



February 18, 2021

House Committee on Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications
Chair, Rep. Seiwert
Vice Chair, Rep. Schreiber
Ranking Minority Member, Rep. Kuether

Re: House Bill 2321 Testimony

Chairman Seiwert, Vice Chair Schreiber, Ranking Minority Member Kuether, and members of the committee.

I join you all today, not only as the council member representing the impacted area, but on behalf of the City of Wichita in support of HB 2321. This legislation is the result of continued dialogue with Evergy, Representative Finney and I regarding ways that we can be proactive to take steps to prevent future incidents like what occurred in Northeast Wichita in the late summer of 2018.

For those of you who were unable to join Representative Finney and I on a tour of the urban transmission line upgrade or attend the first hearing regarding this issue; there were a few specific concerns we pointed out that needed to be addressed.

Detailed notification

While Evergy did attend and present at a District Advisory Board Meeting and Neighborhood Association meeting, there were no visual images of what the final product would look like. In addition to this mistake, the notification only went to landowners as required by law. That is important because this area has a high number of renters and the landowners are not always the best at communication regarding these properties. There are even landowners living out of state that are extremely hard to track down and I am sure have no real communication with tenants outside of rent collection.

HB 2321 addresses this issue by adding in tenants, more detailed specifics of the proposed plans, and a six month window to gather community feedback prior to work beginning. This six month opportunity to gather first hand feedback on the proposed upgrades will give the municipality the opportunity to engage our Metro Area Planning Commission and District Advisory Boards.

These multiple opportunities for constituents to weigh in on how their neighborhoods and properties are going to be impacted is invaluable and I am appreciative that we could come to an agreement on that.



Ensuring that the KCC was involved for accountability

Many of the homeowners and renters who reached out to me were looking for some help with oversight as another opportunity for their concerns to be heard and addressed. HB 2321 addresses this issue by requiring a member of the commission to be in attendance at the public open house conducted so that they can directly receive input from those impacted.

By specifying this must occur on a weekday after 5pm or weekend day, it ensures the greatest opportunity for the greatest number of residents to attend to give their feedback to the commissioner and others.

While I would have liked to see the urban transmission line length be shortened from 2 ½ miles to 1 mile, I understand the complexities Evergy is trying to juggle and in the spirit of collaboration and compromise I am ok with this. The route that runs through the A.Price Woodard neighborhood was 2.8 miles and would have fell within the boundaries of this proposed law.

Lastly, as to not take up too much time, I want to thank Representative Finney for her tireless work on this issue. I want to thank the Evergy team for the consideration, time and attention to addressing this concern. I am also appreciative of the collaboration on this and compromise to get to this point before you today. This is a great step in making progress on this issue and I would like to encourage the committee to support this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Brandon J. Johnson

Brandon J. Johnson
Vice Mayor
City of Wichita