

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

SPECIAL MEETING, THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 2024

The Unified Government Commission of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, met in Special Meeting, Tuesday, August 13, 2024, with ten members present: Bynum, Commissioner At-Large First District; Burroughs, Commissioner At-Large Second District; Townsend, Commissioner First District; Burns, Commissioner Second District; Hill, Commissioner Fourth District; Kane, Commissioner Fifth District; Lopez, Commissioner Sixth District; Stites, Commissioner Seventh District; Davis, Commissioner Eighth District; and Garner, Mayor/CEO; presiding. Ramirez, Commissioner Third District; was absent. The following officials were also in attendance: David Johnston, County Administrator; Angela Lawson, Interim Chief Counsel; Shelley Kneuvean, Chief Financial Officer; Reginald Lindsey, Budget Director; and Monica L. Sparks, Interim Unified Government Clerk.

Mayor Garner said before I call the meeting to order I want to announce that some commissioners, staff, and the public are attending remotely via Zoom, by phone, or on-site. All participants joining by phone, please mute their phones at this time 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 observing knows exactly who is speaking and please be sure to speak directly into the microphone so the public can hear your comments and an accurate record can be made of this meeting. This is critical given the number of remote participants and is also current guidance from the Kansas Attorney General's Office. Public comments will be allowed this evening and that's the basis of tonight's meeting. We want to hear from you; however, comments should be limited to the topic of that item, which is our budget for the 2025 year. Per Commission rules, make sure that you do not do anything that would be considered disorderly or violates the integrity of decorum for this Unified Government's commission meeting.

Mayor Garner 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 Tuesday, August 13, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. to

receive public comment regarding the Amended 2024 and Proposed 2025 Unified Government Budget in the Commission Chambers of the Municipal Office Building. Roll call was taken and there were ten “Ayes,” Davis, Bynum, Burroughs, Townsend, Burns, Hill, Kane, Lopez, Stites, Garner.

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 Garner said, Clerk, were there any revisions to tonight’s agenda. **Monica L. Sparks, Interim Unified Government Clerk**, said there are no revisions.

Mayor Garner said we have one item and one item alone on tonight’s meeting and it is the 2024 Amended and Proposed 2025 Unified Government Budget. We’re here to receive your comments. We want to hear from you, like I’ve already mentioned, regarding the 2025 Proposed Budget that will be voted on by this Commission this coming Thursday, August 15th, at 5:00 p.m. for clarity and it’ll be on the fifth floor of this building. I’m sorry, the Clerk corrected me, we will be in the Chambers here at 5:00 p.m. this Thursday for a final review, debate and vote by this Unified Government Board of Commissioners on the 2025 Budget.

The County Administrator presented his proposed budget on August 1, 2024 and that was following a 9 to 0 vote by this Commission on June 27, 2024 to go revenue neutral. There’s been several workshops in between and I know that a lot of the public have emailed or talked to myself or the commissioners out in the community or emailed us or called us as we’ve gone through this process. Our staff has worked hard to get us to where we’re at today to get us a budget that, hopefully, will balance essential services, not being degraded with bringing about the desire of so many of our residents for some type of property tax relief.

I would like to start off by just applauding—I know I share that with this Commission and a lot of our staff and our Administrator, our Budget Director, and our CFO in a short period of time getting us a proposed budget for 2025 that may not be great for everybody, but it’s good

enough to get us to where we need to be at moving forward. With that being said, Clerk, I'll turn it over to you to start the public comment portion of this meeting.

Ms. Sparks said we have received written comments which I will read first. The first one we have is Commissioners, Mayor, Administrator and County Clerk; 2025 will mark the 30th anniversary of Livable Neighborhoods. Thirty years ago, residents of WYCO rolled up their sleeves and committed to volunteering their personal time, money, blood and sweat when our community was struggling. In return the UG made a commitment by providing an office, staffing and neighborhood grants to help with those efforts. Over the last 30 years Livable Neighborhoods has been a leader in the region for neighborhood organizing and government partnership. They have organized neighborhoods, marched against drug houses, made improvements to city services, planned community events, and provided support to organized neighborhood groups.

Over these last 30 years organized neighborhood groups have logged tens of thousands of volunteer hours doing clean-ups, providing school supplies to students, lighting alleyways, checking in on neighbors, planning community events, attending city meetings, sharing resources to neighborhood members, advocating for their neighborhoods and being stewards of this community. Livable Neighborhoods has spent years building trust with neighborhood leaders and working to make sure they have the tools they need to make their neighborhoods better. With this new round of Unified Government budget cuts, Livable Neighborhoods will lose a staff position, home repair funds and neighborhood grants. These cuts will eliminate the support for organized neighborhood groups and in return will be the end of Livable Neighborhoods. I am asking all of you to please save this valuable community resource and don't cut the funding to Livable Neighborhoods. Thank you, Andrea Generaux, KCK resident and former Director of Livable Neighborhoods.

Comments from Karen Schibi: Mayor, Commissioners and County Administrator; firstly I tried to include our County Administrator's Office on this email but could not find one. Today, on Monday, I tried to call his office to get an email address and was told the office is closed even though the phone number is 573-5030 was answered and the recording said the hours are Monday-Friday, 8-5, but closed on holidays, but to my knowledge this is not a holiday. Therefore, since I cannot email him, I ask this letter be read.

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When I looked at the budget, I was amazed at how low Livable Neighborhoods budget is. This was one of the biggest bangs for the buck in my opinion. As a resident who has taken almost two years to learn how the government works and different department processes, Livable Neighborhoods meeting have helped through Civic Connect classes, their monthly meetings where department give updates, and then all the neighborhood groups sharing events and information to know about upcoming government townhalls.

Also, I've hosted two neighborhood parties in the last year with attendance of 50+ with the help of four other households in our 81 home area in south Turner. Livable Neighborhoods meetings have been helpful in connections to Police, Fire Department attendance, and the community information I've handed out from different departments to our neighborhood as resources for them came from these meetings.

I also was able to help a neighbor who has an illness with a grant, the PILOT, and BPU Relief so he can have his yard mowed helping him to keep pride in his home and stay in his home all of which came from information at the meetings. He graduated and wanted to stay in Turner. Thank you for hearing my comments. I am a fourth generation Dotte and have just arrived at a point after full time, raising my kids, caring for my parents until their passing, and now want to help my community. I hope you do not cut the funding for this department in any way. Kind regards, Karen Schibi.

Ms. Sparks read, good evening Commissioner Davis. I hope all is going well for you. I am sending this email to share concerns with a couple of the proposed cuts due to the 2025 Budget. I will be attending the monthly Leavenworth Road Association meeting this evening and will be unable to appear at the 2025 Budget public hearing this evening.

It is my understanding that the Yard Waste/Recycling Center is being considered. The availability to be able to take yard waste/recycling to the center has played a big part in my neighborhood. We have a neighborhood that is full of older Oak trees. Leaves during the fall and broken limbs year around are a continuous issue. Being able to collect the debris from the yards of our elderly community members and take them to the center is essential in keeping the neighborhood clean and safe.

I also understand that that cuts to services provided by Livable Neighborhoods are being considered. Livable Neighborhoods has been an asset to many neighborhoods throughout our

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community and must be protected. If anything, more funding should be allocated for the department to expand services to neighborhoods.

During discussions with community members a suggestion for cuts has come up repeatedly for Community Police Unit. During the past several years officers assigned within the Community Police Unit have become less and less engaged with the neighborhoods they are assigned to. Some of the concerns I have heard include officers not showing up for neighborhood meetings, officers having little to no input to report during meetings, officers unaware of events that occurred in the neighborhoods and more. The Police Department should strongly consider shutting down that unit and use the officers to fill vacant district patrol positions. Thank you for your time and attention to the aforementioned concerns. Presidential Highfields Homeowners Association, Jeff Brownlee, President/Treasurer.

Ms. Sparks said final comment received from Lori Peaches. Good evening commissioners. My name is Lori Peaches and as a resident and employee of Wyandotte County, I would like to express my concerns regarding the proposed trash service fee increase for 2025. As an employee of Wyandotte County I have been assured that there will be no layoffs or furloughs. I am concerned about how this can happen if my department will be operating with a deficit. The sustainability of my positions requires adequate funding. Without the fee increase, my position could be at risk. If the fee increase is not passed, the Solid Waste Department will have to absorb that cost, which could severely impact the availability of essential services and positions. Without the necessary funding, we may see the closure of the Recycling/Yard Waste Center, a reduction in Household Hazardous Waste events to only two per year, and the elimination of Dumpster Days. This would not only diminish the services we rely on, but also leave the Solid Waste Department operating at a deficit.

Additionally, I understand there have been discussions about possibly collecting 50 to 75 cents of the fee and charging a nominal fee for our services. However, many residents, including myself, would prefer to pay the additional \$1.07 per month to maintain full access to these important services rather than face potentially high charges of \$20, \$25, or even \$30 per use for the Recycling/Yard Waste Center.

Many community members use this facility multiple times a month making it far more economical for us to cover the cost through a small increase in our monthly fee. Currently, the

trash service fee for 2024 is set at \$17.94, which covers essential services such as trash and recycling collection, the Recycling/Yard Waste Center, the Household Hazardous Waste Facility, and Dumpster Days. It has been proposed that the fee increase to \$19.01 due to inflation, not be passed on to residents. While this may seem beneficial in the short term, I am concerned about the potential repercussions to our community. There is already illegal dumping throughout Wyandotte County. If the additional services are cut, there will be so much more trash and yard debris dumped everywhere. With the cuts to other departments, due to the decision to go revenue neutral, there will be no funding to collect all the dumped materials along roadways, dead-end streets and on private property. Thank you for your time.

Ms. Sparks said, Mayor, those are all the written comments the Clerk's Office received. We do have members of the public that are here and have signed up to speak. **Mayor Garner** said if you could facilitate the public comment. **Ms. Sparks** said you will have three minutes to speak. Please state your name and residence for the record.

Elnora Jefferson, Kansas City, Kansas, said it just goes to show you the best laid plans I did was not signed up as number one. I signed up as number five and I'm still called as number one, so don't always depend upon those types of things.

I'm here today to just briefly mention a statistic in support of Groundwork NRG, which is, as everyone knows, the NBR for the northeast. Like the other NBRs, we have a lot of challenges and we've overcome those challenges and we will still have challenges because we're dealing with human behavior and situations under which we have no control. But because I've understood that there is a possibility that there would be cuts to the NBR, I wanted to bring this statistic so that I can show to you one of the things, Mr. Johnston, that I learned on the job. I was listening to your presentation to the things that you learned, is how to justify our salary of being here, so I'm here to mention the statistic to show you that Groundwork NRG is justified, its salary, the amount of money that you give it every year and ask you to consider it when you look at the 2025 Budget.

The statistic that I'm going to talk about would be the statistic for tax foreclosure. Absolutely, tax foreclosure is something that's not pleasant for anyone and most certainly for those who stand to be evicted as a result of tax foreclosure because Groundwork NRG and its partners believe very firmly and are convinced that many of the people against whom tax foreclosure was

an issue were people who suffered from COVID, suffer from loss of employment, from death and had other extenuating circumstances way beyond the fact that they did not want to be compliant.

Over the three years Groundwork NRG and partners returned to the Unified Government \$243,422 in what would have been uncollectible monies. That equates to \$81,140 a year. **Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Ms. Jefferson** said out of that \$81,140 a year, the salary, I'm calling the salary, the amount of money that is given to Groundwork NRG is \$27,500. So clearly, what we have is a surplus. We have not only returned the money that was given to us in good faith, but we have also laid in your treasury for you an additional \$53,640 a year times three, so that's around \$160,000. Thank you.

Sylvia King, 617 Freeman Ave., said I represent Turtle Hill, the President of the Turtle Hill Community Association. I'm here sadly to fight for the lifeline for the NBRs and Livable Neighborhoods. They have helped our community so much when we were in dire need of services. If it wasn't for Livable Neighborhoods, our area would look like a jungle. We don't have the resources or the money to maintain the properties that are there. We live in a depressed neighborhood with dilapidated homes. Some are good, some are newly built, but some are in bad shape. We need money to help keep our area clean and safe. We depend on Community Policing and the Fire Department in our area to help us with an excellent Community Policing Department. We're in contact at least once or twice a week and I would hate to lose any kind of support from him or from Community Policing and any of the Neighborhood Associations. They are needed. Please do not cut that.

As far as the NBRs, they are greatly needed as they are another lifeline to our communities all over Wyandotte County, specifically Groundwork NRG. We've had our issues with Turtle Hill, but they're still in need. They have helped so many people survive, paying property taxes or assisting with property taxes, gas, utilities, etc. As you know, there's not a lot of money in our area and it is so much needed. Please do not cut this. If you do, our neighborhoods will go downhill. Please find other ways to cut, but not the Livable Neighborhoods and NBRs, especially Groundwork NRG, it's much needed. **Ms. Sparks** said you have one minute remaining. **Ms. Jefferson** said thank you for listening and thank you for having this meeting.

Leah Hensley, 4923 Swartz Road, Turner, said I am also the Director of Advocacy at MOCSA, which is the Metropolitan Organization of Counter Sexual Assault. As an agency that has been working on education and awareness in Wyandotte County since 2004, violence prevention since 2014, and partnering with the Health Department since planning of the first cycle of the Community Health Improvement Plan, MOCSA has a long-standing commitment to Wyandotte County in supporting a healthy, safe and vibrant community. Through a community needs assessment it was determined that focusing on neighborhood violence and community connectedness were two of the best ways to promote a safer Wyandotte County. Over the years we have partnered with numerous Neighborhood Associations and Neighborhood Business Revitalization groups empowering residents to identify the connection between their built environment, a sense of community, and violence prevention. The built environment impacts people's behaviors and that's one of the reasons why we promote CPTED or Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. We have worked with CPTED projects—or worked on CPTED projects with several new neighborhood groups and Parks & Rec.

For example, Rosedale Development Association installed a mural designed by the Rainbow Summer Youth Program on a vacated building. Betty Grove, Neighborhood Association, revitalized a small park in their neighborhood and developed plans for reactivating Matney Park with positive activity following a homicide. We have promoted and participated in park cleanups because maintenance of those park landscapes encourages healthy pro-social behavior.

Recently Downtown Shareholders completed a CPTED walkthrough assessment and brainstormed solutions to community concerns. These changes show pride, ownership, maintenance and connection all while boosting positive use of a space. Community Health & Wellness is a responsibility of us all and many community issues intersect with violence prevention efforts. The needle could not move without community partnerships and integrated efforts. **Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Ms. Hensley** said we greatly appreciate your partnership with Livable Neighborhoods investing in resident-led neighborhood connection or neighborhood groups and a necessary technical support such as Livable Neighborhoods and for those groups is violence prevention.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for maintaining and improving the built environment and improving neighborhood and community connection. We encourage the

UG to continue prioritizing safe, livable neighborhoods through continued funding of the work of Livable Neighborhoods, NBRs, and the Parks Department. Thank you.

John Bailey, Kansas City, Kansas, said I'll be quick. I just wanted to add my support to what I've already heard. They've already said a lot of what I had in mind, so I just wanted to say that I think that your support of the NBRs and Livable Neighborhoods is much more valuable than it seems on the surface because it encourages positive projects and volunteerism that ends up in positive results. If you cut your support, then that will have an overwhelming effect like throwing the rock into the pond and it throws waves out continuously and it'll act to discourage that volunteerism and positive results. Thank you all and I hope you all think over that much longer.

Dan Welch, 6221 Armstrong, said you that know me best know I come here to talk about parks. When I was two years old my dad would take me down to the neighborhood swing set and he would push me as I overlooked the traffic on Shirley Highway just outside of Washington, DC. When I was three, I went to visit my grandmother in the rural area of Tennessee and my uncle, my dad said, well let's go see the park, so I'm thinking swing sets. I found trees, waterfalls, wild animals, all kinds of things. That was the great Smoky Mountains National Park. The most popular park in the United States. Everyone remembers, everyone in this room can remember something important to them that occurred in a park.

Up in the budget workshop I heard a comment about keeping people in your community and loving your community. Parks are part of that and we have some tremendous parks with amazing stories to tell that tell the development of the west affecting Europe. It's just amazing the stories we have.

We have Matney Park. You can link the story of Matney Park to the raid on Lawrence during the Civil War. Parkwood Park, it's named after Park College, isn't that odd. City Park came to us because of the issue over streetcars. Northrup Park; Howard Northrup was a fur trader and an operator on the Santa Fe Trail. Kensington Park is a tremendous story of both good and bad that happened to the Exodusters that came in and settled in Kansas. **Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Mr. Welch** said an interesting one is Bill Klamm Park. Bill Klamm was one of the early outreach people working for what we now call ADA. One of his early basketball

games in this area was in the 1940s. He was extremely early. We have Emerson Park named after one of the men at Bunker Hill during the Revolutionary War.

We've got all kinds of stories we can tell. These are all important and tell about our country and the way we work and I don't want you to forget our parks.

Ms. Sparks said, Mayor, we have no other members of the public signed up to speak.

Mayor Garner said this is public comment. My practice is anybody that shows up, we do like to give everybody an opportunity to speak. I don't want anyone to feel like they've been left out of this conversation because every voice does matter. So, if there is anyone that would like to speak, just bring your way to the front one by one and, again, state your name and your city of origin and you have three minutes.

Helen Hokanson, 65th & Cernech, said I also own a home at 81st & Kansas Ave. First of all, thank you so much for passing a revenue neutral budget and thank you for doing that work, all the budget workshops to get this done. It's going to hurt for a little while. I love Livable Neighborhoods and hate to see cuts to it, but we all know cuts have to come from somewhere, so thank you for doing that work and being willing to just do that work.

I know you asked us to stick to the 2025 Budget, so pardon me for speaking to 2026 and beyond. I would like to know how I can support you all as you begin the difficult work of addressing the things that frighten Mayor Garner. I would like to know how I can support you while you start to address the things that frighten Mayor Garner. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sarah Lynch, Wyandotte County, said I come to speak on behalf of the community, but for two different points. I'll try to keep it concise. First, I want to ask you as you're considering cuts to keep in mind the Parks & Rec Foundation—or the Parks & Rec Board and to keep in mind that it may not appear as much, but those parks and those recreation centers do help to keep our neighborhoods crime free. They help to provide services that are much needed to each of the residents that voted for you, your constituents. Without funding, if you're to cut funding more, they will have to layoff more employees which will in turn probably result in at least temporary

closure of whole recreation centers and that would be indefinite until probably the next budgeting, which would be a loss to those communities which you serve. So, I ask you to keep that in mind and to at least maintain their budget.

The next I'd like to address arose what appeared to be the crowning achievement of the last meeting with the removal of the PILOT fee from the utility bill from BPU. It has come to public knowledge that BPU has been requested to raise our rates to make up for the funding that would be lost by the correction of that PILOT fee. What that means is a price hike of 12 to 15% in our electricity on top of raised trash rates, on top of raised water rates, on top of raised property taxes. What appears to be a removal of a fee is not so much a removal of a fee as it is a relocation. As was said in the movie *Pretty Woman*, that's just geography. What it comes down to is a burden on your constituents who already have been crying for help that you've seen cry out for help in front of you.

As a member of this community, as a member of ECHO and being able to communicate with my fellow Dotte's on a regular basis, we all will feel that pain to the point where there are families that are already on the edge that would be pushed over by those raised BPU rates, by those raised fees. So, I suggest perhaps approaching larger businesses like the Monarch's that have been promised not to endure raised rate hikes like the rest of us—**Ms. Sparks** said your time has expired. **Ms. Lynch** said thank you for your time today.

Louise Lynch, Kansas City, Kansas, said I guess I will talk about the elephant in the room, the BPU bill and the PILOT as one of the things that are most pressing. I think it is quite disgusting that the Administrator who has told us that he is being transparent is anything but transparent. He told us last meeting that he was taking the PILOT off the bill and everybody was elated and whatnot, but he forgot to tell you, guess what, we are going to take it and move it, but we are going to have BPU raise your rates at least 12% on top of the 3% that was passed last year, so you'll be paying 15%. So, to say it's not going to affect you getting your electricity or water disconnected is 100% false.

I also want to address when he talked about collecting the PILOT was unlawful. That is atrocious. If that statement is true and it is unlawful, then everyone that has gone along with it since 1988 needs to be brought up on charges of fraudulence and you, Mr. Administrator, and the commissioners, and the attorneys also need to be brought up on those charges because not only

did you participate in that by accepting fees that you knew were unlawfully acquired, you normalized it and spent it, which is called embezzlement. As Rule 5.5 and 1.1 of the Kansas Statute states, the attorneys need to stop being the attorneys for those clients. You did not inform us or BPU that was going on. That is unethical. You should turn in your licenses.

To trick the people into thinking they were getting something good—**Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining—**Ms. Lynch** said because yes we were fighting for that is wrong. Absolutely wrong when you know you're going to take it out in our hides, \$38M, and the only way that BPU can raise that money is by raising the prices of what we pay for water and electricity and you refuse to take off the bill the wastewater, the stormwater, the trash, because guess what, those are also going to get hiked. Deceiving every single Wyandotte person is disgusting. Not one person has come out and talked about that. Yes, at the BPU meeting last week I called your office, you never returned the call, you never returned the email. I asked you not to have those other meetings, to reschedule them so people could be at the places they needed to be to fight for what we need and not having this happen, but you didn't do that. **Ms. Sparks** said your time is up. **Ms. Lynch** said you couldn't even return the call. **Ms. Sparks** said your time has expired. **Ms. Lynch** said if you are interested in helping the people, then you need to do just that. Tricking them is not acceptable.

For the commissioners that are not here, we will make note of it, especially Mr. Ramirez who has been derelict in his duty and not coming to key meetings like this to listen to his constituents. **Ms. Sparks** said, ma'am, your time has expired. **Ms. Lynch** said I'm going. You cannot continue to do this to us. We will not accept it.

Mayra Romero-Ferman, Kansas City, Kansas, said I'm here honestly kind of on a whim because I've not done my research and actually looked at the budget itself in depth, so my apologies if I'm off topic. I kind of want to continue about what you just talked about. You just talked about BPU raising our PILOT fees for a long time that all of us I think in this room are very upset about. I mean every time I look at my BPU bill I just shudder. I live in a Craftsman, 1920s Craftsman and it's not affordable. I just want to say this is hard for me because I know why that bill went up. It's not because of anything the Commission has done. It is because, unfortunately, we had a lawsuit and I'm happy to talk to you, anyone, after this. We had a lawsuit that sued our UG. They sued over a tiny flood in Argentine and were asking for millions of dollars from us, so the only thing that I'm up here to say today is to stop threatening litigation against the Commission.

They are trying their best. Legal, trust me, Legal knows their stuff. They are not going to allow anything unethical or unlawful to happen to us as residents. That's their only job. However, this is a warning to all of the attorneys that are coming here to extort us as citizens, enough is enough. This is unacceptable. They live in other counties and they use our suffering to come here and basically become rich, so please do not fall into these traps. If you guys look around Wyandotte County, you'll see signs for attorneys everywhere now. It's not because they want your best interest because if you have a problem, come to Legal. I am an advocate now, but they know that when I've had problems with the UG I have come to Legal and they have been fixed. They get fixed. You don't get a payout, you sure don't, but you know what, they do the best for all of us. So, for me this was more for the attorney.

Also, I would like to ask that the Commission consider putting in their priorities some contract for deed protection. At the state level this year we actually have a Consumer Protection Law now for contract for deed and we know that Latino residents in this county that do not have social security numbers, that's how we buy homes. Every single one in my family has bought a home this way, and unfortunately—**Ms. Spark** said one minute remaining. **Ms. Ferman** said it's leaving a gap in between having a protection because, of course, the rental office, the Rental Licensing Office does not have a way to enforce this with the Register of Deeds.

Vanessa Robertson, Kansas City, Kansas, said I am President of Caring Neighborhoods, an officially registered Unified Government Neighborhood Group and a citizen, a voter, and I even voted for a few of you guys, Commissioner Townsend, Burns, Melissa, Tom, voted for you guys and Mayor Garner, so I hope you ain't going to fall for the hokie doke that I'm for—they are going for. I'm speaking tonight because you have the power to maintain the neighborhood center service and programs that are vital that helps make the Caring Neighborhood tech span and loyal membership and I'm asking you to do so.

Today, in addition to fulfilling my civil obligations to pay taxes and to vote, I came to you as a Northeast Neighborhood President to speak on behalf of not cutting much needed neighborhood services specifically. The data for these three census track area clearly shows that the service funded under the Minor Home Repair Program, Livable Neighborhoods, and the Northeast NBR, Groundwork NRG are critically needed in order to stay off additional degrading and deterioration. Yet because we citizens place our trust in you today, you have the power to

ensure that the supportive rug that now cushions neighborhood groups like mine with the neighborhood center service of minor home repair programs and grant funding programs are neither cut nor eliminated in the 2025 Budget and beyond.

These programs are not incidentally. They bear directly on the health and wellbeing of the neighborhood members from toilet repair to trash debris, removal of these small tasks and effective prescriptions that—**Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining—**Ms. Robertson** said cure stress and brightens the collective spirit. Please do not cut funding for minor home repairs, Livable Neighborhoods and the NBRs.

Ephren Taylor, Commission District 8, said radical changes are happening right now. People are being kicked out of their homes, budgets are being slashed, and the Commission is having to pick up the pieces and hold everything together. So, how do we get out of this mess and what does a 20-year old black guy know about public policy. Recently I ran for State Senate and I wanted to represent a large part of Wyandotte County and I learned a lot. It was an incredible journey. I learned how this community has come together during large struggles. I've learned to knock on doors with a smile even when drenched in rain or sweat and I can tell you how much I appreciate air-conditioning now.

I learned from people about the struggle of paying for their taxes or their food or their medicine. I heard so many heartbreaking stories and I know it can seem hopeless, but I would encourage us to not wallow in despair because I know we're not a community that wants to do that. I know we're a community that can arise from the ashes and build something great, to build a community where people can get the benefits that they need, the services that they need without having to worry about their bills, but how you may ask. Well, let me explain. The government needs money obviously, but the problem isn't that we need money. It's the way that we're going about it. We don't have enough coins.

Let's say that you improved your property for it to be more energy efficient, which benefits the power grid and also benefits the homeowner because they pay less for their utility bills. Well, that is an improvement on your house, so that's a coin and the 50-year old grandma who hasn't improved their house at all, that's another coin because their house technically improved in value too. If you're following me, property taxes are not a great use of the tool of taxes. They're kind of like a hammer. You can use it to build a great city or you can use it to tear things down, so

what's the solution—**Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining—**Mr. Taylor** said switch from property taxes to land value taxes, which is where you tax the land instead of the property that is upon it. This way you're not punished for improving your home. If you're a developer, you're not punished for making good use of an empty lot and if you do nothing with your home, you're not punished for that either. The great thing about this is it's good no matter what side of the political spectrum you're on. It allows you to have less government intervention with development and so it leans more on the free market. If you're on the left, people that are wealthy landowners tend to own more land and so they end up having a higher tax burden while people that are poor and are struggling to afford their property taxes right now can more easily afford those taxes.

So, three things to remember. Taxes are a tool, property taxes are bad uses of that tool, and land value taxes are one solution to the problem. We can have our cake and eat it too. For the seniors that want a peaceful retirement, for the working class, you want to climb the economic ladder and create the American dream for themselves, and for the young who want a bright future to look forward to. Let's come together and create a thriving Wyandotte County. That's Dotte pride, that's Dotte power.

Pamela Penn Hicks, Wyandotte County, said one of the things that I wanted to discuss about what's going on with all this budget conversation is I've had the opportunity to sit on the Government Efficiency Task Force under the direction of Duane Beth and one of the things I've come to realize in talking with the members of that Commission and that task force and leadership is that we have not yet discussed how to improve productivity amongst our staff.

County Administrator, you made a great point about making sure that our employees got a salary increase and you also made sure that there were no layoffs in this budget round; however, one of the issues that is talked about to me—that I have heard a lot from the community is they don't see our employees producing the kind of work that we would like to see them produce for the salaries that they receive. That has become a major issue. We don't—in talking with, for example, the Park & Rec and the new City Maintenance Supervisor we were told that they had not had enough people to cover all of the code enforcement issues that they have. That in some areas of town there are no code enforcement personnel at all. We do not have that coverage and, therefore, we have issues with making sure that our community is up to the standards that others are very happy to live by particularly in the western part of Wyandotte County.

So, I would like to bring that to your attention and that as we support our staff with more money, that we also expect of them to produce the kind of work that the community can see, and feel and know that they are actually part of our community as well.

One more thing that I wanted to discuss is I have been to the BPU meetings as they are discussing this budget change. They had shared with us that consumption amongst the community has gone way down as people are trying to reconcile their use of the utilities with their ability to pay for those utilities. **Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Ms. Penn Hicks** said with that lack—with that loss of consumption, of course, there is a loss of revenue, so that brings to bear the idea that you would then have rate increases that would put more of a burden on the community than there already is.

There has been an increase in asking for assistance with their utility bills as well. That has gone up tremendously in the last year and a half, so I would like to bring that to your attention as you make this request of BPU to make up the shortfall that came about from the unlawful collection of the PILOT tax for over 36 years and to find a way in which to resolve that. I have heard the earnings tax may have been suggested, so I would like to know whether or not that's legally possible under Home Rule that we are able to assemble that for our community. That would be a great help.

America B. Patton, 1829 No. 33rd St., said I live here with my retired mother and also my little brother. I'm here to—I just simply wanted to pray and also share a note from Mary Bethune Cookman that she wrote to Bishop Greg here who was the former President of Western University. The last thing I wanted to share was I feel as if there is a decline in terms of people coming out to our libraries here in Wyandotte County. First, if I can just share this brief note with you guys just as a word of encourage and it comes out of Hebrews, just the second chapter, and it starts in the first verse. It says this is why it is necessary for us to pay more attention to what we have heard or else we might drift away from it. I wanted to share that because oftentimes I feel like communities going to decline is because we failed to pay careful attention to ways—what made our communities strong from the beginning. Wyandotte County has been facing decline for a long time, but I believe that a great turnaround is coming for Wyandotte County and that's why I wanted to pray.

Dear God, I thank you for tonight. I thank you for this opportunity. I want to offer up a prayer over Mayor Tyrone Garner and his team and oh God I ask that you just will come and stand by them. I ask that the days that Wyandotte County has went into decline will be reversed Father God into a season of prosperity. I'm asking that you will unite us for a time such as this Father God when many people have overlooked our community and looked at us as hopeless and people have turned to go down various streets other than ours, I ask that you will Father God bring back a new sense of unity to our community. I'm asking that you will open up doors, financial opportunities Father God, innovation, prosperity Father God, intuition Father God into the greater understanding. I'm asking that you oh God will just open up the floodgates Father God from heaven so that we can Lord Jesus come together as a strong community as we once were. Father God I'm asking that you will restore our libraries. Father God, I'm asking that you will even bring back Father God the Western University Library. Father God, I'm asking that you will fight Father God in the spiritual realm for the northeast district.

I want to conclude by just saying that I feel that the northeast district of Wyandotte County has went into decline for various reasons, but what I see and what I notice around this globe is that we're strong empires is this—they are strong libraries. I feel that the northeast district is a barren place that is well overdue for a healthy, vibrant library, not just a library for a hangout space—**Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining—**Mr. Patton** said but a library of intuition—of innovation, a library would have archaeological centers in there, genealogy centers, mentoring programs inside of there. I'm talking about world-class libraries. I don't think that when people think about Wyandotte County I feel that they should come and want to visit our libraries. What I see is many people go to other libraries, to other counties, because they offer more, but I feel that we should have a prosperous thriving library in the northeast district.

If you guys want to check out this letter from Bethune Cookman to Bishop Greg written in 1952, you guys can just look me up on social media and I'll be glad to share it. Hopefully, it can go into a new library in the northeast district.

Richard Palmer, raised at 617 So. 3rd St., said in my 69th year now as a taxpayer. I was aware of Saturday where they're talking about closing down the Recycle Center. I use it faithfully. I got to thinking when I was leaving there I said, well, I remember me and my dad from 617 So. 3rd St. going over close to Fairfax, the dump there on 6th St. and I said okay, well I outgrew that and then

we had the one here at 43rd & Muncie. You see the dumping on the roadway all the way through there. I don't know why there's no cameras up there, but now they're trying to close this other one. I've used the facility as far as taking a load with my old decrepit trailer and truck to the landfill and get a free dump, but that's hearsay. I quit calling Community Policing. I mean I never—I did make contact with Community Policing on getting reimbursement on some trailer stuff I had in there, so I went ahead and dug it out of my pocket and paid for it.

Is there anything in the works. I mean we haven't even touched on STAR Bonding where some of this money came back down from the western development coming back. I happened to be going up to do a workshop with the Election Board for a precinct person, you know, working in a polling situation for voting and was able to go through Splitlog Park, nice and clear up. You know the dogs were corralled so I didn't have to worry about chasing one off or getting bit up, but it was cut down. It could use some terrace work, but hey, I'm stickler on—I don't mind putting it out of my pocket cleaning up—**Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining—**Mr. Palmer** said with my neighborhood group, Riverview Neighborhood Group, that I used to work with Father Davern down here cleaning up 7th Steet and up Central and, you know, litter and making it look like somebody likes to walk on these sidewalks, which I do occasionally.

I hate to see this thing close. I've called numerous times where, you know, get a patrolman out Friday night, Saturday night because of illegal dumping where I'm at now, 7th & Central and I've just turned my eyes off of it. I've got a light on. If anybody's knocking on the door, I don't mind helping somebody under stress, but as far as the police getting off duty to go—I mean coming down here and just turning a blind eye to this guy that's just ratholing and everything and burning, Fire Department and you know with no burn permit but—**Ms. Sparks** said your time has expired. **Mr. Palmer** said I'll be at the next tax opposition because you know I've been paying my taxes faithfully for 45 years and it's time to pay that PILOT off and hit the road.

Mayor Garner asked, is there anyone else in the audience that would like to speak and share their thoughts about the 2025 Budget. Seeing none, Clerk, is there anyone online? **Ms. Sparks** said there are no hands raised online. Mayor, we do have a hand that just came up. **Mayor Garner** said okay.

Dr. Alma Rosas-Hall said I'm a Wyandotte County resident and thank you once again for letting me speak. Simple questions that—first of all, it's kind of hard to hear how hard the budget is going to create struggles, not just for our organizations, but also our community. So, real quick, how do you control our community. According to (inaudible) is by oppressing our community. Where we are today as an organization the UG, our school districts, along with BPU is something that has happened along the way. I'm blessed to be here as an immigrant and many of us have seen this playbook, that's how we ended up here. Where we are today is not something that happened overnight. This has been a long process. So, to those of you who have been elected and been sitting in the chairs representing us, my question is, if you have been in this situation and you saw this play come, when and how did you feel that ethical piece of saying this is not where our community needs to be. The decisions that you are making today is not only going to affect the organizations, but it's also going to affect communities like mine.

Today I was trying to help a parent that cannot pay a utility bill, \$2,000 of a utility bill. I went around looking for organizations that helped to support our communities of need and what I found is that only one—those organizations can only help one time and that's it per year. So, it's a cycle. It's a cycle of a lack of accountability in the expenditures, it's a cycle that our community cannot afford to live here. If we don't take a minute as those of you who took the responsibility and the ethical piece of representing us not only as an elected official, but also the physicality—**Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining—**Ms. Rosas-Hall** said that comes with it.

I am asking, please no more taxes. Find a way to make sure that this does not happen again. We cannot afford to give any more money to any businesses, we cannot afford to do anything but take care of our community. Take care of us, get out of the black, get out of the red and move a little bit to the black so we can help each other out and be able to live and afford to live here and also be able to educate our community because an uneducated community can be easily controlled and can be easily misinterpreted and abused as we are in the stages. That's all I have for you. I'm a little bit upset because I don't understand how can a family pay \$2,000 worth of a bill. It's insane. Houses are not that big. We need to have more accountability to those renters and make sure that those houses are able to be livable, that those families are able to live. We need to make sure that we are able to go in and look at those homes. Hold those people accountable. Make sure that our tax revenue is focused on our communities. Also, those of you who have been—**Ms. Sparks** said your time has expired—**Ms. Rosas-Hall** said here, you are responsible—

those of you who have been sitting here for 30 some years, you are responsible where we are today, fiscally responsible where we are today as a county and as a city.

Mayor Garner said, Clerk, are there any other hands raised? **Ms. Sparks** said no other hands are raised at this time. **Mayor Garner** said before I close this because this will conclude the public comment input section for the 2025 Budget. If anyone else would like to speak, seeing none, I will allow our commissioners to make comments.

Commissioner Bynum said I had an email that came after the meeting started that I would like to put into the record if that's allowable. Just please do not vote to cut the budgets of our neighborhood groups. The neighborhood groups provide a valuable service to our community. Thank you in advance for your continued support of our neighborhoods. Lynette Booker, Kansas City, Kansas. Thank you very much.

Commissioner Kane said obviously with cuts, there's certain things we can't have. Again, I was going to ask for some money for a park out west and they will not be able to get it. We had a fairly close deal with the Piper School District and some people—truth be told, we have the least amount of amenities out west and we have no parks west of 435 and I know some people think, well, a neighborhood, if you've got swing sets and stuff like that and that's a neighborhood, it's not the same thing.

One last thing and I've gotten a half dozen emails about the Recycling/Yard Waste, Household Hazards and I know all of us have and it's \$1.07 per month so it's \$12.84. What's going to happen is what we've all heard it. Stuff's going to be on the curbs, it's going to be in the streets and those that can afford it are going to go over to Johnson County and pay an arm and a leg to get rid of that waste. So, I would like to propose that we either come up with \$1.07 or some sort of adjustments therefore to at least keep them open for a few days.

Commissioner Bynum said in listening to our taxpayers—I'm sorry I should have counted before I started talking, we had at least 60% of those that spoke in front of us tonight requesting continued support for Livable Neighborhoods as well as the NBRs and then again just the very small grants that we give to our neighborhood groups. What I don't know is the total cost. At 27.5 times 8

NBRs I know that's 220,000. I'm guessing that we're looking at 250,000 to 300,000 and I'm just looking at Dr. Kneuvean because I really don't know. I'm just asking the Commission and the Administrator to consider with regard to the NBRs if we didn't quite cut them back so much, but some level of cut that wasn't 50%. So, at 20,000 that would be \$160,000 and then if we could also do the same with the neighborhood grants. You heard the testimony of the value that Livable Neighborhoods and the neighborhood groups bring to the community and I thought the one gentleman said it so well. I can't find my note of what he said, but—well, they all spoke very well of it, but he said it encourages positive projects and volunteerism and I thought that was really valuable.

Anyway, I'm asking our commissioners and our Administrator because I know that would require some kind of adjustment somewhere, but anyway, that's the request I'm making of the Commission.

Commissioner Davis said I just want to echo that in my conversation with constituents the two items that have come up the most, it's been I'm fine paying the dollar like the cost of the \$1.07 to the benefit, the benefit completely outweighs the cost and I'm not taking away from the real burden of high utility bills and high BPU bills that other folks have expressed. The real question becomes how can we do the greatest good for the greatest number of people. I would be in support of that \$1.07 to keep those programs in place as opposed to cutting it so that we're able to continue to provide that service that a lot of folks have mentioned.

The same for Livable Neighborhoods. My understanding if you're cutting the NBR funding in half for that proposal, if it is possible for us to increase that, that's fine, but honestly if I had to make a choice, I would rather a restoration of half for the neighborhood grants and keeping the NBRs at half to make a compromise as opposed to just saying full restoration. Fully restoring Livable Neighborhoods as is, is going to be tough just looking at these numbers, but if there's a way that we can find some extra dollars, again, not 100%, but I would be willing to compromise on that so that the entire program for neighborhood grants is not completely depleted for our folks.

I just want to put that on the table. I told my constituents that I would be advocating for that and so I remain an advocate for that. Livable Neighborhoods has done a phenomenal job with very minimal budget impact if I'm being honest. I do believe that we need to have a larger conversation about the roles of NBRs, the roles of that contract as well as where we want the future

of Livable Neighborhoods to go. I don't think between now and Thursday we're going to get there. So, hopefully, this will be one of many conversations we continue to have about the very important assets and service that our residents today and through email and other means of communication have displayed.

Commissioner Townsend said we are at this juncture because we are trying to accomplish the eyes on the prize focus of what we hoped was the biggest concern—address the biggest concern of people that we heard multiple times on multiple occasions about lowering taxes. Don't know if this revenue neutral is going to lower taxes or at least put a lid on them, but this is an attempt by going revenue neutral to do that. So, all I'm saying is whatever changes are contemplated to the current budget presented, let's keep in mind what the goal is and if these changes that are being talked about tonight to help Livable Neighborhoods or the Trash Recycling or you know anything like that can be done in a way that it does not again put us in the red or put us in a position to go into reserves, I would be of an open mind to that, but we have to keep in mind what our focus has been and what got us here. And that was trying to be responsive to the lowering of the tax rate. We are so close, it's going to be painful. Many of us already said that, but keep in mind again the bigger prize and the bigger concern.

So, if there is a way to achieve these reduced cutbacks to certain areas, I could support that as long as we're not going back into the red and dipping into our reserves. Thank you, Mr. Patton, for the prayer.

Mayor Garner said, Budget Director, what was—we're at revenue neutral, what is that budget. What was the allocated amount approved by the Commission last year that we would be operating under going into 2025. Is that 470? **Reginald Lindsey, Budget Director**, said total budget is 472M. **Mayor Garner** said 472M. Okay, that's what we're capped at for revenue neutral. I believe hearing from Commission, Administrator and staff—there was going to be a presentation tonight given by our Budget Director. We wanted to hold off on that because we wanted to hear from the public number one, but we also wanted to hear from our commissioners number two. We have a day out of \$470M+ budget, our Administrator has already indicated 44% of that already goes to debt reduction, so we're trying to squeeze a lot out, but nevertheless, I believe Commissioner Townsend mentioned it, when you talk about a \$470M budget I know that our

Administrator has heard the call to action from this Commission. I'm sure that our CFO and Budget Director will go back, and hopefully, the presentation this Thursday at 5:00, fifth floor, City Hall—in the Commission Chambers, the Commission will have a presentation of the final, final proposed budget for consideration. What is going to be recommended to be adopted by this Commission for 2025 at that time, so I encourage everyone to come back or tune in.

Commissioner Burroughs said for clarification, I think in prior discussions we talked about additional funds for the DA, additional funding for the Sheriff's Department, and now we're hearing for additional funding for the NBRs, the restoration and additional funding for the trash. I do want to echo that those comments that Commissioner Townsend made are very succinct and while these programs are very important and critical to our community, it's also our fiscal stability that's critically important for our community also.

I would just like some clarification because if I remember correctly, it was somewhere around a million two-fifty or a million-three that we were asking staff and the Administrator to go back and find and now if we're going to make restoration we're looking at close to \$2M in restoration and we still have concerns about the PILOT issue. That's still uncertain as to where we are on that, so I would hope that we get a little more succinct in what it is we want to fund and what it is we can afford to fund. I think, if I remember correctly, it's been stated if we're going to restore or if we're going to fund, we have to cut something else because of revenue neutral. Now, I do know there's additional funds that can be used that aren't property tax and that's the sales tax fees, fines, anything else that's out there. I call it the loose change in the pocket and under the couch that can be used, but the fact is that if we're going to continue to restore funding and fund other projects that have already had budget cuts, then we need to look at where we can come up with that money besides exceeding revenue neutral.

I just want to make sure that I'm clear as we come into Thursday night that if we're looking for an additional \$2M, I would hope that we would have a strong explanation as to where that money comes from and what programs were cut to get those dollars. I just hate pitting one organization against another, but we're all—the pain was asked and shared by members of this Commission to the public that was here asking for cuts. We said the pain would be felt and we haven't even started yet and we've already asked—people were already being asked to restore funding.

I'm concerned as we stated going into revenue neutral, but I'm not here to kick the can down the road any longer. We heard from those for a couple of years now that our property taxes need to be lowered and I'm willing to do my part and make those tough decisions Mayor, but I would like to be sure that we're clear about how we're going about this revenue neutral process.

Mayor Garner said just to answer your question Commissioner, just for clarity, just speaking with the Administrator today he has been in talks with the Sheriff. I believe they've come to some informal compromise because the Sheriff's budget is somewhat fluid depending on population and things of that nature with the jail population as far as farming out things like that as well as a compromise for the District Attorney on his ask as well.

I think that takes us right back with this budget there may be some loose change, not much, but I know that our Administrator and our staff are going to go back, take a second look. I don't want to take away from the presentation they're going to give on Thursday, but hopefully, they'll give a final budget recommendation that—like I said, it won't be great, but hopefully, it'll be good enough to be acceptable for this Commission to approve.

Commissioner Stites said one of the things—there was one of the letters that was read into the record was about Community Policing and that how it sounded—the way I took it and correct me if I'm wrong, that it sounded like they were saying that maybe Community Policing needed to be disbanded within the Police Department. I was a Community Policing Officer for KCKPD for many years, that unit does not need to be disband. I think it's one of the best units that we have in the Police Department. If anything else, it needs to be expanded because that's the department that actually gets out and handles the problem. I'll say this, as a patrol officer you get called and you respond to a call, you interact with a person for a very short amount of time and then you go back in service and you answer another call. A Community Policing Officer is given a task that a community group may have a problem with and they're allocated the time to spend on that and actually find a solution so that they're not having the district officer get called over and over and over and over. That's where we need to be expanding is Community Policing so we have a stronger presence, not eliminating it. That's my opinion.

As far as the \$1.07 on the trash, you know what, I happen to live on a road where I think under the bridge they think that is a trash dumpster already and we're already fully funding it. I

mean I call regularly. I mean they're dumping now all the time. I would like to see that Dumpster Days is expanded out west. I know we talk about all the things that happened out west, and I understand, and I want to see development happen downtown also. I think all ships rise with the tide. We need good things to happen downtown, we need it to happen down south, and we need it to happen out west.

The \$1.07 I get it, and you know what, I'll pay it if it goes up \$1.07. Here's my problem, there's some people that can't. We sat right here and we heard people say I don't know where the next dollar is coming from and for us to be—and I'm not being flippant about this, there's people that don't have it. What do they do, how do they come up with that additional—I know it sounds minimal, \$12.00 a year, but when they tack that on with the increase of their BPU bill, the increase of another tax, another fee, it adds up. The totality of it adds up and it makes a big difference. Hell, I think people would be glad if their dang trash just got picked up on time because I don't know about the rest of the commissioners, but I get called regularly about my trash has been sitting here for two weeks, hasn't got picked up, what are we do, we call 311 and I'm not talking about staff or anybody else coming down on them. I'm talking about the inefficiencies that we have in that. People are paying for service today, right now, that they're not getting and that is trash being picked up on time. If it got picked up on time, maybe we wouldn't have the illegal dumping that's going on. So, anyway, I'll leave that where it's at.

The E-Tax that somebody had mentioned, you know what, I'm definitely in favor of exploring that and see what that looks like. There's other cities that take advantage of it. I can't remember the number, but I think it was around 70,000 that work in Wyandotte County, but live outside of Wyandotte County. They don't call Wyandotte County home, but they come here to work. What did I say—**Someone** was inaudible. **Commissioner Stites** said 70%. What I say, 70,000; 70%. I get rolling on here and I get numbers maybe a little bit confused, but 70% they leave. They work here and then they leave, so maybe we look at some of that.

I look forward to us being able to get to a—I was a proponent of revenue neutral because I was one that sat right here and I listened to everybody, their outcry's, years and years and years of taxes just continually going up at a rate that is not sustainable and we're running people out of Wyandotte County. I'm glad and proud that we went revenue neutral.

Mayor Garner said one thing I can say just for those of you that missed the last meeting, I can't I say—this Commission not only overwhelmingly voted for revenue neutral because they did hear the pleas of residents that said wanted relief. It doesn't give you a tax cut, but what it does do is it puts a pressure point on tax increases. It also allows for this Unified Government for the first time to start looking—you've heard me say it before, not just who we are, but who we should be. Looking at efficiencies, looking at how we can operate and improve government for our residents like Commissioner Stites talked about.

I hear a lot about where are our tax dollars going, so we want to make sure that we are fiscally responsible in that regard and so revenue neutral is allowed for that as well. I can say, and thank each one of your commissioners, because the majority of them have also taken the lead. They've frozen their pay increases for next year. I froze my pay increase for next year. They've also, the majority of them, agreed to give up their discretionary funds as a mean to show some level of leadership. Just the Mayor's Office budget, they asked me to give up 15%, I gave 30, so we're trying to do our part because this is shared sacrifice and that's what I've talked about.

Someone in the audience mentioned, okay, let's talk about 2026 and beyond. I will be bringing forth this Commission—I know one of our state legislators did approach me about looking at the earnings tax option under Home Rule. I haven't gotten with the Administrator on that. I haven't had a chance to meet with him. That is something that I will be asking our Administrator and our Legal Department to explore or maybe get to this body as an option to have an earnings tax for those individuals that do not live in Wyandotte County. Also, 25% of future revenues that come into the county coffers, I'm asking this Commission to take a hard look at that proposal and see it as an opportunity to put a pressure point or continue the relief on property taxes. I talked to Commissioner Townsend on retiring our debt in a way that can be sustainable moving forward.

Also, I will be bring forth at the next commission meeting, the full commission meeting, I believe that's, Clerk, what date is that? **Ms. Sparks** said August 29th. **Mayor Garner** said August 29th. For those of you that are interested in your BPU bill, we've listened to you, I've listened to you. I'm constantly trying to find solutions that I can bring to this Commission for consideration and that's the main role of the Mayor. I put stuff on the agenda, I bring ideas, and ultimately this Commission debates and decides and they say yes or no. One of those ideas that I'm really going to be bringing forward is to look at the BPU to see if there's real ways that we can not just have

minor decreases in the PILOT and other fees, but have really substantial decreases potentially, there's no promises made, that could really be of value to all the residents that use the Board of Public Utilities because it should be, as a public utility, a value to our residents that use that. So, I'll be bringing some of those ideas forward and so stay tuned to those.

Thank you all again. Thank you for all the voices that spoke up at all the meetings where you've had an opportunity. It's both valued and appreciated. Please continue to stay engaged, stay educated, and I'm just going to speak for me personally, hold me accountable as a lot of you do when I go out into the community. Continue to do that, hold me accountable. I can't make promises, but I can give you commitment that I'm going to continue fighting with this Commission and with our staff because we do have a lot of good staff members. I can tell you I've watched our CFO and our Budget team. They have worked so hard in a short period of time under immense stress to get us where we're at today as well as the department heads who were asked to do those things too that I've mentioned that myself and the Commission is trying to cut and do so responsibly as not to diminish the good services and resources that you've come to expect.

I can tell you police cars are going to continue to run, the Fire Department is going to continue to respond, the individuals here at the Unified Government are still going to be here to provide services, and infrastructure needs are still going to continue to be prioritized. So, the basic essential service that you've come to expect from this Unified Government will be in place, will not be diminished, but it is going to have to be shared sacrifice.

I for one, and I invite anybody in the public, staff, elected officials, I'll be picking up trash. If I see weeds that are too high, I'm going to get that weedeater out. I'm going to cut the weeds, I'm going to do my part because this is all our community. It's more than just what the government can do. It's about what we all can do together to make Wyandotte County that great safe place to live, to work, and raise a family. We can always talk about give me more money. Government do more for me, but we all have a responsibility to take care of our neighborhoods and where we live to make it the type of place that we can enjoy and remove that stigma that I deal with as the Mayor when I go around.

I had a Mayor from another city today at a meeting and it didn't sit well with me, but he lobbed a negative grenade at our community and I was truly offended of him saying those things about this community when I know we have great people, we have great employees, this is an awesome community. I don't care what anybody says about it, yeah, we're going through hard

times. We've seen hard times before, but we're going to get through this as a unified community. We are Dotte proud and I don't care what anybody says. As the Mayor I'm going to speak up and speak out and stand up for our community because we do have people that care about Wyandotte County and they work hard every day. We heard it from the NBRs, but it is shared sacrifice. So, just know that we all have an opportunity and more so not just an opportunity, we have an obligation to all come together and make our community what we want it to be.

Commissioner Stites said, Mayor, the only thing that I would like to add and I don't want to call this person out, but I know that we have had a member in the Mayor's Office that had some medical issues and I think that it would be good of us to make sure that we include that person in our thoughts and our prayers as they go through recovery of their medical issue. So, just keep that in mind. So, if you could do that tonight when you lay your head on your pillow. **Mayor Garner** said I was going to do that before we closed. **Commissioner Stites** said sorry. **Mayor Garner** said it's okay. I'm glad that we're thinking of J.D. Rios. Anybody that knows John Rios he is recovering. That's about all I can say, but keep him in your prayers, keep him in your thoughts. Anybody that knows him personally, please reach out to him. He has been a liaison in my office for a very long time. So, if you don't see him, that void is there, but just know that right now he needs a lot of prayers and support in any way that you can give it, but thank you Commissioner Stites for that.

Commissioner Davis said I'll be brief with this. I was made aware by staff and I do appreciate you all mentioning Mr. Rios, so thank you. I agree, I hope he has a speedy recovery. I was given some information by staff regarding a proposal from the Kansas Department of Transportation regarding the ownership and maintenance of Leavenworth Road. In this proposal or this agreement it does mention some one-time dollars. One of those one-time dollars is \$3.2M as well as another \$800K and it would be in exchange for the Unified Government to take over Leavenworth Road. I know that we do get mid-five figure amount from the state to maintain Leavenworth Road, but I do think since we are in a financial distress situation that perhaps this agreement at some point should come forward so that the public can be aware, the public can comment and we can see whether or not this would be in the best interest for our community. Just given all the numbers that we're looking at with this being on the table and I know, Mayor, we've talked about this a

little bit and it was my understanding this was going to be on a Standing Committee and then it was not, but I think the time is now for us to really look at this and at the very least consider whether or not we want to take this on because this is millions of dollars that at the very least one time for this budget could really help alleviate some financial stress.

Mayor Garner said just a little clarity. That about—when I first became Mayor Secretary Lorenz who was the KDOT secretary at that time, we had a meeting about infrastructure needs in Wyandotte County and really revolving around our bridges and all the bridges that we have out, unfortunately, that we all inherited and then we're trying to find monies to fix. There was no money that was readily available at that time to have a significant impact on our bridges, but Secretary Lorenz did come back and say we do maintain Leavenworth Road. We just got done with a major refresh of the Leavenworth Road corridor and she personally said, you know, if the Unified Government was willing to take over Leavenworth Road and all the maintenance forever, I've got \$4M for you that could potentially go towards the bridge and maybe a match that could help if we get a bigger grant. That's how that conversation came across.

The question, and I do have a phone meeting with the new KDOT Secretary, Mr. Reed, to really talk about the particulars of that before I can get something to this Commission. What we don't want to do is—we want to make sure that we're doing things right as opposed to right away. What I don't want, we could eat \$4M up in a day with the over billion dollars' worth of infrastructure needs which won't make a dent. When you talk about the state owning a major roadway in our community that they're responsible for maintaining, I want to make sure that they are actually, number one, maintaining that roadway and we're not, that roadway continues to be a priority as far as their ongoing maintenance allocations throughout the great state of Kansas and then weigh that with \$4M as opposed to the millions of dollars we know it would take forever to maintain that roadway.

Then, look at that balance and, yeah, initial infusion of \$4M sounds great on the frontend, but the millions of dollars of potential loss revenue that could be had for the ongoing maintenance of that roadway forever, it might not be as good as it sounds. Before I get to that point of getting it to a Standing Committee, I want to make sure that as the Chief Executive Officer of the Unified Government that I do my job and my due diligence to make sure that this Commission be it Standing Committee or full body has all the information they need to make an informed decision

with the appropriate options that you all ultimately would decide will be in the best interest of this Unified Government. So, that's where I'm at and I wanted to share that with you respectfully. Commissioner Davis, it's not an intentional holdup. It's just to make sure to get you all the information you need so you can look at the actual financial impact that it may or may not have on the Unified Government.

Yeah, \$4M upfront does sound good. We could use it right now, but we don't want to leave millions upon millions of dollars potentially beyond us in this Commission, and even for Wyandotte Countians that probably aren't even born yet, the decision that could potentially be made because we're in dire straits. So, I just want to make sure of that appropriate information. I'm going to continue doing my job, get that information and it will get to a Standing Committee, hopefully, in short order.

Thank you for that observation and, again, thank you all for your patience. Thank you all for your comments and we are at the end of our meeting. There's no further items. I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

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

**MAYOR GARNER AJOURNED
THE MEETING AT 7:41 p.m.**

Monica L. Sparks
Interim Unified Government Clerk

dt

August 13, 2024