

**Tennessee Town NIA General Membership Meeting**  
**6:30 p.m., Monday; May 10, 2021**  
**Multipurpose Room, Faith Temple Church, 1162 SW Lincoln**

***The wearing of facial masks will be required for this meeting to help to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Seating will be socially distanced.***

TENTATIVE AGENDA:

- I. Welcome, Distribution of Smoke Detectors and Batteries
- II. Farewell to HCCI Executive Director Marilyn Stanley (see card)
- III. Adoption of Agenda (vote)
- IV. Approval of March 8, 2021 General Membership Meeting Minutes (vote; pgs. 2-5 of this meeting packet)
- V. Acceptance of Treasurer's Reports (vote; pg. 6)
- VI. Grocery Oasis Update (see pgs. 7-10)
- VII. Creating a Housing Nonprofit Specifically for Tennessee Town (like the SENT initiative; pg. 11)
- VIII. DREAMS Program, 2021 Goals (pg. 12)
- IX. 2021 CRC Tier-Two Initiative Ideas: King's Court, Housing Nonprofit, Vegetable Garden, Other Ideas
- X. Citizens Advisory Council Neighborhood Clean Up (pg. 12)
- X. Community Vegetable Garden at 1194 SW Lane Discussion
- XI. Old Business:
  - A. City Council: Karen Hiller
  - B. Citizen Advisory Council: Don Fortin
  - C. Property Maintenance (Code Compliance)
  - D. Community Policing
  - E. International Academy, Topeka JUMP, Momentum 2022 Updates
- XII. New Business:
  - A.
- XIII. Kudos:
  - A. Mothers' Day: What Mom's Mean to Us and Memorial Day: Remembering Those Who Sacrificed
- XIV. Announcements:
  - A. Neighborhood Relations Programs: (1) *Emergency Program*: Intended to help homeowners make repairs to immediate health or safety hazards, (2) *Accessibility Program*: Provides modifications to residential homes for owners or tenants with disabilities, (3) *Property Maintenance Repair Program*: Assists with repairs for low-income homeowners who need repairs to bring their homes up to code and make the home safe, livable, and healthy. All eligible households must have an active property maintenance violation and be on the deed of the property. For more info. or to apply, please call 785-368-3711.
  - B. TOTO first-time homebuyers' assistance program: The program helps low-income families purchase their first home through HUD funding. The program helps Topeka residents become homeowners by providing education, financing, and home rehabilitation by partnering with Housing and Credit Counseling Inc. For more info., please call 785-234-0217, ext. 317.
  - C. Habitat's Aging in Place Program: Available to individuals living in Shawnee County, age 60 or older, living at or below 60% of the area median income. Must be the home's owner and currently residing in the home. Addresses basic repairs on homes, which reduces the need for critical repairs and enables seniors to live autonomously and with dignity in their homes. Shawnee County Advocacy Council on Aging partnership, business partners and community donors make program possible. To apply, please call Habitat at 785-234-4322.
  - D. Next Meeting: 6:30 p.m., Mon., July 12, 2021, location to be announced (probably Faith Temple)
- XV. Adjournment

Tennessee Town on the Internet! Website: <http://tenntownnia.weebly.com> (all NIA meetings, activities posted) ●  
Nextdoor Tennessee Town: [https://tennesseetown.nextdoor.com/news\\_feed/](https://tennesseetown.nextdoor.com/news_feed/) ● E-Mail: [tenntown@yahoo.com](mailto:tenntown@yahoo.com)

Tennessee Town NIA General Membership Meeting  
6:30 p.m., Monday, May 10, 2021  
Multipurpose Room, Faith Temple Church, 1162 SW Lincoln

Minutes of March 8, 2021 General Membership Meeting

Attendees: President Michael Bell, Vice President Pat DeLapp, Secretary-Treasurer Sandy Lassiter, City Council Member Karen Hiller, TPD Ofc. Matt Wilson, Don Fortin, Emma Ray, Leroy Wedeking, Breakthrough House Exec. Dir. Steve Robinson, Bob Cockerham, and Jeanette Cockerham.

President Bell called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

City Council Report: Karen Hiller gave the report. She said the council's social service grants committee had determined that the transitions with grants had gone well.

The public health and safety committee was dealing with vegetation not being under code compliance, she said. Administrative solutions were being looked at instead of policy changes. She said the committee also was looking at homelessness issues.

Regarding Air BnBs, she said new rules regarding one in the Auburndale neighborhood were looked at that included imposing limits on parking.

She said the vacant property ordinance had been discussed. Pat DeLapp said SCLA President Steve Vogel had written a letter expressing concerns. Call 368-3161 to call with complaints.

Hiller said the city council was moving into capital budget time. The goal was not to exceed the preset budget cap. She talked about street projects and zoo expenses.

Regarding trail development, she said state grants were available that could be applied to county trail/street system connections and downtown to the Landon Trail. She said in the downtown master plan it had been proposed to make one side one lane for cars with a lane for bikes/pedestrians.

Hiller said work on the weir continued.

JEDO now had COVID dollars to distribute, she said.

She talked about Topeka United and mosaic partner pairs.

Abandoned Tires: DeLapp said he recently collected 32 tires and would do another collection in about a month.

He said he was concerned that while there was a fire at the former White Lakes and that the former Red Carpet Inn is wide open without being secured by the City, he had recently received 9 code letters for speaking out. He asked the NIA to write a letter of support of his efforts to pick up abandoned tires.

*Don Fortin motions that Pat DeLapp has collected more than 500 tires over the past year and he should be compensated (\$2 per tire collected with payment coming from property maintenance's budget) as he has been doing the job the City should be doing, discarding the City's code violation on tires collected as those tires were left over from a tire collection run DeLapp had made, writing a letter of support of DeLapp's efforts with the signatures of the NIA's officers, and that the NIA doesn't consider antique cars a nuisance. Ray seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*

Community Policing Report: Ofc. Matt Wilson gave the report. He said he could be contacted via email at mwilson@topeka.

He said that from January 1 through March 7, 2021, there had been 1 attempted murder crime; 5 type-one crimes, all property crimes; and 4 type-two crimes (2 assaults, 1 DUI, 1 drug offense); and 1 trespass and 2 vandalisms.

Wilson said changes to the community policing program should be evaluated and that federal stimulus funds for SSI/SSDI through Breakthrough House would be available.

Adoption of Agenda: *Emma Ray moved approval of the agenda with addition of Enhancement Program under CAC report. Donald Fortin seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*

Approval of January 11, 2021 NIA General Membership Meeting Minutes: *Fortin moved approval of the November 9, 2020 NIA general membership meeting minutes as presented. Ray seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*

Acceptance of Treasurer's Reports: *Fortin moved acceptance of the 2020 and 2021 NIA Operations/Communications reports and the March 8, 2021 Envista free-will donations report as presented. Leroy Wedeking seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*

Discussion of 2021 NIA Officers, NIA Citizens Advisory Council Representatives: Those in attendance said they were satisfied with how the January 11, 2021, elections had been conducted per City ordinance and its requirement for an NIA meeting quorum.

Citizens Advisory Council: Fortin gave the report. He acknowledged new Chair Susan McClacherty for the group's new bylaws. Bell said he wrote most of the ordinance revision. Fortin said he liked Vice Chair Kim Thompson's SWOT analysis and thought the body was moving in the right direction.

Regarding the possible return of the Enhancement Program, he said he supports it and remembers how much NIAs liked it before the City ended it. The old Enhancement Program encouraged volunteerism in the community through awarding points to people volunteering their time that could then be traded in at local home improvement vendors to purchase home improvement materials. It was a win-win as both community volunteerism and home improvements increased.

He and Bell are on a CAC committee working on identifying help agencies who could use volunteers and home improvement vendors who would want to provide materials. The home improvement vendors would be reimbursed through funds available through the City.

Old Business: Neighborhood Initiatives Work Group Report, "DREAMS" Initiative: Discussion occurred on the DREAMS initiative, which would become the policy to guide improvements in NIAs. 2 of its features are ending the SORT grant and replacing it with direct access for NIAs to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund and HOME funds on the housing side and the public works budget on the infrastructure side and removing neighborhood plans so that 2 plans/updates per year could be done instead of the 1 through the SORT.

Details of the initiative were included in meeting packets.

Old Business: Grocery Oasis Survey, Update: Bell gave the report. He said the Central Topeka Grocery Oasis's survey of Central Topeka residents was running at about 10% of surveys returned, well above the usual 5% for direct mail. He said more than 4,000 surveys had been mailed to 10 Central Topeka neighborhoods. Bell said that he expected that by the end of March the tallying of surveys would begin and information released thereafter.

He said efforts were continuing on identifying a site for the new store.

Old Business: Cornerstone Duplexes on Lane Street, Partnership with NIA, City of Topeka, Stormont-Vail and Habitat: Bell said the NIA had not been invited by Cornerstone of Topeka, Inc. to the Jan. 29, 2021, ribbon cutting of the new duplexes at 1131 and 1133 SW Lane even though it was the NIA and its \$75,000 from its 2017-2019 SORT grant that enabled their construction as well as other Cornerstone projects in other NIAs.. Bell said he would follow up to find out why the NIA was disrespected in that way. (Note: The failure to invite us was intentional. Bell asked City Manager Brent Trout for an apology from Cornerstone Board President Rev. Michael Kuner and Executive Director Chris Palmer. None has been forthcoming.)

Old Business: 12th Street Project: Bell included the following report in meeting packets:

The contractor, Bettis Asphalt, is starting work on Monday, March 1, on 12th between S. Kansas and SW Topeka Blvd., and Topeka to Western. The second phase in 2021 will be from Western to Washburn.

The contractor will have the road fully closed in work areas and will be working from Kansas to Washburn, generally east to west, over the course of this construction season. There are still a lot of utility relocations happening outside of this work area to the west, between Washburn and Gage, too. \

The 12th - Washburn to Gage segment is scheduled to be reconstructed in 2022. Here is some general information to get started:

- Contractor will use full closures of 12th as much as possible so If you use 12th to commute, please find an alternate arterial route, such as 10th or 17th. or If you live in the neighborhoods near any section of 12th, please find an alternate route from another direction, so that changes in closure areas do not catch you by surprise.
- Be observant of changing work zones. Coming Soon! 12th Street Website! We will post the link here on Nextdoor once it goes live. It will include a fly-through, weekly update, and other helpful information.

If you have any questions about the project, including accessing your dwellings, please contact Kristi Erickson, City of Topeka Project Manager, at 368-3842 or [kericksen@topeka.org](mailto:kericksen@topeka.org).

Old Business: Lane Garden Grants Update: Bell said he was continuing to look at grants through his signing up as a National Recreation and Parks Association member.

Old Business: Creating a Housing Nonprofit Specifically for Tennessee Town (like the SENT initiative) Discussion: Bell gave the report. He said that while everybody understands the changes the pandemic has brought to local housing providers like Habitat (as well as the NIA's treatment by Cornerstone), that NIAs still have challenges that they need to meet.

He suggested that Tennessee Town look at replicating the SENT program that has made solid progress on housing rehab and new construction in the Hi-Crest NIA. He said he would try to set up a meeting with SENT leadership and the NIA's executive committee to find out SENT's challenges and opportunities to serve its own residents. (Note: the NIA's executive committee met with Director Nikki Ramirez-Jennings and Board President Jonathan Sublet via Zoom on May 6.)

Old Business: International Academy: Sandy Lassiter said things were going well.

Old Business: Topeka JUMP, Momentum 2022: There were no reports.

New Business: 2nd Substantial Amendment to 2019 Consolidated Plan: Accepting an Additional \$587,924 in CDBG-COVID Funds: Information was shared in meeting packets on an additional \$587,924 in CDBG-CV funds to help with the COVID-related activities.

New Business: AGAPE Center of Hope Emergency Housing Report: Don Fortin gave the report. He said the Center worked to find housing for veterans. He said it had accessed the CRC's Tier-Two program for 501c(3) nonprofit status and that the group was looking for more grant writers.

He said a location for the housing the group currently was looked at was 27 acres just east of the former White Lakes Shopping Center (former trailer park). Fortin said the living units would be small and go for \$5,000. He said a \$20,000 grant could cover porta-potties, shower rentals with dryers. He said the units were easy to disassemble.

For more information, Fortin said people could contact him at [donald.fortin@washburn.edu](mailto:donald.fortin@washburn.edu) or 785-276-9999.

Kudos: Bell spoke about Black History Month and Tennessee Town's Part In It: "History" Page at NIA's website: <https://tenntownnia.weebly.com/> and Women's History Month.

Announcements: Neighborhood Relations Programs, TOTO first-time homebuyers' assistance program, Habitat's Aging in Place Program.

Next Meeting: 6:30 p.m., Mon., May 10, 2021, Location to be Announced (probably in the multipurpose room at Faith Temple).

Adjournment: Ray moved adjournment. DeLapp seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

The meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Tennessee Town NIA General Membership Meeting; 6:30 p.m., Monday, May 10, 2021  
 Multipurpose Room, Faith Temple Church, 1162 SW Lincoln

Treasurer's Reports for May 10, 2021 General Membership Meeting:

| <b>Tennessee Town NIA 2021 Operations and Communications Budget:</b> |                    |                                  |                   |                                |
|--|--------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Date</b>  | <b>Piece Count</b> | <b>Transaction Type</b>          | <b>Withdrawal</b> | <b>Balance</b>                 |
| 1-1-21   | ▶                  | ▶                                | ▶                 | <b>\$983.02 (same as 2020)</b> |
| 1-4-21   | 302                | Printing of Meeting Notice Cards | \$28.10           | <b>\$954.92</b>                |
| 1-4-21   | 302                | Postage for Meeting Notice Cards | \$78.52           | <b>\$876.40</b>                |
| 2-17-21  | 302                | Printing of Meeting Notice Cards | \$28.10           | <b>\$848.30</b>                |
| 2-17-21  | 302                | Postage for Meeting Notice Cards | \$78.52           | <b>\$769.78</b>                |
| 4-19-21  | 302                | Printing of Meeting Notice Cards | \$28.10           | <b>\$741.68</b>                |
| 4-19-21  | 302                | Postage for Meeting Notice Cards | \$78.52           | <b>\$663.16</b>                |
| <b>TOTALS:</b>   | ▶                  | ▶                                | <b>\$319.86</b>   | <b>\$663.16</b>                |

Treasurer's Report for May 10, 2021 General Membership Meeting: Envista Account

| <b>Tennessee Town NIA 2016-2021 Envista Account:</b> |   |                           |                 |
|--|---|---------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Date</b>  | <b>Transaction Type</b>                               | <b>Deposit/Withdrawal</b> | <b>Balance</b>  |
| 11-12-18   | Balance Check   | None                      | \$139.47        |
| First of the month going through 5-1-21              | Balance Checks:<br>Dividend of \$0.01 paid each time  | Deposit                   | \$139.78        |
| 1-15-20  | Cash Donation: Michael Bell<br>(to keep account open) | Deposit                   | \$5.00          |
| <b>TOTALS:</b>                                       | ▶   | ▶                         | <b>\$144.78</b> |

Grocery Oasis Update:

## **Central Topeka Grocery Oasis Group and GraceMed working on location for new grocery store**

Blaise Mesa, Topeka Capital-Journal  
Published 8:09 p.m. CT April 7, 2021



Sarah Flieder says she shops at gas stations or a Dollar General since there isn't a grocery store located near her house. Evert Nelson, The Capital-Journal.

Sarah Flieder has lived in central Topeka for the past six years and used to have easy access to groceries. That was before the Dillons store near her house closed in 2016.

"The closest place now is the Dollar General on 10th street," she said. "That is quite a bit of a walk."

Flieder and other Topekans in the area could have some relief if the Central Topeka Grocery Oasis Group has its way.

The group, which has advocated for central Topeka's grocery store needs in recent years, is working with GraceMed to try to build a store next to its building at S.W. 12th Street and Washburn Avenue.

Venus Lee, CEO of GraceMed, said the organization is still early in the planning process.



Walking back home with a bag of food and drinks from the gas station up the bloc, Sarah Flieder says she misses having the Dillons store , which closed in 2016. Evert Nelson/The Capital-Journal.

"Central Topeka Grocery Oasis Group and/or the grocery store owners would be responsible for building the facility on what is now our property," she said. "That is also up for negotiations, whether we lease or sell it."

The effort to get a grocery store in that area is years in the making after a Dillons store on 1400 S.W. Huntoon Ave. closed in 2016.

Marge Ahrens, chairwoman of the Central Topeka Grocery Oasis group, said Wednesday that no grocer has been selected. The group is discussing an agreement with GraceMed and will work with the city on planning and zoning.

Ahrens told The Topeka Capital-Journal that she knows people who have access to multiple major grocery stores near Wanamaker and hopes all parts of town can have that type of access.

"There are no places to get groceries," Ahrens said. "For persons in our neighborhoods, it becomes very serious."





A Dillards store used to be located in the building at 1400 SW Huntoon St. GraceMed is working with the Central Topeka Grocery Oasis Group on possible options to locate a store next door. Evert Nelson/The Capital-Journal.

Council member Hannah Naeger said the eastern border of District 6 was hit hard after the grocery store closed. She said access to fresh produce is lacking.

Fresh produce is also a priority for the grocery oasis group. They want to provide fresh food that is healthier than items found at convenience stores and fast food restaurants.

Council member Karen Hiller said the Dillards that closed years ago provided full-range groceries, a pharmacy, the ability to make utility payments and other “service desk” types of service. She said it had easy access to bus routes and even served as a social center for the community.

### **Downtown Topeka also wants grocery store**

A draft of the city’s Downtown Master Plan includes locations for a grocery store, which was one of the most requested amenities in future development.

A downtown Master Plan survey found that 36.5% of survey respondents want a grocery option.

Michael Bell, board member of the Central Topeka Grocery Oasis Group, said about 60% of Topeka is a food desert. He said the needs of downtown Topekans and the needs of central Topekans aren’t the same.



Michael Bell looks over notes before the start of a meeting to discuss the grocery oasis last year. Evert Nelson/The Capital-Journal.

He said the areas are demographically different and a downtown grocery store would still have transportation issues for central Topekans.

Bell said he wishes the city had intervened to build one in the core of Topeka. Naeger said it has been a long process to add the downtown grocery store to its master plan.

“Even if we are able to get our central Topeka grocery store up and running, and even if there is a downtown grocery store,” Bell said, “there is still a lack of service in the northern parts of East Topeka.”

*Photographer Evert Nelson contributed to this story.*

Creating a Housing Nonprofit Specifically for Tennessee Town (like the SENT initiative):

The NIA's executive committee (President Bell, Vice President DeLapp, and Secretary-Treasurer Sandy Lassiter) met with SENT Executive Director Nikki Ramirez-Jennings and Board President Jonathan Sublet on May 6 via GoogleMeets.

Jennings-Ramirez (J-R) said the group started out by recognizing and understanding the difference between harmful and helpful charity, teaching people not only to fish but to eventually own the pond. She said SENT stands for the holistic ("whole person") transformation of neighborhoods in Shawnee County.

J-R said there were 7 SENT core values:

1. Relocation (not to save people but to improve their lives)
2. Redistribution (equity)
3. Reconciliation (culture, recognize has been done)
4. Listening to the community
5. Leadership development
6. "Wholistic" approach
7. Empowerment (with dignity)

J-R said SENT's initiatives are education and housing (listening to community's needs and "cradle-to-the-grave" education).

Sublet spoke on business development. He said SENT wanted to launch entrepreneurs. On housing, he said SENT wanted to improve the curb appeal of houses in Hi-Crest, do rehabs and in-fill (the first new house in Hi-Crest in 60 years was completed in 2020).

Sublet said SENT acquired 15 properties in Hi-Crest. It's goal has been to sell 80% of them (returning them to the tax rolls) and keep 20% (making some money that SENT then could reinvest in its efforts). He said SENT stands opposed to the gentrification of Hi-Crest and if a SENT house has to be sold, then SENT has the right of 1st refusal.

Sublet said one of the 1st things to be done is to identify a realtor who understands the challenges and needs of an LMI neighborhood and who will full commit to it. He also suggested the following banks with which to establish working relationships:

- CoreFirst
- CapFed
- Community Bank
- Federal Home Loan Bank (although FHLB projects usually require a lot of houses to be considered)

He also suggested establishing partnerships. Bell said that the NIA already had partners including HCCI and GraceMed.

The 2 groups agreed to keep in touch and meet again in the near future. J-R said she would send SENT's business plan to Bell and Bell sent links to the TTNIA website and 2017 neighborhood plan update.

2021 DREAMS Goals:

Each year, each neighborhood is encouraged to come up with DREAMS – usually three, any category, ideally as SMART goals. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound.

We have a dream that \_\_\_\_\_  
We have a dream that \_\_\_\_\_  
We have a dream that \_\_\_\_\_

For example, "NIA X has a dream that we will complete five blocks of curb and gutter repair/replacement on Anyplace Street in our neighborhood before December, 2022."

Citizens Advisory Council Neighborhood Clean Up:



Upcoming Neighborhood Clean-Up Opportunities!

Keep America Beautiful has two days that Shawnee County residents (not businesses) can take advantage of:

**Free Landfill Day at Rolling Meadows, 7 a.m.-noon, Sat., June 19 and Free Yard Waste Disposal at Forestry Products Recycling from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. on July 17. The landfill is located at 7351 NW Highway 75. Inclement weather: June 27 will be the rain date for the Free Landfill day. Please call 246-0305 to verify. Forestry Products Recycle is located at 3431 SE 21st.**

ALL LOADS PICKED UP AT THE CURB BY TRUCK ON JUNE 19 must be covered, contain no tires, hazardous waste items or appliances that contain Freon, no e-waste or PCB containing items. One load per customer. Boards, carpeting must be cut into 4-foot lengths. All loads of trees, limbs, leaves, and grass should be covered and secured.

WEEKLY TRASH SERVICE can take care of most of your solid waste needs.

Shawnee County will collect up to 15 bags of trash plus the items placed in your trash receptacle. Ditch & Associates will pick up 10 bags. All bags need to weigh less than 40 pounds. There are also safe and efficient solutions for disposing of bulk (multiple) or bulky (large) items, but you will want to call them first or request a pickup online. Bulky items include appliances, furniture, mattresses, and other items too large to fit into your trash receptacle. You may need to remove doors or certain parts of your bulk or bulky items before you take them to the curb. Some items require safe prep prior to being picked up.

TO PREVENT INFESTATION, Shawnee County Waste Guidelines are mattresses/box springs, couches and recliners must be bedbug-free or they must be wrapped tightly and securely with plastic. Please do not place HAZARDOUS MATERIALS such as batteries, oil, anti-freeze, herbicides, outdated medications, insecticide/poisons, tires, empty aerosol cans, or paint into your trash receptacles or bags. There is a place for those items at the Household Hazardous Waste Facility located at 131 NE 46th. That facility is open from 7 a.m.-3 p.m., Mon.-Fri. Phone: 286-4381.

Up-to-date information on RECYCLING and RE-USE programs can be found at <https://kabtopsh.org/>.