



# CITY OF TOPEKA

City Communications  
City Hall, 215 SE 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
Topeka, KS 66603

Tel: 785-368-0991  
[www.topeka.org](http://www.topeka.org)

## OPPOSITION TESTIMONY

House Bill 2219

An Act concerning the Kansas Open Meetings Act and the Recording of Public Meetings Subject to KOMA

House Judiciary Committee,

The recording of public meetings is something that the City of Topeka takes seriously. There are four full time employees in the Communications Office for the City of Topeka and two part time employees who work ten hours a week to help broadcast public meetings. City Council meetings, Public Health and Safety Committee meetings, Joint Economic Development Committee meetings, Economic Development Committee meetings, Planning Commission meetings and Safe Streets meetings are all broadcast with audio and video along with any special town hall or budget meeting. My small staff often works nights, weekends and overtime with their other duties to broadcast just these meetings every week. Being mandated to broadcast audio or video of all City of Topeka meetings subject to KOMA would be impossible for my staff. This would bring our meeting total from 2-4 meetings a week to more than twenty a month and three hundred a year. This would require me to hire another full time person, five or more part time people and spend thousands of dollars in equipment just to meet this proposed House Bill 2219. I do not have the budget or the equipment to support this, my department has had to cut its budget by two percent for the last five years, like all other departments in the City of Topeka.

Recording a public meeting is not as simple as placing a phone or small audio recorder on a table and letting it record a meeting. Doing that would produce terrible sound quality and not pick up most of what is being discussed except for the two or three people sitting closest to the recorder. In order to get a good quality audio recording, a recorder with a front and back recorder would have to be placed in the center of the room on a stand. These recorders cost \$500 or more. The City of Topeka often has three or four meetings subject to KOMA running at the same time. This would require thousands of dollars in extra costs between equipment and staff. After those four meetings are concluded, there would need to be two to four computers to upload the recording which can take between two and five hours depending on the length of the meeting. Getting all of those recordings uploaded to YouTube, or burned onto a CD or DVD would send my staff into overtime and working late into the night. When meetings start at five or six p.m., my staff usually works until ten or eleven at night. If video broadcast is included the price and time commitment doubles.

There are around three hundred public meetings subject to KOMA in the City of Topeka every year. In order to broadcast the meetings with the most public interest, the City of Topeka has three rooms set up with broadcast capabilities. There is a five year replacement cycle for our broadcasting equipment. It costs \$40,000 a year to maintain that equipment. To record every meeting subject to KOMA with just audio, we would have to purchase five audio recorders at \$500 apiece for a total of \$2,500 and hire five more part time employees through a staffing agency at \$24,000 a year each to work 20 hours a week to cover all the meetings. The total upfront cost is now 122,500. I would also need to



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purchase two new computers with video editing capabilities software and the Adobe Creative Suite, bringing the upfront cost total to \$143,460 for the first year. My budget to purchase equipment is only \$70,000 per year. One Tricaster, which is the equipment that runs a broadcast for meetings costs \$30,000 a year. I have to buy one this year. There is no way I can afford to record, even with just audio, every single meeting subject to KOMA in the City of Topeka.

Please reconsider House Bill 2219. The City of Topeka does its best to broadcast as many public meetings subject to KOMA as we can. With our current capabilities now, we still have to hire outside help and my staff frequently has to work overtime. The City of Topeka broadcasts two to five meetings a week and loads them on YouTube after 24 hours. However it takes a lot of time, effort and manpower just to cover those meetings, including working nights and weekends. House Bill 2219 would require my staff to solely cover public meetings instead of doing their other duties such as graphics and video production along with the maintenance of our equipment and I would be required to hire at least five additional part time staff to help out. The requirements of House Bill 2219 are onerous. If it is passed my department would not be able to afford the equipment or extra staff to implement the requirements in this bill.