Minutes of the February 13, 2026
Joplin Citizen's Committee: Proposition Police & Fire

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of February 13, 2026, Citizen's Committee: Proposition Police & Fire was called to order by City Manager Nick Edwards at 7:30 am.

Roll Call: Committee Members Present: CB Eastman, Jhan Hurn, Bob Loudermilk, Dottie Murphy, Fred Palmer, Dan Pekarek, Ryan Stanley, Chris Stockton, Gregg Wilkerson, Betsy Mense.

Absent: Kim Cox, Drew Kimble, Payton Layne, Anthony Monteleone, Terry Wachter

City Employees Present: Nick Edwards, Tony Robyn, Drew Douglas, Lynn Onstot, Leslie Haase, Felicia Urban, Gerald Ezell, Andy Nimmo, Richard Pearon, Brian Lewis, Tom Bowin, Luke Stahl, Jared Delzell, Adam Grimes, Dan Stevens, Chuck Copple & Josh Bard.

NEW BUSINESS

Overview of Citizen's Committee: Staff provided an overview of the City's pension system, including the history and structure of Tier 1 and Tier 2 plans. Changes adopted in 2019 were discussed, including the transition of new employees to LAGERS to address significant underfunding issues. It was noted that a dedicated sales tax has been used to stabilize the closed pension plan. As of October 31, 2024, projections indicate the pension plan may reach approximately 120 percent funding by 2027. An updated actuarial report as of October 31, 2025, is expected to be available in late February or early March.

The committee discussed the proposed renewal of an existing sales tax, which would be repurposed as a public safety sales tax with no tax increase to voters. The tax would be restricted to public safety services and is projected to generate approximately $10.5 million annually. Staff noted that failure to renew the tax would result in significant funding shortfalls for public safety operations.

Discussion followed regarding police and fire compensation. A proposed pay plan would provide an approximate 23 percent wage adjustment for police and fire personnel by 2027, with interim increases including a 3 percent merit increase and a 2 percent cost-of-living adjustment. The intent of the plan is to improve recruitment and retention; address pay compression and enhance regional wage competitiveness. The impact of wage increases on retirement benefits was also discussed.

Staff reviewed proposed staffing enhancements. For the police department, additional officers would allow for improved beat coverage and reduced response times. For the fire department, the proposal includes six additional firefighters to meet minimum staffing requirements and reduce overtime. Dispatch staffing shortages and the need to improve coverage were also addressed.

Capital improvement needs were presented, including replacement of police vehicles and major fire equipment such as a ladder truck and rescue truck. The deteriorating condition of Fire Station No. 3 was discussed, along with plans for its replacement. Improvements to the Public Safety Training Center, including a rehabilitation center, were outlined. Rehabilitation of the police firing range was also discussed to address safety, environmental concerns, and long-term usability.

Staff reviewed public education and outreach efforts, including the development of educational materials, frequently asked questions, and a dedicated webpage. Committee members were encouraged to participate in community outreach, with clarification that city staff may educate but not advocate. Plans for presentations to civic groups, neighborhood organizations, and community meetings were discussed.

A motion was made by Ryan Stanley to vote in CB Eastman as Chair and Dottie Murphy as Co-Chair and seconded by Fred Palmer. The motion carried unanimously.

With no further business, the committee adjourned at 8:52 am.

Submitted,

Felicia Urban

Felicia Urban, Secretary