

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

SPECIAL SESSION, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2022

The Unified Government Commission of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, met in Special Session, Thursday, December 8, 2022, with ten members present: Bynum, Commissioner At-Large First District; Burroughs, Commissioner At-Large Second District; McKiernan, Commissioner Second District (left at 6:00 p.m.); 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. Townsend, Commissioner First District; was absent. The following officials were also in attendance: Cheryl Harrison-Lee, Interim County Administrator; Alan Howze and Bridgette Cobbins, Assistant County Administrators; Becky Berger, Interim Assistant County Administrator; Misty Brown, Chief Legal Counsel; Brett Deichler, Unified Government Clerk; Monica Sparks, Deputy Unified Government Clerk; Debbie Jonscher, Acting Chief Financial Officer; Mike Grimm, Research Manager; Richard Rocha, Management Analyst in Budget; Jeff Fisher, Executive Director of Public Works; Matt Willard, County Appraiser; Reginald Lindsey, Budget Director; Michael Peterson Assistant Budget Director; LaVert Murray, Economic Development Advisor in Mayor's Office; Alley Porter, Commission Liaison; Tayler Wash, Organization Effectiveness Coordinator in County Administrator's Office; and Ashley Hand, Director of Strategic Communications.

Mayor Garner said before I call this meeting to order, I want to announce that we have individuals attending remotely as well as on-site. All participants joining by phone should mute their phones when not speaking to avoid background noise. During the meeting, please make sure that you announce yourself by name if you're called, and title every time you speak, so the public that is participating knows who is speaking. This is critical given the number of remote participants and is current guidance from the Kansas Attorney General. Please make sure, around this table, that you're speaking clear into the microphone and that you speak at an audible level so that the public as well as those that are participating can hear you as well as for the record.

MAYOR GARNER called the meeting to order.

ROLL CALL: Davis, Bynum, Burroughs, McKiernan, Ramirez, Johnson, Kane, Markley, Stites, Garner.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL SESSION of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, to be conducted in a hybrid format on Thursday, December 8, 2022, at 5:00 p.m. in the fifth floor conference room of the Municipal Office Building regarding budget/organizational priorities and goal areas for the governing body.

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

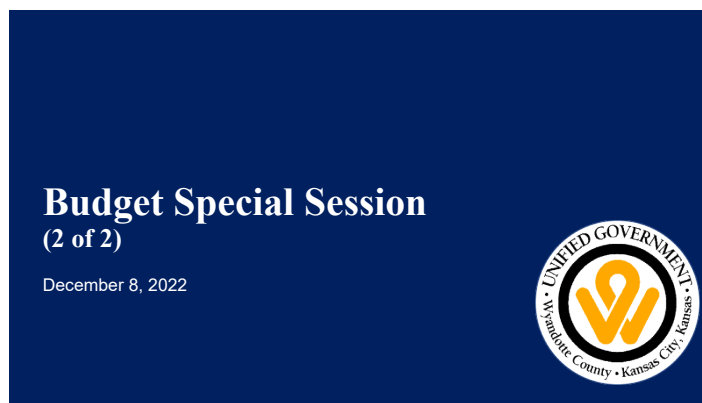


Mayor Garner said tonight we are here to facilitate the ongoing necessary work that this Commission needs to do surrounding the budget and organizational priorities, so I'm going to turn it over to our Interim County Administrator Cheryl Harrison-Lee and she will take the meeting from here.

Cheryl Harrison-Lee, Interim County Administrator, said we are convening part two of the budget priority sessions. At the first session we had an opportunity to look at our priorities and to look at the community survey as well as the input that we received through Dotte Talk. Tonight we're going to have a quick review of what we accomplished at our first meeting. We are going to complete the homework assignment in class, so we'll do that today as well and then we will

look at just kind of solidifying the priorities that you adopted previously. The end goal at the end of this session is we would like to be able to have a completed list of priorities and be prepared to talk next year about the funding scenarios as well as the actual allocation of resources in your next sessions.

With that, I'm going to introduce our Facilitators. We have Shockey with us again. We have Molly who is here with Shockey and we have Bill Ebel. You all met Bill last time who was the former Manager for the City of Overland Park who is now assisting with Shockey and I will turn it over to Molly so she can go over the ground rules and get us started.



Molly Saunders, Shockey Consulting, said I know some of you. For those of you who I haven't met in person, hello. I'm excited to be here with you tonight because the budget is such an important part of your role as elected officials. What I want to do is we're going to walk through what we're doing tonight, what the schedule is and I understand that you all had some very long meetings of late, so I'm going to be very attentive to the time so we will be concluding this at 7:00. That might be my most important job is to finish at 7:00 and so I will be mindful of that.



These are the standard ground rules that we usually put up here. Really, what we want is a good conversation tonight, so everyone participate, get involved, listen to what other people are saying before you formulate your response to it. There may be ideas here tonight that are brought up that you disagree with it or you have a different perspective and let's just get those out. Okay, I'm going to do microphone management here. What we really ask, we've only got two hours and I want to have a focused conversation so if you could set aside your phones for this time, that would be really appreciated.



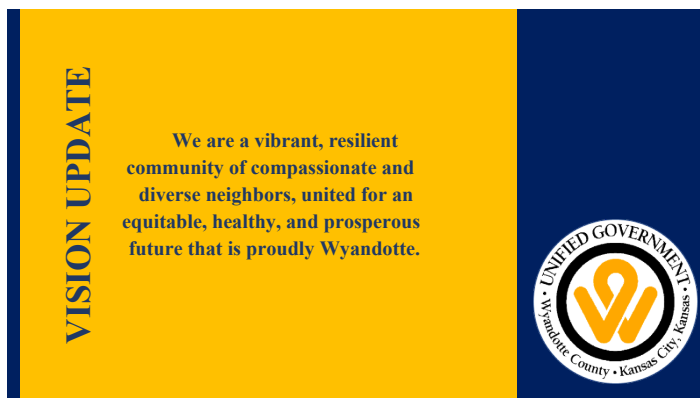
We are going to review what you did at the last session and make sure that all of the priorities that were named feel complete. Then, we're going to go over your homework, and as Cheryl said, we can complete the homework live in-person if you didn't happen to do it beforehand. We're ready for that and that's really to have a more thorough conversation about a couple of issues that you identified at the last session. We are going to break to grab dinner and then we're going to come back and talk about what are some methods to approach the issues that we just dissected together and then we'll go over the goals and call it a day. That's our agenda. It's pretty straightforward and I'm looking forward to some good conversation tonight.

The other thing I want you to know is if you have any questions or comments at any time, just let me know and we can stop and hear what you've got to say.



Last time it seems that there was a lot of consensus among the group of what you want to get out of the budget. As a group, you want to really focus your attention on the highest priorities. That makes the budgeting process a little a more straightforward. You really want a sustainable financial future. That's on your minds and the ways to go about that are by reducing a tax burden on your citizens, growing the tax base, enhancing revenues and that's also looking at your services and streamlining costs and what services you provide.

One of the other things that the group discussed was we want to be able to make these decisions together in a constructive way, so I think this is part of that process.



One of the things that you did at the last session was revise the Vision Statement. The Strategic Plan was done in the 2016-2017 timeframe, so it was time just to kind of take a look at it and refresh it. This is the revised version of the vision. “We are a vibrant, resilient community of compassionate and diverse neighbors, united for an equitable, healthy, and prosperous future that is proudly Wyandotte.”

Commissioner Markley said I was just going to say—you know, I had several employees talk to me about this statement after our last session and they didn't dislike it, but they definitely expressed that they would prefer that we have something shorter. Maybe just settle on some words. Maybe three descriptive words that are easy to remember and easy to spread throughout the organization and we had that discussion a little bit last time. I don't know that we have to do that today, maybe it's something that our marketing squad can spend some time with, but I do think those employees have a point. I think this is not something that somebody's going to remember and be able to recite in the elevator. I think it's ideal if our vision is something that people can remember and recite in the elevator.

Again, I don't dislike this. Those employees didn't necessarily dislike this either. They just said it's really not memorable and it's the way we wouldn't want it to be if we want to perpetuate it throughout our organization.

Ms. Saunders said okay, I see a couple of heads nodding. Is there some agreement? Would you like to spend just a few minutes maybe going around and talking about what are the words that really matter.

Commissioner McKiernan said I would suggest that the three words you're looking for are on the fourth line. **Ms. Saunders** said equitable, healthy, and prosperous. **Commissioner Bynum** said I personally like resilient. We are a resilient (inaudible). **Commissioner Markley** said I think it may be it is just Proudly Wyandotte, equitable, resilient; whatever the three are. You know what I mean and that's it. **Someone** was inaudible. **Ms. Saunders** said so you could do Proudly Wyandotte and if you wanted, that could be it or you could put like three descriptive words. **Commissioner Johnson** said Proudly Wyandotte. **Commissioner Kane** said if we're not proud (inaudible). **Commissioner Davis** was inaudible. **Ms. Saunders** said that's kind of the tagline. I mean you can have this as the descriptor. **Commissioner Davis** said I think that—I mean it is supposed to be a Vision Statement, so it is supposed to be aspirational. There's a world where—I mean there's some organizations that have two, so they can have a more abbreviated version and then keep this, but I do think maybe another time we should discuss this.

Ms. Saunders said it sounds like there's some energy around kind of Proudly Wyandotte being the tagline. So, maybe come back at some point and we can maybe take a stab at shortening

it, but really from—is there a consensus? Commissioner Ramirez, I haven't really heard from you or Commissioner Stites.

Commissioner Ramirez said I like the Proudly Wyandotte too, but I also like the tagline and then the more in-depth version of the Vision Statement.

Ms. Saunders said Commissioner Burroughs, Mayor, do you have any comments? **Commissioner Burroughs** said (inaudible). It really doesn't matter what we say here before we come up with a finished product (inaudible). **Ms. Saunders** asked, do you feel like this sets the right tone? **Commissioner Burroughs** said (inaudible). I don't know how we make people (inaudible). I brought that up last time. I'd like to think that we're resilient. I don't know how we're vibrant, but we are resilient. (Inaudible) lot of issues. I believe there's compassion in this community that I think the diversity isn't given. I think people see that in our community. I don't know that we need to state—we acknowledge it in what we do (inaudible).

Mayor Garner said I guess I'm a little on the other side of it. I just look at a Vision Statement being something not just who we are, but who we should be. That's the vision, who should we be as a county, as a community and what that looks like. I get maybe we are Proudly Wyandotte, but what does that mean. That could mean a lot of different things to a lot of different people and that to me that really doesn't say anything about a vision unless you're saying we want to be Proudly Wyandotte. Proudly Wyandotte is more of a cliché to me more than anything else. I think a vision is just that. Where are we going, what are we aspiring for and, you know, what does that look like.

Ms. Saunders said all right. It sounds like Proudly Wyandotte is a tagline and good. We need to come back and maybe abbreviate this a bit, but still have something that's descriptive. Okay, we'll do it.

**COMMISSION IDENTIFIED
Priorities Nov 2022**

- Street maintenance
- Community appearance –especially mowing
- Police visibility in residential areas +community policing
- Animal control
- Park maintenance –especially equipment
- Trash & recycling
- Below ground infrastructure
- Parks & community centers
- Public transportation
- Motor vehicle registration
- Public health
- Sidewalks + curb maintenance & connections
- Cost of recreation programs
- Tax relief



Page 7

Last time you came up with some priorities at your last session and these are summarized on the slide. I won't go through them one by one, but I do want you to take a look and see does this capture—is there anything missing from this list or is there anything on this list so you're like I don't think that belongs up there?

Commissioner Bynum said to go back to the last session and I know that we did our ranking sheets and so I guess what you're saying is this is what came to the top and since we're having a budget workshop it came to the top as a result of where we should put emphasis in a budget process. I'm making sure I'm back on track with where we left off. **Ms. Saunders** said yes, so really this is to focus the attention of these are our priorities now. This is a long list. These all can't be, obviously, the highest priority, but as a body these were identified as the things that need some focus.

Now, what gets funded is going to go probably to the highest priorities and there will have to be a shifting of funding to other things, but yes, this is really to start—what we're going to do today is really start narrowing down what the priorities are because this is good guidance as a starting point for a budget, but you can't create a budget around this. So, we're going to dig deeper into the infrastructure and tax relief part to really define the issue, but overall, these are the high level priorities.

Commissioner Kane said I don't know why we wouldn't put tax relief as number one. **Ms. Saunders** said tax relief was the one that was on the revenue side, so it was just on the bottom, but we will talk about where it belongs. **Commissioner Kane** said and I do like parks and community centers since I don't have a park out in Piper. **Ms. Saunders** said other comments, good, all right.

CITY GENERAL FUND Long-Term Forecast

Analysis:

- Average expenditure growth of 7% outpacing average revenue growth of 3.2% resulting in a growing deficit Fund Balance in compliance in 2023
- Negative cash balance in 2025
- Long-term corrective action needed

Assumptions:

- 8.2% annual property tax growth
- 4.4% annual growth to personnel
- 12.5% increase annually to fund infrastructure needs
- No reduction to mill, PILOT, or fees in forecast

City General Fund	2022 Amended Budget	2023 Approved Budget	2024 Forecast	2025 Forecast	2026 Forecast	2027 Forecast
TOTAL REVENUES	\$160,969,102	\$155,221,370	\$160,633,958	\$165,785,064	\$171,016,489	\$176,351,469
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$174,147,216	\$160,384,948	\$171,266,506	\$180,157,897	\$193,319,478	\$209,525,512
Net Change in Fund Balance	\$(9,678,114)	\$(5,163,578)	\$(10,632,548)	\$(14,392,833)	\$(22,302,989)	\$(33,174,043)
Cash Basis Ending Fund Balance	\$21,391,486	\$16,137,908	\$5,605,360	\$(8,887,473)	\$(31,190,462)	\$(67,364,506)
ACFR Ending Fund Balance	\$36,190,421	\$31,026,843	\$20,394,295	\$6,001,462	\$(16,301,627)	\$(49,475,571)
Reserve % of Expenditures	21.21%	19.35%	11.91%	3.33%	-8.43%	-23.61%
Fund Balance 17% Target	\$29,605,027	\$27,265,441	\$29,115,306	\$30,626,843	\$32,864,311	\$35,619,337

Page8

At the higher level—these slides are really a reminder of why we’re having this session and the importance of prioritization because the financial forecast doesn’t look that promising in a pretty near term. We really need to focus where are the resources that are available going and the cost to provide services.

This is a challenge when you want to increase service levels and at the same time provide tax relief. Those are two things that can work against each other unless priorities shift from lower priority things to higher priority things. You know, notably, the reserve drops precipitously and you are in negative territory in 2025.

COUNTY GENERAL FUND Long-Term Forecast

Analysis:

- Long-term average expenditure growth of 3.8% is less than average projected revenue growth of 4.5% with the deficit gap gradually narrowing over time
- Fund Balance out of compliance in 2023
- Short-term annual deficits will result in negative cash balance by 2026
- Short-term corrective action needed

Assumptions:

- 8.5% annual property tax growth
- 4.4% annual growth to personnel
- 2023 Budget – 2 mill reduction, 0.25 mill shift to Parks, 1 mill shift to CIP
- Additions – Sheriff's Office staffing commitment, DA digitization project
- No reduction to mill or fees in forecast

County General Fund	2022 Amended Budget	2023 Approved Budget	2024 Forecast	2025 Forecast	2026 Forecast	2027 Forecast
TOTAL REVENUES	\$76,891,702	\$77,872,782	\$80,835,292	\$84,776,332	\$88,763,131	\$92,936,109
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$78,204,310	\$81,556,050	\$84,654,407	\$87,729,889	\$91,269,471	\$94,822,772
Net Change in Fund Balance	\$(1,512,608)	\$(3,728,268)	\$(3,819,115)	\$(3,053,557)	\$(2,506,340)	\$(1,886,663)
Cash Basis Ending Fund Balance	\$12,399,230	\$8,670,963	\$4,851,848	\$1,796,290	\$(708,049)	\$(2,594,713)
ACFR Ending Fund Balance	\$15,440,254	\$11,711,987	\$7,892,872	\$4,839,314	\$2,332,975	\$446,311
Reserve % of Expenditures	19.74%	14.36%	9.32%	5.51%	2.56%	0.47%
Fund Balance 17% Target	\$13,294,733	\$13,864,528	\$14,391,249	\$14,931,081	\$15,515,810	\$16,119,871

Page9

Again, just another look at—this is the county. The prior was the city. Really there is a sense of urgency to get priorities figured out and figuring out how you want to spend the resources that you have.

**COMMISSION IDENTIFIED
Priorities Nov 2022**

- Street maintenance
- Community appearance –especially mowing
- Police visibility in residential areas + community policing
- Animal control
- Park maintenance –especially equipment
- Trash & recycling
- Below ground infrastructure
- Parks & community centers
- Public transportation
- Motor vehicle registration
- Public health
- Sidewalks + curb maintenance & connections
- Cost of recreation programs
- Tax relief



**PRIORITIES FOR
ADDITIONAL
DISCUSSION**
*Infrastructure
Tax Relief*

Page 10

These were the long list of priorities. The two that you were given the homework or seem to get the most discussion were infrastructure and tax relief. I want to make sure, a thumbs up, that was kind of the homework, but if there's something else that we need to talk about, we can add that to the list.

Infrastructure and tax relief can mean a lot of different things to different people.

**COMMISSION IDENTIFIED
Priorities Nov 2022**

**PRIORITIES FOR
ADDITIONAL
DISCUSSION**
*Infrastructure
Tax Relief*

**Homework Assignment for
12/8/22 Session Discussion**

FOCUS ISSUE: _____

F - FRUSTRATION RECOGNITION
What is frustrating you about this issue? _____

O - OBSTACLES AND OBJECTIONS
What is getting in the way of what you want to happen? _____

C - CIRCUMSTANCES AND CONSEQUENCES
If nothing changes what will likely happen? _____

U - UTOPIA (BEST-CASE SCENARIO)
What is the best case scenario? _____

S - SATISFACTION STATEMENT
I would be satisfied if: _____

Page 11

The activity that we're going to do today is really walking through the homework assignment which we call the Focus Activity and we're going to do it together here, but if you had some thoughts written down, you can share those with the group. Really, the purpose of this is to get clear on what is the issue, what are the things that are seen as obstacles to coming up with a solution. You know kind of doing the what's going to happen if we don't change. What would be ideal, and then what would I be satisfied with and sometimes when we have these discussions we discover what we'll be satisfied with are quite a bit different than the ideal situation.

The other thing that we can find or there may actually be obstacles that seem like obstacles, but actually there are some ways around them or there's perceptions that may or may not be true. We are going to start in on this and we're going to do them one at a time.



Let's talk about infrastructure. When you think about infrastructure in Wyandotte County, in KCK, what frustrates you about it?

Commissioner Kane said we have more issues than money and I don't care where you go in all four corners across, somebody's got an issue. A road out at Hollingsworth, you know, that it cost a couple hundred thousand dollars to fix and you can't fix it because there's only ten houses on the street and no matter, each one of us can go anywhere around our district and find something we want fixed, but we can't get it fixed because we don't have the monies to fix it.

Commissioner Ramirez said mine's kind of piggybacking off Commissioner Kane. What's frustrating is not being able to give the necessary resources to Jeff and his hardworking team of being able to do the work. Just not being able to provide the necessary resources for them to do their job. **Ms. Saunders** said so you got people ready to do the work, they just don't have the resources to do it.

Commissioner Stites said (inaudible) but we haven't identified a message or a way to get it done. **Ms. Saunders** said so it may be out there, we just haven't found it. Okay, what else is frustrating?

Commissioner Markley said I think one of the frustrations that kind of ties into all of this is that we're not just trying to deal with today's issues, we're trying to catch up from issues that we let ourselves fall behind on even decades ago, so we need to take care of all the stuff we fell behind on and then still try to figure out how to keep up with what's going on today. **Ms. Saunders** said catching up while trying to keep up.

Commissioner Davis said for me this is Public Safety as well. I know we often talk about Fire, PD and Sheriff, but if a bridge fails or if there's a sinkhole or if it causes an accident, absolutely lives can be lost and property can be damaged if we do not do something about this. I think the investment that we make in Public Works and in infrastructure needs to be in the same vein and in the same conversation that we talk about our officers and we talk about our firefighters.

Commissioner Burroughs said (inaudible) of addressing our infrastructure needs. Where I live one block from my neighborhood they can do curbs in a month (inaudible). It takes us (inaudible) absolutely to finish a project. I don't know why we are so slow in getting projects done even those that have been funded. **Ms. Saunders** said it's inconsistent. You see one thing happening in one place and something else happening—**Commissioner Burroughs** was inaudible.

Commissioner Johnson said I don't know the full depth of this and I might throw this over to Alan Howze, but the life of digital infrastructure is something that we need. Did I say that right Alan? **Ms. Saunders** said infrastructure is more than pipes underground. It is Public Safety and it is also technical structure. **Alan Howze, Assistant County Administrator**, said if you want, add on that—I mean part of that is the economic development infrastructure, for example, fiber optics which are widely available residentially, but not available commercially along some of our major arteries like Quindaro and Metropolitan and those areas. So if those small businesses want to locate in those areas, they don't actually have access to reasonable cost high-speed internet so it's kind of a chicken or egg piece, but that is an infrastructure that is missing from a number of our commercial corridors.

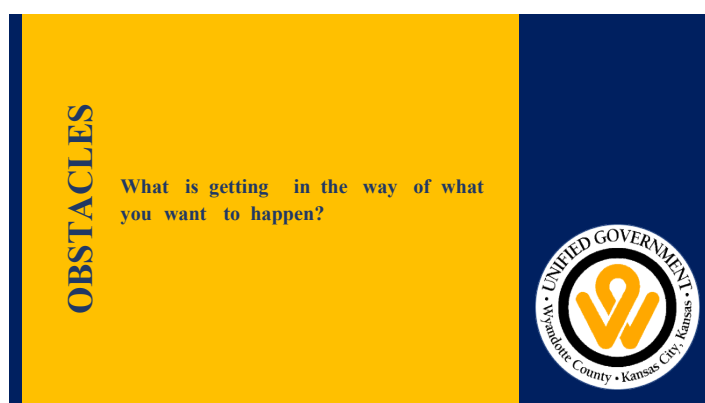
Commissioner Stites was inaudible. **Mr. Howze** said I don't know. I hadn't thought about that. It's probably more BPU in terms of having the lines that can carry the appropriate voltage, but that could probably be part of that as well.

Mayor Garner said I think for me, since I've been Mayor and it's going on a year, I'm just looking for a clear strategy that could be communicated to, not just this Commission and myself, but the public. What are the priorities when you talk about infrastructure. To kind of fall in line with what Commissioner Burroughs indicated; looking at what has been allocated and from those

allocations what's been spent, so what are the success stories so when we do allocate this money, what's been accomplished and then what's left over. Where's the money actually going down to the penny. I know we get a general overview of kind of percentages and cost here and there.

I think what would really be helpful for me, and I don't want to speak for anybody else, I'd like a line by line look at vendors, what we're paying, where this money is going, what it looks like down to the actual taxpayers penny so we can have a better idea and then what's left over, what hasn't been spent, then what are those needs. I think having a strategy that really defines priorities with all those things would be helpful for me.

Ms. Saunders asked, anything else? Nothing else. This sums up all the frustrations in the room about infrastructure.



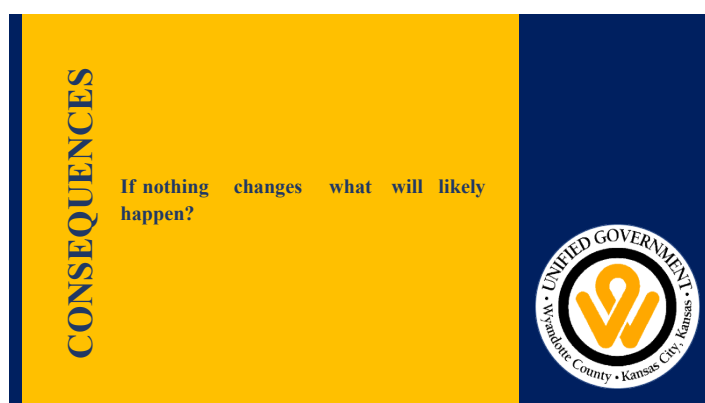
Obstacles, well one of the obstacles was kind of named in one of the frustrations and is there's more to do than there is money, so an obstacle is money clearly. What are other obstacles from doing what you want? **Someone** said capacity. **Ms. Saunders** said capacity, in what way, staff? **Someone** was inaudible. **Ms. Saunders** said okay.

Commissioner Ramirez said I would say the economy and inflation and all the cost of doing business. **Ms. Saunders** said that's out of your control, a lot of it.

Commissioner Markley said stuff keeps breaking. We have a plan and then something that we didn't expect to have to fund comes along and suddenly all of our plans are out the door. **Ms. Saunders** said so it's actually hard to stick with a plan because things happen.

Commissioner Burroughs said (inaudible). We talked about infrastructure. There's been four or five different types of infrastructure mentioned. I believe that my interest in this instance (inaudible) tell us commissioners maybe eight and come to terms and identify the priorities in that infrastructure investment and I think we will be collectively better (inaudible). **Ms. Saunders** said so then we all might be talking about different things gets in the way of putting together a cohesive plan.

Ms. Saunders asked, what else? Nothing. Money, resources, aging infrastructure, kind of a lack of a consensus on what the priorities are.



Let's imagine nothing changes and we're just going to keep doing what we're doing and resourcing the things the way we're resourcing them. What do you envision the consequence of that being?

Commissioner Bynum said nothing changes regarding the challenges we've identified? **Ms. Saunders** said yep. If the frustrations just continue, what's going to happen? **Commissioner Bynum** said for sure we're going to have more of what we've experienced this year with two major bridge arteries into Missouri are closed. I mean we're just going to have more of that and, you know, as we've learned this year now that we have bridges that need full replacement and this is ten times costlier than repair and preservation or more. So, yeah, these aren't challenges that can be ignored or deferred. **Ms. Saunders** said okay, they're just going to get bigger. If nothing is done, there's going to be more of them.

Commissioner Bynum said right. That's what this document is showing us. The document of the outcomes and strategies that the teams worked to put together and that we adopted as we can see earlier this year. This is the result of inaction. **Ms. Saunders** said so you don't want

that to become a thicker document. **Commissioner Bynum** said inaction. That's not fair, just the lack of enough resources.

Commissioner Johnson said to Commissioner Bynum's point, how do we reconcile this document, the conversation we're having tonight without having a problem. To me everything is pretty much laid out in terms of what's priority and what's not. I mean if I'm wrong, somebody help me. I don't want to have a conversation that we've already had. **Ms. Saunders** said I agree.

Commissioner Johnson said I see Jeff back there. He's not going to come to the mic, but you know, if I was him I'd be squirming in my seat because he put a lot of time and work putting this together.

Commissioner Ramirez said if nothing changes, we'll have our infrastructure crumbles, it fails which means we'll have less people moving in, more people moving out, less businesses coming and moving in. Just to chime in, I agree with Commissioner Johnson. You know we're talking about clear vision, we kind of have that already. Commissioners worked on it, a clear vision of where we want our infrastructure and our priorities for our infrastructure and we passed that as the Board. That was our policy that this is our guiding document, this is data-driven of what needs to be a priority for our infrastructure.

Ms. Saunders said this lays out specifically you need to pay for it, so I guess the conversation here is really not about what exactly we're going to be doing, but how are we going to go about paying for it. So by identifying what we've just talked about so far, again, it shows a sense of there's an urgency. There's no point in having priorities if you can't actually—you guys want to do that plan. The consequences of not doing what's in that are crumbling infrastructure, people leaving, not moving in. So, I guess really the conversation we're having is why it's important to move on this priority.

Commissioner McKiernan said while I agree that we have this and we all have all agreed on this, one of the things besides finding additional funding that we all need to do is come to consensus because in this document there are some recommendations for proceeding that may not be our standard historical practice. One of the things that I know we've talked about, Jeff, is that we may

focus on that infrastructure that's on the brink of failure and that infrastructure may be in one geography and that the work may not be spread out over all of the geographies and that we have to be okay with that, that we may not see a CMIP project in our particular neighborhood or in our district for a while because they are focusing on the highest priorities, those that are on the brink of failure.

Besides just committing to finding the funding, we have to commit to accepting, or going along with, or revising whatever it is the approach that's outlined in this document as well, so it's not just the funding. Jeff, if I've misspoken anything on that—**Ms. Saunders** said you got a thumbs up from the crowd.

Mayor Garner said I agree with the commissioner, what he just said. I think looking at where we are at financially. When you talk about priorities, this Commission is going to have to take a hard look at revisiting those priorities and really putting them in a clear perspective. When you talk about \$100M, I'll just use that, is that a necessary need. Is an agitator out, is sewage leaking into the river or is the computer system down, if that's something, maybe we have to put off to a further time. Those are the hard discussions that happen. We have to look at what is critical for Wyandotte County and then look at those critical needs and prioritize in there. I mean there's a laundry list of things in these reports that we would love to address, but where we are financially, can we afford to do that based on the past picture and now looking at where we're at today.

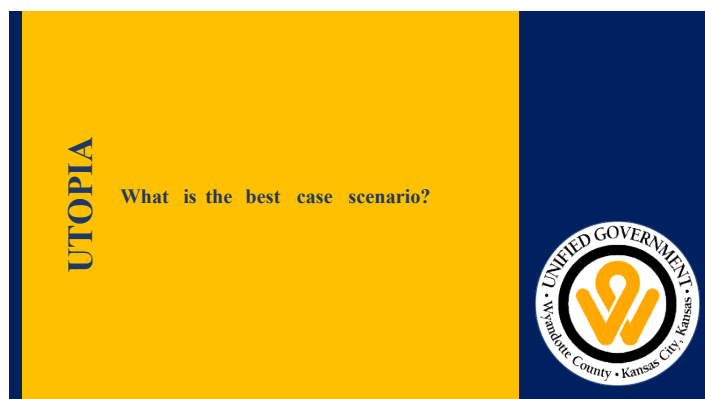
Commissioner Davis said I think two things we haven't really talked about as far as consequences like if nothing changes at all is, number one, there's a lot of misinformation about what has happened or what is being done or the fact that earlier this year, in the ARPA subcommittee, we did allocate \$17M and the majority of that federal funding went to the northeast which is the most disinvested area of our community. So, if nothing happens, the misinformation about what has happened continues to take place and our community is not told the full story of what is going on.

The other part is if nothing happens, we leave money on the table. We've not really talked about grants and we do have a grant manual and a grants team that I think probably needs more staff and more help, but we need to get dollars, not just from Wyandotte County, but from the state of Kansas, from the federal government and we talk about private investment as well so that we can fix some of these infrastructure issues. When we talk about economic development,

there's also opportunity to fix some of those infrastructure issues. We can't do that and nothing will change if we hold up those particular efforts.

Ms. Saunders said if we don't do anything, just keep doing what we're doing, we're going to have some negative consequences. No one has come up with anything good that's going to happen if we don't make some progress.

I want to go back to the plan that you have in front of you. That kind of outlines the details of what you could work on and have some priorities in it. We're not going to get down to the nitty-gritty, what is the priority tonight, but I think you all agree if you could just accomplish everything in that plan, like that is the answer to the next question...



which is what would be the best case scenario. The best case scenario I think is there's funding, this plan is done—**Commissioner Bynum** was inaudible. **Ms. Saunders** said I know. You really put an effort into winning the lottery I hear, so thank you for sacrificing for the group. Does everybody agree that's really the best case scenario is we can fund this thing and we're in good shape or is there more. Is there something more to be best case than is in that document.

Commissioner Ramirez said not only be able to fund it, but be able to maintain what we've done. I think that's also the best case scenario. Yeah, we can keep working and have all the funding and make sure this plan is no longer needed, but we're going to have to have the resources after to maintain what we've built and to just upkeep throughout the years.

Ms. Saunders said so that kind of speaks to this isn't just we get it done and we're done, we can have a party, all the infrastructure is done, it's ongoing. This is kind of just the starting point.

Commissioner Burroughs said (inaudible) properties that are under used, underutilized, ready for demolition. I call it (inaudible). We don't maintain it much at all and that's why we're in the predicament we're in and I would just didn't see us (inaudible) ourselves from them even if it kept tearing it down, selling the property, the ground it sits on. Whatever it takes to get that property back into (inaudible).

Commissioner Markley said I completely agree with that and we've had discussions as a Commission repeatedly about getting rid of some facilities. We just have to do it. We have to choose the facility and do it and I know there's also been some discussion about how that impacts our community members who don't have regular access to the internet or who just don't want to use the internet be it older people. I think right now Monica is doing her road show for the Homestead. We have places we can send our people into the community to address those issues and say if you don't want to use the internet and you don't have a way to do that, you can go to the community center on such and such a day and somebody's going to be right there to help you. It will be cheaper for us to do that 10 times a year than to maintain some of these facilities that just need to be gone.

I think we've got to learn to work in this new world where people can work in different places and we got to send out people out into the community which really we should have been doing even now. It would be best practices even with the facilities we have.

The other thing I would say is kind of go into that same direction of what are we doing to get this best case so we can move forward and still have funding. You know we're implementing Workday. One of the reasons we implemented Workday was because we believed there were some positions that would no longer be needed as Workday was rolled out. We need to make sure we don't lose sight of that goal. We've got a million job postings right now. I guarantee we can find some place for those people to go whose positions may not be needed anymore. We need to figure out to keep our eye on that ball and say what are those positions that are no longer needed as we roll Workday out or what positions maybe can be combined because that's another savings for us and another way for us to move forward and have additional funding.

Ms. Saunders said so best case is using Workday to make some decisions and also best cases coming together as a group and making the hard decisions.

Commissioner Davis said I'll say our staff retention is high and that we are able to attract and keep talent. We have folks that are satisfied with their quality of life working here at the Unified Government and feel that they have a lot of room to grow, room to work on projects that excite them and meaningfully contribute.

The other best case scenario is the community is well informed about what is happening. There's a world in which we can do all of this, but if we're not properly communicating to our constituents on the truth about what we are doing, that means nothing. Government is not just about the nuts and bolts writing data, it's about perception. It's about how I view the particular community and so we also need to change the perception of our community.

Ms. Saunders said so in the best case scenario you're not only completing the plan, but everybody knows what you've been doing. You've been accountable to them and staff feels good because they're able to accomplish things.

Mayor Garner asked, are we still talking about infrastructure? **Ms. Saunders** said yeah, it's still relating to infrastructure. **Mayor Garner** said I guess I want to circle back to the infrastructure piece. I think the best case scenario for me is to look at the projects that are out there. I've talked about this and I know we've said I don't know what's been approved by this Commission totally. I need to circle back and look at all the CMIP projects. Some haven't been done. There's a lot of them.

I think the best case scenario is that we again work with our staff to prioritize what are the critical essential needs and those that can be foregone put on the back burner. We pump the brakes on these other projects. We would love to have them. You know we all would but considering our financial situation, we pump the brakes and maybe we withhold some of these projects or we eliminate them all together because they're not critical infrastructure needs that we have the ability to really address at this point in time financially.

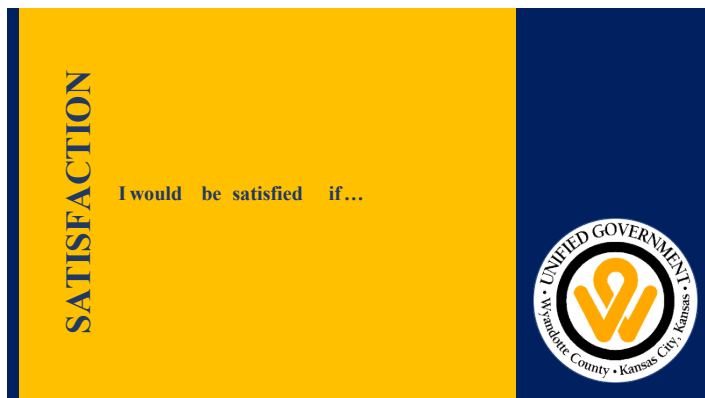
Ms. Saunders said so looking at what the greatest need is.

Commissioner Bynum said I just want to take the opportunity to—in the realm of divesting ourselves from underutilized or possibly unneeded buildings. I put a notion in front of the Mayor a month or so ago about some reuses and reimagining of some of our buildings and removal of several from our inventory. I’m just taking the opportunity to put that in the universe and request the Mayor and Administrator allow us to have that conversation maybe together because if that were something that were to have consensus around it, we could get started ASAP.

Commissioner Kane said we talked about that already at length and there’s a lot of buildings that we own. We can bring multiple different departments in those same buildings and get rid of the buildings that we don’t need and I don’t know why we’re not doing that now. **Ms. Saunders** said okay. I think that kind of gets to we’ve got to make some decisions and move on them.

Mayor Garner said I agree. I’ve talked to both Commissioner Bynum and I just had a conversation with Commissioner Markley. I’ve spoken briefly with the Administrator about it. One of the things that I would like to do is have some commissioners create another task force to really sit down—I have eight task forces. As an efficiency committee if you want to work through that, but what needs to happen is actually not talking about it and really, like Commissioner Markley said, we have got to do this. The time for talk and just debating is over. We’re at that defining point within our budget to where this Mayor’s Office, this Commission, staff and maybe some others, we’ve really got to define what’s necessary and what’s not and then this Commission has to debate it and push it forward and just say this is what we’re going to do.

Ms. Saunders said so that one strategy to move forward is like let’s figure out the game plan for making some of these things happen. Stop talking and start getting the wheels in motion. Going back—this is best case. Everything is working well, we’ve got what we need, we’re maintaining it, etc.



What would you really be if I said, okay, for you to be satisfied with infrastructure, what would that be like within the realm of reality. **Commissioner Kane** said we could go on this—we could beat a dog on this you couldn't believe. I'd be satisfied if we just got 35-40% of the things that we need done. You know we don't have the money to do it all, but whatever we do, we need to do it right and then like I said just here a second ago, get rid of buildings that we don't need, we'll bring more money into the General Fund and then we can fund some of the things that we need to get done. **Ms. Saunders** said you're not aiming for 100%. That would be great, but if you could get to 30 or 40%--**Commissioner Kane** said I'm married. If I got 30% around my house, it would be a great day. **Commissioner Markley** said well, that's never going to happen.

Commissioner Markley said if we just committed to increase in our funding at a certain level every year and could begin to plan out what the future looks like based on that funding, I think that would be a great step. We've looked at that and we've done that to some extent. We have been increasing our funding every year, but we know we can't just all in one year get all of this done. What does a long-term plan look like, how much are we going to increase by per year so that we can set a goal years out where we're going to have everything completed and be ready to maintain.

Commissioner McKiernan said I'm just going to restate everything everybody's already said. I'd be satisfied if we could come to consensus on what is high priority CMIP and that if we could make a group commitment to the dollar value of that high priority CMIP and then commit to funding that on an annual basis. So we've got high priority covered on an ongoing basis and then if we could come to consensus as a group on categorizing deferred CMIP, prioritize what it is and then, as Commissioner Markley just said, commit to funding some percentage of catch-up every

year above and beyond our high priority CMIP, we commit to funding some percentage toward remediating the deferred CMIP.

Commissioner Davis said I would add to, yes high priority and yes deferred, but also maintenance and I did see it here—I forgot where in this document that our staff excellently put together, we need to commit to maintaining what we already have that is working well so that we do not perpetuate the very phenomenon that got us here to begin with.

Commissioner McKiernan said if I could just add one thing. When I say CMIP, I mean everything that's in our Capital Maintenance roster including things like street preservation which is the ongoing upkeep of what we already have. So, I do include what we have in place under that heading.

Commissioner Stites said it's easy for us to say let's commit to it, let's commit and say—the fact is, and you just stated it in the very start of our meeting. We don't have the money. We're on a slope to doomsday and we can't commit past three years from now because we don't have the money. I think our focus needs to be, how do we come up with the money so we can commit to these programs and what can we trim down, trim the fat off of and when I say that I mean the buildings that we don't need, the combining into one. Programs that we, you know, we've sat here and said, I mean through this last budget cycle, that we really need to look at it strong, and I appreciate that we are, about how we're going to this next budget look better and we do have to make those tough decisions and people are going to go, not my rec center, not my community center. I'm not advocating for those. I'm just saying not my program, not my street, or whatever it may be.

If we don't do something—that what you said on circumstances and consequences, is that we go belly up.

Commissioner Markley said I would just add one thing. I will only be satisfied if we're using a data-driven approach for this and that's part of how we deal with the not mine is to be able to say we didn't choose this because we drew your name out of a hat. We chose to close this building because we're looking at all the data and it makes the most sense. We have to be doing this in as

an objective a manner as possible and we have to be basing it on data so we can make the right decisions even though they're going to be hard ones no matter what.

Mayor Garner said if somebody has mentioned it, I apologize, but part of this too is I just want to make sure whatever we're doing that number one we educate the community, we inform the community, we get feedback from the community, and that we try to be as community-driven as possible. Ultimately, you make the decision, I understand that. That's why you're elected officials, but we want to try and make sure that we're trying to meet the reasonable expectations that the majority of our constituents have for us because at the end of the day it's not so much my satisfaction, it's the people of Wyandotte County that need to be satisfied with the decisions that this body is making.

Commissioner Bynum said I'm just thinking another budget discussion point for us collectively could be a look at—so, my big hairy idea was we take the PILOT, for example, and the money that it raises and we commit it only to this. **Ms. Saunders** said committing a funding source. **Commissioner Bynum** said yeah and then I think that's a little bit too big of a mountain to climb, but if we identified revenues that come from certain places such as delinquent tax sales and we said the revenues that we're going to take in from delinquent tax sales or some other thing we're going to commit to. **Ms. Saunders** said that's a strategy. **Commissioner Bynum** said I understand the difficulty and the challenge because I think right now we're spending it on General Government expenses, but I'm just wondering if there's—can you just turn it on its head and shake it all out and try to put it back together a different way.

Commissioner Davis said I think doing all of these things, yes data-driven approach, yes prioritizing, yes maintenance, yes deferred, yes educating to the community, and yes to the buildings and looking at that. Also, less than a year ago there was an option that the Mayor brought before us about a sales tax. At the time I was not in favor of it because of the communication piece. It takes a lot. It's like running for office, you really have to make the case to the community that this is worth the investment. I think now, December, if you're talking November 2023, we absolutely have time where we can get information in addition to everything that is on there from staff to at the very least consider what a sales tax initiative would look like to fund the very things

that we are discussing so that we have options and it's not an either or. We can do both. We can look at a better usage of the current property that we have and we can put a really competitive proposal before our community to consider what we could do with new revenue.

Ms. Saunders said this is going to be a good bridge to our next conversation.

Commissioner Stites said I'm totally opposed to any tax increase. I mean go back to our very first slide. I thought tax relief was identified very high and in fact somebody said let's move it to the top of the list and now we're just now—one of our solutions is let's tax our constituents even more. No. **Ms. Saunders** said we're going to talk about—**Commissioner Stites** said I don't know if other districts, how they view it, but I'm going to tell you right now, my district is tapped out on taxes and they do not want to see another dime of taxes being increased. As a matter of fact they need to see them go down.

Ms. Saunders said this is going to be a great segue into the next part of the conversation. We are going to stop and grab dinner. The other thing I want to tell you is there's a separate agenda item for coming up with strategies, but you guys are just so good, you're coming up with them as we go along, so you're going to two for one here.

Take a break and at five after we'll get started on the next topic.

Ms. Saunders said we're going to go ahead and get started. We can work without slides if they don't come up. The second issue in addition to infrastructure that we're going to talk about is tax relief. That was a top priority and generated some discussion the last time so what I really want to do is kind of dig into that like infrastructure. We're going to have this conversation for about 30 minutes. I'm going to kind of keep you rolling, so we can stay on track of time because we're getting out of here at 7:00.

Let's start with tax relief and I think you can think about tax relief in both, reducing taxes or growing the tax base; however you wish. That's my thought, but you all can talk about that. What's the frustration relating to tax relief?

Someone was inaudible. **Commissioner Bynum** said yeah, that's a true statement. I think another frustration is that we need to do a better job collectively among all of us of helping our community understand the taxing subdivisions, all of them.

Mayor Garner said I think the frustration, and it goes in line with what Commissioner Bynum is saying too. I think one of the concerns and frustration is even though the Commission may have the ability to lower taxes in a variety of ways, we have zero control over the other tax entities. Just that uncertainty if we do tax relief on our part, well, there's some of the other taxing you see that as a green light to raise taxes on their part. So, there's really no relief—a real relief for our residents. Part of that, getting on the same sheet of music with all our taxing entities so we can at least have a shared interest in the long-term viability of our community.

Commissioner Davis said just kind of going on what Commissioner Bynum has said, I think it's—there is some interesting, I don't want to say mental gymnastics, but there's us, we're the city and county, there's the community college, we have Edwardsville, we have Bonner, we have four school districts, but when people think about tax relief they only think about us and that's really the issue. When voters are going to the ballot and they go to vote for someone from the Unified Government, particularly from the Commission, the Mayor, they're thinking about taxes, but they're not thinking about taxes when they go to vote for the school board member. They're not thinking about taxes when they go to vote for their community college representative. That education is key. We need to educate our constituents and let them know the power of the ballot so that they can be consistent and so that other folks that are sharing the ballot with us will also have to be in this tension of tax relief versus funding your priorities.

Commissioner Markley said I think one of the frustrations is that there's not excess money. Like if we have the slides up that shows how we're going in the hole. We're talking about tax relief which would be really easy if we had a bunch of extra money and we could give it back to our folks and not have that impact services, but we don't have a pot of extra money, so figuring out how to provide tax relief and still provide the services is the frustration. **Ms. Saunders** said you're on a tight rope.

Mayor Garner said I think another frustration for me and this just echoes a lot of—some of the residents that I’ve talked to is whether it’s perceived or real. The incentives that a lot of big box corporations want as a main for them to either want to do business here or move in here and how do we manage that responsibly so they’re paying their fair share and they’re good neighbors. They’re contributing because where we’re at we don’t have the ability to continue giving huge incentives that hold little value of where we are financially.

Commissioner Ramirez said for me I’m going to echo the communication that we’re not the only taxing jurisdiction within our city and county. We want lower taxes, but then we have to balance that out with our expenses. So, it’s a balancing act and it’s going to have to take a lot of hard decisions for us to do, but I think that I would just say everything that’s been mentioned for me.

Mayor Garner said I don’t want to say this to disrespect this Commission because that’s your purview, but this is echoing a lot of what residents in the community has said. The continuing raising of taxes year after year after year as a means to shore up our budgets, that’s frustrating. It goes in line when we’re talking about what infrastructure. At some point if we’re going to be committed to tax relief, we have to be committed to tax relief, tightening our belt here at this Unified Government and finding where we’re going to balance that relief with cost-cutting measures that are responsible and make sure that the relief that we’re giving is real so it can be realized by our residents in a way that is satisfactory to them. I can tell you now, people I’ve talked to, what has been done isn’t satisfactory in the eyes of our residents. **Ms. Saunders** said so the community is frustrated.

Commissioner Markley said, Mayor, no disrespect meant, but I do want to make a correction there because education is an issue and we’ve talked about that with the taxing jurisdictions. We have not raised a mill levy in more than a decade, so when we say raise taxes, we mean the taxes are going up, but this Commission has not raised the mill levy since I’ve been in office and when we say raise taxes, we give a different impression depending on how people in the community understand that phrase. **Ms. Saunders** said so what people pay has gone up—**Commissioner Markley** said but we have not raised the tax rate at least in the 12 years that I’ve been here and I don’t think during Mike Kane’s time either.

Commissioner Stites said here's what I'll say. I agree. At the end of the day what's going out of your pocket is more each year than went out the year before, so that's the same as increasing your taxes.

Commissioner Burroughs said it's all semantics. I mean tell people their taxes aren't going up and they look at their bill this month and I know mine went up and I sit on the Commission, so I'm just stating taxes are too high.

Mayor Garner said just respectfully, out of the Commissioner too, and I totally agree with Commissioner Stites and Commissioner Burroughs, people are not realizing tax relief. They're just not. We can say we haven't raised taxes, okay maybe we haven't or this Commission hasn't because I'm just completing one year, but when property values go up and the valuations on people's property go up, that translates into a property tax increase. The frustration the residents are saying is that this Commission has not tightened its belt and operating in a way like I would do with my budget, when I'm on a tight budget, in a way that brings about the relief and stabilization that the residents and—even what I'm saying is, yeah, you may not cause the tax increases, but you're not also holding the line to prevent those tax increases and that's where revenue neutral came in. It equated to a nine mill increase is what I got from staff, so you lowered the increase that was projected by two mills, so theatrically they're still getting an increase, it's just not a total increase, it's only a seven mill increase instead of a nine mill increase. Then you tacked on user fees and other fees that made up the difference.

We can talk smoke and mirrors and games all we want, but I can tell you for a fact you can go anywhere in this county and people will tell you their tax bills show something totally different. So, I like being real with the people in Wyandotte County and saying, yes, your taxes are going up because they are and maybe we haven't raised them, but we haven't acted responsibly when we say we're lowering your tax to do it in a way that can be realized and just tell them, we're not lowering your taxes, we're holding the line on your tax increase. That's really all that's going on.

So, instead of having a huge tax increase, you're having a slight tax increase and so that's the real message I'm putting out in this community. I'm telling you this community is fed up. They're sick and tired, they're frustrated and it hurts me to hear—I went to a meeting last night

with Commissioner Bynum and Commissioner Burroughs. People are talking about packing up and leaving Wyandotte County and that bothers me as being this Mayor. We've got to find a way to anchor people here.

One of the things that I think should help is we got to expand our businesses, we've got to expand our rooftops, and yes, I agree with Commissioner Davis, sales tax is an option. It allows both people—individuals that shop here that are residents and non-residents to contribute to that tax because the biggest tax relief that I hear our residents want is property tax relief. So, that's an option for this Commission to consider when you talk about how do we dig ourselves out. We've got to really put 100% economic development—expanding that tax revenue base as well as exploring other revenue options, which could be a sales tax. I can tell you what, it's a lot better than a property tax and it spreads that tax burden to others that don't live here that maybe shop here, so something for this Commission to consider.

Ms. Saunders said I think I've already identified—there's a lot of frustration. I know, I'm not going to cut you off yet, but I've heard some obstacles. We're going to keep going on frustration. We're going to get everybody's voice and then we're going to move to the next.

Commissioner Kane said first of all, in my mind, revenue neutral would never work. Secondly, my taxes went up \$2,000, so I feel the pain. Groceries have went up. We went through a COVID pandemic. We went through some stuff that we have absolutely no control over, no way, shape or form and maybe that's not an excuse, but no, we have not raised the mill levy in 12 years, 11 years, or whatever. That's not smoke and mirrors. Now, I was here one year and I wish McKiernan was here, and some of you may have been here; we lowered the mill one mill one year and the following year we had to raise it two. There is frustration and I know that people are saying their taxes went up. When I read how much it went up and I'm immediately checking the rest of the houses on my block to make sure that I'm not the only one affected by this.

When there are other taxing entities, we can't control them. I live in Piper and the school bond issue passed and that's great, but that was a huge hit on my taxes. JUCO, a huge hit on my taxes, so we can't stand here and say we're the blame for everything. We're not the blame for everything. We are blamed for almost 50%, but I've been here for a long time and the reevaluations is the largest I've ever seen across the board. I don't care where you live. They said

out west it was going to be x amount percent and mine went up 18% and I'm like I thought it was supposed to be 10% or 14% out west and it wasn't. The bottom line, you know, I think this last budget we did well. We're here right now for next year's budget so we can get our act together and know what we're doing and so we can correct some of the things that maybe we made a mistake in the past or other things that need to get done with infrastructure and everything else.

Another thing, we need more grant writers around here. We need people—and you're going to have to pay them, but if you get one good grant writer, you're paying them \$100K a year, they're going to bring you back millions of dollars a year. I don't know why we haven't went out and started getting them, grant writers. We've got a couple, but I don't know why we haven't went out there and sought some more and bring their talent in here because we're missing money and it would help us if we got more money coming in by the people that do this for a living because some of them are doing it on the side. I want somebody that's dedicated to do this and I'm sorry I talked so long.

Commissioner Ramirez said I think for me what is frustrating when we talk about the tax relief and yes there is frustration out there, but there are a very, very limited amount of solutions that come out of that. One solution was, yes, revenue neutral but it was just given to us with no solutions of how to trim down our budget, find the efficiencies, it was just told for us to do it, so the lack of solutions when we talk about tax relief, give us examples.

Go through the budget. The people say that there's money in the budget, bring those examples to us so that we can go through it. That's my frustration when we talk about tax relief.

Commissioner Burroughs said I will just state clearly that the reason why we're revenue neutral just dictated to us by the state is because we had a tax lid that was dictated to local governments by the state because property taxes are too high all across the state and might hit right on it, it's the appraisal process. Our properties are climbing in value. That's the asset we want to increase in value, but we have to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. I pay my taxes. I know what my responsibilities are to this community, but I think we should be able to see the benefit of those taxes in the community and I think that's leading to part of the frustration. There's very little visible construction going on in our infrastructure that people see being done, very little investment

going into neighborhoods. We have a lot of need in our community. We're trying to be all things for all people and we're challenged with that.

I like to think that there's three things that should operate this budget. What we're mandated by law to do, what we absolutely need to do, and then we look at what we would want to do because if we don't meet what's mandated of us, somebody else will mandate that of us and take that authority away from us. I don't know about you, but I value home rule and it gives us the authority to make the tough decisions, but as I've stated before, there's a lot of sacred cows here and everybody's herd is going to get poked and we're just going to have to come to terms with that if we really want to remedy this budget process.

Commissioner Davis said I'll just add when we talk about obstacles, no one's talking about wages. We talked about inflation, but it's also the fact that, yes, the median income in Wyandotte County is going up, but a lot of these jobs that are high wages do not belong to residents. Many of my constituents, and this is kind of common across the board, are on a fixed income and so because you're on a fixed income whether that be retirement or what have you, an increase or a substantial increase in your property taxes, you're not able to handle.

I do agree on the sales tax because when we talk about tax relief and you all forgive me or tell me if I'm wrong here, we're specifically talking about property tax relief and so the sales tax does go into the strategies.

The last two things I'll say is this, if we do not as the collective body of 11 people come up with what we can agree on the truth is, we will never have real tax relief. If we are looking up at the sky and some of us are saying it's blue, others of us are saying it's green, it won't matter. The work that we're doing here won't matter. Cheap political wins haven't gotten us anywhere. We've not raised anyone's property taxes. We've not, people's property value have simply gone up.

When it comes to revenue neutral and, Mayor, I say this with all due respect, but it's hard to reconcile everything that happened in the spring with what just recently happened, which was we got pay parity for the Sheriff's Office for PD. No one brought up going to revenue neutral then. We funded the \$1.4M request by the DA's Office in five days. If we would have gone revenue neutral, how would we have paid for that? No one brought up going revenue neutral when DA Dupree was before us, but now we're bringing up revenue neutral now. If we keep playing

political games, we don't go anywhere, but it's hard to reconcile those things with what we're talking about now and that is a huge obstacle for us. **Ms. Saunders** said so needing to get on the same page and being consistent.

Commissioner Bynum said one of the things that I wanted to say as a result of the last five minutes of conversation, is that words do matter and so the way that we describe what we do that is mandated by law, which is setting a budget and setting a mill levy rate, it matters, the words we use when we describe that. We cannot control what any other body or resident says about it, but we certainly can control the way we communicate about it.

With regard to managing and being responsible with incentives, what I would add is even when we are working on an economic development project that has a really complex financial structure, we can produce for ourselves and our taxpayers a simple document that explains the cost and the benefit of the project. We should be doing that with every economic development project that comes in front of us. We should have documentation that shows us the cost and the benefit and whether that cost is a cash outlay on our part, a long-term incentive or abatement on our part or some sort of bond, we should be showing ourselves and the community the reality of what that is.

The very last thing I will say is maybe it is time. If we're going to be faced with what's required by law and what's required to maintain a municipality, then maybe it is time to have the extremely difficult conversation about whether we should be giving any incentives at all.

Commissioner Stites said I have one last thing to say here. The good thing about a sales tax vote is that it would go to all of the constituents. I don't know if it would be if we're looking at talking about a county-wide sales tax increase or if it would be just a Kansas City, Kansas sales tax increase, but I look forward to seeing that result from the same people that will overwhelmingly shut this sales tax nonsense down and that their taxes have indeed gone up.

I was on the phone with a lady today who is in my district. She was darn near in tears saying I don't know how I'm going to pay. I've lived here 37 years, I believe, and I'm not sure how I'm going to pay my monthly bill, my taxes. She said I'm going to have to decide whether it's gas, groceries or medication. So, listen to that and then sit and talk about how we want to raise taxes. Our taxes did go up. I don't care how you look at it or how you want to frame it up, the

amount of money that's coming out of that lady's pocket at the end of the month is more than it was last year.

I 100% agree that we are not the only taxing entity and we do need to do a better—and people need to get involved when they're voting for the community college. I know that Bonner Springs and Edwardsville schools, they lowered their mill six mills. I don't know what the community college did and I'm not going to go over every one of them, but you know what, if we don't all get in step and try to make a concerted effort how we are more responsible with our tax dollars, we're going to face this every single year. Education, regarding that, that dollar bill that we see every time where it shows 46%, 12%, 1%, who all the taxing entities are is very telling.

Commissioner Davis said can I say just one thing because I'm the one that brought up the whole sales tax thing. When I brought up sales tax, and just talking about sales tax, it is an option, an option that we put before our community to decide. Us saying to our constituents you don't even get to decide is saying to them we've already made the decision. I completely and wholeheartedly endorse the idea of Bonner and Edwardsville going in and saying no, but at the very least give folks the option of choosing how we handle our financial distress. By not putting that option before them, we do not give them the full autonomy they can have in playing a role in bettering our community. **Commissioner Stites** said I agree, but I also think that's why they elected us.

Ms. Saunders said we're going to do a little bit of a lightning round here. What would you be satisfied with, with tax relief?

Commissioner Markley said we have over all these 12 years that I've been here consistently lowered the mill levy a little bit at a time every year and I think we should keep doing it every year, a little bit at a time. That allows us to make the adjustments we need to make. It keeps us from having to raise taxes again if we make the wrong decision and lower it too far and it has been providing tax relief until we had this awful period where all the values shot up, so I think we continue that path.

Mayor Garner said I think what would satisfy me is revenue neutral so if the evaluations go up, people get a higher property tax bill, they know that this Unified Government has held the line and

if it's a \$432M budget that we're operating off of, going to that next year it will be a \$432M budget. Yes, costs will go up, but what we're telling our residents is you're not going to have to bear that additional burden. We're not going to raise your fees or your taxes, but what we will do, you have a commitment that this Unified Government is going to find ways to cut the costs.

Commissioner Davis hit on something about wages. I'll go a step further. Hard decisions are going to have to be made by the next Administrator and this Commission and some of these department heads because some of the biggest costs are personnel. We have got to streamline this government. I'm not saying people have to be laid off or fired, but when you look at where the cost is coming from, the vast majority is personnel, so attrition, things like that, realigning departments, consolidating departments, really having a task, a work task analysis, and then looking at emerging technologies. What are we missing that other cities are doing that may not be unique, but we're just missing out on.

Grant opportunities that Commissioner Kane talked about, we've really got to explore and be intentional about what we're trying to do here and so everything needs to be put on the table.

Ms. Saunders said we're not going to solve this tonight. We're throwing ideas out to be considered as you move through the budget process next year.

Commissioner Ramirez said what I'm about to say is pretty cliché, but be able to provide relief while also being able to provide the necessary basic services to our residents. Again, it's a balance. It's a very, very careful balance.

Commissioner Bynum said if I'm not mistaken, the three main buckets that fund our government services are property tax, sales tax, and PILOT in our case. I guess I could have some satisfaction with a broader conversation around—starting now with staff about what revenue neutral would look like in a 2024 Budget knowing that the other two sources of funding to make up for holding that flat would be the PILOT and sales tax revenues. If I'm misspeaking about the sources of revenue, I would certainly want to be corrected by staff. If you're going to hold property tax flat and grow your community, then you're obviously looking for economic development, but that won't grow your tax base. I'm sorry to belabor it, but this is the struggle I've been having with

revenue neutral. In 2022 property taxes, \$100, and I'm making a commitment to revenue neutral from now till eternity possibly, which means it's \$100 next year, \$100 the year after that and so on and so forth. So, economic development does not grow my community at \$100 and if it's wrong, then I need that explanation and we don't have to have the explanation tonight, but we need to have the explanation.

The other two options that I see for revenue growth are sales tax and in our case a PILOT. If there are other major revenue generators coming into this community, we need to make sure those are put on the table as well. If I'm wrong about that, we need to make sure we all understand because I don't know how you grow your community at revenue neutral. It doesn't compute for me. **Ms. Saunders** said so it sounds like a broad conversation about revenues would be welcome early in the process. **Commissioner Bynum** said a specific conversation about revenues. Not a broad conversation. I want a conversation that makes sure that every single one of us making these hard decisions understands the implications of what that means.

Mayor Garner said respectfully, Commissioner, I agree but what we've been doing has not worked. You cannot tax people out of our county or tax them into poverty. It creates homelessness, it creates—that's why we have such a huge Land Bank problem. I agree with you, there are other sources that we need to look at. Sales tax could be one of them, but I, and this is my opinion based on what I've seen other cities do, having a full court press on economic development and bringing responsible developments and it's rotting in that tax base increasing those dollars, having a county-wide strategic economic redevelopment plan utilizing these Land Bank properties and doing what I've seen successes in other cities, take your pick, Atlanta, even Detroit that was bankrupt, D.C. If you want to go to Omaha and see what they've done with 75 North, Oklahoma City, expanding the tax base and bringing in brick and mortar and residents that are going to add value to our tax base and expand that.

To me that's what needs to be done because I think Commissioner Burroughs mentioned it, people don't mind paying taxes, but when they come to Wyandotte County and I want to start a family or I want to live here, what am I getting for my tax dollars and how are those tax dollars being stretched. Outside of pockets of Village West and other pockets of developments, people tell me that there's not much here that's attractive to them and we have the ability being centrally located and where land is cheap and where we're economic development hungry, we have a real

opportunity to really make Wyandotte County great. I think economic development is that, but you can't do that by continuing to raise taxes because people can't afford it and businesses aren't going to want to come here and pay high taxes. That's just not going to happen.

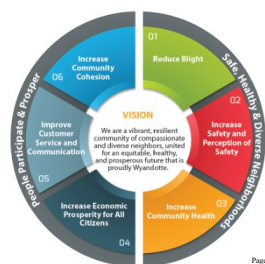
Commissioner Bynum said I completely agree, but again, my question is, if revenue neutral does not mean holding the amount of tax dollars we collect the same year after year, then what does it mean? **Ms. Saunders** said I think this is a conversation, a more thorough conversation needs to be held. **Commissioner Bynum** said that is my request.

Commissioner Ramirez said I agree with everything and just as a note, what works for Detroit, what works for Boston, what works for Milwaukee, may not work for here. We can't use cookie-cutter policy to fix our problems. We need to make sure when we bring those policies here that they fit for the community and they fit for how we operate and how we do business here in our community. We cannot just uproot one policy, bring it over and make it fit. So, that may work in other cities, but here it may not. That's where we, as a body, come in and have to find out why and how, why, when, where and how.

Ms. Saunders said yep. You can consider the others and see how they fit. It really sounds like a more thorough conversation about revenues and revenue neutrality is in your future.

Current Goal & Priority Alignment

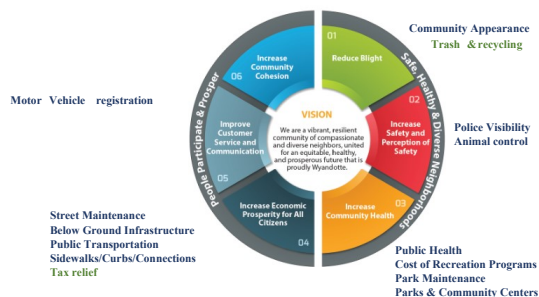
- Street maintenance
- Community appearance –especially mowing
- Police visibility in residential areas + community policing
- Animal control
- Park maintenance –especially equipment
- Trash & recycling
- Below ground infrastructure
- Parks & community centers
- Public transportation
- Motor vehicle registration
- Public health
- Sidewalks + curb maintenance & connections
- Cost of recreation programs



Page 19

So, very quickly, you guys may recognize this pinwheel. I don't know how we describe it. These were put in place again in 2017, so these are the major categories. I think there was one added one year.

Current Goal & Priority Alignment



What I did I tried to take a look at what your priorities are and match them up with the goal area and I kind of did this by looking at the old departmental strategic plans, some overlap with others, but I tried to make it one-on-one. I put tax relief and trash and recycling where I thought they belonged. What I really just want to do today is for you to take a look at what is in this pinwheel and say I think those are our goal areas. We should stick with those or we need to revisit. This way it's really creating the framework for how you talk about budget and one of these areas will become a higher priority than others. So you want to make sure that everything is covered, but there's something that needs to go away or needs to merge with something else, that can be a discussion. Do you all think this still fits or do you think you need to revisit?

Commissioner Kane, you're nodding your head and I don't know what that means.

Commissioner Burroughs said Community Health, how do we as commissioners address Community Health that shows an impact for our residents? How do we do that. I mean I want a healthy community, but whatever we're doing we're still one of the lowest in the state in health outcomes. **Ms. Saunders** said maybe revisit what does that actually mean. **Commissioner Burroughs** said when I see that—I wish every child in this community had health care, I wish every senior had access to affordable drugs. I would like to see that. I'm compassionate enough to know that everyone deserves quality healthcare, but how do we as a body do that. **Ms. Saunders** said so that's something for further discussion.

Commissioner Markley said I would just note that we did some review of this wheel in a prior strategic planning, I don't know how long ago it was, but we had a discussion about the Community Cohesion piece of the wheel because we had ranked which we thought was the priority

and nobody ranked that one and here we see that we've noted all the things that are our priorities and none of them fall under that piece of the wheel. So, that tells me that either we don't even know what that piece of the wheel means or it's not a priority because we all ranked it the non-priority in our last strategic planning and none of our priority goals align with it, so if it were me, number six would be gone, not because we don't want to increase Community Cohesion, but because it's obviously not our priority and/or we don't even know what to put in that category.

Ms. Saunders asked, any other comments on your goal areas. This might require a little bit of going back and looking at—going back over with the Commission this is, what this is, is this still there, but right now it does not look like Community Cohesion is where it's at.

Commissioner Ramirez said I would second what Commissioner Markley was saying about the Community Cohesion. I think if we're able to accomplish all of these goals and all of these strategies, that will lead to Community Cohesion. That will lead to a happy, healthy Wyandotte as we've been saying, so I just second what Commissioner Markley said.

Mayor Garner said I wasn't here and maybe one of the commissioners that's been here that worked on this could—I look at number four and I ask myself, it's a question, are any of these attainable? So, when you revisit these and you talk about goals, did we take into account are these goals realistically attainable and if so, how do we attain and make these goals become a reality and what does that look like. Has staff or anybody circled back on each one of these categories and said here's our successes. I'm not saying we have to get to 100 on all of them, but how close did we come to being 100% on all those and what does that look like and how are we gauging that, our success when you talk about these goals and these priority alignments.

Ms. Saunders said we are identifying all kinds of great future conversations tonight, so this will be revisited. I think it's a good time to do that especially as you move into the budget, more detailed budget discussions because they can help. Again, kind of be the framework for it. So, with that I am going to turn it over to Commissioner Davis unless anybody has any further comments.

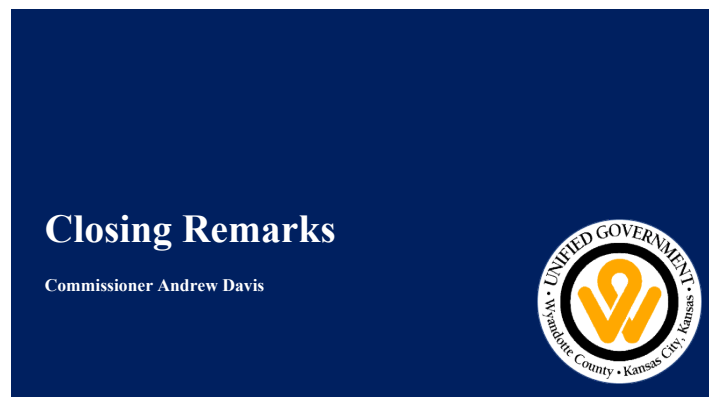
Commissioner Stites said one last thing that I would like to say about our tax, and I'm not going to beat this to death, but we have asked and I know since we've been here that we would like to have a meeting. I know when I was on the Edwardsville City Council that there was a meeting of all taxing entities in the same room. Now, I wasn't, it was just spoke about. I wasn't on the Council when that occurred, but I would like to see us be able to have a roundtable meeting so that we can talk to the community college, we can talk to the library, and we can all sit down and really talk about—that's how we truly are going to figure out how we're going to address lowering the—what our taxing needs are. I would like for us to be able to have that now or sooner than later before we get into the eleventh hour of our budget and go, man, we should have done this and we never did.

Mayor Garner said you have a commitment. I just talked to the Administrator. I think part of the challenge last year was trying to get all the elected in one place. So what happened was, the non-elected did talk, but if that's what you're talking about, you have a commitment that we will work to get all the elected officials in one—at Memorial Hall, somewhere, in the ballroom and maybe we'll have a work session similar to this and have that conversation. **Commissioner Stites** said I am talking about all electives because they are the ones, as Commissioner Davis pointed out, they're the ones that really need to be held accountable whenever the—and I'll say it, the community college, whenever those taxes are going up, somebody needs to be answering as to why.

Commissioner Bynum said I appreciate the work that we are trying to do together and that being said, I'm trying to keep my head from exploding because Commissioner Johnson and I were elected in 2015 and we began making that request, that same exact request. If we're getting a commitment to do that, then I'll try to keep my head from exploding. What I had always been hopeful of is not so that I could point at a school board member or point at a community college member and say what are you doing, why haven't you done something. That's not my goal. My goal was a conversation around priorities. If we share our priorities, perhaps we discover that we all collectively share two or three of them that then could be worked on collectively. So, I'm going to leave it there and hope and pray that this commitment is kept.

Commissioner Stites said I think what's important to note, those people that were here in 2015 are no longer here. They made that commitment and there's a reason they're no longer here because they didn't continue to do what they said they were going to do. **Ms. Saunders** said okay, we don't want heads to explode here.

Commissioner Davis, do you want to have a final—you get the closing remarks.



Commissioner Davis said well, yeah, not the final, final, the Mayor gets the final, final, but first I do want to say thank you to Commissioner Ramirez, Commissioner Markley, Commissioner McKiernan, and Commissioner Bynum. When we started to have this discussion it was back in September I believe where we said, you know what, we made a commitment to our community, to taxpayers, that after the 2023 Budget was passed we would do this work for 2024, that we would not wait, even with the search for a permanent County Administrator, we would not wait. We would get this work done as the ship was moving and so thank you all for that.

We have the new statement, which yes, it needs to be worked out, but I think that is something that we all have really contributed, so I think we can be proud of it even though it is a little wording. We've had probably, I would say, the most honest conversation about our disagreements and that is where good governance is going to come from is for us to talk about the sales tax and talk about revenue neutral, and talk about all of these things in a way that is going to be productive, in a way that's going to better our community and so I thank you all for taking up the time to be honest and to have these conversations.

The kind of next step forward is to kind of huddle with those other commissioners and see kind of what we want to do, whether or not we want to do this again or whether or not we want to kind of wait until that permanent County Administrator is appointed, but I believe when I say

this, we will not rest—I will not rest until we get a better budget and until we get a plan to fix that forecast and to fix where our community is going. I just want to thank you all for taking the time and thank you Shockey Consultants and I know you're not Sheila, but for coming out and leading out this process. I thought this was excellent so thank you.

Ms. Saunders said, Mayor Garner, I think you get to dismiss everyone.

Mayor Garner said thank you and thank you, commissioners, thank you staff, thanks to our facilitators. I think this is our last time with you. Let's give them a round of applause. Really, I would just like to give a big shoutout to our Commission. We can always look back and talk about could of, should of, would of, but what I'm seeing now is really—and Commissioner Davis said it, we're having real conversations and we're looking forward thinking because we do have some huge challenges ahead of us.

I'm always one, I like to involve the community, that's just my background. I believe that everything we do should be community-driven to a certain extent and use that information to make informed decisions that are final and that's something this Commission has to do. With that being said, I know that I would like to also applaud the commissioners that were mentioned for bringing this issue forward. I know it had been mentioned and so it's good that we're getting ahead of this conversation early on.

One thing I would like to do as far as the next step, and I know this process is going to be ongoing, I would like to at least once a month continue to have these budget conversations move forward so we can start doing the real work. We need to have conversations about efficiencies committee or another smaller committee that can look at some of these hard questions on what needs to be done and so those recommendations can be brought forward to our standing committee and to full commission so we can give direction to staff moving forward.

But, also, involving the community, I think I know one of the next things I'm going to do in January or February. I would like to have a public forum to allow the public to weigh into this conversation, to have that dialogue with them, to see what their priorities are, to see what their needs are, and to see what their requests for this Commission would be as we go through this process. I always like to have that door of opportunity for them to speak just as we speak candidly. At the end of the day we talk satisfaction and why we're really here. I'm not here for me. I'm not

here for anybody on this Commission as an elected body. I'm here and only here for the people of Wyandotte County and I always like to make sure that they have a voice in this process. That helps all of us get better, in my opinion, and it also helps this Commission make informed decisions. Anyway, thank you all for being here and for those that I don't see again, Merry Christmas to you, Happy Holidays and I'll take a motion to adjourn.

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

MAYOR GARNER ADJOURNED

THE MEETING AT 7:00 p.m.

Brett Deichler
Unified Government Clerk

dt