



## **Green Valley Governance Plan Neighborhood Meetings**

### Background

In August of 2018, the County entered into an agreement with Jim Kaup of the Kaup Law Office (Kaup) to conduct a study of the governance options available in state statute for the area in the southwest corner of Pottawatomie County known as Blue Township or Green Valley. This was a five stage project that included a report on what options are available in state statute, identifying preferred levels of service, and a report on which governance option best fulfills the stated needs of the residents while internalizing the costs most effectively.

The survey was conducted on December of 2018, and approximately 300 people participated. The results of the survey indicated a lack of consensus both for services already provided and for any new services. As a result of the survey, Kaup gave his report on which governance options meet the criteria of fulfilling residents' needs and internalizes those costs.

Following the report, the final stage of the agreement with Kaup included outreach to the residents of Green Valley to report on the findings of the governance study. The Town Hall Meeting was held at the National Guard Armory in Manhattan, KS on February 5, 2019. It was attended by approximately 200 residents, and the County received more than 300 questions and comments regarding land use, transportation, green space, and the governance options.

The County and Kaup evaluated the questions and comments and determined that an opportunity to follow-up with the residents was warranted. However, rather than a second Town Hall meeting, it was decided that series of smaller neighborhood meetings would be an easier setting in which to respond to the questions and comments from the Town Hall and allow the residents to ask their own follow-up questions of the County and Kaup.

### Outreach

The County utilized several methods of outreach for the neighborhood meetings. Primarily, the County leaned on existing forms of communication amongst neighborhoods using contact information gathered at the Town Hall meeting. Most of the larger subdivisions in Green Valley have a community e-mail list, message board, or other form of communication that they use for meeting announcements and other happenings in their neighborhoods. Green Valley, as a whole, also uses the community social media website NextDoor.com for the same purposes. In addition to these outreach methods, Staff went door to door to several of the smaller neighborhoods to distribute the meeting schedule.

While these methods did not reach everyone in Green Valley, they proved to be a cost-effective and efficient way to reach many of the residents in a short amount of time. They also provided an avenue to present a significant amount of information, via links to the County's website, that otherwise would be too costly to print out and distribute by way of more traditional outreach methods.

### Neighborhood Meetings

The first neighborhood meeting was held on March 18 for the residents of Wildcat Woods and Whispering Meadows Subdivisions. None of the residents attended the meeting. It was determined that reminder sent to the residents the day before the meeting may help to boost attendance at future meetings.

The second neighborhood meeting on March 20 for Elbo Creek and Nelson's Ridge Subdivisions was attended by approximately 40 residents. Many of these residents were skeptical of Kaup's findings that single-family residential typically requires more services than the taxes that they contribute. A preference was stated for the continuation of the present system whereby the area remains an unincorporated portion of Pottawatomie County.

The meeting for Timber Creek subdivision was held on March 25 and attended by roughly 20 residents. Residents seemed to prefer pursuing incorporation over any of the other stated governance options. Although questions regarding the status quo were asked frequently by the residents, and the preference for incorporation was not universally held.

The final meeting for the large neighborhoods was held on March 27 for residents of Eagles Landing. About a dozen people attend this meeting. The residents that attended the meeting held a preference for annexation as a viable option that reflects what they feel many of the community already believe: that they live in the city of Manhattan. Although, again, this preference was not universally held by the attendees.

The County also held two overflow meetings for residents who could not attend their neighborhood's meeting and for those residents who do not live in any of the above neighborhoods. These two meetings were held on March 21 and April 1, and were attended by approximately 60 residents in total. The preference at these meetings was less clear, but many questions were asked about the status quo, about incorporation, and about annexation.

Overall, the meetings were attended by approximately 130 people, about half of whom had not previously attended the Town Hall meeting in April.

### Next Steps

While the viewpoints of the residents varied greatly over the course of these meetings, incorporation was a much discussed topic at each. Due to the relatively small requirements for a valid petition, it is important that the County Commission be

prepared for the submission of a valid petition for incorporation. Attached with this report is a memorandum prepared by Kaup on the details of an incorporation hearing.

Throughout the course of the neighborhood meetings, Staff asked for interested residents to indicate either on the sign-in sheet or a separate sheet their willingness to explore these options further. There were 20 individuals who signed up to take a more active role, and Staff's most immediate step will be to facilitate a dialogue between these interested parties.

The next steps in this process will, by and large, be dictated by the residents themselves. Nearly all of the options discussed during the governance plan require an entity other than the County Commission to initiate. As Staff mentioned at the neighborhood meetings, this process is at the point where the County should stop taking the lead role and move into a more supportive role.

### Conclusions

The meetings offered no definitive conclusions as to what governance option is preferred by the residents. Many residents seemed interested in incorporation, especially as a deterrent to annexation by the city of Manhattan, but several attendees expressed an interest in being annexed.

The question of maintaining the status quo or doing nothing (i.e. not moving forward with any of the options) was asked at each of the meetings. It is entirely possible that the most popular option for residents is the do-nothing option. However, doing nothing does not necessarily maintain the status quo for the residents.

Since the survey was widely distributed in December of 2018, the County has received over 500 written comments and questions and a couple of hundred more verbal questions and comments. There were about 300 participants in the survey, 200 attendees at the Town Hall meeting, and 130 people attended the neighborhood meetings. Even accounting for a subset of residents who participated in two or three steps of this plan, the process actively engaged several hundred residents in Green Valley. Whether or not a proposal by the residents comes out of this process, a real conversation between the residents and the County and amongst the residents themselves has taken place over these last four or five months as we all contemplate the future of this growing area.