



The City of Towanda

City Council Meeting Minutes
Towanda City Hall – 110 S 3rd St.
Wednesday, March 11, 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
☒	☐	Court Administrator – Emelia Toney
☐	☐	

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING:

1. Call To Order

7:00 p.m. by Mike Hayes

2. Appointment and Swearing in of New Council Member:

Motion by Kit Williams to approve the appointment of Angel Ramsey as the new Council Member. Second by Jen Watkins. Motion carried 3-0.

Angel Ramsey took the oath of office and was sworn in by City Administrator Sarah Gooding.

3. Roll Call

4. Consent Agenda

➤ February 2026 Reports

- Minutes of the February 11, 2026 Council Meeting
- Treasure's Information Reports February 2026
 - Statement of Activities
 - Fund Balance Report
 - Budget Execution Report
 - Water Loss Report
- Claims
 - Claims Report
 - 1. Appropriations Ordinance 02-2026
- Staff/Development Information Reports
 - Sheriff Office Report
 - Court Clerk's Report
 - Planning and Zoning
 - Code Compliance Report
 - Towanda Maintenance Department
 - Towanda Public Library Report

Motion by Jen Watkins to approve the consent agenda from February 11, 2026, in its entirety, with a correction under Old Business, Swimming Pool Filter, below:

Motion by Jen Watkins to accept the second quote from Little Richards Pools for a three-unit filter system for \$26,548.56. Second by Kit Williams. Motion carried 2-0 with Drew Shaults abstaining.

Second by Kit Williams. Motion carried 4-0.

5. Public Comment Time: None

6. Presentation and Guest Speakers: None

7. Old Business

a. Main Street Building Resolution

Planning and Zoning Administrator Lisa Long provided a timeline review and update on the building at 309 Main in downtown Towanda, which has been braced for more than a year. She outlined options the Council could consider to move progress forward – either toward rehabilitation or demolition of the building.

Long presented a Building Resolution that provides a path to order the structure condemned and either repaired or demolished, and she also outlined options for the building owner and contractor to pursue grant funding through the South Central Kansas Economic Development District (SCKEDD) to rehabilitate the building. Seeking a grant would require City staff cooperation and time.

Council discussed a proposal by the contractor to reinforce the structure with steel beams, which could replace the 2x4 wood bracing currently outside of the building on Main Street and improve the street appearance while grant funding is pursued.

After additional discussion, Council approved three motions to direct next steps for staff.

Motion #1 by Drew Shaults to approve the contractor to put in the 3 columns of steel beams with brick or stucco, cover on a concrete footing for the front of the building, to replace the current 2x4 bracing, to improve the street appearance of the building, and keep it safe, supported while they advance with a grant funding process, pending that our engineer, JEO, does approve the new claims. Second by Jen Watkins. Motion carried 4-0.

Motion # 2 by Jen Watkins to extend the voting option on a dilapidation resolution until the next Council meeting. Second by Angel Ramsey. Motion carried 4-0.

Motion #3 by Jen Watkins to authorize staff to assist in this grant process. Second by Kit Williams. Motion carried 4-0.

b. Ballfield Management Contract with Circle Recreation

The City and CRC have negotiated a ballfield management contract that positions the CRC as the operator for scheduling and usage. The CRC is also responsible for mowing, field care, and other costs related to use of the fields, such as utilities during playing seasons. The City is responsible for maintaining safe and usable facilities, addressing any safety or major concerns that may emerge, and ensuring utilities are provided. Both are responsible for communication and working cooperatively.

The contract is revenue-neutral for the City. Circle Recreation will take on the costs of use, including mowing, field care, and reimbursing the City for utility costs during active use seasons. This means City taxpayers are not subsidizing activities for the full Circle district, and it also allows CRC to control their costs and field conditions.

The City is responsible for providing safe, usable park facilities, which would be our obligation whether or not we have a contract in place. City staff have completed a facility walkthrough with CRC staff and have identified basic repairs to be completed, including replacing a broken dugout board and repairs to broken fence.

The proposed contract is for a one-year term. Following this first season, the City and CRC may discuss proposed improvements and associated user fees to include in future contracts

Motion by Jen Watkins to enter into the contract with the Circle Recreation Commission. Second by Drew Shaults. Motion carried 4-0.

c. Disposal of Equipment

Staff efforts to develop the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and Municipal Equipment Reserve Plan (MERP) also have identified equipment currently in the City's inventory that could be disposed. Staff proposed disposing of three items via Purple Wave Auction, including a 1995 Chevy Pickup, Blawnox Paver, and Homemade Pump Trailer.

Public Works Foreman Rylan Rose presented the item and recommended that any income received from disposal could be credited to the City's Equipment Reserve Fund and can be applied toward future equipment purchases.

Motion by Angel Ramsey to direct staff to dispose of equipment, as recommended, with all income from disposal credited to the city's equipment reserve fund, to assist with future equipment purchases. Second by Kit Williams. Motion carried 4-0.

d. Sales Tax Updates

City of Towanda voters approved a 1% sales tax in 2016 that has been in effect since early 2017. This sales tax is in its 10th year and will sunset in early 2027. Council has discussed renewal of the tax, and the City is aiming toward an August ballot question so that the vote is finalized ahead of finalization of the 2027 budget.

Voter approval of a new sales tax would provide sustained revenue to address community priorities, allowing the community to expand its investments in transportation and public safety. In a February 4 workshop, Council identified streets and sidewalks and public safety as the top two priority areas for sustained additional funding.

The City will need to submit final ballot language to the County Clerk by the beginning of June, and staff will draft up to three ballot question options based on Council's recommendations for consideration at the April Council meeting and finalization in May.

Council directed staff to develop three sales tax options, including a 70%/30% split between law enforcement and streets, a 60%/40% split between law enforcement and streets, and a more generalized third option.

8. New Business

a. Dump Trailer Purchase

Staff have identified a need for a dump trailer that can be used for Public Works and Utilities and will be more multi-functional than a dump truck. The trailer would be used for equipment transport, parks upkeep, transport of tree limbs, asphalt and water leak needs, emergency response, and road treatments. Staff received three quotes, ranging from \$9,520.66 to \$11,795, and requested that Council approve staff pursuing the low bid, with a maximum spend of \$12,000. The trailer will be purchased out of the City's Equipment Reserve Fund.

Motion by Jen Watkins to the purchase of a dump trailer using the Equipment Reserve Fund, not to exceed \$12,000. Second by Angel Ramsey. Motion carried 4-0.

b. After Prom Donation

The Circle High School After Prom Committee has reached out to the City of Towanda with a request for a donation to support the After Prom event, which provides students a safe environment in which to enjoy the remainder of Prom night on April 11, 2026. Council has made donations in past years via the Mayor/Council Fund.

Motion by Jen Watkins to approve a donation to the Circle After Prom in the amount \$250 from the Mayor/Council Fund. Second by Kit Williams. Motion carried 4-0.

c. Storm Shelter

A request/motion to add this to the agenda was made at the start of the meeting by Jen Watkins. Second by Kit Williams (4-0)

City Administrator Sarah Gooding shared that the arrival of March and stormy weather have resulted in several days in which staff have considered community storm shelter operations, which are a collaborative effort between the City and the Interlocal School. The Interlocal makes its building available, and City staff unlock and staff the shelter.

For many years, one staff member who resides in Towanda has left a safe location at her home to travel across town, unlock the shelter door, and remain above ground to hold the door open for those seeking shelter. This compromises her safety for a service that receives very limited use (typically fewer than six come to the shelter).

Staff have explored alternate solutions to unlock the shelter, but they have required extensive coordination and are not easily replicable. Additionally, pop-up storms prompt both volunteers and shelter-seekers to drive through active storm conditions. In many instances, it is more advisable to shelter in place to protect life.

Sarah advised Council she is not comfortable having the City ask its employees to continue to provide this service. She acknowledged this leaves a gap, and offered to explore options with community partners and residents to consider how best to offer consistent shelter operations and clear communication about when the shelter would be available.

9. Other Business and Announcements

- a. Planning Commission Vacancy:** Motion by Angel Ramsey to approve the appointment of Yvonne Gorman for the Planning and Zoning Committee. Second by Jen Watkins. Motion carried 4-0.

10. Executive Session

Jen Watkins made a motion to enter into executive session for 20 minutes to discuss personnel matters of non-elected personnel and those concerning consultation with an attorney on matters deemed privileged in the attorney-client privilege, pursuant to the justification listed in K.S.A. 75-4319(b) 1 and 2. Second by Drew Shaults. Motion carried 4-0.

- Council entered into executive session at 8:33 p.m. with members of Council, City Administrator Sarah Gooding, and City Attorney Rob Lane present.
- Resumed open meeting at 8:55 p.m.

11. Adjourn

Motion by Angel Ramsey to adjourn at 8:57 p.m. Second by Kit Williams. Motion carried 4-0.



Sarah Gooding
City Administrator/Clerk

Approved the 8th day of April, 2026 by the City Council, City of Towanda, Kansas.