

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMERCE, LABOR AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Mark Hutton at 1:30 pm on Wednesday, March 09, 2016, 346-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Representative Gene Suellentrop – Excused

Committee staff present:

Linda Herrick, Kansas Legislative Committee Assistant

Reed Holwegner, Legislative Research Department

Chuck Reimer, Office of Revisor of Statutes

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Whitney Damron, City of Topeka

Mayor Larry Wolgast, City of Topeka

Mike Taylor, Public Relations, Unified Government of Wyandotte County/KC, KS

Representative Stan Frownfelter

John Todd, Individual

Senator David Haley

Others in attendance:

[See Attached List](#)

**Hearing on: SB338 — Rehabilitation of abandoned property by cities.**

Chairperson Hutton opened the hearing on this bill. Chuck Reimer, Revisor, gave an overview of the bill. This bill amends the definition of abandoned property to residential properties that have been unoccupied for 365 days and have a blighting influence on surrounding properties. Cities could petition the district court to gain temporary possession of the abandoned properties to rehabilitate them through a designated organization.

Whitney Damron presented proponent testimony ([Attachment 1](#)) stating the last time this issue was addressed was in 2014, and cities have since made abandoned housing one of their primary legislative initiatives. Abandoned structures with no owner responsibility create challenges for neighborhoods and present a safety risk for police, fire and others to determine if any individuals are present when responding to emergencies and complaints.

Mayor Larry Wolgast, City of Topeka, and President of the League of Kansas Municipalities, provided proponent testimony ([Attachment 2](#)). The bill would expand the definition of abandoned property and blighting influence. It would give cities the ability to deal with a property and allow for rehabilitation action before it becomes a dangerous structure.

## CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES of the Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development at 1:30 pm on Wednesday, March 09, 2016 in Room 346-S of the Capitol.

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Mike Taylor, Public Relations Director, Unified Government Wyandotte County/KC, KS, gave supporting testimony ([Attachment 3](#)). The bill will streamline and expedite the process for dealing with abandoned properties.

Representative Frownfelter provided proponent testimony ([Attachment 4](#)) and stated the improved version of the bill is a compromise and he endorses the bill.

Written-only testimony was provided by LaVonta Williams, Councilwoman, City of Wichita ([Attachment 5](#)); and Luke Bell, General Counsel and Vice President, Government Affairs, Kansas Association of Realtors ([Attachment 6](#)).

John Todd, individual from Wichita, provided opposing testimony ([Attachment 7](#)) noting cities have the power to deal with property issues under current law. He added that this bill circumvents eminent domain statutes.

Senator David Haley provided neutral testimony ([Attachment 8](#)) and commended Representative Frownfelter for authoring this bill. He noted there are 1,000 abandoned properties in the district he represents. The bill will handle the elements of tax delinquency, chronic vacancy, neglect and disrepair. He urged the Committee to support the bill.

The hearing on this bill was closed.

### **Hearing on: SB366 — Prohibiting price controls on the purchase or sale of private residential or commercial property.**

Time did not permit a hearing on this bill, and it will be carried over to March 10.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.