they're pushing the certifications. We finally got them talking about an alternative to higher ed and putting wages out into the student body versus having to wait after a four-year degree and then pay all of that off. It may be we might have an opportunity through an education program to do that.

Commissioner Ramirez said I want to thank Representative Melton for mentioning affordable housing. We can have prevailing wage. We can have all the workforce we want, but if we don't have the housing stock and the housing supply and affordable housing isn't just for the "unwanted" in our neighborhoods. Affordable housing is for anybody and everybody who can't just go out and buy a home. It's not years ago where that was the dream. That was the ability, but now how the economy and how everything has come out to be. Affordable housing is important and, again, I will reiterate how affordable housing is for anybody and everybody, not just for those that we see unwanted in our neighborhoods.

DRAFT Unified Government 2025 State Legislative Agenda

7	Increase Funding for Mental Health and Psychiatric beds	Appropriation
The Unified Government supports full state funding for mental health services, including additional bed space for psychiatric patients. This will reduce the number of people with behavioral or substance abuse issues who are inappropriately incarcerated in county jails or who end up unhoused. This includes expanded State of Kansas mental health facilities that are backlogged.		
8	Support Funding for Unhoused	Appropriation
Provide state funding for permanent supportive housing, supportive housing for youth that age out of foster care, and emergency shelter. Increase state funding for services for unhoused such as health and housing navigators and social workers. Support the development of a statewide plan to address homelessness - both the amelioration of suffering and the expansion of housing.		
9	Protect STAR Bonds	Legislation
STAR Bonds have proven to be one of the most effective economic development and job creation tools in the State of Kansas. The Unified Government encourages the Kansas Legislature to continue a workable STAR Bond policy with maximum flexibility and without unnecessary restrictions.		
10	Support Public Education Funding	Appropriation
The Unified Government supports the funding formulas for public education, which provides vital funding and an even playing field for children in Wyandotte County. Fully funding special education would reduce the burden on local taxpayers and provide increased services to students most in-need. Restore a higher state funding share for capital projects to help modernize school facilities.		
11	Legalize Cannabis	Legislation
The Unified Government supports de-criminalizing marijuana, removing the felony charge for a third possession, and lifting the ban on sale. Marijuana sales should be subject to existing state and local sales tax and cities should be able to levy their own excise fees and receive a portion of any state funds. Cities should have the ability to opt-in to allowing dispensaries in their city, and the cultivation and processing of marijuana and THC should be limited to licensed facilities.		
12	Expand Treatment and Harm Reduction Approaches for Substance Abuse	Legislation
The Unified Government supports expanded state funding for substance abuse in-patient and out-patient treatment		

Mr. Davis said we'll move on to Mental Health and Psychiatric Beds. This is also something that has been on the platform for a little while and I do want to point out that the state has made some strides in this area. There are two new psychiatric hospitals that are coming online, which should hopefully relieve some of the backlog that has occurred at Osawatimie and Larned, but I think we all know that there are certainly lots of unmet mental health needs that are out there. I'd welcome any thoughts on this area.

Mayor Pro Tem Burroughs said I believe we've seen the legislature appropriate north of \$60M in the last couple of years towards mental health services and I would hope that those at the

highest need either by NixCode or by population in need that we would be at the forefront of some of the funding available for that because we do have a tremendous need and maybe our homelessness situation might assist us in moving to the front of the table.

Commissioner Lopez said I just wanted to add my dad was a Kansas City, Kansas Police Officer for 35 years and I think Commissioner Stites can probably attest to this too, but my dad always said that we seem to put the mental health on the back burner. So, whatever funding that we can get available is always great. I'm definitely for that.

Mr. Johnston said I guess I just want to add that during our last budget process we found out that this is an issue facing our County Sheriff and his was the most interesting budget that we had to go through because he doesn't have a choice whether or not they're incarcerated or not. He has to handle a lot of mental health patients because we don't have mental health capacity in the hospitals. Then it becomes a local government finance issue and as we are looking at capping how local governments get funds, you have to help us have relief for things that are putting pressure on our budgets that are really non-negotiable like this thing. If we have to house them, we need to have funding to provide that service or conversely you expand the state capacity to handle it so we don't have to absorb that expense. It's one of those things that can't be divorced from an earlier option about allowing us to have revenue streams if the state legislature has this expectation kept on our shoulders. So, I think that's an important point we don't want you to lose as you talk to your colleagues in Topeka.

Commissioner Davis said very briefly because I know we have some other stuff to go through. My wife works in the mental health industry and this is something that we regularly talk about. One of the things we may want to add for language is education and building up the pipeline of psychiatrists and social workers and counselors because similar to the childcare issue, if we don't have qualified people to administer the work to those that are in need—we can build all the facilities we want, who's going to work there. Who's going to put in the work and take on a very, very difficult caseload that, quite frankly, a lot of us in this room would say I'm good, I don't really want to do that. So, I think some sort of Workforce component as well as housing component will be very, very important to that particular item.

Representative Melton said in talking to colleagues in Topeka, often it comes up, well you know, I say well we need this and we need that and we just don't have funds and it keeps coming up are you guys applying for all the grants that you need to. Sometimes I wonder—I mean

I think at one time, Administrator Johnston, were we going to do a whole Grant Department or something? I just want to make sure we're not leaving money on the table.

Mr. Johnston said first of all, our departments are scouring their programs that they're eligible for. We still have that on our priority. Unfortunately when we went revenue neutral, some things had to go by the wayside till the next fiscal year budget process and unfortunately that was one of them.

Mr. Davis said I might also mention that Congresswoman Davids did secure some funding for some mental health programs that we're administering here.

Representative Curtis said I just want to echo, I think Representative Melton brings up a really good point, because as we get those notices and I look through I look to see who in Wyandotte got awarded and there are a lot of grant programs out there and I don't think we are taking advantage of all of them. Not just in this area, but in all the areas and that is so important because we're leaving money on the table and it's just going to other communities and so we need to be a little more aggressive on that. You bring up a really good point.

Commissioner Kane said okay, if we get one grant, it pays for their wages, so I don't know why we would not go and try to hire a grant writer because we're not losing thousands of dollars, we're losing millions of dollars. I think that should be a major priority for us here at the Unified Government.

Mr. Davis said I know there's going to be some discussion on this next one, Support Funding for Unhoused. Last year the Governor put \$40M in her budget for a Local Match Program that would help support sustainable models for the unhoused and unfortunately I think that was an opportunity that we missed and it didn't get through the process. There also are a variety of policy discussions that are going on around the unhoused at the legislature. There's been a special committee that's been looking at that, but everybody I'm sure is well aware that this is a significant issue in this community and so I welcome your thoughts.

Commissioner Ramirez said I welcome any and all ideas and assistance from anybody for this issue. It is, as I've always said and I'll continue to say housing is a human right. Everyone deserves a house, everyone deserves the ability to live. How you get there, and this is my personal opinion, how you get there and how you get that house does not matter as long as you have that right taken care of. We have amazing organizations in Wyandotte County that do amazing work

to advance this work and try to do their best, so I do support this, support increase in funding to local governments and local municipalities for us to be able to come up with ways. Then, for us as a body, we come together and then we look at best practices. What are other municipalities doing to handle the situation because they are still human beings, they still deserve everything just as we do and so I support us finding any and all avenues to be able to—it's a very tough issue. It's not going to get fixed with one thing. It's a multifaceted issue where it's going to take some time.

Commissioner Davis said I'll say very briefly I wonder if we're being too narrow with this approach because the housing issue isn't just for those with severe issues. Workforce housing—when we think about housing for families, housing for those that are returning citizens that are recently incarcerated, I wonder if we can come up with more inclusive language. Maybe a variety of housing options that can include wraparound services, that can include Workforce, that can include all of those different needs because, yes, we need that, but we also need a list of a variety of options.

Commissioner Bynum said just to this point, first of all Commissioner Hill has done the most work of any of us on this topic and has reports ready to go—work with her coalition to bring about some local solutions for this. Yes, obviously, we need the Supportive Housing, the Supportive Housing for youth that age out of foster care, emergency shelter, we need all those things. It's my understanding what the Governor proposed last year had some pretty serious strings attached to it. If a county were to tap that money, then the county would be obligated to enact some local ordinances that were less than kind. **Mr. Davis** said those were added by the legislature. They weren't a part of the original. **Commissioner Bynum** said if there were an opportunity to expand whatever state funding would be available, all of this is needed. What I don't know is what we really need is our Kansas City, Kansas Housing Authority to play a larger role in providing affordable housing and what I mean by that is we need more Housing Authority units than we have. We already know there's something like a two-year waiting list for KCK Housing Authority housing. What I don't know is there any correlation between that state level funding. I simply don't know if there's a relationship there. That's what we need is our Housing Authority to be able to develop more affordable low-income housing to help this population.

Mr. Davis said I do want to note Number 16, which is the last item on the agenda, is about Housing so we will talk some more about this.

Commissioner Lopez said I want to kind of say that I've been a little narrow-minded towards this at some point. You know I've worked hard for everything I've had. I've never had help, you know, just done everything myself and I see some homeless and I'm like go get a job and earn it, but then within a month, about a month span, I've come across two homeless guys—and I think the mental health that we talked about is going to come into play too because there's these two homeless guys I came across that were like Picassos. They were sitting there with a shopping cart and you could tell they were homeless, but they—and this was different times, but they had like their big art book, whatever you call that. I don't know, it's a real big page and just them free handing drawing and painting. I was in complete awe, like why aren't you in art school, why aren't you—I wanted to ask them what are you doing here, but then I could see where there's some kind of a mental health issue where some people are just so—I don't know what word to use, but they're just so—everything about art, but everything else doesn't matter. They don't know how to budget or they don't know how to live like we live and work and whatnot, but just to see their art I was in complete awe and I'm like I need to not stop. I need to stop being a little narrow-minded about homeless and look into this harder.

I mean I know that there's probably some drug abuse on some occasions and stuff, maybe we read through that kind of stuff, but I think that the mental health funding would kind of come into, you know, they can kind of join and come in together with this.

Commissioner Hill said I am just so excited about the possibility of getting some funding for the homeless, and I think like Commissioner Lopez just said, there are a variety of cases for the homeless here. We can't just put them all in one box. We've got kids coming out of foster care homeless, we've got kids in school right now homeless. They live with their parents and their parents are homeless. The parents are couch surfing and then we have those that are chronically homeless. It's just a variety of different scenarios. We have veterans that are homeless. They're too proud, they don't have enough money and they're too proud to get help plus they have in many cases the mental illness piece. So the opportunity to acquire some funding for the unhoused just to me is awesome. We need a shelter—I work for a couple of organizations that literally was trying to help the homeless and there was nowhere—how is it okay for mom and the babies to live in a car. How is that okay. So, I just think as we move forward this is a great opportunity to collaborate together, let's figure it out. Let's get that funding done.

I love what Commissioner Davis is saying about connecting that with Workforce. That's awesome, connected with Mental Health Services, awesome, Physical Health Services, we can do this. I just think it's a great opportunity for us to move forward with the funding and may I just ask that all the tough strings that are attached they can't do this, they can't do that, they must do this, they must do that, let's try to figure out a way where we can really help people without choking them along the way, so that's a nice way to say what I'm thinking.

Senator Haley, District 4, said I'm wholly contained where we are right now in the core of our county and as we reach out for what I think will be universal for support, or what seems to be universal support for getting state assistance, some of which they'll be push back for. Remember that we are predominantly a rural state and there doesn't seem to be the level of sensitivity for applied assistance to those who might find themselves unhoused, homeless, whatever the vernacular might be. There will be a push back. I'm sure that most of our delegation will be pushing for that as well as the mental health component because they are intermarried.

I bring this up because I am vitally concerned that there is a plan that if and when these funds are received that that plan is here we walk through or I walk through daily inside of my district, inside of our county, this area here where we are. I'm not going to point out specific blocks or businesses that are affected or disaffected by those who are underhoused or who are struggling economically and perhaps mentally, but it's becoming increasingly chronic and it's a concern for downtown. It's my concern for downtown that reciprocally as we try to find and continue to garner funding from whatever sources from Topeka or from wherever, that there's a comprehensive plan for addressing how we do housing or how we do address from the Unified Government some that are having those difficulties because it is having, I think, a detrimental effect on some of the growth that we see downtown.

I hear all the time from small businesses, large businesses alike, and as we all know as the weather gets colder here I think we're all breathing a little bit sigh of relief that we will have a warming center when it was in a state of flux that 550 State would not be reopening, but now fortunately we do, we stave that off. So my plea, Mr. Chair and members, is that as we look for this funding that we look at this chronic issue that frankly is a concern of mine because I want our downtown to grow. I love what's happening at the Legends. I love the effect and I don't disparage any part of town, but we're having some serious issues with people on the street who don't have a place to live and who sometimes are wrestling with social issues and mental issues. I hope the UG

will apply this funding that I know, I shouldn't speak for all of our delegation, but I think most of our delegation will probably be supporting to try and bring from Topeka.

Senator Petty said since we're on the issue of supporting funding for unhoused and I stepped out for a minute, so maybe this came up earlier, what's the status of Willa Gill? **Mr. Johnston** said when we negotiated with the community college for them to purchase the block for the new campus downtown necessitated the move of Willa Gill from its current site. We have negotiated purchase of two parcels, hopefully a third one, but on James Street, one whole block on James Street. We hope we can get the third party to agree, but two of those we can put a decent center there. We're not talking about building a Taj Mahal, but a very nice replacement center for the roles that are currently in there. Hopefully, we can afford to build something bigger that can maybe encompass the warming shelter there as well as maybe a rotating set of offices for rotating other social service providers in and out during the week. Again, that's limited by the resources that we have, but we've purchased two of the parcels. We have a design build architect RFQ out and so we're ready to move and get that thing designed and start building next year. **Senator Petty** asked, are you using ARPA funds? **Mr. Johnston** said we have ARPA funds, we have Cerner settlement funds, so thank you the state for that. Then we may be able to qualify for some federal funds that are managed through our office, but again, it's limited what we can do, but it's becoming a reality every day.

Mr. Davis said we'll move on to STAR Bonds. It's no secret that STAR Bonds have played a significant role in economic development in Wyandotte County and there have been efforts to modify the STAR Bond statutes to try to maybe decrease the ability of local communities to partner with the state on STAR Bond projects. I will note that the STAR Bond legislation is up for reauthorization in 2026, so that's coming down the pike. I'll welcome any thoughts on STAR Bonds.

Mayor Pro Tem Burroughs said, Paul, one of the questions I had and it goes back to earlier, the tax policy we talked about on the front page, Sales Tax Exemptions should only be applicable to state portion of sales taxes. As we know sales taxes go to pay off the debt on STAR Bonds. Is that a discussion that's coming forward with STAR Bonds that only the state's portion

will go to pay—no contribution be made from the local community. **Mr. Davis** said I have not heard that.

Representative Curtis said I think in the Stadium STAR Bond deal that was the case. That there was a local option on whether or not the local sales tax dollars were committed, but I think that's only—that's not in this regular STAR Bond legislation, it's only in the Stadium STAR Bond legislation. If I could add one point, the thing I would say is I think that our most economically distressed urban areas should be applicable for a STAR Bond District just like our rural areas.

Commissioner Ramirez said there was—I cannot remember if it was last year, Representative, or the year before, there was something out in rural Kansas—it might have been housing, a housing issue where—There's a program that the rural Kansas (**Someone** was inaudible). **Commissioner Ramirez** said okay, so different subject, ask you about that later. Yeah, same concept.

Commissioner Stites said, Representative Curtis, are you saying that the downtown areas are not eligible for STAR Bond projects right now? **Representative Curtis** said well not necessarily not eligible, but they have to meet a higher threshold and you're going to have to help me, Mayor Pro Tem, on what—or somebody on the—I can't remember what the new threshold is. It's much higher than what we have had in the past and the rural areas, they only have to meet a \$3M sales tax threshold. When you think about doing something on our riverfront with Kaw Point and Quindaro Ruins you know that's potential. That helps us, but we could not meet that—is it \$75M, I can't remember. (**Someone** was inaudible). **Representative Curtis** said \$75M.

Commissioner Ramirez said what's this—I guess I've just never heard about this threshold. Is it that the project has to generate beyond the threshold for it to be considered or quote unquote eligible? **Mayor Pro Tem Burroughs** said yes, the minimum investment in order to qualify as STAR Bonds projects.

Mr. Davis said on the Education and this has been part of our platform and for a while we haven't had much discussion in Topeka about changing the school finance formula, but those are heating up. I lived through this, Mayor Pro Tem lived through this, and members of the delegation lived through this, but I'd appreciate any insight that you want to offer on this issue.

Mayor Pro Tem Burroughs said I do want to share with everyone we're going to—food has been delivered. We're checking on it now. We want to have time for our guests to have dinner this evening, so I just want to remind you all that we'll take a short break here shortly. As a matter of fact, after we have this subject, we'll go ahead and take a real quick break and grab our food and come back and finish up, but we do need to be done by no later than a quarter till 7, so that we can adjourn into the lobby.

Senator Petty said I'm sure this isn't going to come as any big surprise. Education is going to be a hot topic this session even more so due to the elections. It's really very important that the Unified Government takes a strong position of supporting our public schools in Wyandotte County. I will just tell you one of the legislators that was reelected from Johnson County brought up, and I was just listening to a forum that he was involved with, of doing away with the At-Risk funding. At-Risk funding is critical to all of our schools in Wyandotte—well, most of our schools in Wyandotte County, KCK, and Turner. You know At-Risk is—there's no reason why you have to feel as a commissioner—there are so many other things that you do need to be extremely knowledgeable about, but there's no reason that you have to feel like you have to know how the school finance formula works, but school districts do. That's why they have elected school boards to look over that and management, but At-Risk funding is extremely important as well as funding for Special Education because the bottom line is that most of the school districts across the state are using their General Fund money to supplement the cost of Special Ed funding. So, anything, you already know this, but anything we do is going to shift the burden to be more on local and less on the state and so that's very important that you stay in tune with what's happening.

I also, I won't speak for the House, but the makeup in the Senate is such that it could very well—this would be the year to pass vouchers and that is not—I mean we could have a seminar on that one, but just anything that has a name other than public education is a voucher, so it doesn't matter what the name is. It's taking the public money to be used in another way and anybody who says let the money follow the—let the parent be control of their money you're not talking about how much money they actually have. You're actually talking about taking the larger pool of money from public education. So, I'm just saying we've got a lot of issues that are going to come up. Vouchers is a big one and it will very much negatively impact the quality of our public school education in Wyandotte County and the state of Kansas.

Commissioner Ramirez said I remember when I was your intern in your office, Senator Petty, and it was during the time—I cannot remember when the formula was being changed or whatnot and I remember researching and trying my best to understand that monstrous formula. I’m a big supporter of public education, always will be, always have been and always will be. Education is what I work in now, specifically Special Education. Yes, I work in a private school, a non-profit, but I would hate to—I hate to say this, but I wish my school wasn’t needed. I wish my school didn’t need to be open. I wish our public education was strong enough that they can take our Special Education students and provide the necessary funding to give them the resources. Not every student learns the same and that’s what I’ve learned with my school, not every student learns—every student learns differently.

I am a firm and strong fighter for public education and so for me anything that is with the name vouchers or anything considered to be vouchers I am vehemently against because that is taking away from the broader pool as Senator Petty said. We need to value our teachers more. We need to value and pay our teachers more for what they do. Yes, they may not be a doctor, they may not be a lawyer, they may not be a surgeon, but they are the ones that help prepare the future. There’s a lot of rhetoric that public schools are not good, that’s just a lot, but if we actually talk to our teachers, they do care and they do care about our students. They want them to learn and so I just ask our delegation to continue fighting for our students, fighting for public education because I’ll be—even though, yes, on a local level I don’t have much say or control over that, but I will be here, a cheerleader, and asking you to continue fighting for our students and for all of Wyandotte County.

Mayor Pro Tem Burroughs said if there’s no other questions, I think this would be a great time to take a little bit of a recess for about 10 minutes and then we’ll reconvene and we’ll have about 15 minutes to wrap up the rest of the agenda.

Recessed at 6:20 p.m. and reconvened at 6:34 p.m.

Mayor Pro Tem Burroughs said we’re going to go ahead and get started. We have about 15 minutes. I’m going to hold us to a tight timeline, possibly 6:45 and we’ll start cutting back. I want

to be out of here and headed towards the lobby by 10 till 7. That way we can get everything set up and be timely downstairs.

We were starting on the next issue, which was Number 11.

Mr. Davis said Number 11, Cannabis. Most folks are aware that the discussion in Topeka has really been centered around legalizing medical marijuana. There's been a number of committees that have looked at that, made some recommendations. The Senate President is not a fan of legalizing marijuana and has concerns about medical marijuana. He has been an obstacle, although I think there is continued momentum, but I would appreciate hearing the legislative delegation's thoughts about this issue. We've had pretty robust discussions here in past years about this issue.

Senator Haley said the issue of both medicinal and even recreational as we sit here as a whole in the donut of opportunity around the surrounding states now have all in one form or another have this as does much of the United States. A recent survey said that more people partake of marijuana in America than a daily alcohol drink. I thought that was an interesting survey and I've tried to impress upon—as the one who started this in 2009 in the state of Kansas as the solo sponsor for medicinal marijuana have watched the various incarnation of bills that have been over the last 15 years introduced, there I believe is enough support, though I haven't polled since the election, there was enough support in the legislature.

As you know, Mr. Chair, the House did pass a measure a couple of years ago and it was the Senate, the roadblock, as has been presented by Mr. Davis has largely been with our leadership as Senate President. I hope it will be impressed upon him and that the House can renew its efforts with its new—we really should be, of course—there was a measure that came out that almost made it through that had a special lobbying effort out of Sedgwick County that was drawn too narrowly that did come through the process last year for marijuana. It revolved around two or three entities only having the ability had it passed to be vendors if you will. I'm glad to see this is on the agenda. It should be, it's the right thing to do for Kansans who are looking for alternatives for opiates, strong opiates and strong pills to ease that and, again, the majority of Americans now choose to imbibe cannabis than do alcohol on a daily basis and Kansans should not be deprived from that.

The other part, of course, is the legal stigma, bringing people into the pipeline if you will, who are found guilty of a possession crime, often of possession of oftentimes small amounts and

the disproportionate amount of people who don't have access to legal services who end up in the system for nothing that in another state now would not even be a crime.

Commissioner Townsend said just reading what is before us, it's saying that the Unified Government supports decriminalizing marijuana, removing the felony charge for a third possession and lifting the ban on sale. Last year I missed the robust discussion I guess they had on this point to the death of a family member, but I won't pass it by now. While I can appreciate the decriminalization of it so someone doesn't inadvertently fall into the three strikes you're out rule because we are on at least one side of a state where this is not an issue in Missouri. However, I wonder if we can separate the decriminalization aspect of it from encouraging the sale of it here. The reason I say that is, we just talked about impact on our community of mental health, homelessness, education. What does legalizing marijuana for all purposes, I'm not talking about just medical where you need a prescription, do to exacerbate the problems we just discussed in those areas. Have we talked to our law enforcement and I did reach out to our Chief. I think he would have some interesting things to say about what marijuana does and how fentanyl or marijuana being laced with fentanyl, that's a scourge on our community that we continue to fight.

I have real concerns and just outright opposition without further extended discussion with professionals in the area. They're talking about homelessness and education and the efforts our law enforcement have undertaken to lessen murders, killings, robberies here, are we undercutting what we're proposing to do to better that. We look at our local CHIP, the Community Health Improvement Program, how does legalizing marijuana for all purposes impact that for old and young alike. I think this is something that we locally need to take a look at again and hear from some professionals in these areas before just wholeheartedly supporting lifting the ban on sale, not decriminalization, I get that but I also have concerns about where dispensaries would be located. I would just with the roll of the dice think that the northeastern part of Wyandotte County may take a hit. Will this become an issue for zoning as where these things can pop up, so I've got some real concerns about that and would like to see us do more of a deep dive before we wholeheartedly support just the sale for any purpose.

Commissioner Davis said I do support the legalization of cannabis. I think we see across the river in Missouri a regulated substance no different than alcohol, no different than cigarettes. The

fentanyl issue, I empathize with my colleague. It's very, very real. We're dealing with it right now even with cannabis and fentanyl being criminalized. So, the question is not criminalized versus decriminalizing when it comes to impact. I think there's other questions around education, treatment on substance abuse and things of that nature. I do think we should put something about regulation in there if that is going to be the will of this governing body so it's not just a willy-nilly, we just want to legalize it vote. We want folks to be responsible, no different than alcohol, no different than other substances.

The other thing I'll add is a huge issue that a lot of states are running into, California, Colorado, what have you, even in Missouri, is a permitting process. So even if it is legalized just for medical purposes who gets a permit first really starts to shape the market and sometimes it puts locals, particularly women and minority-owned businesses, at a disadvantage. Senator Haley had spoken to the importance of decriminalizing, but I think something about the permitting process of making sure that is fair and that does not disadvantage local folks would also be very important.

Commissioner Kane said wow, I'm the complete opposite. Both my parents died a very slow and painful death and I would have given them gummies all day long every day as long as they were awake. As far as the permitting and stuff like that, there's processes for all the surrounding states that you have to follow, so we would have to follow—we would use those guidelines as guidelines. You know I would have loved to give my parents some just to ease the pain that they were going through. There's good and bad in all this, but I believe there's more good and I believe there's a lot of green that would come up with the good. We're missing out on a lot of monies across the state by not implementing either medical marijuana or just—I'd rather see it all to be honest about it.

Commissioner Lopez said I just want to agree with Commissioner Kane. My dad just passed away a few years ago and he was struggling a little bit. I gave him gummies. I said, dad, you're going to take these. I don't care if you like it or not, I don't. Dad took them and he was very glad, made him feel better. I do know that—I'm not saying, I'm just saying, but you know you go to these country concerts and you got all these drunk cowboys and they just start brawling and fighting and getting crazy, but then you go to a rock concert and everybody is smoking marijuana. They're all calm. Everybody's getting together loving it. I mean I went to an Ozzy Osbourne

concert and I think I got secondhand smoke high or something because the next morning I was killing like 20 pancakes.

I mean I agree with Commissioner Kane. We just got to figure out what's what because we are out a lot of money. I mean how much is Missouri—how much money is Colorado turning because here's the thing, there's good and the bad, but there's always going to be bad whether we say it's not—we're not going to do this because this is bad, it's going to happen regardless and then more of our prison starts filling up even more. At the end of the day you just got—remember, Jesus says it's okay.

Mayor Pro Tem Burroughs said I do want to remind us that we are at the witching hour of 6:45. We have to be in the Chamber at 7:00 sharp.

DRAFT Unified Government 2025 State Legislative Agenda

13	Support Services for At-risk Youth	Legislation
1) Provide State financial support to youth who age out of the foster care system at age 18. Additional financial support improves the likelihood of successful transition from foster care to being a productive resident and reduces risk of people who age out of foster care ending up in the criminal justice system. 2) Expand Child-in-Need-of-Care Support Services to provide cognitive behavioral counseling and enhanced support for youth to prevent future incarceration or violence.		
14	Protect Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	Legislation
Approximately 19,000 people in Wyandotte County experience food insecurity. Research demonstrates that greater access to SNAP results in reducing hunger and poverty; and improving dietary intake, academic performance, mental health, economic self-sufficiency, and local job growth. The UG opposes making it more difficult for Wyandotte County residents to access SNAP.		
15	Create a Riverfront Authority	Legislation
Legislation authorizing the creation of a Kansas City, Kansas Riverfront Authority to develop the Kansas and Missouri riverfronts into a premier attraction.		
16	Support Housing Programs	Legislation
The Unified Government supports the expansion of existing programs and creation of new programs at the state level that encourage access to affordable housing. These include, but are not limited to the Housing Investor Tax Credit Act, the Kansas Affordable Housing Tax Credit Act, the Historic Kansas Act, and the Kansas Housing Incentive District Act.		

If you will look at the rest of the documents that you have before you, a couple of these issues expand on some that we've already discussed. I would encourage you if you have any questions or concerns, our delegation friends, please reach out to members of the Commission and/or Paul and/or our County Administrator, Mr. Johnston. I know we reach out to you quite often and we want to thank you for taking those calls and we wish you the best in one of the most challenging times facing you in the next couple of months, but rest assured, we're thinking about you and believe it or not we have your back. Thank you for being here this evening. Before I adjourn,

November 21, 2024

Paul, thank you very much for the time you've given us and for putting the sheet together. Alan, thank you.

Action: Commissioner Kane made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Ramirez, to **adjourn**. Roll call was taken and there were eight "Ayes," Townsend, Burns, Ramirez, Hill, Kane, Lopez, Stites, Davis.

**MAYOR PRO TEM BURROUGHS AJOURNED
THE MEETING AT 6:47 p.m.**

Monica L. Sparks
Unified Government Clerk

dt

November 21, 2024