



The City of Towanda

City Council Meeting Minutes
Towanda City Hall – 110 S 3rd St.
Wednesday, April 8, 2026, 7:00 PM

Governing Body

Present Not Present

☒	☐	Mayor – Mike Hayes
☒	☐	Council President – Jennifer Watkins
☒	☐	Council Member – Kit Williams
☒	☐	Council Member – Drew Shaults
☐	☒	Council Member – Chris Hunt
☒	☐	Council Member – Angel Ramsey

Staff

Present Not Present

☒	☐	City Administrator – Sarah Gooding
☒	☐	City Attorney – Rob Lane
☒	☐	Planning/Zoning Administrator -Lisa Long
☒	☐	Deputy City Clerk – Cami Jones
☐	☐	

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING:

1. Call To Order

- 7:00 pm by Mike Hayes

2. Roll Call

3. Adopt Agenda

Motion by Jennifer Watkins to adopt Agenda. Seconded by Drew Shaults. Motion Carried 4-0

4. Consent Agenda

- a. Minutes of March 11, 2026 Council Meeting
- b. Treasurer's Information Reports March 2026
 - i. Statement of Activities
 - ii. Fund Balance Report
 - iii. Budget Execution Report
 - iv. Water Loss Report
- c. Claims
 - i. Claims Reports
 - ii. Appropriations Ordinance 03-2026
- d. Staff/Department Information Reports
 - i. Sheriff's Office Report
 - ii. Court Clerk's Report
 - iii. Planning and Zoning
 - iv. Code Compliance Report
 - v. Towanda Maintenance Department
 - vi. Towanda Public Library Report

Motion by Jennifer Watkins to approve the consent agenda. Seconded by Angel Ramsey. Motion carried 4-0. Mike Hayes asked why we have increased loss this month. Sarah Gooding and Rylan Rose explained how water and air can cause holes down the pipe, particularly after one leak is fixed. Sarah showed an old, galvanized pipe as an example. Kit Williams asked if we could take out pipes and replace them? Sarah stated that we plan on acting on this later this summer.

5. Public Comment Time

Jan Van Buskirk shared that approximately 90 people attended the Friends of the Library Easter Egg Hunt.

Nick Wilhelm with Gambino's expressed frustration with the ongoing bracing and structural issues next door to the restaurant. He shared pictures of the boards holding up the building, including broken boards and boards in bad shape. He stated that if something isn't done in 30 days, he will pack up his business.

6. Presentation and Guest Speakers

A. JEO Update – 90% Water System Design

Brad Shores, JEO Consulting Group provided an update on the Water System Design project, which is nearing completion. At the previous presentation, there was significant interest in fire hydrant locations, and Brad shared a handout showing where current Fire Hydrants are placed and where they plan on adding Fire Hydrants. He also discussed considerations at the NE corner of Main and Third in front of Vintage Bank Kansas and thoughts on taking down the curb to make it ADA Compliant. Council agreed.

Following completion of the design phase, the City will need to develop a strategy to pay for project construction. Drew Shauls thinks the City should apply for any kind of grant money to fund the project. City Administrator Sarah Gooding is working with JEO on a preapplication for a State Revolving Loan Fund low-interest loan from the Kansas Water Office and also will explore other grant, loan, and bonding opportunities, with the goal of recommending strategies to proceed with funding construction.

B. Q1 City Financial Update

City Administrator Sarah Gooding presented a financial update on what she is seeing at the end of the first quarter of the year. The report included a review of regular consent agenda reports and what each means, as well as advising on concerns in the budget structure and a preview of the budget process ahead.

7. Old Business

A. Main Street Building Resolution

The month of March has been spent working with the Project Engineer, Prairie Psalm Engineering, and the City Engineer JEO on requirements/plans to support and construct the building safely while removing the board braces on Main S. To prepare for the pier construction and while the approval process was pending, the Contractor has made brick and mortar repairs to the adjoining Gambino's northwest corner. Recently, the City has been informed of the application and qualification of the project for a CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) for Commercial Rehabilitation. The Owner/Contractor has begun the process. This grant application period opened in March with a shorter award time. Sarah and Lisa were briefed by SCKEDD on the process. If they are awarded this grant, construction potentially could move faster than previously anticipated. The condition of the building appears to increase its qualification.

Latest from Engineers: Tuesday, March 31, 2026 "JEO does not object to the removal of the temporary wooden shoring over the sidewalk after the addition of the columns and steel shoring as illustrated by Prairie Psalm Engineering." The City has received a copy of the drawings. Work was approved 3/31/2026 to begin.

Financial Analysis: Grant money is needed for the major repair of the building. If the City were to proceed with the dilapidation process, it could require significant finances to stabilize the existing building in preparation for the removal of the Jones building, in addition to the demolition costs if the City were faced with the remediation.

Drew Shauls asked why it is taking so long to get anything done with this project. Rob Lane stated that Engineers take a long time to talk. Lisa Hamilton stated that the engineer did not approve the project until March 31, 2026. Council asked Perry why nothing has been started that the contractor has had a week to start but has not done anything. Perry stated that he will push to see what the contractor can do. Perry also told Nick that he would help him with his wall to Gambino's. Mike Hayes asked when the last time was that anyone looked inside the building.

Drew Shauls made a motion to Table the Demolition Resolution until a Special Meeting on April 22, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., seconded by Kit Williams. The motion passed 4-0.

Council told building owner Perry Jones to have work in progress by April 20, 2026.

B. Sales Tax Updates – Draft Ballot Language

Staff have developed two concepts for ballot language, including one that may be allocated in either a 60/40 split or a 70/30 split, for a total of three options requested by Council at the March 11 Council meeting. These are drafts at this time and will be sent to the City Attorney for review before a sales tax resolution is brought to Council for final approval at the May 13 City Council meeting. Council is asked to provide consensus and guidance around one or two options for final review and consideration.

Council discussed options and will approve final language via a resolution at the May meeting.

8. New Business

C. Swimming Pool Sandblasting & Painting

In 2023, staff power-washed the shallow end and applied an epoxy paint, which has held up significantly better and set a standard for maintenance goals going forward. In March 2026, staff have completed spot treatment and a full repainting of the shallow end ahead of the upcoming pool season. This work was initiated before there was a full awareness of the extent of repairs needed to properly refurbish the pool's deep end.

As staff power-washed the deep end, a dry-seal masonry material previously used to coat the deep end flaked off. These materials are intended to prevent moisture intrusion through concrete, but are not necessarily designed for swimming pool use and for containment of standing water. Staff have removed the material to the best of their ability.

Based on these findings, Public Works staff are recommending a full rehabilitation strategy for the deep end of the pool, including sandblasting the deep end, completing any necessary repairs and restoration to the concrete, and applying two coats of epoxy paint to re-seal the pool. This **work is anticipated** to provide a paint finish that lasts approximately five years.

The proposed project is unanticipated major maintenance to the City Pool, but the hope is that a comprehensive sandblasting and resurfacing process will decrease annual maintenance and painting needs in the coming 3-5 years.

City Administrator Sarah Gooding said the City is fortunate to have an employee on staff with experience in sandblasting, which allows completion of the project in-house with a rented unit, under the recommended proposal. Staff recommend paying up to \$10,000 for the project, not including staff labor time, out of the City's Capital Improvement Fund, which has a current balance of \$58,218.14.

Mike Hayes recommended authorizing up to \$12,000.00 for purchases to fix the pool.

Motion by Jennifer Watkins to approve restoration of the deep end of the pool, with a not-to-exceed budget of \$12,000, to be paid out of the City's Capital Improvement Fund. Second by Kit Williams. Motion carried 3-1, with Drew Shaults voting no.

D. Compensating Controls & Financial Policy Updates

The City of Towanda maintains Financial Procedures establishing how City manages its financial resources and the procedures employees should follow to ensure that funds are managed in a trustworthy manner. Financial procedures represent best practice but also need to be aligned with actual daily practices and a reasonable division of duties for a small City.

The City's Financial Procedures have been reviewed through the lens of the Compensating Controls, actual staff practices, and clarifying responsibilities and checks and balances. They also inform our audit and provide continuity and guidance through staff transfers to minimize disruption.

Once established, procedures should be reviewed with staff and guide daily operations to minimize the potential for negative financial impacts on the City as a whole.

Motioned by Angel Ramsey to approve the proposed Compensating Controls and updates to the City's Financial Procedures. Seconded by Drew Shaults. Motion Carried 4-0.

E. Water Loss Adjustment Policy

The City of Towanda, like many other cities and utility systems, has a history of providing relief for customers affected by water leaks. Current City procedure is that if a water customer has a leak and provides documentation that it is fixed the city will recalculate the overage and waive its share of water fees.

This procedure does not appear to be documented anywhere, and without written policy and procedure to fall back on, staff also face pressure to provide adjustments for other circumstances.

The City Code does not currently allow for any water use adjustment, and limits adjustments solely to the wastewater portion of the bill. The proposed Adjustment Policy seeks to provide clear guidance and documentation to support future water adjustment requests.

The City of Towanda water utility pays Rural Water District No. 5 for all water purchased and used within the City's distribution system. The City must charge customers for the RWD portion of all water loss to avoid absorbing a deficit. Additional City charges on water volume allow the City to fund maintenance, upkeep, and upgrades of the system.

The City can sustain periodic offsets to assist customers with leak adjustments, and this can alleviate hardship if a line break or running toilet results in an unexpectedly large bill. This courtesy assistance by the City must be balanced with system viability to ensure that the adjustment policy is practical to administer, promotes prompt repairs, and generally incentivizes best practices to protect the City as a utility supplier.

Motion by Drew Shaults to approve the proposed Water Leak Adjustment Request form, and direct staff to develop and bring back an Ordinance to update City Code. Seconded by Angel Ramsey. Motion carried 4-0.

F. Job Descriptions Updates – Part 1: City Financial Job Family

This is the first of three anticipated rounds of review and updates of City job descriptions to ensure that duties are clearly and succinctly outlined.

Internal review of financial employee roles, financial procedures, and best practices led to the identification of the financial family of City roles as the first positions to be updated.

Job descriptions seek to clarify the unique roles and responsibilities of the City Administrator/City Clerk versus the areas in which the Deputy City Clerk should be cross-trained. They also recognize that this role provides services commonly performed by a Utility Billing Clerk. All updates provide an overview of key responsibilities and legal functions based on duties outlined in the Towanda City Code.

An accompanying set of updated financial procedures clarify the checks and balances necessary to both equip practical operations of a small city with limited staff, as well as provide protection for the City as employees manage the organization's financial resources.

Motion by Kit Williams to adopt and implement the proposed job descriptions for the City's financial family of jobs. Seconded by Drew Shaults. Motion carried 4-0.

G. Employee Handbook Updates

The City of Towanda Employee Handbook provides policy guidance to direct and inform the daily work of City employees. The handbook bridges City Code, employment law, local policy, and daily operations, and provides guidance and guardrails that govern how employees perform their roles.

Current daily operations do not strictly adhere to the handbook, which prompted a review under the City's new City Administrator. Rather than a heavy-handed administrative approach to reconcile operations with the handbook, it is recommended that Council consider updates to the Handbook that reflect changing practices in local government and achieve the following:

- Position the City of Towanda as an employer of choice, where employees are treated well and enjoy quality work-life balance, desirable benefits, and opportunities to learn and grow.
- Provide clear and enforceable guidelines and guardrails for employees and supervisors that also protect the City.

The current proposed update focuses on key handbook policies where there are opportunities to enhance or improve guidelines. There are other policy considerations that should be reviewed, but are not yet reflected in this version of the handbook. Additional reviews and additions are likely throughout the coming months, but this update should be the most significant and comprehensive review.

Key updates were outlined.

Motion by Kit Williams to adopt the handbook resolution as proposed. Seconded by Angel Ramsey. Motion carried 4-0.

9. Other Business and Announcements

A. Special meeting in Late April

April 22, 2026 7:00 p.m.

B. Community Solutions for Storm Shelters

April 14, 2026 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in Community Building
Council wants sweet treats

10. Executive Session (none scheduled)

11. Adjourn

Motion by Angel Ramsey to Adjourn at 10:10 pm. Seconded by Kit Williams. Motion carried 4-0.



Sarah Gooding
City Administrator/Clerk

Approved the 13th day of May, 2026 by the City Council, City of Towanda, Kansas.