

MANAGERS REPORT



DATE: January 7, 2022
TO: Mayor Benage and City Council
FROM: Ty Lasher, City Manager
RE: January 11, 2022 Workshop

City of Bel Aire 2022 Legislative Priorities (Item Ia):

The legislation season is upon us at the state and federal levels. Each year, both legislative bodies meet to consider new legislation. Often, bills are introduced that can negatively or positively affect the City of Bel Aire. The League of Kansas Municipalities (LKM) creates a legislative platform and helps lobby for cities. The Regional Economic Area Partnership, which represents south central Kansas, also creates a legislative platform. Council reviews the League and REAP platforms to identify a list of five priorities that are most important for Bel Aire. Included in your packet is the 2021 Bel Aire priorities and 2022 REAP / LKM platforms. Once Council has determined a list of priorities, staff will create a letter for final review and approval. The letter will then be sent to all our representatives in Topeka and Washington. Staff will also use these priorities when speaking individually with legislators for supporting / opposing legislation that comes up daily. I have asked staff to share the priorities they see that directly impact their department. Here are their recommendations:

Finance:

1. **Home Rule.** Consistent with the Home Rule Amendment of the Kansas Constitution approved by voters in 1960, we support local elected officials making decisions for their communities, particularly local tax and revenue decisions. (LKM) *For obvious reasons but tax and spending are critical.*
2. **Repeal unnecessary budget requirement and leave local tax and spending decisions to local elected officials who ultimately answer to our local voters.** New Revenue Neutral Rate requirements duplicate budget hearings already in place and duplicate the mailing information already provided to our citizens. We are wasting time that could be spent growing our local economy and money that could be spent on public safety or local street improvements. (NOTE: not listed in LKM or REAP but Ted's thoughts)
3. **Countywide Sales and Use Taxes.** Since 1977, Kansas has successfully used a city-county revenue sharing formula for the benefit of all. The

existing formula benefits both city and county taxpayers and ensures there is a fair method to distribute funds that are generated primarily in cities. (LKM) *Countywide Sales tax is 20-25% of Bel Aire's total revenues.*

4. **Federal Recovery Money for Cities.** Federal funding from the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan Act have been critical for local governments to both respond to the negative impacts of the pandemic and support the economic recovery. As cities work on plans to best help their residents, Congress should not move to take back these funds. (LKM) *Add: Congress should provide flexibility for these funds to be used on all infrastructure projects.*
5. **KPERS.** We support the full funding of the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System (KPERS) and Kansas Police & Fire (KP&F) retirement systems and honoring all commitments that have been made by KPERS and KP&F. The local KPERS system should remain separate from the state and school retirement system. Changes to the KPERS system should not impact a city's ability to hire and retain qualified public employees, **including any undue burden on hiring KPERS retirees**, or reduce benefits promised to employees. (LKM) *As we continue to see the baby boom generation retire, jobs are becoming very difficult to fill. Being able to hire retired government workers would be a great option. Current legislation penalizes the retiree as well as the organization.*

Police:

1. Chief agrees with all 2021 Bel Aire agenda points.
2. In the REAP document, several items were captured in Bel Aire's document.

Public Works:

1. City-County Highway Fund – This is what provides some of our financial support for maintaining our streets.
2. Transportation Maintenance – Funding for biking and walking infrastructure.
3. Utilities & Mandates – There are quite a few unfunded mandates out there. Over, the past four years, we have been collecting and testing stormwater samples for no regulatory purpose, other than KDHE research. No funds or reasoning why.

4. Right-of-Way – There have been slow erosions into our ability to maintain and control our own ROW – particularly when it comes to cell towers, 5G, etc.
5. Stormwater Management – See above discussion on mandates regarding stormwater.

City Manager:

1. Finance – We support local control over property taxes (Repeal Tax Lid and no limit on property tax evaluations. Tax and evaluation lids directly impact the revenue of the City. City Council sets the mill levy and thereby the amount of property taxes collected). Sales taxes should be left up to the municipality. (Voters approve sales taxes. No change in local city/ county sharing of sales taxes. Fund the LAVTR to allow a reduction in property taxes). Collect on remote sales.
2. Utilities – Make no changes to franchise authority (City's maintain their ROW's so should be able to collect fees for their uses). Continue to allow local control of ROW's. Service area should be at the city level when annexations occur. We support clean water quality and water quantity. Changes should occur with the Groundwater Management Districts (Municipalities should be represented on those boards).
3. Transportation – We support increased infrastructure funding from the feds and state for local improvements. City-County Highway fund should be fully funded by the state. We support fully funding the state comprehensive transportation program (IKE) and none of these funds being used for other services. Safety and maintenance should remain a key focus for roads. We support funding for the K-254 Corridor Management Plan and implementation / funding of new improvements for this main corridor. Transportation Development Districts should remain as they are.
4. Economic Development – Ability for cities to issue tax abatements is key to business development and should not change. Tax Increment Financing and STAR bonds should continue to be utilized without changes.
5. General – Home Rule should not be altered. Eminent Domain and annexations are key to cities ability to grow and acquire property so should not be altered. City elections should remain non-partisan. Re-districting should be done to benefit citizens.

Senior Funding (Item Ib)

The Bel Aire Senior Club has been in existence since 1990 operating as a non-profit and have kept their status through 2021. In 2002, when City Hall as

constructed, a room was set aside for seniors. The City applied for and received senior funding for the Senior Center. Since that time, there have been two separate and independent groups. Over the years, the City has given funding to the Senior Club and the amount has varied. In order to maintain the Senior Center Level 1 status, the City must provide and track a set number of activities as well as have the appropriate number of participants. The Senior Club would take attendance and share those numbers with the Rec Department. Over the last couple of years, the Senior Club has not shared their participation numbers, or very few, with the Recreation Center. The money the Senior Club has utilized over this same period has gone to fewer functions but more for donations. In 2020, the City hired WSU to take a comprehensive look at how our senior center is functioning. One of their recommendations was for the Rec Center to take over all planning for seniors. As the age of our seniors grows, getting volunteers is becoming more difficult. The Rec Staff would prefer to be more involved in assisting the Club with their activities and using those for required numbers for the Sedgwick County Department of Aging reports. Rather than granting those funds to the club, staff would prefer to assist with planning and paying for Club events based on input from their board. You can see below, the Senior Club was budgeted \$4,000 in 2022. Staff is recommending a revised Senior Policy where the club would request funding for events and the City Manager would approve. The max would be \$4,000 for 2022 and the events would need to benefit all seniors as well as count towards the Aging Department requirements.

	2022
Senior Center Budget*	\$ 35,010
Senior Club Grant	\$ 4,000
Bel Aire Chamber Grant	\$ 10,000
Special Events Budget	\$ 12,000

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Senior Club Grant	\$2,500	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000

Waste Connections – Contract Amendment (Item Ic):

The City entered into a 10-year contract with Waste Connections for trash and recycling services in 2016. The agreement does not include annual increases for rates but allows Waste Connections to request increases yearly. They have done this on occasion over the last five years. However, the city has only approved two increases totaling 2.5%. As Waste Connections looks at ways to improve efficiencies as well as provide quality service, they have suggested we alter the contract from two curbside cleanups to one curbside cleanup. In exchange for the second curbside collection, they would give each customer a coupon to take one

pickup load of trash to the transfer station one time per year. Staff has discussed this option and feels it could be a positive. We no longer have a brush site so homeowners could take one load to the transfer station at no charge. In addition, citizens could take what they would have left for the curbside pickup to the landfill on their own time schedule rather than the collection dates agreed upon by the City and Waste Connections. You might see other changes to consider and we could discuss. Keep in mind, we have to be cautious about opening renegotiations as that could change pricing.