

**Tennessee Town NIA General Membership Meeting**  
**6:30 p.m., Monday, November 9, 2015, Buchanan Center Conference Room, 1195 SW Buchanan**

TENTATIVE AGENDA:

- I. Welcome
- II. Guest: Spencer Lindsay, Working Men of Christ Ministries, Inc.
- III. Adoption of Agenda
- IV. Approval of September 14, 2015 General Membership Meeting Minutes (pgs. 2 - 3 of meeting packet)
- V. Reading and Acceptance of Treasurer's Report (pg. 4)
- VI. Reports of Officers, Committees (pg. 5 - 6)
- VII. Community Policing Report: TPD Officer Michael Diehl
- VIII. Property Maintenance Report: Dennis Boyles
- IX. Citizens Advisory Council (CAC) Report: Donald Fortin
- X. City Council Report: Karen Hiller
- XI. Old Business (by 7 p.m.):
  - A. Acquisition of 1192, 1194 SW Lane; Neighborhood Empowerment Grant Submission
  - B. Habitat for Humanity Partnership
    1. In-Fill Housing in First 1200 Block of SW Buchanan
    2. Habitat's Plan to Come to Tennessee Town and Elmhurst for More Activities in 2016
  - C. Thanksgiving and Holiday Party Discussions
  - D. Aaron Douglas Art Fair Report
  - E. Tennessee Town Mural Report
  - F. International Academy in Tennessee Town Update: Sandy Lassiter
- XII. New Business:
  - A. Emergency Preparedness Workshop: Sandy Lassiter
  - B. Neighborhood Leaders' Roundtable Report
    1. 10 Tennessee Town Addresses to Put on City's Demolition List
  - C. 2015 Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce "Expedition Tour" Report
  - D. 2016 NIA Goals Discussion
- XIII. Kudos: Recognizing the Good News and Deeds of Our Neighbors and Friends:
  - A. Pat DeLapp and His Efforts with the Disposal of Tires in the Area
- XIV. Announcements:
  - A. Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging: Medicare Part D Enrollments, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.; Sat., Nov. 21 and Sat., Dec. 5; 2910 SW Topeka Blvd. No appointments necessary. Medicare beneficiaries must bring their Medicare card and a list of their prescription drugs. JAAA has Medicare trained staff and volunteers to provide unbiased information on insurance options. Medicare Part D enrollment and counseling assistance is provided at no cost, however donations are accepted.
  - B. 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. For more info. or to apply, please call 785-368-3711
  - C. Next Meeting: 6:30 p.m., Mon., January 11, 2016, Buchanan Center, 1195 SW Buchanan
- 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) ● Twitter: [@tenntown](https://twitter.com/tenntown)

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Minutes of September 14, 2015 General Membership Meeting:

Attendees: President Michael Bell, Vice President Pat DeLapp, Secretary-Treasurer Sandra Lassiter, Topeka Police Dept. Ofcs. Michael Diehl and C. Purney, Marge Heeney, Rachael Ann Geriecher (Jones), Emma Ray, Joyce Revely, Karen Hiller, John Williams, and Leroy Wedeking.

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

Pat DeLapp moved adoption of the agenda. Emma Ray seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Ray moved adoption of the July 13, 2015 NIA general membership meeting minutes. DeLapp seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

DeLapp moved acceptance of the Treasurer's Report. Sandy Lassiter seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Attendees were directed to review the Report of Officers contained in the meeting packet.

Officers Michael Diehl and C. Purney gave the community policing report. The crime reports since the July 13 NIA meeting were distributed. Dillon's is a hot spot for shoplifting and burglaries. Regarding the aggravated battery at the Tennessee Town Plaza Apartments, they said it was isolated to a certain tenant. Ofc. Matthew Blassingame, the NIA's former community police officer, now handles Topeka Housing Authority properties like Tennessee Town Plaza. The officers said there hadn't been anything going on at the smoke shop and liquor store at SW Huntoon. To contact Ofc. Diehl, call his cell at 217-8361. To contact Ofc. Purney, call 368-9200.

There was no Property Maintenance report.

There was no Citizens Advisory Council report.

Councilwoman Karen Hiller shared on neighborhood watch and county one-cent tax. Streets should come first with tax money as the citizens voted. Discussion occurred on illegally (public nuisance) parked cars. It is intended to be a minimum standard code. Hiller said a new property maintenance officer had been on duty for about two weeks. To contact Hiller, call 232-2917.

Michael Bell spoke on the NIA's Neighborhood Empowerment Grant submission for Lane Garden Improvements. He said a citizens' review committee would review submissions and make recommendations to the City Council later this year. Regarding acquiring the two properties north of Lane Garden, at 1192 and 1194 SW Lane, he said things were moving forward with the property owner.

Ray reported on National Night Out. She said she was pleased with the NIA and how things turned out for this year's celebration, but she said she would love to have more support from churches and neighborhood residents.

Lassiter reported on the International Academy. She said it's up and going well, most recently establishing its Lawrence Virtual School. She said classrooms on the north side of Faith Temple had been inspected and okayed for use, where there are currently 12 students. International Academy website: <http://www.iatks.com/>. On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TheInternationalAcademy/>

Bell reported on the “Tennessee Town Talks” oral history event. He said nearly 10 people attended and had a great time discussing the neighborhood’s history. Vern McFalls videographed the event, which will be posted in various media.

Bell said partnership discussions with Stormont -Vail had ended after the NIA could not satisfy the demands made of it by its Stormont-Vail contact, David Cunningham, to move the partnership forward.

Bell said Topeka Planning Director Bill Fiander wanted input from Tennessee Town on the City’s Pedestrian Master Plan -Sidewalks. Bell presented a proposal that established the NIA’s priorities. DeLapp moved to adopt Bell’s plan. Lassiter seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Regarding in-fill housing in the first 1200 block of SW Buchanan, Bell said Shiloh has agreed to donate lots south of the church’s parking lot for two new Habitat houses. Also, he said Habitat has a holistic neighborhood initiative in the works and Tennessee Town will likely be considered as a partner. Shiloh Pastor D.C. Clark has established that the church’s parsonage will be demolished. The NIA and the City have identified funds to enable the demolition.

Lassiter moved to secure a dumpster(s) on Oct. 10 on city property for the NIA’s neighborhood cleanup. DeLapp seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Discussion occurred on the NIA’s operations/communications budget moving to the end of 2015. Have a balance of \$1,555.92 as of this meeting. Have 2 more meeting notice cards to mail and the Holiday Party.

Hiller reported on the Aaron Douglas Art Fair, to be held on Sept. 26. The Art Fair will celebrate its 10th anniversary this year. Asbury-Mt. Olive’s Young Lions will volunteer. She said she expected about 50 diverse and emerging artists to attend and that music, dance, stage activities and interactive art would be featured.

Bell said the Tennessee Town mural, on the south wall of 1238 SW Lane, was nearing completion. He said he would notify the NIA if a ceremony was scheduled.

Bell reported on and provided photos of the defacement of the markers in front of the Buchanan Center. He said he took the photos of the defacement on Sep. 8 and reminded attendees that the price of equality is eternal vigilance.

Bell gave kudos to Faith Temple’s Rev. Ronald Lassiter for his service to the church and community as he retires and to Hiller and the District One Crime Summit (another Summit is slated for March 2016; the completed Summit’s final report is available at [www.topeka.org/HND/CommunityEngagement.shtml](http://www.topeka.org/HND/CommunityEngagement.shtml)).

Announcements regarding the Fraternal Order of Police’s Golf Tourney and Neighborhood Relations’ programs were mentioned.

Next meeting: 6:30 p.m.; Monday, Nov. 9, 2015; Buchanan Center.

Joyce Revely moved adjournment. Lassiter seconded the motion. The motion was approved. The meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

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Treasurer's Report for November 9, 2015 General Membership Meeting:

| <b>Tennessee Town NIA 2015 Operations and Communications Budget:</b> |                                |  |                   |                   |
|--|--------------------------------|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Date</b>  | <b>Piece Count</b>             | <b>Transaction Type</b>  | <b>Withdrawal</b> | <b>Balance</b>    |
| 1-1-15   | ▶                              | ▶  | ▶                 | <b>\$2,000.00</b> |
| 2-20-15  | 300                            | Printing of Meeting Notice Cards (\$0.05 each)                         | \$22.05           | \$1,977.95        |
| 2-20-15  | 300                            | Postage for Meeting Notice Cards                                       | \$78.97           | \$1,898.98        |
| 4-8-15   | 300                            | Printing of Meeting Notice Cards (\$0.05 each)                         | \$22.05           | \$1,867.93        |
| 4-8-15   | 300                            | Postage for Meeting Notice Cards                                       | \$78.97           | \$1,797.96        |
| 4-27-15  | 300                            | Printing of Meeting Notice Cards (\$0.05 each)                         | \$22.05           | \$1,775.91        |
| 4-27-15  | 300                            | Postage for Meeting Notice Cards                                       | \$78.97           | \$1,696.94        |
| 6-26-15  | 300<br>(NIA mtg, T-Town Talks) | Printing of Meeting Notice Cards (\$0.09 each)                         | \$27.00           | \$1,669.94        |
| 6-26-15  | 300<br>(NIA mtg, T-Town Talks) | Postage for Meeting Notice Cards                                       | \$80.43           | \$1,589.51        |
| 7-7-15   | 1                              | KS Secretary of State Incorporation Fee (nonprofit status)             | \$40.00           | \$1,549.51        |
| 8-10-15  | 1                              | National Night Out: Carnival Guy (Inflatable)                          | \$175.00          | \$1,374.51        |
| 8-10-15  | 1                              | Basketball Tourney: Generator  | \$46.00           | \$1,328.51        |
| 8-10-15  | 1                              | National Night Out: Darnall's (Face Painting, Clowns, Games, Balloons) | \$200.00          | \$1,128.51        |
| 8-31-15  | 300                            | Printing of Meeting Notice Cards (\$0.05 each)                         | \$15.00           | \$1,113.51        |
| 8-31-15  | 300                            | Postage for Meeting Notice Cards                                       | \$80.43           | \$1,033.08        |
| 9-25-15  | 300<br>(Neighborhood Cleanup)  | Printing of Meeting Notice Cards (\$0.05)                              | \$15.00           | \$1,018.08        |
| 9-25-15  | 300<br>(Neighborhood Cleanup)  | Postage for Meeting Notice Cards                                       | \$80.43           | \$937.65          |
| 10-26-15   | 301<br>(Added 1 recipient)     | Printing of Meeting Notice Cards (\$0.05)                              | \$15.05           | \$922.60          |
| 10-26-15   | 301<br>(Added 1 recipient)     | Postage for Meeting Notice Cards                                       | \$80.70           | \$841.90          |
| <b>TOTALS:</b>   | ▶                              | ▶  | <b>\$1,158.10</b> | <b>\$841.90</b>   |

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6:30 p.m., Monday, September 14, 2015  
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Reports of Officers:

A. Aaron Douglas Art Fair:

Bell attended the event, which was held from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. on Sat., Sep. 26, at SW 12th and Lane Sts.

B. 2015 Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce "Expedition Tour" Report:

Bell and DeLapp attended the Tour of Tennessee Town at 1:15 p.m. on Fri., Oct. 9. The Chesney Park and Oakland NIAs also were toured. Topeka Chamber Interim President/CEO Curtis Sneden said this about the tour: "(It) is part of a larger two-day event called Expedition Topeka 2015," he said. "Our 45 or so attendees will see a number of things and engage in several discussions about Topeka's present and future. Our goal is to give them a fresh set of eyes with which to view their own town. We also hope the attendees will come away a tangible sense of optimism about the future and some clear ideas about what next steps they might want to take-up in getting us there."

Regarding Tennessee Town, Sneden said, "I am hopeful that you will be able to talk to the people on our bus a little bit about the history, some of what gives Tennessee Town its distinctive flavor and things you are doing to improve it, (including) examples of how SORT monies have been deployed...."

The Tennessee Town tour included points of historical significance, like its founding in 1879 by former slaves from Tennessee who came to Topeka as part of the Exoduster Movement, the Buchanan Center, the NIA's five churches, the Colored Women's Clubhouse/Living the Dream, Inc. headquarters, various examples of housing that dates back to the beginning of the 20th century, and the old ice house in the first 1100 block of SW Buchanan. More recent points of interest, like the Tennessee Town mural at SW Huntoon and Lane Sts, the Aaron Douglas Art Park, the plans for expanding Lane Garden at SW 12th and Lane Sts, the King's Court basketball and playground complex at SW Lincoln and Munson Sts, the International Academy classrooms at Faith Temple Church and the upcoming building at SW 12th and Lincoln Sts, the SORT efforts in the first 1200 block of SW Lincoln and the partnerships the NIA forged with the City and Habitat for Humanity that turned around that block, the location of two new Habitat homes in the first 1200 block of SW Buchanan, the Asbury-Mt. Olive Apartments in the second 1100 block of SW Buchanan, the Tennessee Town Plaza Apartments, and the Cornerstone of Topeka, Inc. house at 1231 SW Clay, also were included.

Bell and DeLapp also discussed with the Tour challenges of concern to all NIAs, including stagnated or decreasing funds for neighborhood revitalization efforts while the costs of housing rehabilitation, new housing construction, and infrastructure, among other things, continue to increase.

According to the Chamber, the word "expedition" was chosen for its event "because that word evokes optimism, adventure, discovery and purpose. Aside from informing the attendees and engaging them deeply in important discussions, Expedition Topeka 2015 will represent the moment when stakeholders, leaders and dreamers from across the community came together and realized the future they want is truly within their reach."

C. Meeting with Working Men of Christ Ministries:

Bell met with Spencer Lindsay and two other members of the group at 11 a.m. on Thu., Oct. 22, at 1025 SW Western. The group's mission is to reach incarcerated men and women through its ministry and to remain with them at each step of their reintegration into the community after their releases. WMOC has purchased the house at 1175 SW Clay in Tennessee Town and hopes to renovate it to further pursue its mission.

During the meeting it was revealed that there were zoning issues present with WMOC's intended use of the house at 1175 SW Clay. The Topeka Planning Department is involved in trying to resolve those issues which feature classifying the WMOC house as a halfway house, which it isn't.

Here is the link to WMOC's website: <http://www.workingmenofchristministry.com/>

D. Neighborhood Leaders' Roundtable:

Bell attended the Roundtable, held from 9 - 11 a.m. on Sat., Oct. 24, at Washburn Tech. Neighborhood Relations' Director Sasha Stiles led the meeting, which also included presentations by NR's Monique Glaude and Richard Faulkner; and Mainstream Inc.'s Herb Callison (on forming nonprofits). Attendees were advised that they had been invited to the Roundtable to prioritize the additional funds NR had received for demolitions and 2 new inspectors to start in 2016. NR asked attendees for 10 addresses in their neighborhoods that should be demolished. Attendees discussed those topics and more in smaller groups. These are the ideas I presented to my group:

- When Richard Faulkner came to speak to my group, I wanted to impress upon him the importance of allowing the various groups at the Roundtable the chance to go back to their groups to discuss the issues raised and to provide input from those discussions to the City *before* the City moves forward. I believe that it is *vital* important that whatever strategies are designed to address demolitions start with the input of the people dilapidated and vacated housing affects on a daily basis and that those people are involved in those policies from their creation through the assessment of what ultimately is adopted. People are *much* more likely to buy in to what's going on when they have a direct and valued stake in what's going on.
- My point about the "30% rule" is that structurally sound houses are denied rehab funds by the City because said rehabs exceed 30% of replacement value (the state statute, to my knowledge, reads replacement value, not appraised value). That rule can ultimately put houses on the demolition list that could be rehabbed. Understanding that the City has to be selective about how it spends stagnating or dwindling rehab funds as the costs of rehab increase...
- I also asked that the City find ways to gain more funds (public or otherwise) and through establishing partnerships with local housing providers and private entities to enable more rehabilitation. Then, if that's accomplished, perhaps the City could reevaluate its 30% rule. All of this would reduce the number of houses on the City's demolition list and provide more affordable housing for Topeka's LMI population.
- I also asked that the City, in concert with the KS legislature, find ways to speed up the processes associated with gaining control of vacant houses without said efforts being a "taking" of those houses.