



City of Lawton

Downtown Project Plan TIF Review Committee

Lawton City Hall
212 SW 9th Street
Lawton, Oklahoma
73501-3944

Minutes

Monday, October 20, 2025

3:00 PM

Lawton City Hall
3rd Floor Conference Room

Recommending Body

"Official action can only be taken on items listed on the agenda. As a recommending body, the Committee may review and discuss agenda items, propose and enact floor amendments, and then choose to make a recommendation to the City Council or provide direction to the City Manager. The Committee may also defer items for further review, refer matters to the City Attorney, or send items to standing committees, boards, commissions, or authorities for additional study. In some cases, items may be postponed to a later date or removed from the agenda entirely."

Meeting Called to Order

Chairman Stanley Booker called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. in the 3rd floor conference room of City Hall.

Statement of Compliance with Oklahoma Open Meeting Act, 25 O.S. 301-314

Chairman Booker verified with Branstetter that the meeting notice and agenda were posted in accordance with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act.

Roll Call

MEMBERS PRESENT: Stanley Booker, City of Lawton Mayor; Ron Jarvis, City Planning Commission Representative; Johnny Owens, Comanche County Commissioners Representative; Morgan Gould, Great Plains Technology Center Representative; Skeeter Sampler, Lawton Public Schools Representative; *Debra Johnson, Comanche County Health Department Representative

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

*Arrived at 3:03 PM

Introduction of Guests and Committee Members

Committee members and guests of the meeting introduced themselves.

Guests of the meeting introduced themselves as follows: Dewayne Burk, Deputy City Manager (City of Lawton); Richard Rogalski, Lawton Economic Development Authority;

Kirby Brown, Ward 3 Councilman Elect (City of Lawton); Tammy Branstetter, City Clerk's Office (City of Lawton); Matina Davis, Citizen of the Community; Kim McConnell, Lawton Constitution; Christine James, Planning Director (City of Lawton); Robert Bausch, Citizen of the Community

Business Items

1. Designation of Tammy Branstetter as Secretary and Assistant to Chairman.

Motion by Owens, **Second** by Jarvis, to approve the designation of Tammy Branstetter as Secretary and Assistant to Chairman. **AYE:** Owens, Sampler, Gould, Booker, Jarvis. **NAY:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

2. Brief Overview of Current Status of Project and Reasons to Amend Lawton Downtown Economic Development Project Plan.

Richard Rogalski, Executive Director, Lawton Economic Development Authority

Richard Rogalski, Lawton Economic Development Authority (LEDA), said I appreciate you all being here and taking time out of your schedules for this. The Lawton Downtown Economic Development Project Plan was the original plan in the city that created the first TIF District, TIF 1. It was created in 2006. Larry Mitchell was the City Manager at that time, and he was the Executive Director of LEDA at that time. Then, that plan was amended in 2010 to add TIF 2.

Debra Johnson, Comanche County Health Department Representative, entered the meeting at 3:03 PM. Chairman Booker introduced Ms. Johnson.

Rogalski said this was the original downtown project plan, and the purpose was to redevelop and revitalize the downtown. There's been a lot of discussions. As you know, in the 1970s, urban renewal came in, and they built the mall. That was great for a while, but then there were a lot of areas outside that area that were kind of failing a little bit. Economically, the mall was not doing that well. So, the idea was to re-energize and revitalize the downtown area. The front door of our area, 2nd Street, which's considered the front door of Lawton's downtown, was covered with a lot of dilapidated buildings in the area, and so there was an urban renewal plan and this project plan, and they worked together to create the Lawton Town Center, which was that retail development. They rebuilt 2nd Street. They put in the brick pavers and the landscaping and all of that. This was a pretty big effort to sort of give the downtown a jolt.

Rogalski said the more famous project plan, because we've dealt with it more recently, is the STEDI Project Plan. The STEDI Project Plan is all about industrial development. However, this project plan was all about downtown revitalization, and so its primary purpose was invigorating the retail of the downtown area. We've got the Hilton Garden Inn in place, which is a big generator of revenue for the city. We've got Dick's, Kohl's and the other stores in that line there. Unfortunately, some of the smaller spaces

actually stayed empty for a while. In fact, some of them, I think, may have never been filled yet. So, the project plan didn't take off like we wanted it to. Part of it was timing. We got it all built in about 2013 and 2014 — that's when it opened, and the economy wasn't doing that well. Then we had the COVID pandemic hit, and some of the stores over there are empty now. But, we're seeing sort of a resurgence — a post-COVID resurgence. As you all know, there are 10 acres on the north end and two and a half acres on the south behind the Hilton Garden Inn that were part of the original Lawton Town Center plat that are just still empty. In fact, there are other spaces. There's a space next to Bricktown Brewery and a space next to the Mattress Firm that are also empty, but those are owned by the developer. The two that I'm talking about are owned by LEDA, which is a public entity, so they've generated no tax revenue for the last 15 years since that project plan was done.

Rogalski said but then recently, as you heard, we're seeing some retail coming back a little bit. I believe there's a bid on the Joann's Fabric space. There's supposed to be a retailer coming into that space — that's through the redeveloper. Rogalski said we've had interest in the 10 acres that LEDA still owns. We've had interest over the years, but never a very good deal. In this case, we have a purchase and sale agreement that was approved by LEDA in July, and it was for a grocery store on that parcel.

Rogalski said the purpose of this plan is to simply restart our time on those two vacant parcels. That's kind of why we started the process — to restart the time on those vacant parcels so that we can actually do some of the things that we intended to do with this project plan. Since we're editing the plan, we might as well do a couple of other little things that are simple. The first thing we did is correct an oversight in the original project plan by expanding the project area to include Elmer Thomas Park, Central Middle School and Lawton High School.

Rogalski said some of you know this from being associated with the STEDI Project Plan — there's a TIF district where the money is earned, then there's a project area where the money can be invested. Remember, the purpose of a TIF district is not just to create revenue for the city — it's to pay for improvements that are necessary to rebuild the downtown. Lots of old infrastructure, lots of old streets — there's all these things that we've got to pay for. The budget in the original project plan had funding for public facilities and project support like you would expect, but it also had school facilities and other public facilities. So, there are these things that we can do with this project plan that we just haven't, because the revenue never came forward. We've been basically making our note payments since that time, and that's all we've been able to do with the downtown funding. With the development of this new grocery store, if it's able to come to fruition, now we can actually start doing what we intended to do with the project plan, which is to start investing in the downtown area and revitalizing some of our facilities there.

Rogalski said the other thing we did, which is similar to the STEDI Project Plan, is that these two new districts, when they're activated, would actually provide 10% of the funding to STEM directly. So, there would be a 10% cutout to STEM, but the rest of it is

just exactly how it was in the original project plan.

Rogalski said we have copies of the edited plan to provide to you, but that's the gist of why we're here.

Chairman Booker said I do want to talk about the purpose of the TIF. While it's to rebuild downtown, it's also to build the tax base up and to create a more economic environment which brings in more tax growth. It's not just "rebuild downtown" — it's all based on trying to increase tax revenue and promote economic development.

Rogalski said absolutely.

Chairman Booker said I also want to say that the STEM is designed to fill the pipeline of the jobs that we're creating for the future. It's always great to do STEM, but there is a function behind the STEM we do, and it is to educate the workforce of the future, so it's workforce related.

Sampler said you had mentioned that we're going to start the TIF on the other two parcels.

Rogalski said we have the ability to restart them. We're discussing TIF A and TIF B, and we're not going to start them until we actually have a user.

Sampler said I'm assuming, based on the original plan, there was an expiration on the TIF.

Rogalski said it's 25 years — that's by statute. We would only be restarting those vacant parcels. The other stuff stays as it is.

Gould asked how you define STEM in that 10% cutout.

Chairman Booker said we have a STEM Board and a STEM Consortium. The Consortium is basically anybody that has an interest and provides STEM education to children. The schools are members of the Consortium, as well as members of the STEM Board. Right now, the STEM Board has about \$200,000 a year, and the STEM Board decides how that's spent and where it goes. We've tried to get that money into nonprofits to reach children that probably aren't going to have the advantages my child might have. We even have a focus to get into the neighborhoods so that we reach more of those children that may not have the family support to get them to a project at the school or at the FISTA.

Gould asked Rogalski what kind of economic impact he is expecting from this. He asked how much money it would generate for something like that.

Rogalski said it's all in the plan. He said the plan will be handed out to you all, but the reason we don't hand the plan out before this meeting is because you haven't set the

other committee members. So what we do is we give it to you at this meeting, and we'll give it to the members that you elect, and that way everybody starts looking at the same time. Then on Friday, you'll have your first meeting to consider it and discuss it. Rogalski said I actually have \$3.8 million of STEM funding in this project plan budget. It doesn't mean we're going to get that. That's the maximum amount we can get, but if those two new sites develop, I'm projecting that that would be the amount of funding that would be generated that would go into STEM.

Chairman Booker asked if the projected \$3.8 million for STEM would be over a 25-year period from the date the TIF is activated.

Rogalski said yes. He said that's not a tremendous amount of money, but remember retail doesn't generate the revenue that industrial facilities can do. I can have a \$400 million industrial facility, but a \$20 million retail facility is a lot. You know, your property tax revenue is not that much. Then in the downtown plan, we also capture the sales taxes - the city gives up their 2% sales tax, and it goes into this project plan. The \$3.8 million includes this. So, it's not a tremendous amount of money that's generated, but that's how retail works. In fact, most of the money is sales tax.

3. Submission of Chairperson's list of seven names for At-Large Members.

Chairman Booker said the Chairman is to submit seven names, and the Committee members decide which three members they want. Chairman Booker presented a list of seven names as follows:

- ☐ Bernita Taylor
- ☐ Nate Slate
- ☐ Ron Nance
- ☐ Phil Kennedy
- ☐ Jace Zacharias
- ☐ Mark Henry
- ☐ Mark Brace

Chairman Booker said a little snafu on my part — when we've done TIF meetings before, it was that one of them had to be from the business community. However, because this is a retail TIF, one member has to be from the retail community. Not making that connection, I only suggested one person from the retail community, so Phil Kennedy kind of has to be on there. He asked for committee members to suggest additional members to serve.

4. Consideration and appropriate action to select three At-Large Members to Downtown Economic Development Project TIF Review Committee (at least one of whom is a representative of the Lawton business community) selected by the other Review Committee members from the list of seven names submitted by the Chairman.

Jarvis made a motion to nominate Mark Brace, Jace Zacharias and Phil Kennedy. This

motion was seconded by Owens.

Johnson said I'm not familiar with Jace.

Sampler said I'm not either.

Chairman Booker said in my opinion, Jace is like the shining star of the future for Lawton Fort Sill. He's about 28 years old. He worked for United States Senator Inhofe, and then he worked for Tom Cole. Now, he's working at BancFirst. He's really a sharp young man, and the reason I put him down is I felt like we needed to have a young person that's really showing great potential for the future.

Owens asked if we'd have two members from BancFirst.

Chairman Booker said if you go with this nomination, then yes, you'd have two.

Gould asked if he could present an alternative motion.

Chairman Booker said you can present a substitute motion.

Gould made a motion to appoint Jace Zacharias, Phil Kennedy and Bernita Taylor. He noted he made this motion so we don't have two people from BancFirst.

Sampler asked for background on Bernita Taylor.

Chairman Booker said Bernita Taylor has got a phenomenal organization here in town called MIGHT, and they do tremendous things to change kids' lives.

Johnson said you mentioned a carve-out for STEM. She asked if any of these individuals have involvement, knowledge, and/or skills in STEM. She asked if Bernita is involved some with STEM work.

Chairman Booker said Bernita does a lot of STEM work and currently holds a contract with the STEM Board.

Rogalski said she manages Quest, which is a body that disseminates STEM funding into the neighborhoods and community.

Rogalski noted that Nate Slate serves on the STEM Consortium.

Chairman Booker said Nate is really the father of STEM for Lawton Fort Sill — he's the reason that Eisenhower was the STEM High School of the nation in 2014. He's continued to promote it and is the one that started the STEM Consortium to get everybody together in order to try to keep STEM going. There are lots of players in STEM today, but Nate was very instrumental in the beginning.

Chairman Booker said we have a substitute motion on the floor for Bernita Taylor, Phil Kennedy and Jace Zacharias. He asked if there is a second.

The substitute motion did not receive a second.

Chairman Booker said the substitute motion dies for a lack of a second. He said we will deal with the original motion, which was Phil Kennedy, Jace Zacharias and Mark Brace. He noted that we also have a second. He asked for a roll call vote.

Motion by Jarvis, **Second** by Owens, to appoint Mark Brace, Jace Zacharias and Phil Kennedy to serve as Committee Members at At-Large. **AYE:** Jarvis, Booker, Sampler. **NAY:** Gould, Owens, Johnson. **MOTION FAILED.**

Chairman Booker asked for a substitute motion.

Sampler asked if we could do individual motions.

Chairman Booker said yes.

Motion by Sampler, **Second** by Owens, to appoint Phil Kennedy to serve as a Committee Member at At-Large. **AYE:** Jarvis, Booker, Sampler, Gould, Owens, Johnson. **NAY:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

Motion by Gould, **Second** by Owens, to appoint Jace Zacharias to serve as a Committee Member at At-Large. **AYE:** Jarvis, Booker, Sampler, Gould, Owens, Johnson. **NAY:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

Motion by Owens, **Second** by Jarvis, to appoint Nate Slate to serve as a Committee Member at At-Large. **AYE:** Jarvis, Booker, Sampler, Gould, Owens, Johnson. **NAY:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

5. Future Meeting Schedule: October 24, 2025, at 3:00p.m. and if another meeting is necessary or appropriate, October 27, 2025, at 3:00p.m.

Chairman Booker highlighted the future meeting schedule.

No action was taken on this item.

Adjournment

Motion by Owens, **Second** by Sampler, to adjourn the October 20, 2025, special meeting. **AYE:** Jarvis, Booker, Sampler, Gould, Owens, Johnson. **NAY:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:24 PM.