



# Agenda Item Report

## City Commission - Jan 19 2021

---

Department	Staff Contact
City Attorney's Office	Toni R. Wheeler, City Attorney

---

### Recommendations

Discussion of the letter received by Lynn Williams, Chairwoman of the Kaw Nation requesting return of the Big Red Rock currently situated in Robinson Park, and direct staff as appropriate.

---

### Executive Summary

Attached please find the letter Chairwoman Lynn Williams of the Kaw Nation wrote to the Mayor regarding the red rock located in Robinson Park. In the letter, Chairwoman Williams explained that the Big Red Rock, as it is commonly known, is sacred to the Kaw people. Chairwoman Williams also relayed in her letter that the Kaw Nation citizens voted at a quarterly General Council meeting of the Kaw Nation in October 2020, in favor of having the Big Red Rock returned to the Kaw people. Chairwoman Williams, on behalf of the Kaw Nation, requested the rock's return to the Kaw Nation. At its meeting on December 9, 2020, the City Commission discussed the letter. The City Commissioners were receptive to Chairwoman Williams' request and directed staff to schedule a discussion of it at a future City Commission meeting.

Research performed by the City Attorney's Office identified no legal barriers to the City's ability to return the rock to the Kaw Nation. Staff recommends confirming the agreement of the Board of County Commissioners of Douglas County because the rock is located on land set forth and designated in historical records of the City and County. Preliminary discussions with County Administrator Sarah Plinsky have been positive. A new County Commission was seated on January 11th and at the time of writing this report, the Board of County Commissioners had not discussed this matter but Ms. Plinsky indicated they would be willing to do so in the future.

Community members have expressed support for the Kaw Nation's request. The Commission has received correspondence from the community offering to assist the City, with time and funds, to support the return of the Big Red Rock. There may be grant funds or community donations that may cover a portion of or all of the costs of relocating the rock. The City could assist in the Kaw Nation's application for a grant by writing a letter of support, or if appropriate, by joining in a grant application. Staff can work with partners to explore such grant opportunities, if it is the Commission's desire.

The City Commission could move forward with the request. Next steps could include the following:

1. Authorize the Mayor to send a formal written response to the Kaw Nation acknowledging

receipt of Chairwoman Williams' request and expressing an intention to work with the Kaw Nation and other community partners to relocate the rock;

2. Direct staff to prepare a joint resolution of the City Commission and Board of County Commissioners for approval by both governing bodies stating the intention to relinquish the rock to the Kaw Nation and to work collaboratively on the Project;

3. Direct staff to continue to work with representatives of the Kaw Nation and other community partners on the project, including exploring grant opportunities to cover costs associated with its relocation and related costs, developing preliminary plans for moving the rock, including any community events associated with the move; and

4. Direct staff to report back to the Commission regarding progress on the project periodically.

---

### **Strategic Plan Critical Success Factor**

Effective Governance/Professional Administration  
Collaborative Solutions

---

### **Fiscal Impact**

The fiscal impact to the City is unknown at this time. This item was not in the 2021 City budget and CIP.

---

### **Action Requested**

---

### **Previous Agenda Reports:**

[December 8, 2020 City Commission Meeting](#)

---

### **Attachments**

[Kaw Nation Letter from Chairwoman Williams  
Communications - Added 01/19/21](#)

---



# KAW NATION

Drawer 50  
Kaw City, OK 74641  
(580) 269-2552 phone  
(866) 404-5297 toll free  
[www.kawnation.com](http://www.kawnation.com)

RECEIVED  
DEC 03 2020  
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE  
LAWRENCE, KS

November 30, 2020

Honorable Jennifer Ananda, Mayor  
City Hall  
6 East 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Lawrence, KS 66044

Dear Mayor Ananda,

Greetings, I hope this correspondence finds you well.

On Sunday, October 11, 2020, the Kaw Nation held its quarterly General Council meeting. At that meeting, Kaw Nation citizens overwhelmingly voted in favor of having *I<sup>n</sup>'zhúje'waxóbe* or the "Big Red Rock" (as it is more commonly known) returned to the Kaw people. Please accept this letter as a formal claim of ownership of *I<sup>n</sup>'zhúje'waxóbe*, currently residing in Robinson Park in Lawrence, Kansas, and for its unconditional return to the Kaw Nation.

*I<sup>n</sup>'zhúje'waxóbe* is sacred to the Kaw people and considered an item of cultural patrimony. Our stewardship of this rock and its significance as a spiritual item of prayer for our people is well documented by white anthropologists and witnesses including James Owen Dorsey and George Morehouse. After our removal from Kansas to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) in 1873, our people no longer had access to *I<sup>n</sup>'zhúje'waxóbe* at its original location near the confluence of the Kansas River and Shunganunga Creek, just outside of Topeka. White settlers understood the ceremonial significance and sacred nature of this rock to the Kaw people. Ignoring this fact, *I<sup>n</sup>'zhúje'waxóbe* was appropriated by the descendants of White settlers and, in 1929, was removed from its original location to Robinson Park and re-dedicated to "the pioneers of Kansas who in devotion to human freedom came into a wilderness, suffered hardships and faced danger and death to found this state in righteousness."

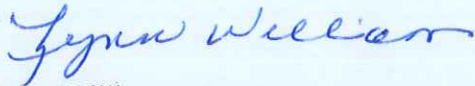
Our intent for the return of *I<sup>n</sup>'zhúje'waxóbe* is to reclaim our role as its original stewards and to respectfully restore and renew its significance as a sacred item of prayer for our people. We have no intent to remove this item from Kansas, but to bring it to a new home at Allegawaho Memorial Heritage Park in Council Grove. The park is owned and maintained by the Kaw Nation and is open to the public. Here, the rock will join other monuments of historical significance to the Kaw people and the citizens of Kansas. Our long-range goal is to develop and implement an interpretive plan for the site as an educational resource for all Kansans and visitors to learn about Kansas' original inhabitants, the Kanza.

With this letter, I designate James Pepper Henry (Kaw Nation Vice-Chairman), Pauline Sharp (Kaw Nation Citizen), and Curtis Kekahbah (Kaw Nation Citizen) as official representatives of the Kaw Nation

regarding this claim and its process. They form a committee that will work with all affected and interested parties. It is our wish to work collaboratively with you and your representatives in the spirit of mutual respect and cooperation to reach an amicable conclusion that is satisfactory to all parties. Upon mutual agreement, we welcome the participation of other entities in this process.

On behalf of the citizens of the Kaw Nation, I thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Lynn Williams,  
Chairwoman  
Kaw Nation

Cc: James Pepper Henry

## Harrison Hall

---

**From:** Roger Holden <whitecat23skidoo@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 18, 2021 6:43 PM  
**To:** City Commission Agendas  
**Subject:** Big Red Rock issue

External Email. Be careful with links and attachments.

- City of Lawrence IT Helpdesk

As a resident of Lawrence since 1972, I am wanting to express my support for returning the sacred Big Red Rock to the Kaw Nation. It belongs to them, not to Lawrence. I encourage the City Commision to find and support avenues of financial resource that will lead to the moving of the Big Red Rock to the Allegawaho Memorial Heritage Park in Council Grove, Kansas.

Sincerely,  
Roger Holden



## Harrison Hall

---

**From:** Emily Lysen <emvironmentalist@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 18, 2021 9:04 AM  
**To:** City Commission Agendas  
**Subject:** Big Red Rock to Council Grove

External Email. Be careful with links and attachments.

- City of Lawrence IT Helpdesk

I wanted to write my support of moving this rock back to the Kanza people. If funding is needed, I, and many other community members, will help fund this!

Thank you,  
Emily Lysen

## Harrison Hall

---

**From:** Susan Brosseau <suedonelle@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 17, 2021 8:33 PM  
**To:** City Commission Agendas  
**Subject:** Big Red Rock

External Email. Be careful with links and attachments.  
- City of Lawrence IT Helpdesk

We are in favor of returning the big red rock to the Kaw Nation. We see no reason that the City should keep it.

Susan Brosseau  
Bill Kalinich  
2133 Terrace Rd.  
Lawrence 66049  
785-760-2346

## Harrison Hall

---

**From:** Suzan Hampton <suzanhampton@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 18, 2021 1:19 AM  
**To:** City Commission Agendas  
**Cc:** Suzan Hampton  
**Subject:** In favor of supporting the return of the Big Red Rock

External Email. Be careful with links and attachments.

- City of Lawrence IT Helpdesk

Dear Mayor and Commissioners,

I'm in favor of the City of Lawrence helping facilitate and raise grant funding to return the Kaw Nation's cultural legacy to them.

Not only would this be a modest but meaningful gesture in support of justice, it also would open up a great opportunity to re-envision under-utilized Robinson Park as the northern gateway to Downtown. The possibilities are intriguing to activate the park with the Lawrence Loop soon to connect through East Lawrence and near the river to Burcham Park.

'Red Rock Return' might even be publically celebrated to pull the Native and non-Native community together to "thank the rock for its temporary service to Lawrence, and wish it well on its journey back to its ancestral home", if that was something the Kaw Nation would want.

A pow-wow, parade, or other outdoor ceremony or celebration might be enjoyed by families while educating younger citizens about issues of social and racial justice. Maybe the Rock could travel ceremoniously down Mass St. to Haskell University, and then to the Kaw Nation's park at Council Grove...just an idea.

Thanks for considering my opinion, and thank you for your service to our community.

Suzan Hampton



## Harrison Hall

---

**From:** Rick Lysén <rolysen@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 18, 2021 5:49 PM  
**To:** City Commission Agendas  
**Cc:** Rick Lysen  
**Subject:** Kaw Nation Big Red Rock

External Email. Be careful with links and attachments.

- City of Lawrence IT Helpdesk

City Commissioners:

I am in favor of allowing the sacred Big Red Rock moving back to the Leaders of the Kaw Nation.

I appreciate your voting in favor of this resolution and assisting in the cost of this project.

Rick Lysen  
513 Lawrence Ave.  
785-218-9669

--

Rick Lysén

## Harrison Hall

---

**From:** linda watts <lindajoywatts@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 18, 2021 12:01 PM  
**To:** City Commission Agendas  
**Subject:** Kaw Nation request

External Email. Be careful with links and attachments.

- City of Lawrence IT Helpdesk

Dear Commissioners.

We support returning the Shunganunga boulder to its rightful place as requested by the Kaw Nation. .We support the City/County writing a grant to pay for the transfer of the boulder and for the replacement monument.

We suggest that the current site of the Shunganunga boulder be used for a monument acknowledging that the land now incorporated into the city of Lawrence and Douglas County is the ancestral land of indiginous people, including the Wazhazhe Ma<sup>n</sup>zha<sup>n</sup> (Osage) and the Washtáge Mo<sup>n</sup>zhá<sup>n</sup> (Kaw / Kansa).

Both of these actions serve as reparations to native peoples for the governmental seizure of their ancestral land for control and development by Kansas Territory settlers and removal of native Peoples to other lands.

Katheryn Roblee  
Linda Burton  
Heather Soper  
Margie Dyck  
Ted Waiss  
Linda Watts  
Rev. Barry Williams    Member of First Presbyterian Church, Lawrnece

January 18, 2021

Mayor Finkeldei and City Commissioners,

For ninety-one years the Big Red Rock has stood in Robinson Park as a monument to the Founders of Lawrence with no mention of the people whose land was taken so that Lawrence could be established; The Kanza. Now, we have the opportunity to begin to make amends for that injustice.

The plaque cemented to the Big Red Rock says that our City's first residents found this place in freedom. We know that this is not the whole truth. Let's begin acknowledging a fuller, deeper more complicated truth by supporting the Kaw Nation's request and offering any and all assistance they need to bring the Big Red Rock to the only piece of land owned by the Kanza in Kansas.

And let's not stop there. With the rock at its new home, we will have a moment to reimagine "Robinson" Park. Together, led by the local Indigenous community, we can ask ourselves what meanings this place holds, how it might be used and how it could be known or named.

We are grateful to have had the time and support to help bring this story to light. Now it is your turn to add to this story in a way that represents what we have learned and how we have changed.

Sincerely,

Members of the Between the Rock and a Hard Place project

Pauline Sharp, Kanza  
Charles Curtis Kekahbah, Kanza  
Curtis Kekahbah, Kanza  
Charlee Huffman, Kanza  
Jay Johnson  
Elizabeth Schultz  
Brett Ramey  
Dennis Domer  
Tai Edwards  
Sara Gregg  
Dave Loewenstein

## Harrison Hall

---

**From:** ed canda <erccanda@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 19, 2021 10:20 AM  
**To:** City Commission Agendas  
**Subject:** Return of the Big Red Rock

External Email. Be careful with links and attachments.

- City of Lawrence IT Helpdesk

To the Lawrence City Commission  
January 19, 2021

I am writing to express my strong and enthusiastic support for returning the 'Big Red Rock' to the Kaw Nation in accord with their request sent to the Lawrence City Commission. This is a matter of social justice and respect for the Kaw Nation and for the sacredness of the rock itself. I am committed to support this important and long overdue initiative with personal donation of funds.

--

Edward R. Canda  
5228 Harvard Road  
Lawrence, Kansas 66049

## Harrison Hall

---

**From:** Andy Ransom <theandychrist@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 19, 2021 9:01 AM  
**To:** City Commission Agendas  
**Subject:** Return the sacred rock

External Email. Be careful with links and attachments.  
- City of Lawrence IT Helpdesk

Dear County and City Commission Officials,

Please consider the request from the Kaw Nation to return their sacred prayer rock.

The Shunganunga Boulder is not Douglas County's to hold or boast. It is time to return it upon the request of the Kaw Nation and by request of Douglas County residents.

Furthermore, Robinson Park is inaccessible and poorly located with heavy traffic on all sides. It is a continued disgrace to keep this sacred rock from its original location and hold it in such an inconsiderate way. Never, in my 20 years of living in this community have I seen Robinson Park occupied or used by our community.

Holding this sacred rock hostage is wrong. By returning it to the Kaw Nation, The City of Lawrence has an opportunity to be transparent about its participation in the theft of this land and its origins. Return the Boulder as reparation to the indigenous people of this land immediately.

Sincerely,  
Andrea Ransom

## Harrison Hall

---

**From:** A Truthbrarian <atruthbrarian@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 19, 2021 8:31 AM  
**To:** City Commission Agendas  
**Subject:** Support for Kaw and Big Red Rock

External Email. Be careful with links and attachments.  
- City of Lawrence IT Helpdesk

Good morning,

I am writing to urge the City and County to honor the formal request by the Kaw Nation to facilitate returning the "Big Red Rock" in Robinson Park back to the Kaw Nation.

Moving the Big Red Rock to Council Grove is a chance to make a painful wrong, right. I fully support the City & County Commissioners in allocating resources for the move without delay.

Thank you,

Angela Rathmel  
2631 Louisiana  
Lawrence, KS 66046

## The Big Red Rock on the Other Side of Town

Most Lawrence residents are familiar with the Big Red Rock currently located in Robinson Park across from City Hall on Sixth St. (See “City to discuss tribe’s request for return of prayer rock”, LJW, Jan. 16, 2021). Few residents are aware of the “other” Big Red Rock located among a small grove of cedar trees overlooking the intersection of Haskell Ave and 31<sup>st</sup> St. This second Big Red Rock (BRR#2) is approx 60% the size of the purloined Big Red Rock (precise measurements are difficult because BRR#2 is partially buried).

The Kansas Geological Survey (Public Information Circular 28, April 2009) reports that two glacial advances reached northeast Kansas during the Pleistocene Epoch or “Ice Age.” BRR#2 was left behind when a glacial advance carried fragments of Sioux Quartzite (likely from the Dakota region) into the ancestral Kaw valley. Many glacial deposits have been found in Douglas County, within and around Lawrence and on public and private land surrounding Clinton Lake. Drive through East Lawrence neighborhoods and you will notice a few rock walls and even a couple of homes which have incorporated glacial erratics. When Salb Construction excavated before building new homes in the Mary’s Lake Addition (2800-3100 Harper St), a layer of glacial erratics was unearthed on the east slope of the hillside where BRR#2 is located. Several homeowners along East 28<sup>th</sup> St Terrace and South Harper St have incorporated basketball and bushel sized glacial erratics into their landscaping.

BRR#2 is resting among a partially exposed field of glacial erratics which overlooks several historic and natural points of interest - the Haskell and Baker Wetlands, the Wakarusa River Valley below Clinton Lake Dam, a portion of the route of the Oregon-California Trail, and Blue Mound, to name a few. The recent developments on this hilltop at the south edge of Lawrence have resulted in an attractive “campus” that includes Peaslee Tech, the Lawrence College and Career Center, and the Boys & Girls Club of Lawrence. Peaslee Tech and USD 497 have the opportunity to enhance the campus by creating access paths, installing an interpretive sign and perhaps a bench for visitors to rest and enjoy the expansive views and beautiful sunsets.

The folks at Peaslee Tech recently removed a dense tangle of honeysuckle and invasive woody undergrowth after a homeless encampment was found in the hilltop cedar grove last fall. The resulting open sight lines have created a more park-like setting. Unfortunately, the woody plants, vines and brush, mixed with remnants of the trash and litter from the homeless encampment, were bulldozed into piles and not removed from the property. Several unsightly brush piles remain on the public right of way. Hopefully, Peaslee Tech or the City of Lawrence will remove the brush piles in the spring.

There are two ways to gain access to BRR#2. The easiest access is from the parking lot on the west side of the Peaslee Tech building, 2920 Haskell Ave. Parking in front of the Lawrence Work Force Center,\* walk to the southwest corner of the paved lot, then follow a semi-circular dirt path heading south along the public right of way and BRR#2 is easily spotted over your left shoulder. Bikers or runners on the Lawrence Loop can access BRR#2 from the northeast corner



of Haskell Ave and 31<sup>st</sup> St. Walk straight up the hill toward the cedar grove, across the unmowed public right of way, and BRR#2 is in plain sight within a few feet of the south property line of Peaslee Tech. Visitors are encouraged NOT to attempt to excavate or remove the glacial erratics surrounding BRR#2. These interesting and beautiful stones resided here long before human inhabitants – according to KGS, they arrived between 700,000 and 130,000 years ago!

#### WARNING

\*Visitors should NOT drive or park on the south side of the Peaslee Tech building. Peaslee Tech operates a CDL driver training program during school open hours. Student drivers learn to operate semi-trucks, which includes parking, backing and turning tractor-trailer rigs in the south side area. Currently, Just Foods is operating a temporary food distribution depot out of the south side of Peaslee Tech. In addition, B&GC of Lawrence uses the south side for parking of school busses.

This information sheet prepared by Stephen Garlow, [mrlsgarlow@aol.com](mailto:mrlsgarlow@aol.com)



President: Bart Littlejohn

Vice President: Nick Kuzmyak

Secretary: Katie Kuzmyak

Treasurer: Pat Miller

Communications Coordinator: Eleanor Gardner

**PINCKNEY NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION**  
PO Box 125, Lawrence, Kansas 66044  
[www.PinckneyNeighborhood.org](http://www.PinckneyNeighborhood.org)  
[Pinckney.Neighborhood@gmail.com](mailto:Pinckney.Neighborhood@gmail.com)

January 19, 2020

*Via e-mail*

Dear Lawrence City Commission Members:

Members of Pinckney Neighborhood Association would like to comment on the proposal to move the “Big Red Rock”, as it’s commonly known, from its current location to a place determined by the Kaw Nation.

Robinson Park has been a great addition to the neighborhood since its establishment; and a major part of the park is the “Big Red Rock”. The rock is a significant symbol of Kansas but its placement carries a stain. Long ago the effort to move the rock to its current location was done so without knowledge or consent of the people that it meant so much to. We now have the opportunity to rectify that wrong.

We believe that the rock should go back to its original stewards, the Kaw Nation, and would be supportive of the City and County in those efforts. It is our hope that the remaining site in Robinson Park will become part of a greater narrative of the multi-faceted history of our City and its original and continuous purpose to provide a place for all.

Sincerely yours,

Bart Littlejohn  
President, PNA



January 18, 2021

Brad Finkeldei, Mayor  
City of Lawrence  
6 E. 6<sup>th</sup>  
Lawrence KS 66044

*RE: Regular agenda item #1 (letter from Kaw Nation)*

Dear Mayor Finkeldei and members of the City Commission:

The land that became known as Kansas and Lawrence was originally the Kansa, Osage, Wichita, Kiowa, Kiowa-Apache, Comanche, Pawnee, Cheyenne and Arapaho nation before White settler colonialism. The Potawatomi, Kickapoo, Wyandot, Sac and Fox, Iowa, Ottawa, Chippewa, Miami, Piankashaw and Wea, Peoria and Kaskaskia, Cherokee, Shawnee and Delaware nations had reservations in pre-territorial Kansas. The Iowa, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, and Sac and Fox continue to have reservations in the state.

With this recognition, LiveWell Douglas County supports the return of *l'* 'zhúje 'waxóbe or the "Big Red Rock" from the City of Lawrence to the Kaw Nation citizens.

The significance of this rock as a spiritual item of prayer for the Kaw people is well documented. It was removed from its original location almost one hundred years ago and moved to Robinson Park, an act of theft and cultural destruction that must be recognized and remedied by returning the rock to the Kaw people. We laud the efforts of the Kaw Nation to restore the significance of this stone by installing it at the Allegawaho Memorial Heritage Park in Council Grove, to serve as an education resource for all Kansans and visitors about the Kanza people.

Returning this stone also creates an opportunity to re-envision this park space, which fits well into the city's current focus on developing a downtown Master Plan. We would like to see efforts made to better integrate this park into downtown and to create comfortable, safe connections between this park and downtown and to other green/recreational spaces just to the west, including Constant, Burcham and Watson Parks. At least one possible routing of the Lawrence Loop, for example, has been proposed that would create pedestrian/bike access to this park via a paved trail behind City Hall and under the Kansas River bridges. Such a trail would make this park readily accessible and would provide visitors to the park wonderful visual connections to the Kansas River and our vibrant downtown.

We urge the Lawrence City Commission to honor the ancestral and living inhabitants of our wonderful state by working with the Kaw Nation to relocate *l'* 'zhúje 'waxóbe, and also to create a new purpose and aesthetic for Robinson Park, creating opportunities for the space to be used and enjoyed in a more appropriate way by residents and visitors to our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'William J. Hentzler'.

Joey Hentzler  
Chair of LiveWell Douglas County