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

SPECIAL MEETING
MONDAY, AUGUST 22, 2022

The Unified Government Commission of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, met in Special Meeting Monday, August 22, 2022, with eleven members present via Zoom or onsite: Bynum, Commissioner At-Large First District; Burroughs, Commissioner At-Large Second District; Townsend, Commissioner First District; McKiernan, Commissioner Second District; Ramirez, Commissioner Third District; Johnson, Commissioner Fourth District; Kane, Commissioner Fifth District; Markley, Commissioner Sixth District; Stites, Commissioner Seventh District; Davis, Commissioner Eighth District; and Garner, Mayor/CEO, presiding. The following officials were also in attendance: Cheryl Harrison-Lee, Interim County Administrator; Misty Brown, Chief Counsel; Bridgette Cobbins, Assistant County Administrator; Brett Deichler, Interim County Administrator; Kathleen VonAchen, Chief Financial Officer; Debbie Jonscher, Deputy Chief Financial Advisor; Reginald Lindsey, Budget Director; Michael Peterson, Assistant Budget Director; Richard Rocha, Management Analyst in Budget; Judy Her, Budget Department; Jeff Miles, Fleet Manager in Public Works Department; Alley Porter, Commission Liaison; Jeff Fisher, Executive Director of Public Works; Jeff Conway, Assistant Counsel; Dr. Mildred Edwards, Chief of Staff in Mayor's Office; Ashley Hand, Director of Strategic Communication; and Monica Sparks, Acting UG 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 here onsite. All participants joining by phone should mute their phones when not speaking to avoid background noise.

During this meeting, please make sure that you announce yourself by name and title every time you speak so that the public that is observing knows exactly who is speaking. This is critical given the number of remote participants and is current guidance from the Kansas Attorney General's Office.

Mayor Garner called the meeting to order.

Roll call: Johnson, Kane, Markley, Stites, Davis, Bynum, Burroughs, Townsend, McKiernan, Ramirez, Garner.

PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA

Item No. 1 – 211884…TWO PUBLIC HEARINGS: (1) To CONSIDER EXCEEDING THE REVENUE NEUTRAL RATE: (2) PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE PROPOSED 2022 AMENDED BUDGET AND 2023 BUDGET.

Synopsis: Presentation of the Unified Government's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for the Fiscal Year ended December 31, 2021, submitted by Kathleen VonAchen, Chief Financial Officer; Debbie Jonscher, Deputy Chief Financial Officer; and Pamela Kahao, Accounting Manager.

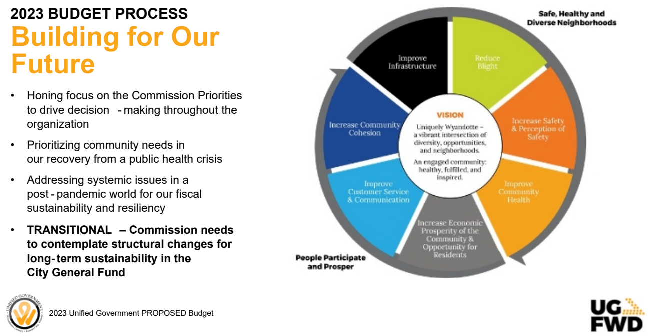
Mayor Garner said this evening the governing body is conducting two public hearings. Tonight we will hear public comments regarding the governing body's intent to exceed the revenue neutral rate as well as comments regarding the Proposed 2022 Amended Budget and Proposed 2023 Budget.

I'll ask our Interim County Administrator, Cheryl Harrison-Lee, to make opening remarks.

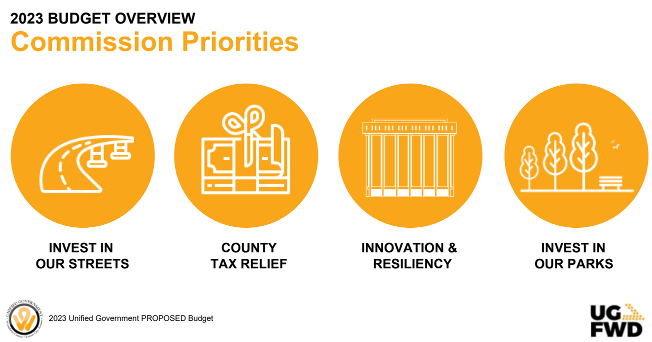
Cheryl Harrison-Lee, Interim County Administrator, said over the past several months we've had various sessions to gather feedback from the public as well as from the Commission members as well as the survey that we provided to get your feedback on developing the budget.

Tonight, the Budget staff will be presenting an overview of the proposed budget and we'll be looking to get your feedback in the public hearing. With that, I will turn it over to Reginald Lindsey.

Reginald Lindsey, Budget Director, said tonight Debbie Jonscher, Deputy CFO, and I are going to go over what was proposed in the 2023 Budget and then also factors as they relate to the revenue neutral rate.

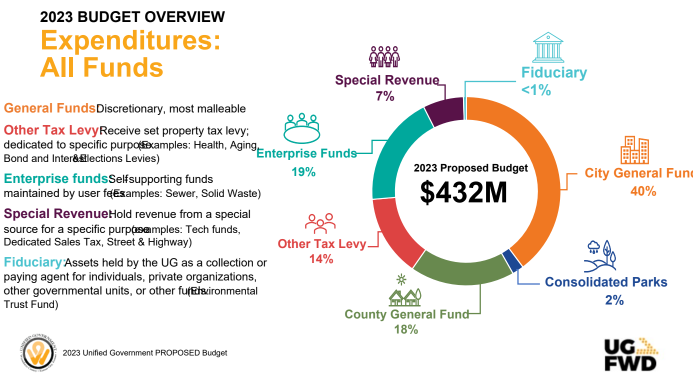


Part of the 2023 budget process, the Unified Government has a vision and then we also have our strategic goals. Part of what we touched on during the budget process was honing and focusing on Commission priorities to drive decision-making throughout the organization and prioritizing our community needs in our recovery from our public health crisis. Also, addressing systemic issues in a post-pandemic world for our fiscal sustainability and resiliency and as a transitional one of the things we're working on is sustainably long-term balancing out our City General Fund.



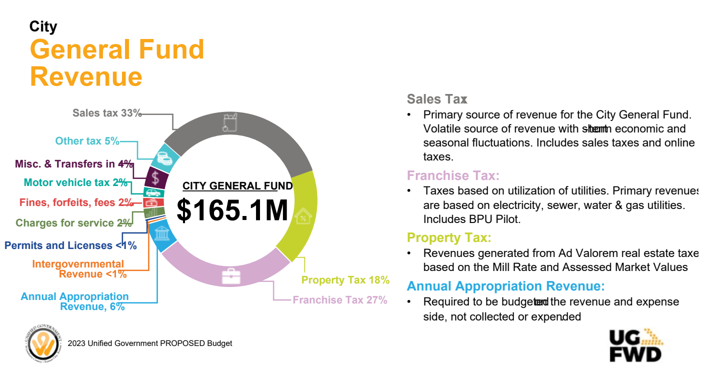
During the 2023 budget process we've had multiple ways to engage with the public and also the Commission has multiple ways of hearing from the public. We started out with a Commission Retreat and then we actually also had a community survey that went out to the whole community. We also had Dotte Talks with the communities and then we also had a budget simulator that was rolled out to the public and then the Commission all got feedback from citizens within their respective districts.

Some of the things that came out of that was the Commission set priorities to invest in our streets and what they want to do is invest 25% more in our streets and then also county tax relief. So, when we proposed the 2023 Budget we proposed a half mill decrease on the County side and now we're looking at a two mill tax decrease on the County side. Also, commissioners wanted to invest in innovation and resiliency and that basically is for personnel increases, provide more benefits and also raises for employees and then also do a Comp and Class Study and also strengthen our cyber security team and enhance it. Also, Commission wanted to invest in our parks and part of that included shifting a quarter mill to our parks so that we can increase personnel there and also provide more hours in our community centers and provide more programming.

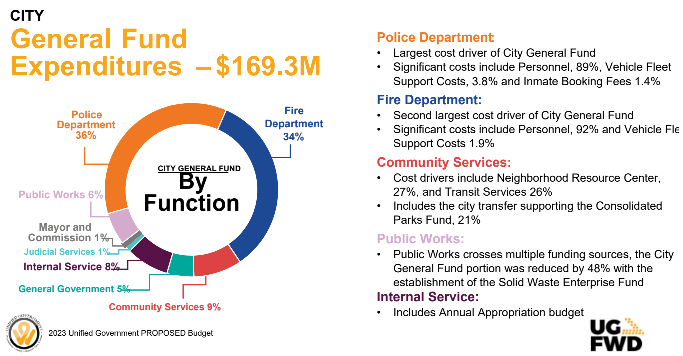


With that said, our total budget for the 2023 Budget is a $432M balanced budget that has revenues and expenditures accounted for and it funds over 29 state certified funds and over 40 departments in the Unified Government. This provides 200 services countywide and citywide.

Some of the expenditures here are our City General Fund which is a $169M budget and our County General Fund which is an $80M budget and then our Consolidated Parks Fund which is an $8.7M budget and together as part of this pie, those funds that I just talked about make up the General Fund and they make up 60% of this pie. The other funds are our Other Tax Levy Funds and also Enterprise Funds.



Currently, we have a view of the City General Fund and the revenues that it brings in. We see sales tax in the City General Fund for 33% of the budget which makes up $54M of the $165M of revenue that we have coming into the City General Fund and then we also have Franchise Taxes that are 27% of the PILOT and that's about $44M. Basically, what we have here are taxes from utilities. Primary revenue here is from electricity and sewer and water and gas utilities and this does include the BPU PILOT.

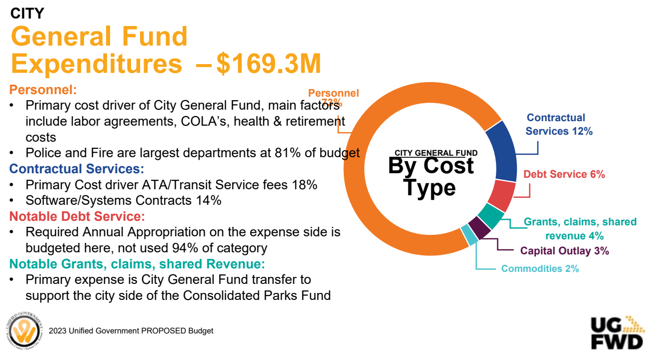


Next, we have a view of our expenses in the City General Fund and that's a $169M budget. We can see the Police Department makes up 36% of that budget and that's about $59M and most of the Police budget is made up of personnel which is 89% of the Police Department budget.

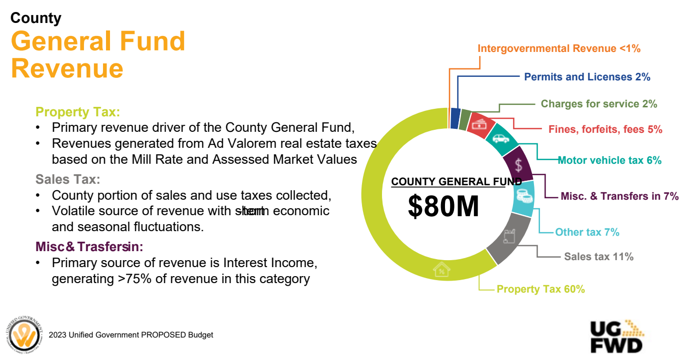
The next largest department is the Fire Department which makes up 34% of the pie and that's a $56M budget and 92% of that budget is made up of personnel.

Next, we have Community Services and basically we have departments here that includes the Neighborhood Resource Center and our Transit services that are provided.

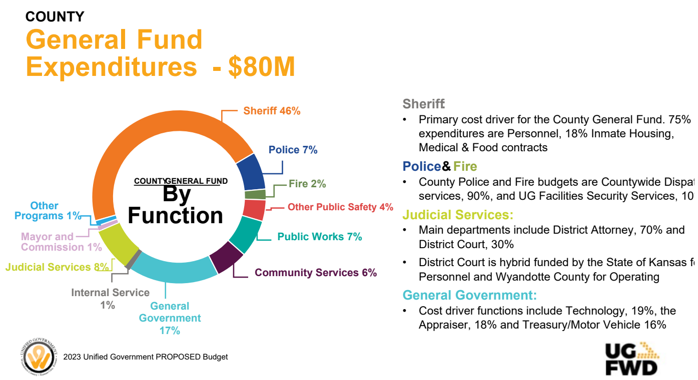
Then, we have Grants and Claims and most of our grants and claims of the City General Fund is a transfer that goes to the Consolidated Parks Fund in the amount of $4.8M.



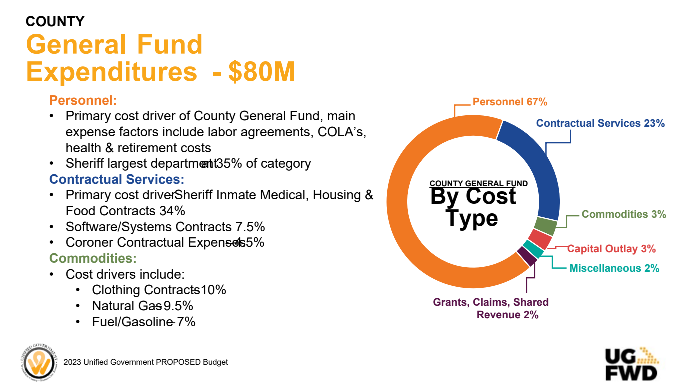
This is a different view of the expenditures over the City General Fund. This looks at the cost by the type of cost it is. We have Personnel here, so 73% of the budget is Personnel and that's about $120M and Police and Fire make up 81% of that. Contractual Services is 12% of the budget and the primary cost driver there are transit contracts that we have with the KCATA.



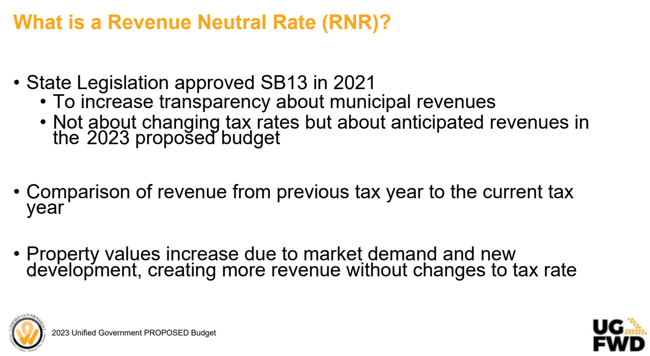
The current slide gives us a view of revenues coming into the County General Fund and that's $80M. We see 60% of revenues come from property tax which equates to about $48M. Also, sales tax is 11% and then miscellaneous and transfers is 7%, so basically what that is from interest income.



The County General Fund here, we're looking at the expenses and there's an $80M budget. The Sheriff's Department makes up 46% of this pie which is about $36M and 75% of the expenditures for the County General Funds is personnel within the Sheriff's Department, 75% is personnel. Then, the next piece of the pie is General Government which is 17% and that's made up of technology, also, the Appraiser's Office and Treasury and Motor Vehicle.

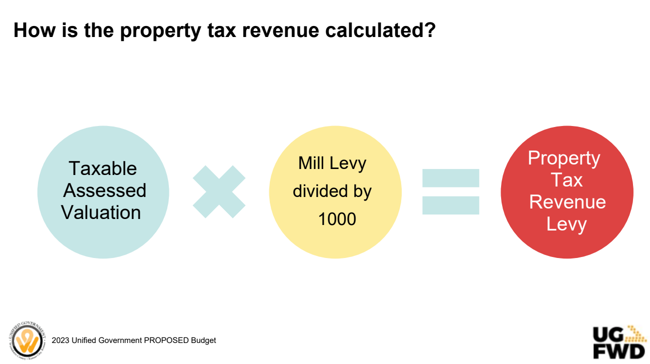


This slide here is a different view of the expenditures and it looks at them by cost type and so what we have here is Personnel. Personnel across the County General Fund is 67% of the pie and 35% of that personnel pie is Sheriff's personnel. The next largest piece of the pie is Contractual Services at 23% and Sheriff contracts and software and the Coroner's Office make up almost 50% of our contractual services.

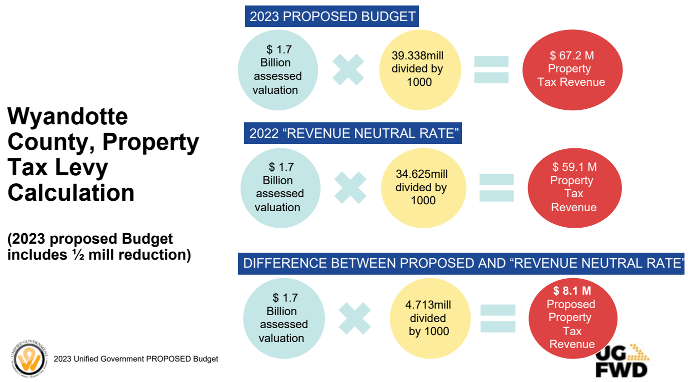


Now, I'm going to turn it over to Debbie Jonscher, Deputy CFO, and she's going to discuss the Revenue Neutral Rate.

Debbie Jonscher, Deputy Chief Financial Officer, said the second part of this meeting tonight is to discuss the Revenue Neutral Rate and I just wanted to give you a little bit of background on the Revenue Neutral Rate. It was state legislation that approved Senate Bill 13 in 2021. This was to increase transparency about municipal revenues. It is not about changing the tax rate, but about the anticipated revenues in the 2023 Budget. It's a comparison of revenues from the previous tax year to the current tax year. Property values increased due to market demand and new development creating more revenue without changes to the tax rate.



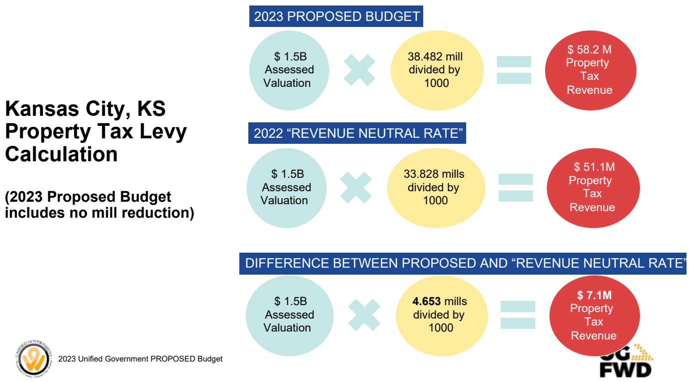
I just wanted to show you here how the property tax revenue is calculated. We take the taxable assessed valuation, times it by the mill levy, divide by a thousand and that gives you the property tax revenue. This is the current amount—this would be the amount of property tax revenues levied for the current year.



These next two slides go into a little bit more detail about the Wyandotte County Levy calculation and the Kansas City, Kansas Levy calculation. This slide here is Wyandotte County and I'm going to start at the top. Well, first of all, I'm going to note that in the 2023 Proposed Budget it does include—the proposed budget included a half mill reduction on the County, but for this exercise here, I have used the current mill levy. I just wanted to note that for comparison. When we started talking about our intent to not exceed—to exceed the Revenue Neutral Rate, we had not proposed a budget. I just wanted to make sure that these were comparable.

The current assessed value for Wyandotte County is currently $1.7B and we would take that times the current mill rate which for the County is 39.338 mills divided by a thousand and that gives you $67.2M in property tax revenue.

When we talk about the Revenue Neutral Rate, we're talking about not receiving the same amount of revenue that we would have received in the current year, but using the new assessed value. So, we're taking the $1.7B of assessed value and times it by the Revenue Neutral Rate, which would be 34.625 mills divided by a thousand and would give you $59.1M in property tax revenue which is the same as what you would receive in the current year. The difference between that is, for the County, it's 4.713 mills and it amounts to $8.1M property tax revenue.



The next slide is Kansas City, Kansas calculation and I will just note that there's no mill included here as well as in the proposed budget. We did not include a mill levy reduction for Kansas City, Kansas. The current assessed value for Kansas City, Kansas is $1.5B and we're going to times that by the current mill rate which is 38.482 mills divided by a thousand and gives us $58.2M in property tax revenue.

For the Revenue Neutral Rate we use the same assessed value of $1.5B times the Revenue Neutral Rate which is 33.828 mills divided by a thousand and would give us $51.1M in the property tax revenue.

The difference on the Kansas City, Kansas levy is 4.653 mills and the difference in revenue is $7.1M.

Revenue Neutral Rate Calculation

UG TAX LEVY FUND	2022 Budget Property Taxes Levied	2022 Budget Mill Rate	2023 Estimated Property Tax Levied @ 13% est. AV+	2023 "Revenue-Neutral" Mill Rate	Levied Revenue Reduction at "Revenue-Neutral"	Mill Reduction at "Revenue-Neutral" Rate
County General Fund	$47,230,114	31.4488	$53,750,150	27.6809	($6,520,036)	(3.7679)
Elections	1,322,729	0.8808	1,505,330	0.7752	($182,600)	(0.1055)
Parks General Fund	2,106,625	1.4027	2,397,441	1.2347	($290,816)	(0.1681)
Aging	1,555,615	1.0358	1,770,365	0.9117	($214,750)	(0.1241)
Mental Health	643,860	0.4287	732,744	0.3774	($88,884)	(0.0514)
Health Department	2,362,526	1.5731	2,688,669	1.3846	($326,143)	(0.1885)
Developmental Disabilities	521,906	0.3475	593,954	0.3059	($72,048)	(0.0416)
County Bond & Interest	3,334,982	2.2206	3,795,371	1.9546	($460,389)	(0.2661)
Subtotal – Wyandotte County	**$59,078,357**	**39.3381**	**$67,234,023**	**34.6250**	**($8,155,666)**	**(4.7131)**
City General Fund	28,489,680	21.4340	32,464,287	18.8422	(3,974,607)	(2.5919)
City Bond & Interest	22,660,057	17.0482	25,821,371	14.9864	(3,161,314)	(2.0618)
Subtotal – City of Kansas City, KS	**$51,149,736**	**38.4822**	**$58,285,658**	**33.8285**	**($7,135,921)**	**(4.6537)**
Grand Total – Unified Govt	**$110,228,094**	**77,8203**	**$125,519,681**	**68.4535**	**($15,291,587)**	**(9.3668)**

2023 Unified Government PROPOSED Budget

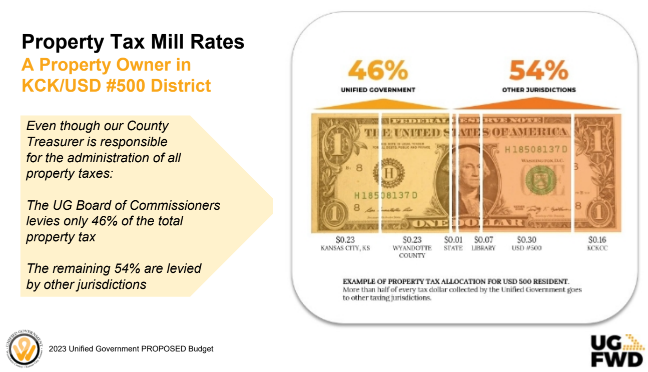
UG FWD

This next slide just shows all the Tax Levy funds included. The levies are set by entity, so we have Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas. This shows all the different funds that are included in those levees. Under Wyandotte County you not only have the County General Fund, you have Elections, the Parks General Fund, Aging, Mental Health, Health Department, Developmental Disabilities, and the County Bond & Interest.

Under the city of Kansas City, Kansas you have the City General Fund and the City Bond & Interest Fund. So, this is the same calculation that I showed starting with the 2022 budgeted property taxes levied for both Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas and we have the 2022 mill rate, which would give you the middle column, and is the estimated taxes levied with the increase in assessed value.

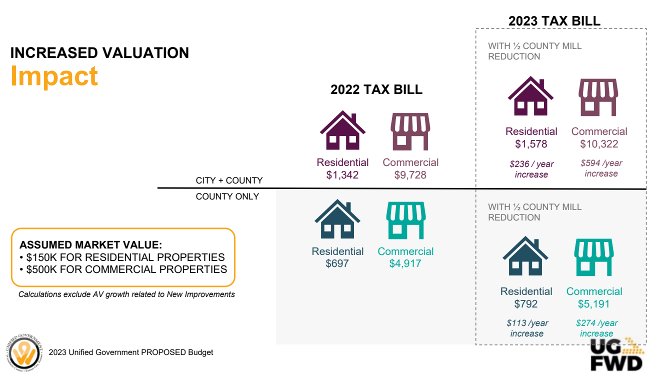
Then, we have the Revenue Neutral Rate and then what the—if you approve—if you chose not to exceed the Revenue Neutral Rate, then the levied revenue reduction, these would be the amount you would reduce for each fund. Then, also, the last column shows the reduction in the mill rate.

I will just note over in the first column at the end for the City and the County the taxes levied were $110M with a mill rate of 77.820 mills. With the increased value at that same mill rate, the City and the County would receive a combined amount of $125.5M. With the Revenue Neutral Rate the mills would be reduced to 68.4 mills and that would account for a $15.2M reduction or 9.3 mills.



This next slide we just wanted you—you saw this during the budget presentation, but just showing the property tax mill rate and we've used the Unified School District 500 as the example here. That's showing that the County Treasurer is responsible for the administration of all the property taxes; however, the Unified Government only receives 46% of the total tax meaning that 54% of that is levied by the other taxing jurisdictions.

This is just to give some information about what a mill is worth. In our presentation on August 11th we talked about the value of one mill or what one mill represents for a resident and a commercial property. We're using the same number, the 150,000 that we used in our previous workshop for a residential home. One mill equates to $17.25 per year. On a $500,000 commercial property, that one mill equates to $125 per year.



This is the valuation impact. This was also presented at the last meeting and we're using the same value for residential and commercial. For residential $150K, $500K for commercial. The top line shows if you have a residential property in Kansas City, Kansas, so you are in the city and the county, your residential tax bill for 2022 would be $1,342. With the increased valuation and the half mill reduction that was proposed in the budget, a residential property for 2023 would pay $1,578 which equates to a $236 per year increase. For commercial in 2022, it was $9,728 and for 2023 that commercial property would be $10,322 for an increase per year of $594.

Below the line is just if you live in the county, but not in the city, and it's a residential property is $697 in 2022 and in 2023 it would be $792 for a $113 increase per year. Commercial in 2022 is $4,917 and in 2023 it would be $5,191 for an increase of $274 per year.

Comparable Mill Rates

Unified Government and Other Cities/Counties

The UG's mill rates compared to the State

City rates are in the middle with other 1st class cities

County rates are among the lowest in Kansas

1996 & 2022 (Budget Year) Mill Rate Summary
Kansas City and Wyandotte Co. Comparison to Other Kansas Entities

Kansas City	1996		2022	
	City Mill Levy	Rank (Out of 24 First Class Cities)	City Mill Levy	Rank (Out of 26 First Class Cities)
	64.220	1st	38.482	16th

Wyandotte Co.	1996		2022	
	County Mill Levy	Rank (Out of 105 Counties)	County Mill Levy	Rank (Out of 105 Counties)
	32.784	78th	39.338	93rd

Ranked High to Low.

2023 Unified Government PROPOSED Budget

This information we also previously presented just showing comparable mill rates for the Unified Government and other cities and counties in Kansas. City rates are in the middle with the other first-class cities and county rates are among the lowest. The top table is Kansas City, Kansas and in 1996 prior to consolidation the city mill was 64.2 mills and we ranked first out of 24 first-class cities. In 2022 the city mill is 38.482 mills and we are ranked 16th out of 26 first-class cities.

For Wyandotte County, in 1996 the mill was 32.784 mills and we ranked 78th out of 105 and in 2022 we're at 39.338 mills and we currently rank 93rd out of 105 counties.

Why is this important?

- Financial Health - Growth in the property tax revenues is important in order to support fiscal health of the community in order to continue provide quality services to our residents
- Additional revenue – allows for investment in infrastructure, services and other community priorities.

2023 Unified Government PROPOSED Budget

I will just close out with why this is important. I just wanted to note that growth and valuation can provide tax relief, but it's also important for financial health in order to support fiscal health of the community and continue to provide quality services to our residents. The additional revenue also allows for investment in infrastructure, services, and other community priorities.

That's the end of our presentation. I'll turn it back over to the County Administrator.

Ms. Harrison-Lee said, Mayor, that completes our presentation. We'll entertain questions at this time.

Mayor Garner said thank you for that presentation. I'll ask the Clerk if any notifications were received from the public who wish to express their comments regarding the item being presented. **Monica Sparks, Acting U.G. Clerk,** said yes, Mayor, we have received some comments and I can read those now with your permission.

Our first comment is from Elizabeth Naramore stating you do realize you are taxing people out of their homes. We are approaching retirement and are going to have to relocate. On my way out, I will vote you all out of office.

From Leslie Still, please consider my following communication. I have read provided information which states that the County Clerk has asked the taxing subdivisions to not tax more than they did the previous year, meaning the 2023 tax would remain the same or lower. However, the estimated notice shows large increases in the subdivision taxes on our estimated real estate property. My wife and I are on fixed incomes which do not support unexpected real estate tax increases. Our real estate property has not been improved upon for several years to warrant the increase of new appraisal value, yet, now we also expect to receive higher homeowners insurance costs due to the new real estate appraisal. We would appreciate your Commission encouragement for every one of the subdivisions to hold back on the spending budget and request they hold to the previous year level of their expenditures. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Our next comment is from Megan Painter. Community Housing of Wyandotte County wishes to join with our community partners in stressing the necessity of funding this year's cold weather shelter. This need is coming into even sharper focus. Those working with WYCO houseless population are now seeing children living outside. These funds will literally save lives and may lead to families and individuals getting the resources needed to obtain permanent housing. It is sometimes difficult to remember the pain induced by exposure to extreme cold while the temperatures outside are in the 80’s and 90’s, but when those cold nights do hit, the thought that someone in our city is trapped outside is unbearable and a decent warm place becomes an evident human right. This Commission has understood the value of a cold weather shelter in recent years and we ask for your continued support in funding so that all Wyandotte County residents can sleep safely through the worse winter nights.

Our final comment was from Rachel McMeachin. She submitted a PowerPoint which was distributed to all.

Those are all the comments we received, Mayor.

Mayor Garner asked, is there anyone present that would like to speak on this item. If so, please come to the podium. Once you have been acknowledged, we ask that you provide your name and city of residence for the record. You’ll be given up to three minutes to state your name and comments and I’d ask that those that are in the room, if you could make your way to the front row, that way you can come right to the podium as the speakers complete their statements.

Don White said I own some properties here in Kansas City, Kansas. I was buying them when they were fairly cheap and I’ve got tenants in them, all low income. So, when you all raise these taxes, say I got a house with three bedrooms, I’m renting to a guy that’s retired on a fixed income for $800 and if my property taxes are $3,000 on this property and my insurance is $150 a month, basically, I’m operating almost at a negative. If people are refurbishing these properties for low-income people in the northeast end, and we keep getting these tax increases, we’ve got to pass them down to the tenant and the tenant can’t afford it, so I mean it just puts people in a catch-22. What you all are going to do is push people out of this city and what’s going to happen is—I’m from California originally, so what’s going to happen is people are going to be forced to move 50-60 miles out to St. Joe, Topeka because Kansas City, Kansas is essentially located, but people don’t understand that. If you’re on 18th & Quindaro, you’re ten minutes from downtown, so people see that and now they're coming with this big money so people that have been here for years are going to be priced out.

At this point and at the rate it's going up, like I had to increase on a house I got for $5,000 maybe seven or eight years ago, they tell me it's worth $125K now. You know I did some minor upgrades, so I mean it's like a catch-22. I don't understand—I might understand everything has got to go up over time, but a lot of people on the northeast end is getting priced out of their homes and are getting took. I don't know how they've got this set up, but I know if you can't pay your taxes, you're going to lose your house and if it doesn't sell at the tax sale, it goes to the Land Bank, which it goes to the Unified Government and then the Unified Government decides who they give this house to. They're going to write up a proposal, submit $100 and then they're going to give it to whoever they want to give it to. I don't know if it's a backdoor buddy system who get these houses, but people are losing their homes, homeless and being misplaced—**Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Mr. White** said what I'm saying is something has got to be done.

I understand taxes got to go up. I totally understand that. It's got to be improvements, but it's got to be a common medium especially for the elderly people and people that's on Section 8 and low income. They've been here for years and now they see themselves being priced out of theirs. That's all.

Rob Santel said my comments on the budget this evening come on behalf of the residents of Wyandotte County. They're living here without a home of their own, those that are currently experiencing homelessness in our community. This population is increasing in size and we are about 90 days away from extreme weather, so we have work to do to come up with a plan for us to have something to do this winter. My question for the Commission is for us to be able to come up with funding for us to figure out how we can do this on an annual basis so then every year we don't have to figure out—have to come to this point where we have to play this game of how is this thing going to get funded, but that it would be a part of the annual process of the Unified Government to figure out how can we get this project funded.

Last year we operated 38 nights. We served 275 different individuals. Not only was this a life-saving intervention in our community, but it was also a vehicle that was able to be used to get people into permanent housing. Just this week we have housed many different people that our first connection to them in the community was through that extreme weather project.

Our second ask is that the Unified Government would designate a point person with decision-making power to be our main point of contact in this process, both in our planning process, especially as we are trying to locate the funding piece as well as trying to identify what location that will be suitable for our needs would be. So, please identify who that person would be.

Then, also, we are asking the Unified Government to commit to working with the social service entities that are part of this as well as when we work with Kansas City, Missouri on having a regional response to this. We are having conversations with them about how can we have a regional response so that we can have our ducks in a row when it comes to cold weather, which is 90 days.

Krysten Olson said I've served as a social service provider in Wyandotte County for five years and counting and as such it's my duty to advocate for Wyandotte County's most vulnerable population which is our houseless neighbors. Much of what I'm going to ask is going to echo what Rob just asked. I'm here tonight to request the UG consider an extreme weather project in the annual budget process. As you all should be aware, Wyandotte County severely lacks emergency shelter beds year round as a limited number of beds are available for single men and survivors or victims of domestic violence. Each winter we are left scrambling to produce funding and a location for the extreme weather project. This type of project is crucial to provide emergency shelter during the coldest nights of the winter season for Wyandotte County's houseless population. Without this life-saving option, our houseless neighbors can literally freeze to death on the streets.

Last year's extreme weather project was open 38 nights, served 275 different guests with a total of 1,606 bed nights and operated on a budget of only $175K and that did not include paying rent and utilities on the facility we were using.

I'm proud to say I served as part of last year's project staff. We were a group of mental health providers, social service providers, healthcare workers, persons with lived experience and committed community members. But, the weight of this critical life-saving project should not rest on our shoulders alone. Our houseless neighbors are your constituents.

This project needs to support an active participation of the UG. I urge the commissioners to consider the following requests: 1) that the UG consider this project in the annual budge process rather than scrambling each year to figure out how to make it work. **Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Ms. Olson** said 2) the UG designate a direct point of contact for the project during preparation and throughout the winter, and 3) that the UG partner with extreme weather project's partners to collaborate with KCMO for a regional cold weather response.

Kevin Bailey said it's really a privilege to be here and have a governing body that is attentive and interested in these matters and also have the public out here. I will express my opinion about the cold weather shelter for our population. I don't believe it's the government's job to provide that type of service. We do have houses of faith and places of worship that do have tax-exempt status and the people that contribute to these houses of worship do it freely, but as we've had people testify, they're stating that they're being driven out of their homes due to the taxes and they're not contributing money willingly to a noble cause, the cold weather shelter. I believe the government should be smaller. I think it should spend less money on things of that nature.

I come here out of frustration. I live in Bonner Springs and I have some investment properties that I work hard on and I finally paid off, but the tax rate, the property taxes—you know your slides were beautiful, you're articulate the way you read them, but when it comes down to where the rubber meets the road, there's a lot of money going out for people that are struggling. I think my question would be to this good body here, is it your desire for the people of Wyandotte County to prosper, do you want prosperity in Wyandotte County. You need to lower the taxes. I'm not talking about keeping them the same, they need to come down.

I was born a few blocks from here. I raised five kids in this county, I served in the military. I love this area. I love Kansas City. I call it my town. **Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Mr. Bailey** said I don't get up and speak much and I don't make much noise, so this is a little out of my character, but I believe that an audit of this Kansas City, Kansas and Unified Government is in order. I think it needs to be an independent audit. I think it needs to be done immediately and I don't know why we have previous Administrators that are leaving with severance packages, nearly a million dollars, and if I understand correctly, they're still driving a government vehicle. If I'm speaking out of turn or I'm incorrect, I'll take the correction. I don't trust government and money corrupts, so that's what I have to say.

Faith Rivera said as you guys know I am an avid lover of Wyandotte County. I recently just ran for state representative for Wyandotte County, District 37 and I'm also on the Parks & Rec Board, just as a little information. I want to talk about, real quick, how this impacts me and our community. I don't live here singly. I live in Wyandotte County as a roommate because I can't afford to live here on my own. I live with five roommates in a huge house in Turner because we cannot afford to live by ourselves and that's a travesty.

As you see, I came from work today to come here to say that people in my community are struggling. You see more and more homeless people in our community because of taxes, because of BPU, and because we can't—as you're raising our taxes, our wages aren't getting higher, so there's got to be some conscious. You need to be conscious about this information because what you're doing is you're driving us out. While you're raising this information—or again, our wages aren't raising. We fight to stay here in our community because we love our community, we grew up here, we fight to be here, and for you guys—I know that you guys know that I run and I ask people to run for office. I'm asking them to—I'm asking the community to think about running and running for any of you guy's offices because we need to change. We need people that are going to sit up there that are going to fight for us and that are going to understand what it's like to live on this side of the pulpit.

Christine Frolin said I've been a lifelong citizen of Kansas City, Kansas, Wyandotte County. I was born here, raised here. I've worked for 37 years until I physically could not do it any longer and so in my retirement time, the last couple of years with inflation and cost of living increases going up and, of course, I'm on a fixed salary, it doesn't go up. I'm literally at the point to where I don't know that I can afford to live here any longer. I can't even tell you how many people that I know that have lived here this amount of time but have been forced to move out and live somewhere else. What they tell me is that their utility bill went down, their taxes went down, their quality of life went up. It's shameful because I know that we've got intelligent people here somewhere and we can do better than this for our citizens. It shouldn't be like this, it doesn't have to be and I'm hoping that things will change, but what I've seen the last few years, this is dismal and the more I find out, the more disillusioned I am about Wyandotte County.

I put my trust here. We've got a new Mayor. I'm hoping for a fresh and new start, but something has got to change.

Dr. Tammy Counts said I am a resident of Wyandotte County. Five years ago my husband and I bought a house on 68th Street and I called it my retirement home. I am a teacher here in the district. I'm a Special Education teacher, so we're rare and we're few. As a teacher I used to be angry at my colleagues who drove in from the different counties to work in my school district, but now I understand. My mortgage came and it said I had a $2,100 shortfall in escrow, so I paid it in order to keep my mortgage down and now you're asking me for more. I do want to retire for real this time. I retired in 2020 and I came back during the pandemic because of the teacher shortage, but I don't want to be a hypocrite and be one of those teachers that come from another county because I can't afford to live here.

My question is, if I'm understanding right, $80M comes from property taxes. Was I understanding the PowerPoint correctly? That's a real question and then I'm trying to understand the math because according to this document that came to me with all the differences that I will have to pay as an increase, to me it looks like it's $8.1M increase in property taxes. Am I correct or is that wrong or—anybody. **Mayor Garner** said this is—**Dr. Counts** said okay, we're just supposed to pose questions. Okay, so that's my question and that's what I'd like to know.

Then, my second question is—**Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Dr. Counts** said within five years, how did my house increase in value by $30K. All I did was replace the windows. I'm going to try to reroof my home and put up new gutters, but $30K, my house is worth that much more. I want to thank you, but once again, if that's what it's worth and if taxes keep going up, I'm going to take that $30K and move to a different county.

Chester Owens, 1150 Washington Blvd., said thank you for allowing us to speak. I'm probably at a disadvantage because I have sit where you all are sitting and I understand some of the problems that you have. Many people are speaking on the residences, but I want to deviate just a little bit. Our neighborhood group, we own six vacant lots and the item that I received today, each vacant now has increased 300%. Why is there such a drastic increase in the vacant lots? I don't expect an answer, rather tragic. Our neighborhood groups provide a lot for this community and we get nothing back basically. Most of our neighborhood groups are seniors and we are hurting. Members are dying and we cannot afford another increase. We utilize our neighborhoods for our neighborhoods. We have a community garden where we distribute food. How are we going to continue to do this. Our services have declined and are rapidly declining. Probably one of the major things I have to do is go one block and look at the junkyards that are appearing and also I have to live on a street where it's a racetrack. I can sit on my front porch and watch the racetrack. Cars go from 10th & Washington to 13th Street, they're sometimes going 80 miles an hour. What happened to the services?

One thing I think we need to look at—**Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Mr. Owens** said we need to look at people in addition to property. You need to balance it off. It's totally out of balance now. We're looking at property and not people and this is tragic. We as seniors are hurting and $200 may not seem a whole lot to you all, but to us who are on fixed incomes, that's a huge, monumental amount. Something has to change.

Tausha Payne said I'm here speaking about my property tax or the property taxes. Yes, I do agree that homeless shelter and it's importance is important, but in order for us to get there, we have to start in our homes and our homes where we're—how are we going to help somebody else when we can't help ourselves right now. Just for the community for elderly people who are on fixed income, how are they going to be able to help somebody. We got to start and help our home first and my property taxes have been going up for the past five years and I'm going to be honest, I feel like you all are robbing Peter to pay Paul and you are pushing people out. I'm at a point where I'm ready to sell. I really am because I can go anywhere else and pay way lesser taxes. Everything will be cheaper. BPU all that, it's just ridiculous how we are being taxed as a community as we are already a low income community. How are you going to keep taxing a low income community, I don't understand that. So, that's what I have to say. I don't even need the whole minute to speak. I'm just speaking on property value and starting in our city, starting in our homes. Some things I feel like is not even necessary that you all are funding for, but that's my opinion. I'm just tired of my property taxes going up and it's pushing me out the door.

Rhonda Harless said I live in Kansas City, Kansas. I live off of State and 61st. My property value, according to you guys, went up $32K from last year. I'm on a fixed income. I will be moving out of this city because of the taxes if something isn't done fairly soon because I can't afford to live here. I can move to another state and live high on the hog and I can't do that here. I have no city sewer. I'm still on a septic tank. I have no sidewalks. My street is dangerous. They don't slow down. They go from one bar on 32nd to a bar on State at 40-50 miles an hour and every house, six houses, there's children at those houses and they don't slow down. There's no speed limit sign. I would like to know what's going to be done.

Annie Boyd said I am a 79 year old senior citizen and I've raised eight children in Wyandotte County. I've worked 30 plus years for the federal government and I worked before that. I have worked hard all my life and raised my kids and we—I've always lived here in Wyandotte County to buy a house for my kids and myself. I moved from 2822 Hiawatha, zip code 66104. I'm out here now at 64th Terr. and I'm still 66104. My car insurance is higher, everything is higher for me. Last year my house appraisal was $9K more and this year—I mean next year it's going to be the same. Where am I going to go. People in my neighborhood, really we're supposed to be in a higher class, but I'm still—you all have me paying this. When I was on Hiawatha I was only paying $100 a year for my house. Now I'm paying 15—I'm paying a ridiculous amount. It just don't make sense, it does not make sense.

Again, like they're saying look at—we're people. We worked hard to have something and we can't have it. I worked hard and long so I could live a decent life, but I can't live a decent life if every year my appraisal is going to go up $9K more or higher. I just need some consideration because a lot of people in my neighborhood are moving out. **Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Ms. Boyd** said, again, Wyandotte County utilities—my daughter had to pay $800 a month for a whole year for water and lights. That's just crazy. She has five boys, her husband is deceased. I mean it's just ridiculous. Wyandotte County—you really need to do some thinking because, again, this is just not right. Something needs to give.

Charles Carney said I live in the Prescott neighborhood. My wife and I have been taking in unhoused people since 2004, sometimes known as the St. Lawrence Catholic Worker House. We almost always have two to four people living with us at any given time. We do this for free, we don't get paid for it. We do it voluntarily. Last winter before the cold weather shelter was in place, we took in four. We had a very unexpected spade of cold weather. We had four people in our unfinished basement. Not an ideal situation, but it beats the heck out of people freezing to death. Dr. Martin Luther King said, "the measure of any society is how it treats its most vulnerable." Well, how are we doing so far Dr. King, not very well if we don't have a—don't even have funds or a plan in place for a cold weather shelter this winter, this close to the time.

My wife and I are taking a 20% increase on our housing—on our property taxes and we are doing everything we can to help people in this community. That kind of feels like—oh, what's that thing called, oh yeah, no tax—that kind of feels like taxation without representation.

Commissioners and Mayor, we need your help. The burden of housing should not fully rely on us citizens alone. Now, with all due respect, a gentleman came up here and said that the churches and the social service agencies are willingly taking in people for cold weather and the homeless. Respectfully, where are they, because I have some friends who live in Rosedale and they take some people in and other than that I don't know of anybody else. **Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Mr. Carney** said I beg of you that we put together resources with caring professionals and a comprehensive plan to not only solve the long-term problem of homelessness, but to solve these emergency problems where people are in danger of dying. We need to do this with KCMO and with the region.

I want you, I beg of you to vote for a budget that stands for justice. I beg of you to advocate for human rights and I ask you to vote for dignity. Dr. King said, "justice deferred is justice denied."

Carolyn Wyatt, 359 Troup, said what I want to say is that someone made a statement saying that they take their orders from staff. Staff didn't put you there, so you should take no orders from staff. The community put you there, so you should be listening to the community. I have some vacant lots, like \$5, \$6 a year, now they want \$300 so what they're trying—what do you call that—gentrification and you know it's not about gentrification. It's about residents, it's about people. You know, people put you there. Maybe you're not the person that needs to be there if you don't see the people. Elections are coming up next year. There will probably be somebody else in those seats because I'm going to be—I put out a slate every year and believe me, your name will be on that slate if you don't hear the people and we'll go door-to-door and make sure that you won't be in that seat. Consider the people. Some of you may not be running and that's okay, that's good if you ain't running. I see some smirks. That's good if you're not running, but what I'm saying is that if you don't care, we know somebody who will care.

Like I said, northeast area, it's not the vacant land there. You know you want to raise people taxes, but you don't invest in it. You invest out west, you invest somewhere else. You got to spend some of that money and the commissioners, if you're not advocating for the northeast area, you don't need to be there because your money is going to another area every year because you're not asking for money. You're not pleading with the people. We got commissioners who are pleading for their area, so you got to plead for your area, you got to get that money because if you don't get it, guess what, it's going somewhere else. It's not going in your area. That's why we put you in those seats—**Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining—**Ms. Wyatt** said for you to do the right thing. You're there to do the right thing. If you're not doing the right thing, you're doing the wrong thing.

John Coil said 20 years ago I came into the Kansas City metropolitan area and came into KCK and started purchasing houses and rehabbing them and holding them. I'm an Episcopal priest. I came into this area because I had a sense of ministry and a sense of call to try and provide quality housing for people. We have attempted to make sure that the housing was quality with good roofs, central heat and air, new windows, good facilities to make sure people are well housed and also to hold rents as tightly as I could possibly do so. In the last couple of years we've had to raise rent really for the very first time and this last year I had to raise it between 6 and 10% in order to deal with the insurance hikes and now the tax hikes. The problem is that when these taxes jump the way they do, they burden the most vulnerable in this kind of situation.

I have been a leader in large institutions, understand the complexities of large institutions, and I understand the difficulties of the decisions that you have to make, but I do ask you to seriously consider taking advantage of the fact that the property values have gone up and please consider the possibility of using a lower mill rate. We need to benefit from that.

I don't live in Wyandotte County. I live in another county. My taxes are ridiculous, but at least in this past year they dropped the mill rate significantly enough that it held everything stable for us. I want to encourage you to approach it this way. **Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Mr. Coil** said you can have the mill rate where you drop it down a little bit and still bring in a few more dollars and I want to encourage you to consider that in your deliberations.

Ms. Sparks called Al Greenwood to speak. He did not appear.

Ms. Sparks said, Mayor, those are all the speakers we have in Chambers. We do have some online.

Mayor Garner said before we go online, is there anyone else that would like to speak before I move on. I'd like to give that opportunity.

Sandra McGill said I'm born and raised in Wyandotte County. I'm not a good speaker so I wasn't going to speak, but a lot of this has touched my heart. I haven't heard anything about middle class and middle class is where we always get the short end of the stick. We always have to pay the help, but nobody helps us and right now with the taxes as they are, we can't help ourselves, so if we could look at that. I know years ago when out west, the Legends came, we were told we're going to increase. We increased almost 300% for me and we're going to go back down in five years or whatever it was because of their tax break. When we went back down, we went down 5%, so I've never ever saw that same tax rate I had before, nowhere near there. It's been really hard and we're really struggling now and it's not helping the homeless or anybody else because like they said, if we can't help ourselves, then we definitely cannot help anyone else. Please consider what we're saying here today and take it to heart.

Mayor Garner said now we'll recognize members of the pubic online who would like to speak on this item. Please raise your hand so the Clerk can acknowledge you. When recognized, please state your name and city of residency for the record. You'll be given up to three minutes to state your comments.

Ms. Sparks called for Nehemiah Rosell. He did not respond.

Denise Kane, KCK, said all I would just like to say is that I would like to see the commissioners and the Mayor take and be very considerate of how we older people that live in this community are struggling to take and pay taxes, to buy food, to be able to live as we have in the past. That's all I wanted to say.

Melvin Williams said for the last, I want to say month, I've been requesting—well, let me first say this, we're getting over taxed and no city services to go with it. We have departments that have more supervisors than employees. One department, I know, has 10—including the supervisor has 10 employees, so five of them are supervisors. When are we going to finish consolidating the

Unified Government? We can save a lot of money that way, but I guess when it's not your money, you don't care how it's spent. I've been asking for a month now, on my street alone and various other streets, but my street alone—I know I'm 5'7 and the weeds are at least a good nine feet tall. I've been asking for the city to come out to cut it down. We have a dead end sign, because I know, I live on a dead end and if it wasn't for my neighbor down the street pretty much just chopping or weed eating in front of the dead end, nobody would know there was a dead end sign there.

Potholes, everywhere. I see that in some areas that they are out there filling them in, but the point is, we're getting taxed and nothing to show for it. I don't want to beat up on one part of town because it's not their fault that they choose to live there, right? I'm not going to say that I live in a dangerous area in town neither, but at the same time I do want my city services that I pay for to come out and cut grass on my street that's taller than me. That's not fair. I almost hit a deer today. **Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Mr. Williams** said if it wasn't for me helping my grandmother, Lord forbid, she would probably lose her house because everybody keeps saying, and I agree with them, taxes go up every year, but these old people out here, they can't afford it. If they can't afford—they barely afford their medication, what makes you think they're going to afford extra tax increase on their property.

We consolidate the Unified Government, give us what we ask for, city services, and figure out a way to help our senior citizens.

Rachel Russell said I currently reside in the Rosedale community. I would like to speak on behalf of the Proposed 2023 Budget. I have three asks this evening for the Commission and this administration. 1) that the Unified Government consider extreme weather project in its annual budget process rather than scrambling each year to figure out how to make this work. We can and we shall do better. 2) that the Unified Government designate a point of contact for the project to communicate directly with social service providers and like partners in preparation and through the winter season, throughout the winter season. 3) that the Unified Government partner with the extreme weather project partners to collaborate with Kansas City, Missouri for a regional cold weather response and other jurisdictions.

At the point we are 100 days away from the first day of winter based on the cold weather rule. As we, as well as our best vulnerable, cannot wait a day longer to not be proactive versus reactive. Many partners are at the table, many that are represented tonight to ensure not one more person dies in Wyandotte County this winter due to cold weather injury.

As a member of the community at large that participated in the operations last year, I know the impact of the shelter firsthand. Many of those that I met last year are housed or in the process of getting housed. This isn't just an extreme weather project or a shelter, but a gateway to ending homelessness in our community. I hope the UG will prioritize the need for this project now and in the future.

In closing, I don't have the golden solution, but we've got to address families experiencing homelessness as well. **Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Ms. Russell** said we are seeing an uptick and it's heartbreaking. We need your support and your commitment to addressing the immediate needs of those most vulnerable in our community.

Mel Winter said I'm the Director of Operations with Our Spot KC and I'm speaking in regards to the cold weather shelter. Our Spot KC worked with other agencies, social service providers throughout Wyandotte County last year to help provide the cold weather shelter. I wanted to speak to its need and the vulnerability of the population that's experiencing houselessness. Our Spot KC specifically provides dedicated services to LGBTQ Plus folks and our population is dramatically overrepresented and we're able to be there in those cold weather shelter nights and provide the gateway to housing to get people on lists and to do everything we can to connect people with services.

We were able to provide workforce development to the youth who live in our transitional housing program through the cold weather shelter last year and various other opportunities. They were able to engage and interact. We served meals, things like that.

The ask is that cold weather shelters be put in the annual budget for Wyandotte County and also to provide a point of contact and create a regional response to cold weather shelters for folks who are unhoused.

Nehemiah Rosell said I wanted to speak as well about the extreme weather project. I'm a licensed social worker in KCK, but working with the in-house population in this county for seven years and was a worker at the cold weather shelter last year. From working there last year, and from my work in the community, I see the acute need and the need of this extreme weather project in this community. Sometimes last year we were at capacity before we were even opening the doors and so we had to then divert people to other resources.

We, as involved every year, we have a point in time count where we count the number of folks who are experiencing homelessness in the Kansas City area. In this year we had 201 people who were either unsheltered or in the cold weather shelter for one night. That's just one night, 201 people in our county who are homeless and that's a (inaudible) days from last year. The need is real.

I also manage a housing list that has over 120 people who are literally homeless and waiting for housing and that's the biggest it's been since I've been in my position. During the point in time count we are able to see geolocation of where people are at and the vast majority of those surveys of people who are unhoused were east of 18th Street and so really the Reardon Center last year was a prime location because it's near the people in need and also near the bus line and transportation.

Like others here tonight, I'm asking that we have funding for this year and that's coming up really soon as well as a location, as well as dedicated funding in the budget for ongoing years because every year we're just scrambling to try and figure out how we're going to help these folks who have nowhere else to go on the coldest nights of the year. We also need a dedicated staff person who has real authority that we can have ongoing support from and communication within the UG and then also a regional plan so we're not at—**Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Mr. Rosell** said so we're not at (inaudible).

I just want to say I also appreciate people's concerns about the property tax, but there's not an either or and we're not asking the city to raise property taxes to fund this cold weather shelter. This project is pennies compared to the city budget as a whole. In thinking about this project, I think about all the people last year who I saw at the shelter. People who lacked a lot of self-care, people who struggle with mental illness, the people I see every day in the same situations who are in dire danger on the coldest days of the years if we don't fund this project.

I might think of the individual I saw today as I was coming out of my work, an elderly veteran in a wheelchair, recently homeless, and if this was January, he would have nowhere else to go tonight. So, for those folks in our county who are in this need—**Ms. Sparks** said your time has expired.

A. Dusik said I am not an elderly person; however, I am disabled. I have a very limited income. As my real estate taxes stand right now, I have made zero improvements to my home, I have been unable to make any type of improvement to my home and it currently requires a minimum of three plus months of my entire disability check per month, the entire thing, at the current taxes to take care of my yearly tax. My home this year, with not a single thing being changed, has increased 76.573% with nothing being improved on my home. Yes, I understand, homes around me are selling more than they ever have. However, with those homes, they have gone in and been completely rehabbed by a person who flips homes or that nature. I raise a child, and my gosh, if I were to have one emergency come up, I would not be able to tend to that.

With an increase in my real estate taxes, you are guaranteeing our homelessness. With that being said, those three months' worth of my income that has to pay for what is current on the taxes for the next year, I would not be able to take care of BPU, so I'm in a pickle there, not being able to have utilities for sake of having to be able to take care of the already high taxes.

If my ability to appeal my taxes would have gone through, but coincidentally, I'm putting in my appeal when your computer system got hacked and I've been told tough luck since then. I've not been able to do anything to counteract your guys' increase, but I'm trying my darndest. **Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Ms. Dusik** said I just really don't understand. Everything in this county is going up, up, up and we've got big corporations coming in and oh, we'll just forgive their taxes. What about the people who have been tried and true for 40 plus years or more in this county. We sure don't feel the love back. That's a guarantee and my father retired working for this city and I'll be darned if I lose our family home because of these taxes. This is too much you guys. It's not fair.

Ms. Sparks said, Mayor, there are no other hands raised online. **Mayor Garner** asked, are there any other comments from the public?

Karl Schottler said I own the Paramount Landscape business here in Kansas City, Kansas. I live in Lenexa, but I located my business in Kansas City, Kansas because of the appeal it had back in 2003 as far as affordable tax rates and a community that was welcoming to a business of my stature. In listening to this, and I understand, I mean this is a very proud community because I've listened to all of these comments. To me, and again, not necessarily a knock to these very intelligent people over here, but all they've done is manipulate the numbers. Back in 2018 the appraisal value of property went up 46% in one year. Since then, now that we're in 2021, which is the data I have here, it's up 49% from 2018. They talk about the mill levy coming down and how they're competitive against other counties, other cities, it's because the appraised value has skyrocketed and that's what's killing everybody.

I don't know where the medium ground is in there, but it's the appraisal side of this that is driving this and you can say the mill levy has reduced and looks good, but overall, the revenue has gone way up. I don't know what the property tax revenue was in 2018, you know, if it was tremendously lower or what the funding changes have happened, but it's just a math issue at this point of pushing numbers from one side of the spreadsheet to the other and by raising these appraised values, it has increased the burden on the homeowner and small businesses. **Ms. Sparks** said one minute remaining. **Mr. Schottler** said if I had to do it all over again, I don't know that I would locate my business in Kansas City, Kansas because I'm not a big corporation. I don't get the tax abatements and all of the kickbacks and things that make it appealing to them, but to push that burden down on the small guys, on your residence, on your fixed income.

I've heard people talking about homeless shelters tonight. Well, your homeless population is increasing because they're losing their homes. So, yeah, you've got to fund homeless shelters because they can't afford to stay in their homes. Anyway, I guess I would ask you to look at the assessed value, the appraisal side of this in addition to the mill levy and see if there are some adjustments, some medium ground there that can be brought back to reduce the tax burden on the residents and small business.

Beverly Watkins said I live on 59th Street in Kansas City, Kansas. The thing I want to say is that I am one of those that bought a house. I sold my house and bought another house. When I bought my house and I moved in, it had been re-renovated like somebody was saying and the price went up. The original price was 88 and then it went up to 200, but the thing I want to say is that when I moved in there the taxes were $1,600, so I bought the house because of the payment amount and everything, but no sooner than half a year, it went up to $1,900. The next year it went up to $3,800. If I had would have known this—it's got to be some kind of way that you can put that down. Let a realtor know that you have to say a percentage rate of a house when you're moving in there. They're telling us it's $1,600 and the next year it's $3,800. I can't afford $3,800. Add it, I'm paying $300 more in two years, $300 in property taxes more in one year. I'm talking about a month.

Mayor Garner said this will be the final call, is there anyone else in the audience or online that would like to make any comments in regards to the matter that's been presented before you tonight. If there are no further comments, I will close the public hearing. Do any members of the Commission have any questions or comments they would like to make in regards to the matter that is before us?

Commissioner Townsend said I wish to thank everyone who spoke from the heart tonight. I want all of them to realize that it's not a matter of us not, from our hearts, appreciating what you have undergone with increases. In short though, the gentleman who last spoke, forgive me if I mispronounce your name, was **Mr. Schottler**, who has the landscape business. He hit the nail on the head. We do not vote on assessed values, but I agree, there needs to be something that looks at that. That is the combination of what yields your taxes and I couldn't leave here tonight with someone here or listening thinking we are raising your taxes. Since I've been on this Commission, since '13, the mill rate, which is what this Council votes on, has been reduced at least twice and held constant, but there has to be some way we can look at assessed value.

From what I was told, assessed value is evaluated at the beginning of each year and looks at properties like yours whether it's a house or vacant land that sells and that's where these rates are supposed to be coming from. I agree with you, we need to look at what we can do to level those off, bring that down. I think one of those things is market forces. If you have more need, more demand, you've got housing stock, that's going to raise your prices. What we can do about that, I'm not sure. Get more housing stock in here. I know our Interim Administrator has talked about a plan for housing. That is one, I think, long-term goal, but I didn't want anyone to leave here tonight thinking we're voting to raise your taxes. That is the effect, it affects you all and it affects us as well.

Also, there are a lot of numbers tonight. We have to, in my opinion, reevaluate where the dollars are going. Just so you all know, again, of the dollars that the UG collects, all of that is not for the UG. We only get to spend 46% of every dollar that's collected from all the taxing entities and I would encourage you to make your heartfelt pleas to the other taxing entities, the school board, junior college; these are also entities that are elected officials just like us, but it seems like we always get the passion and that's okay, but education is vital to this process.

Where we have currently in the proposed budget a $4.3M deficit in the City General Fund and that's the fund where the majority of our expenses are paid from, the majority, police, fire, roads, streets, so just bear in mind as we do if you want the taxing dollars, the amount of money, the revenue that we take in decrease, we may have to look at decreasing some other things; personnel services. Don't want to say it, nobody wants to hear it, but you've asked us to make some hard choices so that's what we're looking at.

Commissioner Burroughs said I too want to thank the public for speaking up and coming to this budget hearing this evening. Our assessed values are really causing pressure on all property owners of all ages throughout our entire community and even we commissioners feel it. I mean I broke my property tax assessment down the other day and I too feel it. I have stated all along since I've been here as a commissioner we cannot continue to do this. We cannot continue to operate this way and expect things to change. We've had a large increase in assessed value. We've heard that over and over this evening, but yet we have continued to keep the money coming in and not address expenses. So, you either have a spending problem or you have a revenue problem and it's trying to find that balance that we're challenged with.

I believe there's money in the budget to lower the mill to become a little more revenue neutral. My colleagues, some will disagree with me I know, but that's the privilege I have of being the voice of the people in my community. It's countywide is how I look at my community and I know there's commissioners up here that we have done battle trying to find a way to find some resolution. I will share with you, I'm opposed to the Revenue Neutral Rate and that's where I stand. I want property tax relief. I'm going to take my legislative hat off, my commissioner hat off, I'm putting my property tax owner hat on, I want my taxes lowered.

Again, thank you for the time you've shared with us and airing your concerns.

Commissioner Ramirez said thank you everyone who came out tonight. I'm listening, I am. I talk to my district, Rosedale. A lot of them too are asking for property tax relief, but also on the other side, it's that increase in services. So, where I stand, it's I need to find that balance of that property tax while also being able to provide more services. That's why last Thursday, you know, Commissioner Bynum with our CFO, provided an option of a two mill reduction on the County side because our County budget is more healthy. It can withstand and it can be sustainable whereas on our City side, we cannot because as Commissioner Burroughs said, we may have a spending problem, so we don't have the resources to provide that mill reduction, but I support on the County side a two mill reduction. Along with what Commissioner Townsend and the gentleman said, maybe we do need to look at how we assess in our appraisal process.

That was something when I did run for this seat that was, I can tell you every time I knocked on a door, property taxes was number one issue and that was one of the things I talked about, was maybe we need to look at how we assess, our appraisal process, whatnot. But it wouldn't hurt to take a look because as Commissioner Townsend has said, we have over the years lowered, many times lowered the mill rate, but our assessed value keeps going up. I know naturally property value, if homes are selling more around you, it'll go up, but I don't think it will be going up exorbitantly as they are.

I want property tax relief. I just don't want us to cut too much where—and this has happened in the past, where the Commission has cut too much and then the next year they had to raise taxes because they cut too much. That's where I'm at. I do want property tax relief, but I want to make sure that we do it right, we do it the right way.

I don't think Revenue Neutral Rate is the way to get there. We can lower it little by little every year, but I just don't—I think that a drastic cut like that is going to be a shock to the budget. I don't want us to cut services when you all are asking for more services, better services.

To your question about the $80M, that's the County budget total. That's how much we have budgeted for the County and we're bringing in the same amount as we're spending on the County side. That's what that $80M you're talking about. So, I do support the two mill reduction on the County side. I do because we can sustain it. It will provide some tax relief on the County side. The City needs some work and I have pledged and a lot of our—some of the commissioners here have pledged on, along with our Interim County Administrator, is looking for those efficiencies within our government, finding those cost savings.

Just in our Standing Committee earlier tonight, our Public Works Department provided—they gave us an update on a program that they did where they created cost savings by doing training in-house rather than external training where it would have cost more. They worked together to create that cost savings and that efficiency and that's something we should do throughout all of our departments. I have pledged to do that. I have pledged it to our Administrator, to our staff, of working with them to find those cost savings so that we can provide more and better tax relief. Unfortunately, like I keep saying, when people ask how it is to be in government, on the outside it looks slow, but once you're in government, once you're here, it's even slower. It takes time. I'm committed to it. If next year—if between now and when we adopt the budget or after we adopt the budget and we work with the commissioners and staff and our Administrator, if we can find more cost savings, more of those efficiencies, drive down our costs, and then next year I would be more than happy to have more conversation on tax relief. Not just on the County side, but also the City because that's where the majority of our expenses come from is the City.

I do hear you. I have family. Lord knows, they have come to me, they have called my phone too, so I hear you and I am committed. I have good friends and I have good friend, Faith, out in the crowd. I can tell you I am a Mexican American. Part of our culture is being honest and operating with integrity and that's how I've done ever since I've been here and that's what I'll continue to do.

Commissioner Johnson said, Mr. Lindsey, on page 5 of your Budget Overview, I see the expenditures of all funds is yet $432M. Do we have a page or anything that shows the revenues from all funds? I just see the expenditures. **Mr. Lindsey** said, no, that's not included there in the presentation, but if you hold a second—**Commissioner Johnson** said I would love to see that. I've said it before—**Mr. Lindsey** said it's $425M. **Commissioner Johnson** said expenditures are at $432M so that lets me know that we are structurally unbalanced. I thought I heard that the budget was balanced. **Mr. Lindsey** said yes, the budget is balanced and the reason it is balanced is because we have a fund balance that we can spend from to make it balanced. So, when it's structurally imbalanced—**Commissioner Johnson** said I would disagree, yeah, it's structurally imbalanced to the tune of $5, 6, 7M. I'll do the math. Yeah, I see that $7M. I've always been one that has advocated that we do not need to touch the fund balance unless we have no other choice. So, this means to me that we still have work to do and we're doing this in a climate where our constituents are asking that we lower the taxes which would be revenue. When we're $7M already in structurally unbalanced, learn these terms here, it makes it awful hard to suggest that we would lower taxes when we already have a $7M hole.

I will say that in light of the increased valuations that are going on, that we should protect our senior citizens and those that are disabled that have talked tonight, we should as a government try to figure out ways that we can protect them as market values increase in terms of property. But when I look at and ask that question and get the response that I received, then it lets me feel even more certain that now is not the time to lower the mill levy. I can't speak to the appraised values as has been brought out to us tonight. I mean this is not towards you Mr. Lindsey, I'm just talking at large. Because we have been approached by our Public Works Director in letting us know that we need an average of $20M more a year just to deal with the number one issue that we have and that our citizens have told us they want to address, which was our streets and our roads. That was on the community survey.

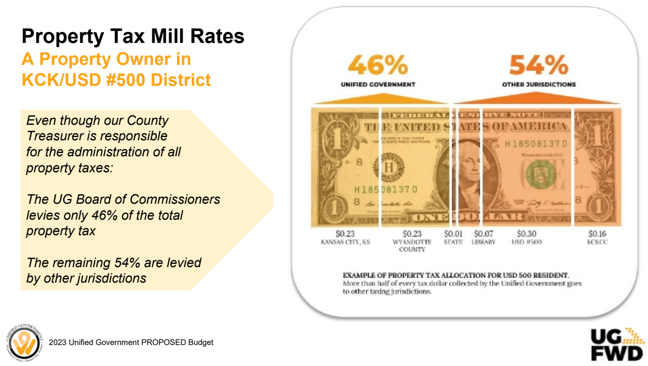
In order to address that, we're going to need more money. We already told Angel in Parks & Rec that we wanted to have better amenities particularly east of 635 in terms of our parks and there's somebody here, that I'm not going to name, that wants a whole new park. Again, we leveraged that against the discussion about lowering taxes.

The Sheriff has been to us twice already saying that they need to increase the level of pay because they can't compete with the Police Department, the Kansas City, Kansas Police Department. I talked with one of the members of the staff and they said they have about maybe 12 to 15 deputies in the intake facility where we have over 300 persons. You only have 12 to 15 sheriffs to take care of that. He's been to us twice and we said okay, we hear you.

I don't know, as I said before, the math doesn't math for me. When we look at lowering mill levies, it reminds me of the words of Dr. Mosher from the Kansas City, Kansas Community College and he talked about all the needs that they're endeavoring, building new facilities, well, we're talking about streets and roads. We're talking about public safety, we're talking about parks and rec. You can't increase the (inaudible) tonight.

We've also heard about dealing with our homeless which is a national problem that we are not in Kansas City, Kansas alone in that issue. We are dealing with it just like everywhere else. We cannot listen to the needs of our community in terms of things that we have or don't have and then suggest that we also cut the revenue source that's already showing that overall when we compare revenues to expenses, we're at a $7M shortfall. So, bear with that. Thank you for the floor and I will conclude.

Commissioner Stites asked, is it possible to pull up the chart that shows the dollar bill? I think it's very important to see that.



I just wanted that set up before I start to talk about it, but whenever you hear the stories that are being told out there tonight, online, in person, I'll tell you if it doesn't pull at your heartstrings to hear people that can't afford or have to make decisions on whether they're going to buy medication, put gas in their car, or even be able to go visit family or eat dinner that night, we better start paying attention. It tells me that we've done a terrible job. If we're presenting, and it's not a balanced budget, Commissioner Johnson, I agree, it's not balanced. We're out of balance, we're out of whack and we better start looking at other ways to take care of it. If it means we got to start cutting services, then we need to start cutting services. Commissioner Johnson mentioned Dr. Mosher and them trying to build new facilities, stop. Stop building new facilities. We can't afford them. You know what, did you guys look at the very end where it says .16 KCKCC, when you guys are advocating for us to lower the mill levy or hold it down, there's a pretty good chunk of money that you guys are paying and they're building new facilities.

The community college was in here last week, I believe, and they said have no intentions of lowering the mill levy. They're partners of all of ours and we have asked as a Commission to have all taxing entities brought into the room together so that we can talk about how we can lower or hold the taxes down and that has yet to happen. They don't want to hear it. They don't want to hear it, but yet here we are facing the brunt of it and I'm going to tell you, I'm a newly elected commissioner. I've got broad shoulders and a big belly, but I got broad shoulders and I can hold it. I appreciate you guys coming in and voicing it, but I'm going to tell you, 46% the Unified Government, 54%, we don't even control half of that. We don't control half of the dollar that you guys—I say you guys, it's us too, I pay my taxes and I don't want to pay the high taxes either, so we don't even control it. I encourage you, and Commissioner Townsend, when you said that you advocate for people to reach out to the other taxing entities, they need to hear the same thing. You guys need to be talking to them, so do we, but we can't seem to get them in the same room to have a discussion.

I am for tax relief. We have to do it. I don't believe that every single fund balance that the Unified Government operates has excess funds in it, every single one I said. I don't know why. If it says we need $500K in a fund, we've got $2.2M in that same fund. Let's get rid of that money. We're statutorily required to have certain funds for a rainy day, let's hold that line. We don't need more than what we're required to have because we can pass that on to our constituents. We can lower our taxes.

The other thing that I'm going to say is the $20K—I wanted to ask actually—the 25 that Commissioner Johnson asked about or mentioned on the Public Works, they're asking I think it was 25 actually. You might have said 20, but I think it was $25M additional each year. Is that on the City or the County side? **Mr. Lindsey** said City. **Commissioner Stites** said so that's on the City side. So, okay, we're asking for a County mill reduction, not a City side mill reduction. So, okay, that has nothing to do with—let's leave that out because that's the City side. We're talking about a County mill reduction which hasn't happened, has not occurred in how many years. I asked this, I believe, last Thursday. I have never got an answer. When was the last time that the County had a mill reduction? Still waiting, but it's time and we were told at the last presentation that when the City mill levy got reduced in 2017, 2018, and 2019 by two mills, two mills, two mills, that's because the County was in trouble and the City could handle it. Now it's just the opposite. The County's not in trouble. You just heard it. They're $80M, $80M in and out, but we're not reducing the mill levy. We're not talking about reducing it or, you know, maybe a little bit. We are bringing in more money this year than we brought in last year and we don't have to try to figure out ways to spend it. We need to give it back to the people that pay the taxes and voted us up here to represent them.

Commissioner Kane said I don't know if this is my 17th or 18th budget and I have mentioned the park every single budget because we don't have one west of 435, but there's parks all over the city and we don't have a place to go. I was here when we lowered the mill levy. The following year we had to raise the mill levy and then we had furloughs and layoffs for the employees. We have to remember they're constituents as well. There are certain departments that we are damn sure top heavy and we need to fix that, no doubt about it.

Some of the things the people have to realize, this isn't the only thing that went up and remember, we're coming out of COVID. So, the grocery stores, the liquor stores, the bars, all those places have an expense, a delivery expense between 35 and 70, don't laugh at that. I do believe we can lower the mill two mills on the County side, but I want to be careful that we don't cut too deep to where we can still perform to get the roads fixed.

When those furloughs happened, the Police Department, they had to vote on not getting their raise, so we dug too deep that time. I think this two mill reduction will work, but we have to be careful. I know it would probably please more people if went more, but we don't know—COVID's not over. We don't know where this is going, so I want us to be cautious. My mother-in-law lives right up the hill and she is in financial stress as well, but we have to be mindful when we talk about if you dig too deep, then what do you eliminate. What service do we not give you that you want. It's frustrating to be up here knowing that we need to do something, but sometimes we can only do so much.

We are so short-handed in Police, Fire and Sheriff, it's unbelievable. We want to make sure that this is the safest place to live and one of the things that we don't do enough, we don't give credit to our employees enough. We saw a presentation tonight from Public Works. It's probably one of the best presentations I've seen since I've been here. They got a fantastic idea and perhaps we can use that idea, Jeff Fisher, and some other departments where we do our own training here. We're trying to do something to make a difference. Today we saw something that I thought was really, really unique and I think we can expand on that, but we never lower the mill as much as anybody wants, but I also don't want to lower it this year and raise it next year.

Commissioner Burroughs said I'm pleased to see my colleagues talking about a mill reduction. I don't care if it comes out of the County or the City as long as we get some tax relief. That's what this meeting and this budget's about, but we heard testimony tonight about one lady saying her taxes went up $300 a month and that's a tremendous burden to carry and yet we're only offering a half mill reduction in our proposed budget and that adds up to $17.25 per year. That's $1.43 a month reduction in property tax for a homeowner. I don't know if that's considered significant enough to make a difference, but I will share with you that on the small business it was said that it would be 125 per year, that's a reduction of $10.41 a month over the year. So, if we really want to do meaningful tax relief, we're going to have some tough decisions.

We also went through a financial audit and my concern after the audit presentation that evening, it wasn't an action item. Most audits are presented and then they're put on a shelf, so I would ask this body to give strong consideration looking at the financial audit. It did tell us we were not financially stable moving forward and there's some decisions, as I've stated all along, they're going to have to be made. They're not going to be decisions that we like, but I would like to be in a position maybe two, three years from now to tell the community that we made the hard decisions three years ago and you stayed with us and we're here today to do what needs to be done and that's to move our community forward, but we can't do it if we don't make some financial changes.

Commissioner Johnson said I also want to say publicly, I appreciate the fact that we can agree to disagree in the matter of civility. I'm glad that my colleague, Commissioner Burroughs, brought that up in terms of how much money the average citizen would actually receive. The average benefit to our tax base in terms of actual money in our pockets cannot be compared to the actual benefit in terms of the amenities and the need for basic services that are still paramount in our community. So, I compare how much money is coming into my pocket versus how much—so but versus how much amenity that I can have in my community. It's already been said, northeast needs a lot and so our constituents while they do talk about the need for—you know in terms of dealing with the raise, the higher valuations, I'm trying to get my thoughts here. Again, I do believe that we should look out for those that are elderly, those that are disabled and find ways that we can put a ceiling there where they would not have to pay as much as those that are not in that elderly category.

The needs in our parks are egregious. We need improvements all the way around. We need improvements in terms of staffing, in our community centers. We need, we need, we need and so when our community is telling us this every single year, the hard decision is whether we should cut or not to cut and I get that, but for me the hard decision is whether or not we can look at the fact that there are the needs that outweigh the dollars that are coming in. When you tell me that this budget is structurally imbalanced, I think that speaks volumes. It tells the story. The needs continue to outweigh.

To my colleagues that say they want to look at ways that we can find excess in the budget, I totally agree. We all should be about that. As the Commission, we should be about that, but I do not believe that lowering the mill levy at the same time is the prudent route when we're already structurally imbalanced.

Commissioner Stites said I think it's very important to note that we're structurally imbalanced on the City side, not the County. I'm asking for a two mill reduction on the County side. The City side needs to get their stuff together and we need to figure out how we fix the City side. The County is okay. We've already proven that. That's where we're at. That's why we're asking for tax relief on the County side.

Commissioner Burroughs says I don't care if it comes out of the City side or the County side, the mill reduction. I disagree. I want it to come out of the County side because the County side is what affects every citizen in Wyandotte County, not just the citizens of Kansas City, Kansas. When the mill reduction on the County side happens, it happens for KCK, Bonner Springs, and Edwardsville.

Commissioner Markley said, Mayor, I'm prepared to make a motion.

Action: **Commissioner Markley made a motion, seconded by Commissioner McKiernan, to approve the resolution and ordinance indicating the governing body's intent to exceed the Revenue Neutral Rate.**

Mayor Garner said before I have the Clerk do the roll call, I'll make some comments. I don't vote on this in most instances unless there's a tie. We've been having this budget conversation for quite a while now. It really hurts me to hear—the pain that I heard when I campaigned and ran for office to be Mayor the same complaints of high taxes, high BPU PILOT, how it affects our seniors, how it affects our working families. I've seen the mothers, single mothers working two and three jobs and can't make ends meet because there's not any money there to make ends meet. I watched over the years, even when I was an employee here, we've slowly been taxing and you've heard that tonight, our residents into poverty and other residents out of this community.

We've heard from some good not-for-profit social service groups saying that we need to invest in our unhoused and impoverished populations and I totally agree. There's a balance with that. When people can't afford to stay in their homes and they're pushed out on the street, I think those types of things need to be looked at. I've heard a lot of conversations here about what we need to do and willing to work and things of that nature and I'm not here—and I say this respectfully and I don't mean anybody disrespect, we need to start working on behalf of these people. I haven't heard any real solutions. We've waited on staff to give us solutions and even with staff, I haven't heard any cost-cutting measures. Yes, we are going into a recession, yes, we've come out of COVID, and yes people are struggling because costs are going up and what I'm hearing is we want to continue adding to that burden when we have an opportunity as a governing body to tighten our belts, like I would do with my finances, if I know that we're in dire straits, we know that we're $1.7B in debt.

We've heard from our staff that by 2027 our balance sheet is going to be pretty much leading us down a pathway to bankruptcy. We've heard from the auditors and I'll quote them again, he said if we don't change the way we do business, he paused and said or else and we know what that means.

When I hear about Revenue Neutral, one reason I support Revenue Neutral is because it's not a tax decrease like some tend to believe, it's to prevent a tax increase because when the valuations go up, that brings in more money through the mill levy increases. The Revenue Neutral Rate says that instead of the Unified Government bringing that additional money, we balance that in a way so our taxpayers don't have to pay the difference and they can literally pay pretty much what they paid last year, but what does that require us to do. It requires us to look for ways to cut costs, tighten our belts, operate more efficiently, consolidate certain departments, look for efficiencies in government.

Mr. Fisher brought a great idea and I believe we tapped into the collective minds of some of our employees and asked them how could you save our taxpayers and our Unified Government money and I believe we could find that. I know that some of our commissioners over this budget cycle asked for certain documents, they haven't got it. I asked for a breakdown on what our contracts look like and how did we arrive to these expenditures. How do we get to these estimates and how we negotiated in good faith with whoever our vendors and whoever we have contracts with to make sure that the taxpayer dollars are, you know, we're getting a good return on that dollar for whatever service they provide.

We've gone from $420M last year, now there's a $432M projected budget. Every year it just goes up and up and this gentleman said it greatly, we've given the farm away to a lot of big box multi-million dollar corporations with incentives and BPU giveaways on the backs of working families and small businesses. I hate to say it, but that has to stop. We've got to broaden our tax base by really investing in the disinvested areas and bringing the type of residentials and rooftops and small business to expand our tax base. We've got to put a pressure point on this tax burden.

I concur with my colleague, Commissioner Burroughs, that it can be done responsibly. I've heard a lot of folks talk about we don't have time and let's look at things next year. Well, I've talked to folks and they don't have time and they don't have any time for this Commission to get it together and wait till next year or the staff.

In fairness to this Commission and to this Unified Government, the public needs to know that yes, hard decisions are going to have to be made by this Unified Government because of our economic condition and because of the dire straits. I'm not here to place the blame on anybody, this is the reality of where we're at today and what we do know is we can't keep doing business this way because this town is going to end up bankrupt. We're going to keep running people out of town. It's the same scenario that I observed when I got laid off in 1987 because people were flooding out of here because of the high taxes and the lack of services. Crime went up and the only avenue to alleviate that was to start laying off staff and employees.

I've asked where is $420M going. I don't get a good answer because I can tell you I share in the belief with a lot of our residents, I don't see $420M worth of anything. When you talk about crumbling infrastructure, roads and bridges; we've got two bridges out, we've got vacant lots with weeds as high as trees, potholes just about everywhere that you can imagine. We talk about the shortage in staff, but we can't even get some employees and we got a lot of good employees here. Let's not leave that unnoticed, but customer service, according to a lot of our residents, is lacking. I know that for a fact because people call the Mayor's Office as a supplement 311 because we got employees that won't even answer their phone and won't provide the basic services and questions that our residents demand and deserve. So, customer service is lacking.

My question is, when you look at $420M and another $432M for the next year, I think we can do better with our money. We've got to demand better. There has to be better accountability.

I do agree, I think it was brought up, I believe that when you look at middle management and above, I think we're top heavy. That was brought up by one of our residents. I don't disagree with that. We've got to find a way to responsibly cut costs and I'm going to go back to what I said when I said that the community needs to take note of our economic condition where we are. When this Commission makes those hard decisions, you're going to have to support those hard decisions that this Commission makes because where we are financially not sustainable.

There are some things that this community needs to work with this Commission and this staff to find out what are the essential services that you do want to fund and what are the things we can live without until we can get a grip and stabilize the financial health of our Unified Government. That has to be coupled with finding ways to cut costs internally by our administration, finding ways to operate more efficiently. I don't know, do we use technology, there's a lot of ways to do those types of things, but we all know that we can't expect a different result if we keep doing the same things. We keep doing the same thing over and over.

Before I got where I'm sitting now, I heard the same things, next year we'll have the conversation, next year we'll talk about it, next year maybe we can do something. I want to help find ways to cut. I haven't heard one collective idea, comment, suggestion, ideas that really pushes that narrative forward. When do we start having that conversation. We are late in this budget cycle. I hear a lot about what we need to do, what we should do, but I don't see a lot of us doing that and we can't totally keep relying on staff to make decisions for this elected body.

We need to start leading from the front because we are elected to do that and that's what the people of this county expect us to do. Whether it cost me or any of my colleagues vote, we have to do what's right for Wyandotte County, but we can't keep taxing our people into poverty and taxing people out of Wyandotte County. That also prevents people that want to do business here. They're watching, they see, they look at the numbers. I've heard people say oh, we reduced the mill levy. To get to Revenue Neutral, it's about nine mills. Am I correct? I'm hearing two mills. My colleague, Commissioner Burroughs, talked about what benefit that is. I think it's an insult to the average taxpayer when you're talking about $10 a month. You heard a lady talking about that she's paying $300 a month.

I challenge this administration, the staff, and this Commission to do the hard work that needs to be done and figure out what essential services we want to fund, what things working with our community that we need and we can live without. I'll give you an analogy. It's like being sick. I know I have to take this medicine and it doesn't taste good, but I know if I do take it and allow myself to get better, then I can get back to full health. That's where Wyandotte County is right now, so it isn't just about this Commission or the staff. This community collectively, all of us, have some hard decisions to make and I urge our residents to work with staff, to work with our administration, but more importantly, work with your elected officials so they know. I believe in doing things that are community-driven.

I just know the way we're doing business is unsustainable and I cannot support continuing from my position, as your Mayor, to support anything short of preventing tax increases on our residents in Wyandotte County.

Commissioner Bynum said I respect that we have a motion and a second on the floor. Just a couple of thoughts that I wanted to share. My monthly mortgage payments went up last year and I fully anticipate that they will go up again, so you know I'm definitely a taxpayer with a mortgage looking for ways to make sure I make my house payment and have a place to live. I've joked many times about the little prayer of things I make on the first of the month when I make that payment and say, okay, I'm good for another 30 days. It's not a joke. Any of us is easily 30 to 60 days away from homelessness. You know it just takes one serious devastating thing to happen to you or your family and there you are. I say that because we're real people and we are certainly dealing with and managing our limited finances in many of the same ways that those of you that spoke to us are, so please do take that to heart.

I will say that it's my firm belief that people inside of our Unified Government are absolutely looking for solutions and innovations and creative ways to bring cost savings into the community. We had Public Works & Safety Standing Committee tonight at 5:00 p.m. before this and we heard a wonderful innovative problem-solving way that our Fleet Division, Transit Division, and Parks & Rec folks came together to solve a problem that was going to be an expensive problem to solve due to a change in federal law that they figured out how to solve right here on their own without that cost. So, I believe we do have committed individuals working in this government looking for cost-cutting measures. We heard one tonight and it was very exciting.

The County Appraiser, many of you, most of you mentioned your valuation. When my valuation statement came in April and it was only $17K higher, I kind of took a victory lap because

I was expecting a minimum of 30, just in my mind, off the top of my head, thinking it'll be 30, it was 17. I called it a win.

The County Appraiser is appointed by the County. That County Appraiser is appointed by your County Administrator. That person works in a County building that we all pay for. We are required by law to budget and pay for that department and that Appraiser follows state mandated functions. We have multiple departments that we are required by law to pay for that carryout state mandated functions. I hope that's not a surprise to you. District Attorney would be one of them, the Sheriff would be one of them, Motor Vehicle is one of them, your Election Commissioner. We don't make the ordinances they are governed by, but we are mandated to provide space for them and fund their budgets.

So, when we talk about valuations and our Appraiser, yes, we want very much to influence house, commercial, industrial appraisals. We control one side of that equation and that's the side that this Commission and Mayor have been talking about now for several months along with our staff. The side we control is the mill levy.

When the State Legislator last year passed Senate Bill 13, that's a state law that we are following with this hearing tonight and that state law says that if we intend to collect more revenue from the assessment of taxes this year than we did last year, this is a required public hearing to do that. There are 13 taxing entities in Wyandotte County, 14 if you count the tiny sliver of Lake Quivira that actually sits in Wyandotte County. We will set the mill levy rates for two of those, the city of Kansas City, Kansas and the county of Wyandotte.

We have been provided the intent to exceed Revenue Neutral for every single one of those 13 taxing entities including ours. The one possible exception—I've read every single one of them, there's one exception that is unclear to me and that is the Bonner Springs School District who looks to me they might be providing a mill levy reduction for people who live in the Bonner Springs School District. Every single other taxing entity, which includes Turner Rec Commission, in case you didn't know, if you live in Turner, you pay mills to the Turner Rec Commission, and has published their meeting notice of their intent to exceed Revenue Neutral.

I will tell you I'm glad to hear from you, we're always glad that you want to come and talk to us. If you are interested in any of those other meeting notices of their intent to exceed Revenue Neutral, we can provide them to you. You can email me. I will send them to you. You could ask the County Administrator's Office, you could ask the Clerk's Office. The point is, we have those notices. They have to provide them to us and they have, so if you want to know when the dates of those meetings are, we can send those to you. They're coming up.

I say all of that almost by way of explanation and education and yes, we've taken many stabs at finding a way for us to work together, talk together, and have conversations about locating money for the General Fund, money for Public Works, money for the services, ways that we can pay for these services that are being requested and we've yes, still had a conversation about the possibility that we could have a two mill reduction on the County side of the budget, which I do support.

I wanted to ask for a couple of things from our Administrator and corresponding staff. We have mentioned here tonight our Special Funds that do have balances in them. We've had conversations on more than one occasion about can we sweep those funds. Those funds are also governed by state law and there's limits on what you can and can't do with the money in those funds.

My request, Mayor, would be that and it doesn't have to be immediate, but I think it's important for the community to understand, I would like an information session on every single Special Fund we have. We've had those before, but I want one again because I think it merits understanding, every single Special Fund, what it can be used for, what it cannot be used for. I would like a Special Session, if you will, on every single element that encompasses our debt. We speak about a very large dollar amount when we reference our debt. I believe that the dollar amount we're referencing includes the debt of the Board of Public Utilities. That's fine. We do own that utility. It's a municipally owned utility. I just want us to have an information session where we bring forward what makes up that debt. I would also like an analysis of every incentive we've provided on a development project over the last decade and what is the performance, good or bad, of those incentives that we've provided.

I want to make good decisions as well. I want to be able to strive for a level of tax relief in the way that this body can provide it, which is with the mill levy, and looking for cost-cutting measures. I want to make sure we are doing that with data.

Commissioner McKiernan said while it is true that the Unified Government could bring in more money next year than this year, the price that the Unified Government is paying for labor, goods, and services is going up by a substantial, if not, greater amount. I frankly believe our employees are busting their butts to provide the services that our citizens want and unless and until I am shown otherwise, I hesitate to make cuts where there are so many unmet needs. Just this evening we heard about the needs for improvements in Policing, Code Enforcement, Public Works, Parks and other services.

Although I haven't been here for as many budgets as Commissioner Kane has, I've been here for a fair number of them, and in my very first budget I made the statement that I had no doubt that there is inefficiency in the operation of the Unified Government. I also said that I had no doubt that for every one dollar of inefficiency we will uncover, there are two dollars of real but unmet needs that should be funded for the benefit of our citizens. I stand by that statement because I have not yet been shown otherwise.

I will consider mill rate reductions on both the City and County side of the budget with the understanding that those reductions may necessarily result in the reduction of services provided to our citizens. Additionally, I will consider mill rate reductions greater than the two mills we've discussed up to this point, but I will not vote for the Revenue Neutral Rate.

Commissioner Ramirez said we all want efficiencies, we all want the cost measures, but again, going to Charter our authority is very small. That's the Administrator's authority to look for those by the direction of the Commission and if that is what we want, I would be more than happy to work with the commissioners who want to create a resolution directing the County Administrator to find cost measures throughout the Unified Government. It's not just an ask, it is a resolution voted on that she has the authority and the responsibility to do it. If we don't wait till tomorrow, wait tell next year, all right, I will ask, I'll work with Misty, our Chief Counsel, to draw up a resolution. I hope commissioners are willing to vote on it to give that direction. Let's do it.

Commissioner Davis said I do want to recognize that a motion was made and seconded, so I am not going to delay because I understand the hour here. I want to thank my colleagues for—I will first thank you all for bravely coming to the mic and sharing. Thank my colleagues for their responses. This has been rather educational for me.

I hear you all on the heavy burden of taxes, no question about it. I recently bought my home a few years ago and we've already seen the increase. I'm not a senior citizen, I'm not disabled and I'm not on a fixed income so I understand my privilege within this conversation and

I'm with you all in that. We need to find a solution so that it is manageable. I also hear the demand for potholes to be filled, street bumps, guardrails, more amenities, I think everyone wants a rec center and all of those things cost money. I do not say all of those things to say that your (inaudible) and the things that you're going through on a real month-to-month basis is not—it's not real because it is, but you also deserve those better services. You also deserve those amenities and so it is my job to try to balance those two things, which is not easy.

I do think there are some things that can be done. I echo what Commissioner Townsend and Commissioner Bynum has said on getting some concrete answers. I don't know if they're having this particular conversation on the school boards. I mean I know for a fact as I was the one that had asked Dr. Mosher from the community college if this was even being considered and the answer was no and that's 16% of your property tax bill that is pretty much spoken for. I'm not saying that he said no, the Board has pretty much said no.

There was a comment made up here about elections, well, if you scroll down the ballot, those folks are on there too. So, the consistence, if we're really going to talk about relief, we have to hold everyone's feet to the fire. It's not fair, and I'm not saying this because, you know boohoo, this comes with the job, but it's not helping you to solely focus on 46% of your property tax bill. It is not helping you. What will help you is when the elections do come, you say if you're running for BPU, what are you doing to lower my utilities. What will help you is you say, if you're running for the community board, which I think was uncontested last year, meaning there wasn't even any competition, so there wasn't a lot of campaigning, yet they control 16% of your bill. What will help you is when folks are going to run for the school board for various jurisdictions to not only ask about the quality of education, but to also ask where the money is going and, oh yeah, you're about 30%, 34% depending upon where you live, of my property tax bill, what are you doing about that. This conversation has to happen everywhere. We can't make it happen because we're only responsible for the Unified Government. You all can make it happen because you're the voters and I encourage you all to do so.

I echo all of the requests for the Special Sessions and all the information that Commissioner Bynum was asking for and I feel like, since we're asking, and I will echo we can't keep talking about expenses while also not talking about revenue. No one is talking about how we can bring more money in. If you're in a home and you're able-bodied, you're able to work and you can get a new job and make more money, why not do that. You may not have to cut out all of the niceties or spend less money on groceries, you might be able to get another job. The equivalent of getting a better job or getting a job that is higher paying is for us to invest in economic development in a way that's not convoluted. Too many cooks in the kitchen makes it very, very difficult to know what's going on, but we need to do that.

We also need to look at other ways to increase our revenue without looking at property taxes. We have the Olympics coming here, which is great. We have Homefield and the Margaritaville. We're going to have a whole bunch of folks that are coming to spend money here in KCK. Why don't we capitalize off that. Why don't we look at the Transient Guest Sales Tax and look at an increase so that we can offset some of the tax burden for you all as property tax owners and on all of us so that we can make those strategic investments and give some relief at the same time.

We talk too much on this dais about expenses and not enough about revenue. We have to have both conversations. If not, we're doing you all a disservice. If I'm not mistaken, there's a bill at the state level, the Homestead, I think it's a Refund Act—a refund bill. I would encourage you all to talk to your state legislator about what the state can do. If I'm not mistaken, there was a bill that was passed that caps it. I think if your home is $350K or less, if you're making a certain amount of money for a certain age, you can actually get a property tax rebate from the State of Kansas, so there are some things that can be done. I just want to put that out there and my apologies if all of my information is not correct.

I'm on record for incremental and strategic tax relief, so I am for a two mill reduction. We need to have a conversation with our Appraiser about the assessed value. We do have a new Appraiser and so I look forward to having that conversation and yeah, I await what we can do for economic development because that is real. That's where we can really get true property tax relief.

When it comes to the warming shelter, I echo what a lot of our non-profits and social service providers have said. I think we here, the Unified Government, needs to decide what we want to do. If we're going to own the warming shelter, let's do that. Let's commit the money, let's commit the staff, let's do that. If we're going to partner, let's do that, but I think to not do anything and to not have the conversation at all or to only have the conversation behind closed doors has not been helpful and we need to get a clear direction. I don't know if that clear direction means the Reardon Center. I know there's a lot of politics behind that, but I think we should do something. I am for us being a compassionate community and not leaving people out in the cold to die. I will stand on that. I do believe that the great work that was done with the warming shelter can be replicated and expanded so that we can get folks off the street.

Currently, within the budget, there's almost $300K dedicated to the Reardon Center. I don't know why that money would be dedicated there, but perhaps we can use that money to actually solving homelessness and we can get something in perpetuity for the warming shelter.

Mayor Garner said I believe there's a motion and a second on the floor. Any further discussion? Seeing none, roll call please.

Action: Roll call was taken on the motion and there were eight "Ayes," Johnson, Kane, Markley, Davis, Bynum, Townsend, McKiernan, Ramirez and two "no's," Stites, Burroughs.

Mayor Garner said, Clerk, I'm going to present a veto for the record.

Misty Brown, Chief Counsel, said are you saying you are vetoing this item that just passed? **Mayor Garner** said yes ma'am. **Ms. Brown** said I do not know if there's a legal question to me to address, but I would say that in preparation we do not see a lot of vetoes of this, but Charter Ordinance 114 and also ordinary Ordinance 281 does set out the Mayoral powers for vetoes. In essence, the Mayor does have power to veto something other than a Charter Ordinance or an administrative ordinance that does not involve policymaking. When looking at this item tonight, this appears to be a policymaking decision in that it does attempt to set the policy of the Unified Government regarding the mill rates that would—that could possibly occur next year and we did have a public hearing on the item, so a veto is proper in this instance and in essence there could be an override of the veto which would take seven votes of the Commission to overturn the Mayoral veto.

Commissioner Markley asked, what is the next step for us? Do we just make the motion again because we already had seven votes. **Ms. Brown** said the next step, if the Commission wished to override, would be a motion to override the veto.

Action: **Commissioner Markley made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kane, to override the veto.** Roll call was taken and there were eight "Ayes," Johnson, Kane, Markley, Davis, Bynum, Townsend, McKiernan, Ramirez and two "no's," Stites, Burroughs.

Action: **ORDINANCE NO. O-108-22 & RESOLUTION NO. R-45-22,** "An Ordinance and Resolution of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas to approve exceeding the Revenue Neutral Rate." **On motion of Commissioner Markley, seconded by Commissioner Kane, the ordinance was approved and the resolution was adopted.** Roll call was taken and there were eight "Ayes," Johnson, Kane, Markley, Davis, Bynum, Townsend, McKiernan, Ramirez and two "no's," Stites, Burroughs.

Mayor Garner said with no further business coming before this governing body, I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

Action: **Commissioner Davis made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Markley, to adjourn the meeting.** Roll call was taken and there were ten "Ayes," Johnson, Kane, Markley, Stites, Davis, Bynum, Burroughs, Townsend, McKiernan, Ramirez.

MAYOR GARNER
ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 9:40 P.M.
August 22, 2022

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Monica Sparks
Acting Unified Government Clerk

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