



K A N S A S

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2021 Legislative Policy

SUMMARY POSITION

This policy statement presents general state legislative goals and objectives formally adopted by the Governing Body of the City of Dodge City. This statement will be provided to the Dodge City legislative delegation for its consideration at the 2021 legislative session. The focus of this policy statement is on general policies and principles; however, some positions on specific legislative proposals are included under appropriate general policy statements. Future revisions to this statement will include additional positions of the City on specific proposals and bills introduced during the 2021 session.

FEDERAL

FEMA

Although FEMA has revised its mapping strategies, it still discounts the protection that existing structures provide. For Dodge City, this happens when an existing structure is structurally sound but since design standards have changed, a sound structure is now considered useless. It still adds previously unmapped flood areas into a classification of “Undetermined Flooding”. No one knows the affect this will have on the citizens living in or development in this newly classified area. Also, the “one fit” approach does not work. Attention needs to be given to local conditions to determine the “best fit” for the area.

If accreditation is still necessary, Dodge City supports new legislation prohibiting FEMA from adding previously unmapped or any new special flood hazard areas to flood insurance rate maps without local government agency approval. In addition, Dodge City supports new legislation prohibiting FEMA from using the “approximation method” for establishing new special flood hazard areas, particularly in developed areas of the country. The “approximation method” was designed by FEMA to streamline map modernizations and employs no reasonable opportunity for due process by affected property owners and local officials. New special flood hazard areas should only be added to the flood insurance rate maps after a detailed study and concurrence of local government.

Dodge City supports legislation that would extend the accreditation time period. This would allow cities to responsibly budget and prepare for the financing necessary to meet the required improvements to the levy system.

IMMIGRATION

Immigrant labor is vital to the Dodge City economy. Concurrently, Dodge City believes in legal immigration. Therefore, Dodge City believes the United States Congress should approach the immigration issue in a sensible way. For Dodge City, a sensible approach is an approach built on an essential foundation including the following:

- 1) All immigration legislation is tempered with an understanding of such legislation's economic impact for companies employing immigrants;
- 2) A recognition that immigrants living in Dodge City require a reduction in time and distance barriers between the individual and his or her pursuance of legal residency;
- 3) It is critical that United States Citizenship and Immigration Services provide local governments the ability to offer biometric services for applicants to reduce travel expenses as well as lost work and school time;
- 4) Recognition that Dodge City requires additional resources to integrate immigrants into the community; and
- 5) Dodge City supports a path to citizenship which is vital for immigrants who are of good moral character and ready to become fully integrated in our communities.

The City of Dodge City requests that the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) increase the frequency of mobile services in Dodge City and Southwest Kansas as follows:

- Increased frequency of mobile service visits from 3 times a year, to 9 times a year (minimum).
- Provide full services (biometrics, interviews, etc.) during each visit.
- Dodge City will continue to provide support staff, designated space (rent-free), and technology.
- Increased frequency of naturalization ceremonies.

In addition, the City of Dodge City strongly believes that the United States Congress should engage to deliver bipartisan legislation that provides a permanent solution for recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. Such legislation should include a pathway to citizenship within a reasonable time frame.

TRANSPORTATION

AIR: The Essential Air Service (EAS) program is critical to providing the region with access to multiple major international airports. Dodge City encourages continued federal funding for passenger air service to Dodge City.

Dodge City supports incorporating qualified classroom and simulator training for commercial pilot certification in order to meet the increasing demand for passenger air transportation service in Dodge City and Southwest Kansas communities.

Federal funding through the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) is critical to maintaining the infrastructure of airports. AIP funding is available and should continue to be available to all airports. The uninterrupted funding of the AIP program is critical to the timely delivery of airport improvements. Dodge City supports continued and uninterrupted funding of Federal Aviation Administration and Airport Improvement Projects for airports.

HIGHWAY: Transportation infrastructure is critical not only to the safety of regional residents and travelers but also for the maintenance and growth of the regional economy. Dodge City supports increased transportation safety including continued funding for highway maintenance and infrastructure investment and efforts to promote traveler safety.

RAIL: Preserving cross-country rail service through Dodge City and Southwest Kansas is important as rural regions must offer many alternative modes of transportation. Dodge City believes freight and passenger rail service is one important way to maintain and grow the economy of Dodge City. Such service includes, but is not limited to, Amtrak passenger rail service. Dodge City believes Amtrak should continue to be adequately funded at the federal level to provide daily service and that necessary upgrades to rail infrastructure be provided through a joint effort involving federal, states, Amtrak and BNSF.

HOUSING

The City strongly supports the prevention of disproportionate cuts to rural development programs. Such cuts affect rural housing which is vital to the continued prosperity of the economy in rural communities. Prevent changes to qualification standards currently in place for USDA Rural Development programs.

Provide the assistance of the USDA Rural Development to offer training in local housing associations, in programs such as the Direct Home Loans, Home Repair Loans and Grants, Mutual Self-Help Housing and Guaranteed Rural Housing Loans.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

The City strongly supports renewable energy alternatives and the biogas industry. Dodge City believes that developing a viable biogas, solar and wind energy industry in the United States and the State of Kansas can boost the economy and provide a reliable, sustainable, distributed source of renewable energy while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Communities and private organizations around the nation are utilizing renewable energy alternatives not only to diversify energy supply and reduce dependence on imported fuels, but also to improve profitability for operations through energy and co-product sales, nutrient recovery and avoided energy costs.

Dodge City encourages continued support for RINS (renewable identification numbers), which provide an important incentive to producing renewable natural gas and promote financial opportunities to move forward in developing a robust biogas industry. The City suggest that no changes be made to the Renewable Fuel Standard program and that the Environmental Protection Agency does not lower the targets for cellulosic biofuels from the current statutory targets.

RAILROAD QUIET ZONES

We urge Congress to reexamine the Train Horn Rule with the Federal Railroad Administration. Rules for implementing quiet zones should be less burdensome and allow for differences in community circumstances while continuing to protect public safety. We also request Congress provide federal funds for the purpose of establishing quiet zones and consider new technology which may enhance the safety of quiet zones while minimizing or eliminating train horn noise.

STATE

HOME RULE

HOME RULE: Dodge City strongly supports the constitutional home rule authority of Kansas cities. Consistent with the Home Rule Amendment of the Kansas Constitution **approved by voters in 1960**, Dodge City supports the ability of local elected officials to make decisions for their communities, particularly local tax and revenue decisions. Self-governance by locally elected officials must be preserved in order to ensure that local issues and problems are handled at the level of government closest to the citizens that they represent.

ANNEXATION: The ability of Dodge City to grow is inherent to the ultimate success of annexation powers as they are currently established in state statute. Dodge City recognizes the statutory framework which was amended in 2011 and 2015. Further amendment would shift this balance in a way that would impede orderly growth. Therefore, Dodge City would strongly oppose any further change which would limit the authority of Dodge City to grow through annexation.

EMINENT DOMAIN: Eminent domain is a fundamental municipal necessity. The authority to acquire property through condemnation proceedings is critical for public improvement projects. Dodge City supports increased flexibility for local government to use eminent domain for economic development purposes, including blight remediation, without seeking legislative approval.

PUBLIC PROPERTY & RIGHTS-OF-WAY: Dodge City opposes any legislation which would restrict the ability of cities to control and manage public property and rights-of-way or the ability of cities to franchise those entities that utilize the rights-of-way.

CITY ELECTIONS: Dodge City strongly believes that City Elections should remain non-partisan and separate from state and national elections.

GOVERNMENTAL ETHICS

KANSAS OPEN MEETINGS ACT (KOMA) and KANSAS OPEN RECORDS ACT

(KORA): Dodge City supports all levels of government being subject to the same open meeting requirements which promote citizen involvement without being unduly burdensome. Open records laws should balance the public's right to access with the necessity of protecting the privacy of individual citizens and the ability of public agencies to conduct essential business functions. The statutorily required sunset for all exemptions to the Kansas Open Records Act is impractical and should be removed.

PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

City employees are the foundation of effective city government. City governing bodies must have the authority to develop personnel policies in order to attract and maintain a high quality public workforce.

KPERS/KP&F: Dodge City accepts the State's efforts to maintain the solvency of the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System by providing employees with a diverse professional investment portfolio that will offer long-term security. Dodge City supports the current statutory framework regarding KPERS and KP&F as passed by the 2012 Kansas Legislature. The local KPERS system should remain separate from the state and school retirement system. Changes to the KPERS/KP&F system should consider the impact on cities' ability to hire and retain qualified public employees.

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS: Dodge City believes that green card holders (or permanent residents?) in Kansas should be allowed to become law enforcement officers. Dodge City strongly encourages the state legislature to change state statute that bars non-citizens from becoming law enforcement officers.

MUNICIPAL FINANCE:

KANSAS TAX SYSTEM: Cities are important partners in creating jobs, reviving the economy, delivering vital services, and providing quality of life. Any changes to the Kansas Tax System must avoid shifting additional financial burdens to local governments.

PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS: Dodge City believes that the existing property tax base should be protected and therefore encourages the Kansas Legislature to resist any proposal to further exempt any specific property classification from taxation. The machinery and equipment exemption should not be expanded. The Kansas Legislature should actively review existing exemptions in order to determine whether the exemptions are still appropriate or should be repealed.

REVENUE SHARING: The Kansas Legislature should reinstate existing revenue sharing programs. In the event that the State is unable to fully fund said programs, the Kansas Legislature should authorize cities to impose alternative revenue sources in order to maintain appropriate levels of funding for the health, safety, and welfare of our citizens.

TAX SPENDING LID: Dodge City opposes any state-imposed limits on the taxing and spending authority of cities. We believe that local spending and taxing decisions are best left to locally elected officials and the citizens they serve. Dodge City strongly supports repeal of the property tax lid.

UNFUNDED MANDATES: Dodge City opposes unfunded mandates. If the State seeks to promote particular policy objectives, such mandates should be accompanied by an appropriate level of funding.

INTERNET SALES TAX

The collection of sales and use tax should not preempt state and local sales and use tax authority. Should federal legislation allow for the State imposition of such taxes, we support the distribution of those funds to cities and counties using an equitable formula. Kansas should continue to participate in the Streamlined Sales Tax Project. Cities are important partners in creating jobs, reviving the economy, delivering vital services, and providing quality of life. The Governor and Kansas Legislature should include city leaders in discussions regarding restructuring the Kansas tax system and any changes must avoid shifting additional financial burdens to local governments. The City of Dodge City opposes the removal of sales tax exemptions for Kansas Municipalities.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Dodge City relies on state and federal programs to remain competitive in efforts to attract and retain businesses and qualified labor. Unfortunately, many government programs are designed for either urban or rural communities. Dodge City is neither, based on the region's micropolitan statistical area (μ SA) geographical designation. Therefore, Dodge City is too big for rural-oriented programs and too small for urban-oriented programs. Dodge City is dedicated to the design and implementation of economic development programs for the growing segment of Kansas communities that are ineligible for many programs.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION: The Historic Tax Credit program and Historic Preservation Grants should be maintained and enhanced. Such programs assist communities in maintaining and/or restoring their historic buildings and serve as a critical resource for economic development and job creation. Without such gap assistance, many if not all redevelopment plans would be impossible to fulfill. These credits and grants provide valuable private investment that preserves our history and heritage not only for today but for future generations.

ZONING: Zoning is a fundamental municipal responsibility and is best controlled by local governments to ensure that acceptable and compatible uses of property are in place to retain and preserve the character of a community. This regulatory process is an activity best suited to the locally elected officials when considerations of health, safety and welfare of the community are to be determined. Dodge City opposes any change which would limit authority of cities.

STAR BONDS: Dodge City supports the ability of cities to utilize STAR bonds in order to promote economic development in their communities.

GAMBLING

By law, two percent of gambling revenue in Kansas must go to the Problem Gambling and Addictions Grant Fund which is designed to treat problem gamers and people with other addictions. Grants are to be awarded for the direct treatment of pathological gambling and for research regarding the impact of gambling on residents of Kansas, including determining the effectiveness of education and prevention efforts.

The Problem Gambling Fund must be protected for the purpose it is intended and must be allocated throughout the State with an emphasis on the gaming zones where people are at a greater risk to develop issues with problem gambling.

The State of Kansas should avoid legislation which would negatively affect existing gaming facilities and the communities which have dedicated public funds for infrastructure and growth related to such facilities.

HOUSING

The State of Kansas has provided many useful tools for communities to utilize incentives where gaps between construction rates and market rates prohibit development without incentives. The retention of these programs is critical to Dodge City as is the simplification of the processes required to make utilization timely and less complicated.

Dodge City strongly supports the Moderate-Income Housing (MIH) Program, an initiative funded by the State of Kansas and administered by Kansas Housing Resources Corporation (KHRC), which works to help cities and counties develop multi-family rental units, single-family for-purchase homes, and water, sewer and street extensions in communities with populations of fewer than 60,000 people. MIH funding can also be used to finance construction costs, rehabilitate unsafe or dilapidated housing, and offer down-payment and closing-cost assistance to homebuyers. We encourage the State of Kansas to continue providing MIH funding and also expand its financial commitment to this very important housing program.

The retention and simplification of programs such as Rural Housing Incentive Districts and Neighborhood Revitalization Program that are currently permitted by statute in qualifying communities is vital to Dodge City.

The Kansas Legislature should continue to grant affordable housing tax credits. The tax credit program continues to be a gap financing necessity which is imperative for developers to create affordable housing facilities.

TRANSPORTATION

TRANSPORTATION: Passenger rail, freight rail, commercial aviation, general aviation and adequate highways are critical to the safety of our citizens as well as a vital means of maintaining and growing our local economy. Dodge City believes in the continued advocacy and funding for transportation infrastructure and maintenance in Southwest Kansas.

HIGHWAY; Transportation infrastructure is critical not only to the safety of regional residents and travelers but also to the maintenance and growth of the regional economy. Dodge City supports increased transportation safety including continued funding for highway maintenance and infrastructure investment and efforts to promote traveler safety.

RAIL: Preserving long distance rail service through Dodge City and Southwest Kansas is important as rural regions must offer many alternative modes of transportation. Dodge City believes freight and passenger rail service is one way to maintain and grow the economy of Dodge City. Such service includes, but is not limited to Amtrak passenger rail service. Dodge City believes Amtrak should continue to be adequately funded and that necessary upgrades to rail infrastructure be provided through a joint effort involving federal, states, Amtrak and BNSF.

IMMIGRATION

Immigrant labor is vital to Dodge City's economy and continued growth and development. In correlation with this issue and due to the increased number of safety and transportation risks with uninsured drivers, Dodge City supports an initiative for limited and restricted driver's license. The City also supports current legislation that gives in-state tuition to undocumented students at Kansas colleges and universities.

EDUCATION

EDUCATION: An adequate and stable workforce is essential to maintaining and growing the economy of Dodge City and Southwest Kansas. Therefore, Dodge City believes in establishing educational opportunities for local and regional residents. Such opportunities include, but are not limited to, specialized training programs and educational degree programs. To meet these educational goals, Dodge City wishes to maintain adequate funding to allow for growth and advancement of educational programs in K-12, as well as post-secondary and graduate programs. Additionally, Dodge City supports adequate funding for all Kansas Board of Regents institutions.

Southwest Kansas is the only quadrant of the state without a four year public university. In order to bridge this gap and to provide a stronger higher education presence in our region, a University Center has been established to offer bachelor and masters level programs to meet the demands of the workforce with an initial focus on healthcare services. Students will obtain their first two years of education and their associates' degree through one of the regions' community colleges and then have the opportunity to finish their bachelor or advanced degree through the University Center. Headquartered in Dodge City, students across the region will have access to programs through a blended mix class format with some face to face classroom time in addition to web-based offerings. The opportunity to "Grow Our Own" is extremely critical to the long-term success of our regional workforce and the state of Kansas.

MEDICAID

Medical providers are challenged in meeting their communities' needs. We support the expansion of Medicaid/KanCare through receipt of the state budget neutral money therefore allowing such entities the ability to support critical services for their citizens.

WATER

WATER: Dodge City is dedicated to a thoughtful water policy that enables Dodge City to safely and effectively meet water needs while also protecting resources. Dodge City believes increased local involvement is critical to the successful implementation of the current Kansas Water Plan and the Vision for the Future of Water in Kansas plan which is intended to coordinate the management, conservation and development of the water resources across the state for the next fifty years. Dodge City also strongly encourages the development of new and sustainable water supplies.

The expanded use of reclaimed or re-use water is one way that communities/cities can meet the future demands for water. The use of this water for non-potable uses needs to be considered. A couple of examples are: 1) expanding the use of re-use water for irrigation of private property; or 2) use in construction projects.

To provide for the future growth of a community, cities must be diligent in purchasing water rights; however, in the past, water rights were 'tied together' and municipalities lost additional allocation with this procedure. When water rights are converted to municipal use from agriculture use, there is a reduction in the amount allowed for consumption. Agriculture consumption is in the form of irrigation. Most of the water consumption incurred by municipalities occurs during the summer months by irrigation. Consequently, municipalities should not have a reduction when converting water rights.

Dodge City supports legislation to allow municipalities the ability to "untie" currently owned water rights and reduce or eliminate the conversion of water rights from agriculture to municipal.

The City generally supports state legislative initiatives which would improve the quality of life for our citizens and enhance the effectiveness of local governments consistent with Home Rule. The City generally supports the provisions of the Statement of Municipal Policy of the League of Kansas Municipalities.