Minutes of the March 30, 2026
Joplin Legislative Committee

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of March 30, 2026, Legislative Committee was called to order by City Manager Nick Edwards at 4:01 pm. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. The motion carried.

Roll Call: Present: Mayor Keenan Cortez, Mayor Pro Tem Josh DeTar, Charles Copple, Josh Bard, City Manager Nick Edwards, Finance Director Leslie Haase, City Attorney Peter Edwards, Felicia Urban.

Absent: Mark Farnham

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion of Legislative Priorities: City Mayor Keenan Cortez began the meeting by welcoming everyone. The meeting included a discussion of legislative priorities, with a primary focus on proposed changes to the state income tax structure. An update was provided indicating that legislation related to city authority over right-of-way infrastructure appears unlikely to advance this session, though it may be revisited in the future. Attention then shifted to the broader tax proposal, specifically the state's intent to eliminate or reduce income tax while expanding the scope of sales tax to include additional services. Concerns were raised that, although the proposal is framed as revenue-neutral, it would effectively increase the overall tax burden on residents by broadening taxable categories such as personal and service-based transactions.

A proposed amendment was discussed that would mirror the current treatment of food sales by limiting the expansion of sales tax to the state level only, excluding local governments. This approach would prevent cities and counties from automatically being included in the expanded tax base, thereby avoiding additional financial strain and eliminating the need for future rollbacks. It was noted that the legislation has already passed the House and is now under consideration in the Senate, where efforts are underway to identify a sponsor for the amendment. Concerns were also expressed regarding limited coordination among advocacy groups and uncertainty about the level of organized opposition.

Additional discussion highlighted the broader financial implications of the proposal, including potential negative impacts on municipalities, counties, fire protection districts, and other political subdivisions. It was noted that many of these entities rely heavily on local sales tax revenue and could face significant funding reductions. Concerns were also raised about the disproportionate impact on senior citizens and individuals on fixed incomes, who may not pay income tax but would face increased costs due to expanded sales taxes.

Participants discussed ongoing outreach efforts to stakeholders, including legislators, municipal organizations, and professional associations such as fire service groups and realtors. There was general concern that many stakeholders may not yet fully understand the scope or impact of the proposed legislation. Strategies considered included increased communication, coalition-building, and potential direct engagement with senators. It was also noted that if the measure advances to a

public vote, there will be a need for a coordinated educational campaign to ensure voters understand the full implications, as ballot language may oversimplify the proposal.

The group also discussed comparisons with other states without income tax, noting that those states often rely on significantly higher alternative revenue sources, such as tourism or property taxes, which may not be feasible in Missouri. Additional topics included outreach to statewide organizations such as the Missouri Association of Counties and the National Federation of Independent Business to assess their positions and potential involvement.

The meeting further addressed related policy issues, including regulation of gaming machines and manufactured housing. It was noted that the State Attorney General has recently indicated a more active enforcement stance on certain gaming devices, which may prompt renewed local consideration of ordinances. The group discussed whether to pursue enforcement action locally or await further legal clarification at the state level. Follow-up actions include reaching out to appropriate legal and enforcement contacts to determine next steps.

The meeting concluded with a summary of action items, including continued legislative outreach, coordination with partner organizations, evaluation of enforcement options on gaming devices, and monitoring of related policy developments. No additional items were raised, and the discussion was adjourned.

With no further business, the committee adjourned at 4:53 pm.

Submitted,

Felicia Urban, Secretary