

**Oral Testimony to the
Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee
in support of House Bill No. 2033**

**Troy Unruh, City Commissioner, City of Garden City Kansas
February 20, 2019**

CITY COMMISSION

DAN FANKHAUSER
Mayor

LINDSAY J. BYRNES

ROY CESSNA

MELVIN L. DALE

TROY R. UNRUH

Chairwoman Tyson and Members of the Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony on behalf of the City of Garden City Commission as you consider House Bill No. 2033.

My name is Troy Unruh. I was raised in Garden City and have spent nearly all my adult life in the community. I am a City Commissioner for the City of Garden City and currently fulfill the role of Vice Mayor. On behalf of the City Commission, I ask you to vote in favor of House Bill 2033 as presented.

In your consideration of this bill, I believe I can offer unique insight as to the will of the Finney County voters on the November 2017 ballot issue as I became a newly-elected City Commissioner during the same election. While campaigning, I spoke with many residents. The biggest topic of discussion during the election was the sales tax ballot question. Many candidates, including myself, were looking for clarification on the measure, how it would work, and the time frame for completion on the six projects. I found myself engaged in great discussions throughout the community about how to best pay for large capital projects at the local level.

MATTHEW C. ALLEN
City Manager

JENNIFER V. CUNNINGHAM
ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER

MELINDA A. HITZ, CPA
Finance Director

RANDALL D. GRISELL
City Counselor

Our City and County government has a history of collaborative sales tax projects. In the 1990s the two entities collaborated on a sales tax project for the construction of a joint Law Enforcement Center. In the 2000s, they again collaborated in a sales tax to provide the necessary local match for a major Kansas Department of Transportation project on US Highway 50 from Garden City to the western edge of Finney County. The community is very supportive of the two governments partnering, and in the months leading up to the November election, it was evident from joint public meetings that the two governing bodies desired to find a way to merge their two intended ballot measures.

In the crafting of an interlocal agreement between the City of Garden City and Finney County, the two entities built in a Sales Tax Oversight Committee that would have a majority of its members be represented by people not on the Commission. This provided an additional layer of transparency through periodic public presentations, throughout the proposed life of the sales tax, accounting for both the receipts and the expenditures and giving the community updates on the status of the projects.

As a new Commissioner, I have been further exposed to the citizen engagement used by our local government leaders to solicit input in budgeting and capital improvement planning. As I meet Commissioners and Councilmembers from other cities, I realize that not all local governments go to the extent that ours does to determine the pulse of the community. Those citizen engagement tools shaped the combination of transportation, public safety and quality of life projects placed on the November 2017 ballot.

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Personally, I want taxes to be the last choice of funding at any level of government. There are times when they are necessary to use and there are times when the decision must be left to the voters. This collaborative sales tax ballot issue was a rare ask of our community regarding very large infrastructure and facilities projects. The community responded with a decisive margin (nearly 57% voted “yes”) in one of the largest local turnouts for a non-State or Federal election in recent memory.

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Since joining the Commission, I have been active in matters related to executing the will of the voters expressed in that November 2017 election. As they relate to the sales tax projects, I had the fortune of successfully recommending a member to the Sales Tax Oversight Committee who is chairing that committee and has provided reports to the City and County Commission. I also helped interview and select the contractor who will be used to build the three Lee Richardson Zoo project using the construction manager at risk (CMAR) process. These duties, and others I fulfill in my elected capacity, allow me to do my part in ensuring the projects requested by the Finney County voters get delivered on time and on budget. On behalf of the City of Garden City and the Finney County voters, I ask this Committee to do the same through passage of House Bill No. 2033.

Thank you for the service you provide to the State of Kansas and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide this testimony.

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