



## **Community Advisory Panel Meeting Minutes for June 5, 2025**

### **Members attending the meeting:**

Amy Nolan  
Luke Shoffner  
Amy Midis  
Tiki Dixon  
Brian Strutz  
Dr. John Nolt  
Wes Willoughby  
Janet Testerman  
Yassin Terou  
Cheryl Ball  
Keira Wyatt

### **Others in attendance:**

Dawn Ford, Facilitator

### **KUB Staff:**

John Piotrowski  
Mark Walker  
Erin Gill  
Tiffany Martin

### **KUB Commissioners:**

Kathy Hamilton

### **New Business**

The Community Advisory Panel met at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 5, 2025, at KUB's Hoskins Operations Center (4505 Middlebrook Pike).

Dawn Ford called the meeting to order.

Ms. Ford asked if there were any changes to the April meeting minutes. There were no changes, and the panel approved the minutes.

Ms. Ford shared the meeting's topic as KUB's support for community growth. She introduced John Piotrowski, Vice President of Customer Support & Development, and Mark Walker, Senior Vice President & Chief Financial Officer, to give a presentation discussing KUB's development programs, processes, and challenges.

Mr. Piotrowski began the presentation by showing Knoxville's ranking as a top housing market in 2025. He then shared the departments at KUB who support development in the community and a chart that showed the growth of new service work volume since 2015. Keira Wyatt asked if the new service jobs were created jobs for the economy. Mr. Walker and Mr. Piotrowski clarified that these were new service order requests.

Mr. Piotrowski continued by discussing ways that KUB supports development and its role in recruitment efforts. He shared some of the growth challenges KUB is experiencing as a utility and highlighted growth in specific areas around Knoxville and in Knox County.

Commissioner Kathy Hamilton asked if the sewer system highlighted with the discussion on East Knox County developments were acquired by KUB from another utility district or if they were originally on KUB's system. Mr. Piotrowski said it is likely a mixture due to the lines KUB acquired over the years. Commissioner Hamilton asked if there were specific challenges that KUB will face with this area having both forced mains and gravity mains. Mr. Piotrowski said these are challenges that KUB will have to prepare for as development continues in the area.

Ms. Testerman asked if burying utilities is becoming the best practice for newer developments. Mr. Piotrowski said electrical infrastructure is commonly buried on the front end of a new development. There are circumstances where overhead infrastructure may be used in rural developments, but buried infrastructure is incentivized by KUB.

Mr. Walker continued the presentation by discussing KUB's Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Program. He shared information on the program, the requirements, and the features that benefit small businesses. He then shared the current number of participants and awarded value.

Tiki Dixon asked about the bidding process and how potential vendors are notified. He said he is concerned there is a gap in how the demographics of the area do not support the scope of work in the bids. Mr. Walker said KUB works to close that gap through supplier outreach, education done with the Procurement staff, and the multiple community events KUB attends and hosts. He added that KUB intends to work across multiple departments to identify opportunities that could be done by a small business and grow the SBE program.

Ms. Wyatt asked what marketing strategies are used to make local vendors aware of the bidding opportunities. Mr. Piotrowski said KUB hosts multiple meetings to meet with vendors. He shared that KUB employs a contactor, Nikitia Thompson, who helps with outreach in the community. Mr. Dixon suggested going through the \$741,000 awarded through the program in the current fiscal year to determine what scopes of work are included in the amount. He said if there are scopes of

work that are not supported locally by a vendor there will continue to be a gap. Mr. Walker agreed that there will be instances where these awards would go to contractors outside of the service territory. Mr. Walker shared that he would like the number of local small businesses in the program to be higher than what it currently is.

Brian Strutz asked if the SBE program thresholds on employees or revenue is something that could be expanded to attract more vendors. Mr. Walker said the only limitations are what KUB chooses internally, and the threshold levels could be evaluated.

Yassin Terou said The University of Tennessee has a database to contact vendors when there are project opportunities. He asked if KUB has something similar. Mr. Walker said KUB does this as well. Mr. Terou said it was the first time he has heard of this program as a small business owner and suggested it would be helpful to offer a place where businesses could sign up to receive information on upcoming projects.

Cheryl Ball asked about the networking KUB does with the City of Knoxville and the community effort to share projects and referrals for vendors. Mr. Piotrowski said this is a role that Ms. Thompson plays with supplier outreach, and members of the Procurement Department are in contact with local representatives on upcoming projects, events and lists of potential vendors. Ms. Ball shared that the City was holding a small business breakfast the following Tuesday. She added there is a large amount of collaboration between the local government and institutions for procurement needs. She also shared that the process to register as a vendor for the City is simple and keeps the potential vendor notified of opportunities. Mr. Piotrowski confirmed that KUB is participating in the City's business breakfast and added that there is a large education element to supporting small businesses and assisting them with their bids and questions as a vendor.

Mr. Dixon asked if there was a forecast or calendar of upcoming bids. Mr. Piotrowski said upcoming bids are shared in a quarterly newsletter and at community events.

Ms. Wyatt asked if the Knoxville Chamber works with small businesses to notify them of upcoming projects. Amy Nolan responded that information from the Chamber is shared through events, newsletters, and social media channels. She added that Ms. Thompson is on the Chamber's Board and helps to identify opportunities for businesses in the area. She used an example of local small businesses not bidding on IT contracts as an opportunity for growing this sector. Ms. Wyatt asked how the Chamber works with KUB to notify vendors of projects. Ms. Nolan shared there is open communication between the two that allows for discussion of these opportunities.

Mr. Walker discussed supplier outreach and that KUB is working to identify more projects that can be performed by a small business vendor. Mr. Dixon reiterated the importance of building relationships with small businesses. He said while some may not bid on smaller contracts, they may spread the word to others. He added that he is still unsure if the program is delivering the desired outcomes, but he commended KUB for having a program that supports small businesses. Ms. Wyatt agreed with Mr. Dixon's remarks and added that small businesses serving the community require building capacity. She used an example of requiring large businesses to partner

with a smaller business to help achieve this. Mr. Walker shared that while this wasn't part of the SBE presentation today, KUB tracks subcontracting by large firms for small businesses. He said he believes KUB does a good job on supplier outreach, but there is still work to be done to bolster the program's vendors and awards.

Amy Midis asked about construction projects, such as Cumberland Avenue and Alcoa Highway, and if KUB improves the capacity to support future development. Mr. Piotrowski said KUB does upgrade the infrastructure and capacity when there are opportunities for future growth in development areas.

Amy Nolan shared that the growth in the area has come from an age demographic of 55 and up. She commented that the "growth demographic" of ages 25 to 55 has only grown 6% in the last 10 years for the Knoxville area. Mr. Walker shared that this growth is still good for KUB and its ratepayers. He shared an example of a large industrial customer and the electric margins they provide each year. This helps keep rates down for everyone over the long term.

Wes Willoughby asked if KUB has any growth projections and what projects they are seeing. Mr. Piotrowski answered that while KUB does not specialize in growth projections, KUB is seeing more multifamily and mixed-use developments for the area. Ms. Nolan added that she sees more development coming to East Knox County from Greenheck and housing developments. Mr. Walker added that KUB's safe, resilient, and reliable services spur growth in the community.

Ms. Ford announced that the next meeting would be October 2 at 3:00 p.m.

No members of the public addressed the panel during the public forum.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:11 p.m.