

**Tennessee Town NIA General Membership Meeting**  
**6:30 p.m., Monday; May 8, 2023**  
**Buchanan Center, 1195 SW Buchanan**

*The wearing of facial masks will be encouraged for this meeting  
to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus.*

TENTATIVE AGENDA:

- I. Welcome, Distribution of Free Smoke Detectors and Batteries
- II. Adoption of Agenda (vote)
- III. Approval of Jan. 9 and March 13, 2023, General Membership Meeting Minutes (pg. 2-8 of meeting packet; vote)
- IV. Acceptance of Treasurer's Reports (pgs. 6-7; vote)
- V. Community Policing Report: TPD Ofc. Devon Long (10 minutes)
- VI. Property Maintenance Report: Shane Hoven (10 minutes)
- VII. City Council Report: Karen Hiller (10 minutes)
- VIII. 2023 Juneteenth Celebration Event (pg. 9; vote); 2023 Brown v. Board Event Update (to be held on May 13)
- IX. DREAMS 3 Application: King's Court Complex Improvements Update (pg. 9)
- X. Citizen Advisory Council Report: Don Fortin (10 minutes)
- XI. 1208 SW Munson Update: Vice President Pat DeLapp
- XII. Old Business:
  - A. Private-Public Partnership with Stormont Vail, the City of Topeka and GraceMed Update (pgs. 9-10)
  - B. Replicating the Hi-Crest NIA's SENT Initiative in Tennessee Town Update (pg. 10)
  - C. Pedestrian Mid-Block Lighting Update (pg. 10)
  - D. Lane Garden Update (pg. 10)
  - E. Central Topeka Grocery Store Update (pg. 11)
  - F. City-Wide Public Poverty Simulation Update (pg. 11)
  - G. International Academy Update: Sandy Lassiter
- XIII. New Business:
  - A. None
- XIV. Kudos:
  - A. To All of Our Student Graduates, Well Done!
  - B. Kudos from Attendees
- XV. Announcements:
  - A. Community Engagement 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 Housing Services at 785-368-3711.
  - B. Computers for Seniors; Lawn Moving Services: Contact Community Engagement at 785-368-0166 (Maria Anderson) or 785-368-3663 (Bianca Burnett).
  - C. 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.
  - D. Next Meeting: 6:30 p.m., Mon., July 10, 2023, Buchanan Ctr., 1195 SW Buchanan
- XVI. 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 8, 2023  
Buchanan Center Conference Room, 1195 SW Buchanan

Minutes of Jan. 9, 2023 General Membership Meeting

Attendees: President Michael Bell, Vice President Pat DeLapp, Secretary/Treasurer Sandra Lassiter, Citizen Advisory Council Rep. Don Fortin, Topeka City Council Karen Hiller, John Williams, Emma Ray, Mark Gibbs, Ann Streicher, Bob Cockerham, Zach Scott, Charles Zeatski (sp?).

President Bell called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m.

Election of 2023 NIA Officers: *Emma Ray moved to keep the same 2022 officers for 2023. Ann Strecker seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*

Community Policing Report: There was no TPD officer at the meeting to provide the report.

City Council Report: District One City Council Member Karen Hiller gave the report. She spoke about the HUD Consolidated Plan and the work she and District Two City Council Member Christina Valdivia-Alcala had done on the council's Public Health and Safety Committee regarding cracking down on LLCs and adding vegetation other than grass to the city's noxious weed policy. Hiller also discussed addressing retaliatory evictions and vacant properties. She said the 2022 lawn mowing program would be continued in 2023 and that pictures of good blocks would be taken and posted.

Strecker said the Topeka Housing Authority takes its time mowing the grass at the Tennessee Town Plaza Apartments.

Adopt of Agenda: *Donald Fortin moved adoption of the meeting's agenda as presented. Pat DeLapp seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*

Approval of the November 14, 2022 NIA General Membership Meeting Minutes: *Ray moved approval as presented. DeLapp seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*

Acceptance of NIA Treasurer's Reports: Bell said regarding the NIA's support budget that the City of Topeka had not finalized the printing and mailing expenses for the NIA's meeting notice cards, so an accounting of those expenses would delay that report.

Bell said that he was checking on the Envista free-will donation account, so that report would be delayed.

2023 NIA Goals Discussion: The following topics were discussed:

- Pedestrian mid-block lighting
- Lane Garden
- Document how well-kept the neighborhood is
- Pickleball and the NIA
- Public art, murals
- Tennessee Town history
- King's Court improvements
- Church's involvement
- Fund raising
- Historical collection at the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library's Topeka Room

Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) Report: Donald Fortin gave the report. He said a new chair, Historic Old Town NIA President Shemecha King Simms, had been elected. Fortin also discussed a design for a t-shirt and a CAC holiday celebration.

Old Business: Lane Garden Update: Bell said nothing had changed regarding Lane Garden and the refusal of the Shawnee County Commissioners to rectify intentionally leaving Lane Garden out of the 2012 city-county parks & rec merger. He said he was looking for legal representation to sue the county.

Old Business: Private-Public Partnership with Stormont Vail, the City of Topeka and GraceMed Update: Bell said the NIA had reapproached Stormont Vail regarding a public-private partnership to work on holistically addressing challenges in the NIA, from traditional challenges like housing (in possible partnership with SENT Topeka) and health care (including the GraceMed Clinic's support of a new, full-service grocery store). He said he would keep the NIA apprised regarding discussions.

Old Business: Central Topeka Grocery Store Update: According to Central Topeka Grocery Oasis (CTGO) Group Chair Marge Ahrens:

- We are "banking on" \$638,000 of Topeka ARPA money for highly energy efficient and environmentally safe refrigeration for a Central Topeka Grocery store
- We are in negotiations with GraceMed Health to lease one acre at the corner of 12th and Washburn for the store
- We are meeting with an architect who is certified in renewable energy construction and has built and modified grocery stores. He is researching zoning/building access issues.
- We have a draft of our Business Plan to be finalized in January
- We are hoping to hire someone/a business to act as our "administrator"

Bell said a nonprofit, co-op store model has been discussed.

Old Business: International Academy Update: Sandra Lassiter gave the report. She said 2 new families had come on board and that a Christmas celebration occurred with Coach Bob Cockerham and his wife, Janette, and the team.

New Business: 2023 HUD Consolidated Action Plan Budget and Priorities Report: Bell discussed recommendations he had made to the City's governing body, including the following:

- 1) Hiring another grant writer who would specifically work with Community Engagement, Planning and Development and Public Works/Utilities to find grants and other funding sources outside the Con Plan to address local challenges (certainly the City can find enough money to fund another FTE position if it chose to).
- 2) Public-Private Partnerships would cost the City very little to nothing and would bring local for-profits and non-profits on board as partners. It also would be a way for non-profits that don't pay property taxes to contribute (i.e. payment in lieu of taxes, or PILOT; or services in lieu of taxes, or SILOT).
- 3) A yearly review of the administrative expenses used to deliver Con Plan programming to make sure that as much of the Con Plan entitlement as is possible is actually going to programming geared to improving the lives of low- to moderate-income people and LMI neighborhoods.
- 4) And yes, a modest increase in Topeka's mill levy. It's far past the time that we understand that the needs of LMI neighborhoods and people are increasing while funds for those areas and populations are not. And it's far past the time that we look beyond the standard response when we need to identify additional funds: a sales tax increase. Those sales tax increases disproportionately hurt the very people the Con Plan is trying to help because those people typically spend more of their income on sales taxes than those who are better situated financially. But our city leaders historically have heard the voices of property owners magnified to 100 times their actual volume and have consistently refused to use this tool as they seek to make the city better for all of its inhabitants.
- 5) By bringing formerly vacant houses and lots back on the tax rolls, the City would recoup its expenditures at the back end of these processes by making the aforementioned investments at the front end of these processes. This is not a zero-sum proposition. This requires long-range thinking and planning instead of the immediate gratification most policy making seems to demand these days.

We can't keep kicking this can down the road. Your challenge to find funding does not end this discussion. What it should do is make the city's governing body more determined to find the funds. Drive through Old North, East, Central and Southeast Topeka and you'll see what I'm talking about.

6) “Regarding SORT, Tennessee Town was a SORT NIA for 2017-2019. Tennessee Town is probably the smallest NIA in Topeka geographically, and yet the 2 target areas within our neighborhood only encompassed 10 of the neighborhood's 16 square blocks. Targeting funds in Tennessee Town still left out about half of the neighborhood. That was, and is, one of the problems with targeting: limited impacts. The other concern is while one NIA/year "wins the lottery" with the SORT, the other NIAs, often with the same housing and infrastructure concerns, get worse. The DREAMS program would ANNUALLY hook EACH NIA into public works' department funds (not just SORT funds) for infrastructure projects and Affordable Housing Trust Fund dollars (in addition to HOME and other federal housing funds) for housing projects. Bigger pots of money, bigger impacts in more NIAs. (It might not solve all of the challenges in all of the NIAs, but it would at least stop the bleeding as additional programming and funding can be identified and it would do so for more than the SORT's one NIA/year.)

7) “One of the unfair benefits of the SORT, I believe, is how it limits the creation/update of neighborhood plans to SORT NIAs. Tennessee Town was able to update its 2001 plan, but it took 16 years to do so and ONLY because we were a SORT NIA for 2017-2019 (otherwise we might still be waiting). A document as important as the neighborhood plan, which sets priorities and goals and is formally codified by a vote of the city's governing body, should be made available more regularly to the city's NIAs. The DREAMS program recommends that the planning department can do 2 neighborhood plans/year, thereby cycling NIAs more quickly through either the initial plan or an update (instead of one/year with the SORT).”

8) Also, SORT ultimately pits NIA against NIA as the challenges in ALL NIAs either remain unchanged or get worse. DREAMS would enable each NIA to approach the City at the same time with their proposals. That is the way things operated before the SORT and the faulty paradigm of targeting funds was adopted as city policy.

9) The pandemic has seriously interfered with the ability of NIAs to meet regularly. It has been tough for some NIAs to get back on their regular meeting rotations as people are still wary about attending meetings. A portion of the Con Plan's funding should go to helping NIAs to do more outreach so that the involvement of their residents is maximized.

10) More funds for in-fill housing so that local housing providers can build more than a handful of homes per year when the need is far greater than that and so that the City can contribute more than just foundations for those new homes. Also, building “tiny houses” on foundations should be examined.

11) A separate line item within the Con Plan should be created for land acquisition and land banking should be codified as a city priority.

12) Release NIAs from the suburban notion that there has to be at least 50 feet of frontage to build a new home. In Central, East and Old North Topeka houses were built on 25-foot lots for decades. I used to live in a couple of them in Tennessee Town. There exist modern 25-foot house plans compatible with existing neighborhood architecture that the city could utilize and decrease the costs of new housing (smaller houses) in certain areas of the city.

13) More funds for housing rehabilitation. If the City is serious about getting to houses sooner, then it must find more housing rehab funds or those houses that it gets to sooner will just end up on the City's demolition list and an opportunity to expand the city's affordable housing stock will be lost.

14) Actually funding the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Let's not let go of the recent promises regarding this point. Let's finally follow through. The needs are increasing, not decreasing.

15) The City should pursue establishing the "Chamber of Commerce for NIAs" contained in the Neighborhood Element to the Comprehensive Plan 2025 and encourage small, local business development in the city's NIAs. I grew up in Central Topeka and small, locally owned business were everywhere. This ties in to walkability, sustainability (shorter vehicle trips) and other issues, too.

16) A greater policy and funding commitment to addressing Topeka's food deserts and its food/nutrition insecurity challenges. Sixty percent of our city is a food desert, as defined by the federal government. There are economic opportunities, as well as the obvious health opportunities, for Topeka's most socioeconomically challenged individuals, families and neighborhoods that can be addressed by prioritizing this issue. The recent ARPA allocation for food insecurity is a positive first step. Much more needs to be done to actually facilitate the construction of full-service grocery stores in our city's underserved areas.

17) A examination of the city's commitment to the periphery of Topeka at the exclusion of its foundational neighborhoods in Old North, Central, East, and Southeast Topeka. Progress has been made on this front. There's still room for more progress to be made.

18) A housing study, until recently, had not been conducted in Topeka since 1990. That's incredible. Actually it's despicable. Decisions had been made without this valuable research tool being used. Housing study updates should be conducted at least every 5 years, along with the city's Consolidated Strategic Plan.

Kudos: King Day Celebration on Jan. 16: Bell discussed the significance of King Day and mentioned that there were activities planned throughout the city to mark his birth.

Announcements: Community Engagement Programs, Computers for Seniors, TOTO first-time homebuyers' assistance program. Next Meeting: 6:30 p.m., Mon., March 13, 2023, Buchanan Ctr., 1195 SW Buchanan.

Adjournment: A motion was made to adjourn. The motion was seconded. The motion was approved.

### Minutes of March 13, 2023 General Membership Meeting

Attendees: President Michael Bell, Vice President Pat DeLapp, Secretary-Treasurer Sandra Lassiter, Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) Rep. Donald Fortin, CAC Chair ShaMecha King Simms, Topeka City Council Member Karen Hiller, Topeka Police Ofc. Devon Long, Property Maintenance Director John Schardine, Property Maintenance Officer Shane Hoven, Ann Striecher, Jami McAfee, Bob Cockerham, Mark Gibbs.

President Bell called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

PROPS Visits Tennessee Town: CAC Chair ShaMecha Simms introduced attendees to PROPS the Penguin. PROPS stands for "People Recognizing Other People Shining." He and Simms are visiting Topeka's NIAs "to be in community with them -- and honor all the work they do on behalf of their neighborhoods."

Community Policing Report: TPD Ofc. Devon Long: Ofc Long said Police reports- Officer Long spoke about the upcoming tax season and being cautious about mail. Also, he said catalytic converter thefts are on the rise. Long advised that with these and other theft issues attendees should make a TPD report.

Property Maintenance Report: Shane Hoven: Department Director John Schardine accompanied Hoven. Schardine said property maintenance would be at full staffing soon, or 6 inspectors. He said the new Housing Navigator, Ima Fauldo, was on board. Schardine said the focus now would be on working with homeowners with every new housing case, including helping them to qualify for grant money.

Regarding homeless encampments, Schardine said the EAS (Equity Access Shelter) initiative, within housing services, had been brought in to help the homeless and those transitioning from homelessness.

City Council Report: Karen Hiller gave the report. She spoke on the City's continued efforts with the "Change the Culture of Property Maintenance," including adding back in overgrown vegetation either in 2023 or 2024. Hiller said there were informational sessions to be held at :30 p.m. on Mar. 30, at the Central Park Community Center; at 11:30 a.m. on Apr. 3, at the Hillcrest Community Center; and at 5:30 p.m. on Apr. 10, at the Salvation Army.

Bell asked about the status of Housing Services Director Corrie Wright. Hiller said she had resigned effective sometime in March.

1208 SW Munson Report: Vice President Pat DeLapp: DeLapp introduced attendees to Jami McAfee. She and her husband, Antoine, recently bought 1208 SW Munson from Stormi Brewer. DeLapp said he thought the refurbishment of the house presented an opportunity for the NIA to publicize its efforts to save housing and support homeowners. He mentioned an event featuring painting and other activities for 10 a.m. on Sat., May 20. It also was suggested that the NIA write a letter to the city manager endorsing saving the house.

*Pat moved to hold the 1208 SW Munson event at the time and date suggested. Ann Streicher seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*

2023 Brown v. Board, Juneteenth Celebration Events: Regarding both events, Bell said they had come from 2023 NIA goals discussions about expanding the NIA's social footprint.

Regarding the Brown event, Bell said the NIA is hopeful that it can work with HCCI to stage a Brown v. Board recognition ceremony on Sat., May 13, at the Buchanan Center. The Buchanan Center was the logical location to hold the event because of its historical significance to the SCOTUS decision. If the weather permits that day, the event would be outdoors in front of the Buchanan Center. The NIA can take responsibility for setting up the event space. In the event of inclement weather, we'd have to stage it inside in the first-floor conference room.

(Note; Buchanan Center tenants HCCI and Cornerstone of Topeka both signed off on those arrangements.)

*Bell moved to authorize the NIA's Executive Committee to work with Donna Rae Pearson and the Brown Foundation, as well as other individuals and entities, to bring about the Brown v. Board recognition event on Sat., May 13, 2023 at a time yet to be determined at the Buchanan Center, 1195 SW Buchanan. Bob Cockerhan second the motion. The motion was approved.*

Regarding the Juneteenth event, discussion was deferred to the May 8, 2023, NIA meeting.

DREAMS 3 Application: King's Court Complex Improvements: Per the identified 2023 NIA goals, Bell said there would be a workshop from 6-8:30 p.m. On Wed., May 17, 2023, on applying for the DREAMS 3 funds for the improvements. He said he had reserved 4 spots for the NIA, 3 for its officers and 1 spot for CAC Rep. Don Fortin.

The NIA identified the following King's Court improvements:

- 2 benches to repair
- Add 2 more benches
- Murals beneath the benches
- 2 trash receptacles
- New play structure and matting
- Restriping the basketball courts

Simms said the Historic Old Town NIA would write a support letter for King's Court improvements.

According to the City's website, the DREAMS 3 program involves the "annual selection of multiple NIAs to receive between \$1,000 and up to \$50,000 in mini-grant funding. Total of \$200,000 in annual funding available (\$140,000 (GO Bond Funds) + \$60,000 (CDBG Funds)) for small infrastructure improvements, neighborhood beautification and community building grants."

Adoption of Agenda: *Fortin moved approval. Ann Streicher seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*

Approval of Jan. 9, 2023 NIA General Membership Meeting Minutes: Bell apologized for not having the minutes ready for approval. He said the Jan. 9 minutes would be presented with the March 13 minutes for approval at the May 8 meeting.

Acceptance of Treasurer's Reports: Note: GoBlue, the printer contracted by the City of Topeka to print and mail the meeting notice cards, has decided to no longer do so. GoBlue was the printer through June 20, 2022. The figures for the next report regarding printing and mailing may be different because a new printer may be identified by then.

Update: From Community Engagement Director Monique Glaude, March 10, 2023:

"2022 year-end Budget report

"We are still reconciling purchases as there were a number of large purchases made in December and final invoices are still being confirmed. For now, we have shifted focus to 2023, since there are several new changes, and it is important to get everyone up to speed and ready to use their 2023 funding in a more effective manner. The final budget report for 2022 will be sent out in early April.

"2023 cost for mailing and printing

"We now have two vendors, a printing vendor, and a mailing and pre-sort vendor. We are working to finalize the neighborhood mailing lists for more accurate mailing address totals so that we have good addresses and numbers to provide them. We plan to have the lists finalized within the next week and we will be meeting with both vendors in the coming weeks to confirm pricing with the updated lists. Once we have that information, we will be able to provide the NIAs with better totals and costs."

The NIA has been allocated \$983.02 in support budget funds for 2023, the same amount as the past several years. There have been no official expenditures from those funds so far in 2023, although the printing and mailing expenses for the meeting notice cards for the NIA's March 13 meeting will be deducted as soon as the questions listed above can be answered.

Envista Free-Will Donation Report for May 8, 2023 General Membership Meeting: DeLapp deposited \$20 into the account since the March 13 NIA meeting to keep the account open. The new balance will be provided at the July 10, 2023, NIA meeting. No withdrawals ever have been made on this account.

2023 NIA Goals Discussion: Bell provided a recap of discussions from the Jan. 9 NIA meeting.

Citizen Advisory Council Report: Don Fortin: Fortin discussed the CAC mission statement, PROPS the Penguin, community engagement programming status updates, John Schardine's visit, and various neighborhood projects.

Fortin also agreed to be the NIA's National Night Out Coordinator again this year after representing well the NIA in 2022.

Old Business: Private-Public Partnership with Stormont Vail, the City of Topeka and GraceMed Update: Bell said an electronic meeting had been scheduled with Stormont Vail to discuss a public-private partnership between the health-care provider and the NIA for 3:30 p.m. on Tue., April 25, 2023.

This partnership could take on the shape of the one started in Columbus, OH years ago. Here's a link to that initiative: <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/about-us/population-health-and-wellness/healthy-neighborhoods-healthy-families#:~:text=The%20HNHF%20initiative%20targets%20five%20impact%20areas%3A%20affordable,it%20can%20improve%20community%2C%20family%20and%20individual%20wellbeing>. Our NIA met via teleconference with Nationwide Children's Hospital and City of Topeka representatives in 2015 regarding this effort. All parties were supportive of replicating it in Topeka.

Old Business: Replicating the Hi-Crest NIA's SENT Initiative in Tennessee Town Update: Bell said an electronic meeting had been set up with SENT Topeka for 8-10 a.m. on Thu., May 4, 2023.

SENT Topeka would primarily be a housing partner with the NIA, but also would work with the NIA on other issues.

(Note: Because of a leadership change at SENT Topeka, the meeting was cancelled but will be rescheduled.)

Old Business: Pedestrian Mid-Block Lighting Update: Bell said an electronic meeting should be set up with Public Works Director Braxton Copley Tue., April 4, 2023.

Old Business: Lane Garden Update: Bell said he had sent out multiple times a request for emails to be sent to the Shawnee county commissioners and the county clerk indicating support for bringing Lane Garden under the county's jurisdiction and rectifying a years-old exclusion of Lane Garden from the city-county parks and recreation consolidation, which put parks and rec under the county.

So far, 18 individuals, including former District One City Council Member Duane Pomeroy, and one NIA (Historic Old Town) have sent support emails to the aforementioned county contacts. If attendees have yet to send a support email, please let Bell know and he'll get the script for the email to them.

Bell also has contacted multiple law firms about a potential civil action against the county. Bell will keep the NIA apprised of what happens.

Old Business: Central Topeka Grocery Store Update: Central Topeka Grocery Oasis (CTGO) Group Chair Marge Ahrens provided this update:

The Central Topeka Grocery Oasis (<https://www.centraltopekagro.com/>) is scheduled to sign a lease agreement with the GraceMed Health Clinic this week! Next, the group will put together a committee to create a celebration event for our neighbors and friends. If there are Tennessee Town residents who would like to help plan and execute the celebration event, please let Bell know.

Old Business: 12th Street Update: Most recently 12th Street was/is closed at SW Clay in Tennessee Town and at SW Western in the Historic Holliday Park NIA.

Recently the property owner at 1201 SW Lincoln took photos of how the project had taken out her walkway to Lincoln. Bell intervened. His intervention helped make the City come out to replace said walkway. Unfortunately, the City didn't fill in the grassy areas to either side of its work, which were there before the original walkway was taken out. The City has promised to come back out to fill in those grassy areas.

(Note: The City did return to fill in the grassy areas.)

Old Business: International Academy Update: Sandy Lassiter: She said things were going well and that the children were on spring break.

New Business: Greater Topeka Partnership Poverty Simulation, Spring Public Poverty Simulation Update: Bell said due to his efforts to stage a city-wide poverty simulation, the Greater Topeka Partnership (GTP) held a poverty simulation retreat for its members only on Jan. 27, 2023 (<https://www.wibw.com/2023/01/27/community-programs-bring-attention-poverty-crisis-with-simulation/>).

On Jan. 30, GTP Director Matt Pivarnik sent the following email to Bell:

“Michael,

“Thank you for this recommendation. The staff at the Greater Topeka Partnership participated in a poverty simulation on Friday. K-State Research and the United Way administered the simulation for us, and we had several volunteers help out, including folks from the Community Action Project.

“It was eye-opening, sobering, and educational. Our team appreciated the experience. Many on our team experience poverty in their younger lives and it triggered emotions.

“Again....appreciate you so much for recommending we do this, brother.”

Plans are underway to stage a city-wide poverty simulation open to the public for later this spring, coordinated through the City Department of Community Engagement, the Citizen Advisory Council, the Kaw Area United Way and the Northeast Kansas Community Action Program (NEKCAP). Bell is involved in those efforts and will keep all posted on what's happening.

Kudos: March is Women's History Month: Bell thanked the ladies for their contributions to their communities, including locally, state-wide and nationally.

Announcements: Community Engagement Programs, Computers for Seniors, TOTO first-time homebuyers' assistance program. Next Meeting: 6:30 p.m., Mon., May 8, 2023, Buchanan Ctr., 1195 SW Buchanan.

Adjournment: Fortin moved adjournment. Streicher seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

The meeting adjourned at 9:41 p.m.



Tennessee Town NIA General Membership Meeting  
6:30 p.m., Monday, May 8, 2023  
Buchanan Center Conference Room, 1195 SW Buchanan

Juneteenth Event Arrangements, Vote: After initially looking at a Sat., June 10, 2023, date, moved to 3:30 p.m. to accommodate other Juneteenth activities that day, now the NIA is looking at Mon., June 19, 2023, at a time yet to be determined, to work with other groups holding Juneteenth activities that day. The NIA's theme for its Juneteenth event is "What Does the Official End of Slavery Mean in 2023?"

Two speakers, Courtland Davis (<https://www.facebook.com/courtland.davis.39>) and ShaMecha King Simms (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100087980467244>) have been identified. The NIA has a 3rd speaker in mind and is communicating with him. Faith Temple's Christine Smith has agreed to facilitate the event, which is set to be held in front of the Black History Museum at 1149 SW Lincoln (formerly the Colored Women's Club-house).

**NOTE: Motion: We authorize the NIA's Executive Committee to work with Christine Smith, as well as other individuals and entities, to bring about the Juneteenth recognition event at a time and on a date yet to be determined at the Black History Museum, 1149 SW Lincoln.**

DREAMS 3 Application: King's Court Complex Improvements: Bell said there would be a workshop from 6-8:30 p.m. On Wed., May 17, 2023, on applying for the DREAMS 3 funds for the improvements. He said he had reserved 4 spots for the NIA, 3 for its officers and 1 spot for CAC Rep. Don Fortin.

The NIA identified the following King's Court improvements:

- 2 benches to repair
- Add 2 more benches
- Murals beneath the benches
- 2 trash receptacles
- New play structure and matting
- Restriping the basketball courts

Stormont Vail-NIA Public-Private Partnership Meeting Report and Update: Bell and DeLapp met electronically with Stormont Vail's VP of Clinical Integration Amy Kincade and Community Engagement Director Karla Hedquist on a potential public-private partnership that might also include the GraceMed Health Clinic and SENT Topeka.

Here is what Bell prepared for the meeting:

Goals:

To bring the three major players together with the City of Topeka to work to holistically improve an adjacent low-to moderate-income neighborhood, Tennessee Town, just as Nationwide Children's Hospital (NCH) in Columbus, OH, worked with the City of Columbus and an adjacent low- to moderate-income neighborhood to improve it through NCH's "Healthy Neighborhoods, Healthy Families" initiative (<https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/about-us/population-health-and-wellness/healthy-neighborhoods-healthy-families>). To continue discussions through the following tentative timetable:

Year One:

Work out through discussions what the immediate priorities will be among a plethora of challenges, including (but not limited to) housing rehabilitation and new construction, infrastructure (streets, alleys, sidewalks, curbs/gutters, lighting), the Central Topeka food desert and food and nutrition insecurity (working with the Central Topeka Grocery Oasis Group, which is involved in the construction of the new Central Topeka grocery store and is a GraceMed partner in that effort), park improvements and creation, crime and safety, the challenges of our senior neighbors, and historic preservation.

Year Two:

Work out through discussions what the specific responses will be for the challenges identified during year one and who the players will be regarding creating opportunities to ameliorate or solve those challenges.

Also, to invite in other Central Topeka neighborhoods, namely the Historic Old Town and Elmhurst neighborhoods, as they both border Stormont Vail and have many of the same challenges as Tennessee Town.

Years Three Through Five:

Implement and assess a multi-point plan created at the end of year two to address challenges.

Partners:

- 1) Tennessee Town NIA
- 2) Stormont Vail Health
- 3) GraceMed Capital Clinic (on board right now with the new grocery store to be built on land it owns and is leasing at SW 12th and Washburn)
- 4) SENT Topeka
- 5) Central Topeka Grocery Oasis Group (CTGO)
- 6) City of Topeka (city manager and the community engagement, planning and development and public works/utilities departments)
- 7) Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library
- 8) Community First, Inc.
- 9) Doorstep, Inc.
- 10) Housing and Credit Counseling, Inc.
- 11) Cornerstone of Topeka, Inc.
- 12) The Five Neighborhood Churches (Asbury-Mt. Olive, Faith Temple, Lane Chapel, Shiloh Baptist, The First Church of the Nazarene)
- 13) Topeka Housing Authority
- 14) Topeka Habitat for Humanity
- 15) Penwell-Gabel Funeral Homes, Crematory and Cemeteries
- 16) ArtsConnect of Topeka

All the parties agreed to meet again electronically in late May 2023 to keep discussing the partnership.

Replicating the Hi-Crest NIA's SENT Initiative in Tennessee Town Update: Because of a leadership change at SENT Topeka, the meeting scheduled for ? was cancelled but will be rescheduled.

Pedestrian Mid-Block Lighting: Bell and DeLapp electronically met with Public Works Director Braxton Copley and staff at 2:30 p.m. on Tue., April 4, 2023. Discussions at that meeting included:

- Looking at solar-powered pedestrian lighting grants through the US Dept. of Energy and other grantors
- Looking at lights that primarily illuminate sidewalks and not streets
- There are 2 RFPs for residential lighting right now (NIA agreed that it might be too soon to apply right now; it just wants to be moving ahead on applying soon)
- Copley suggested driving by the lights at SW 4th and Taylor, where a trial project is underway

Because the City has told us that an NIA is not a "philanthropic organization" [apparently meaning a 501c(3) entity], Community First, Inc. has stepped up so that the NIA can use its 501c(3) nonprofit, philanthropic status to submit funding applications for the solar-powered mid-block lighting (there are funds available at least through the federal Department of Energy). The project still would be created by and done on behalf of the NIA.

Lane Garden Update: Bell is working on a new tack regarding finally enabling the NIA to make improvements. He will keep all posted as things progress.

Central Topeka Grocery Store Update: Central Topeka Grocery Oasis (CTGO) Group Chair Marge Ahrens has provided this report:

There is much work in process by our volunteer Board and partners:

- Evaluation of issues related to land lease, to signage and administrative costs
- Development and completion of a position description for project manager
- Architectural and engineering analysis of solar and geothermal inputs and projected energy costs
- Fundraising planning: meetings with partners, website "Donate" button and QR code.
- Completion of proforma ( costs to a grocer of running the store) for potential grocers
- Search for a grocer

Topeka Poverty Simulation Update: The CAC's effort to stage a community-wide poverty simulation has been moved to later this year. The poverty simulation would be staged after a successful Greater Topeka Partnership-only simulation in January.

According to the Missouri Community Action Network (MCAN; <https://www.povertysimulation.net/about/>), "poverty is a reality for many individuals and families. But unless you've experienced poverty, it's difficult to truly understand. The Community Action Poverty Simulation (CAPS) bridges that gap from misconception to understanding. CAPS is an interactive immersion experience. It sensitizes community participants to the realities of poverty.

From MCAN: CAPS is not a game. It is based on real Community Action clients and their lives. CAPS exists to:

**Promote Poverty Awareness:** During the simulation, role-play a month in poverty and experience low-income families' lives.

**Increase Understanding:** After the simulation, you will unpack your learning and brainstorm community change.

**Inspire Local Change:** Together, you can be a voice to end poverty in your family, friends and community.

**Transform Perspectives:** The goal of CAPS is to shift the paradigm about poverty away from being seen as a personal failure and toward the understanding of poverty as structural, a failure of society.

And, most importantly, the poverty simulation is an opportunity for Topeka to identify and address those structural challenges so that we're moving forward on lessening poverty in our neck of the woods. A poverty simulation can set the stage and provide the soundtrack for all of the other work Topeka's LMI advocates do.