



City of Fort Wright

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City of Fort Wright Caucus Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

6:00p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

The City Caucus Meeting was called to order at 6:00p.m. by Mayor Hatter, he led the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence.

City Clerk Kerrie Holland called the roll. Mr. Collins-Present, Ms. Ross-Present, Mr. Wall-Present, Mr. Weber-Not Present, Mr. Wessels-Not Present, Ms. Witt-Present.

Also present were Mayor Dave Hatter, City Administrator Jill Cain Bailey, City Attorney John Brooking, Police Chief Jonathan Colwell, Fire/EMS Chief Steve Schewe, Public Works Director Jeff Bethell, City Clerk Kerrie Holland

CITIZEN COMMENTS/GUESTS

NONE

ITEMS TO DISCUSS

Law Enforcement Navigator Program – Amanda Peters- Also in attendance was Judge Executive Chris Knochelman.

Program Scope & Operations-Expansion: All Kenton County cities have joined the program except for Independence and Erlanger, which maintain independent social workers. **Staffing:** There are currently four navigators, including one dedicated to Covington and three multi-jurisdictional roles.

Role of Social Workers: Acting as "second responders," they handle follow-ups for substance abuse, food insecurity, and wellness checks. This allows police officers to return to active patrol sooner. **Case Management:** Navigators "connect the dots" between individuals and resources. Cases are followed for 90 days post-stability, and all 214 reported cases have been successfully connected to services.

Financials & Funding: The program is supported by opioid settlement payments (2025–26). One navigator position costs approximately **\$125,000** (salary and benefits).

Agreements: Fort Wright is considering an interlocal agreement to contribute its 2025–26 settlement funds (excluding Kroger's portion). There is a 60-day "pull-out" clause for participants.

Reporting: The Navigator Program will handle state-required reporting and provide supplemental data to individual cities via their software. **Key Concerns & Clarifications: APS(APS) vs.**

Navigators: Council members noted that the program often provides a faster, more positive response than Adult Protective Services. **Resource Tourism:** There was a query regarding whether "free" services would attract out-of-area individuals; officials noted this occurs but is infrequent and usually involves transporting individuals back to their home areas. **Emergency Response:** For

overdoses, Fire/EMS handles Narcan and transport; the Navigator Program would intervene once the medical crisis is stabilized or the patient refuses hospital transport. **Next Steps: Legal Review:** Amanda Peters is sending relevant statutes to the CAO for review. **Upcoming Meeting:** A regional meeting regarding the allocation of settlement funds is scheduled for **April 27–28** in NKY.

FLOCK Camera Proposal

Follow-up Information: Per the previous Council request, a summary was provided regarding the use of FLOCK cameras in surrounding cities. **Department Report:** The Police Chief reported on outreach to FLOCK. A brochure and formal pricing quote were presented to the Council for review. **Executive Concerns:** The Mayor expressed specific concerns regarding the implementation and oversight of the system. **Financial Proposal Total Cost:** \$79,700 for a 3-year contract. **Scope:** This quote covers the installation and maintenance of 4 cameras. **Proposed Camera Placement** The FLOCK team suggested the following strategic locations for the 4-unit deployment: **Dixie Highway:** Near St. Johns. **St. James Avenue:** Adjacent to St. Agnes. **Auto Dealership Area:** Near local dealership lots. It was noted that the dealer may be willing to donate funds to cover a camera near their property. **Interstate Access:** Northbound and southbound ends of the interstate. **Council Direction & Discussion** The Council discussed whether to move the proposal discussions to the March Agenda. Individual views were recorded as follows: **In Favor:** Councilmember Collins **Possible/Leaning Yes:** Councilmember Wessels **Opposed:** Councilmembers Witt and Wall. **Undecided/Unsure:** Councilmembers Ross and Weber. **Conclusion & Next Steps Agenda Status:** There is currently no majority support to add the FLOCK camera proposal to the March City Council meeting agenda. **Action Item:** The matter will be moved to a future Caucus meeting for further deliberation on costs and community impact.

NKADD Fair Share Contribution Request

The Council reviewed the annual "Fair Share" contribution request from the Northern Kentucky Area Development District (NKADD) in the amount of **\$2,398.91**. **Key Discussion Points: Payment History:** It was noted that the city did not pay the contribution for the 2025 fiscal year. **Service Utilization:** The Fair Share contribution provides the city with a block of 23 service hours. However, Council members noted that the city has been unable to utilize these hours in previous years. **Recommendation:** The standing recommendation was to decline payment of the invoice. **Council Action:** The Council reached a consensus **not to pay** the NKADD Fair Share contribution bill for 2026 FY.

Legislative Updates & Discussion

The Council reviewed the status of several bills and authorized the following actions regarding formal correspondence: **HB 276, HB 518, and SB91:** Letters of opposition have been officially sent. **SB 112:** Council requested specific changes be drafted for the existing letter of opposition. **HB 495:** Action is currently on hold pending the receipt of additional information. **Bill Recommendations & New Business-HB 75 (Property Tax Exemptions):** The CAO raised specific concerns regarding this bill. The Mayor briefed the Council on various options following discussions at the recent Mayors' meeting. The Mayor recommended that members reach out

individually to State Rep **Stephanie Dietz** to discuss further. A formal resolution is to be prepared. **HB 182 (Solicitation & Panhandling):** Discussion held regarding new tools to manage panhandling on interstates. The Council noted this legislation would assist in resolving ongoing local issues. **HB333 Religious Developer / Home Rule:** A discussion occurred regarding home rule implications concerning a religious developer. **HB213 Police Personnel:** Discussions occurred regarding this HB concerning staffing shortages by making it easier for local law enforcement agencies (cities, counties, and sheriffs) to rehire retired officers. **SB 132 (Massage Therapy Regulation):** Council highlighted the importance of this bill, which would grant the city the authority to inspect and regulate massage facilities. **HB 612 (Liquor Regulatory Fees & Barrel Tax):** Discussion focused on 4% regulatory fees for wet/dry cities and changes to the barrel tax. Concerns were raised regarding the declining bourbon market and the financial health of distilleries. A resolution was requested. Discussions pertaining to **HB495** which is a proposed piece of legislation introduced in early 2026 relating to **local occupational license fees** (local taxes on wages).

Salt Storage Solutions/Building Proposal Update

Request for Proposals: The council has formally requested proposals for the redesign of the Tot Lot playground, Verdantas has submitted a quote for the initial cost and proposal of the research into removing the Tot-Lot Playground and adding the Salt Storage in its place. **Technical Site Assessment-Geotechnical Investigation:** A geotechnical study is recommended to assess soil stability and subsurface conditions before construction begins. **Financial Impact:** The estimated expense for this geotechnical work is **\$14,000**. **Best Practices:** The committee recommends following industry best practices for site preparation to mitigate risks such as soil settlement or drainage issues. **Procurement & Compliance-Bidding Requirements:** Because the project cost exceeds established statutory threshold limits, the project must be put out for formal competitive bid. **Contract Status:** It was noted that there are currently **600T** of salt currently secured under an existing contract for use. **Next Steps:** Finalize approval to move forward with Verdantas if chosen. Authorize the \$14,000 expenditure for geotechnical testing. Verdantas will prepare the formal bid package for public advertisement, which is included in their cost.

Banklick Creek Conservancy/Park Project – Councilwoman Witt

Conservancy Outreach & Funding-Councilwoman Witt reported that the Banklick Creek Conservancy has contacted the City to offer funding for specific environmental and accessibility projects. **Project Scope & Clarifications-**Councilwoman Witt clarified the following parameters regarding the proposed cooperation: **Property & Trails:** There are currently no plans to expand Fort Wright (FW) property or establish connectivity with existing trail systems. **Primary Goals:** The focus is strictly on improving water visibility and creating easier access to the creek for residents. **Cleanup Efforts:** Councilwoman Witt requested, and received, a verbal consensus from Council to begin personal cleanup efforts at the site. Coordination with TANK (Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky) is required before moving forward. **Park Status:** No official decision has been made regarding whether the area will be designated as a public park. **Council Inquiries & Safety Considerations-**Councilwoman Ross raised several safety and logistical concerns: **Water Quality & Safety:** Questions regarding whether the water is clean and safe for public interaction. **Water**

Levels: Current data indicates a standard depth of 1.5 feet, with a high-water mark of 8 feet. **Emergency Access:** Concerns were noted regarding whether emergency vehicles can gain access to the rear of the property. **Liability:** Discussion held regarding insurance liabilities; Attorney Brooking noted that exclusions for recreational use may apply. **Proposed Improvements-** Suggestions for the use of Conservancy funds include but are not limited to: Tree health assessments and removal of invasive species. Drainage and runoff improvements. Potential kayak access point. Construction of a sidewalk to connect with SD1 trails. **Actions & Next Steps- Approval Granted:** Council provided a verbal "OK" for Councilwoman Witt to begin preliminary cleanup. **Authorization Needed:** Formal notification to TANK is required. **Decisions Pending:** All formal decisions regarding park status and specific infrastructure remains under review

UPCOMING EVENTS

KLC Night in Frankfort: Scheduled for February 25, 2026

Councilwoman Witt is waiting on final approval for Spring Cleanup-Proposed date is April 18, 2026

Fire/EMS & Hoxworth blood drive to be held February 23, 2026

With no further items on the agenda to discuss, Mayor Hatter asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilwoman Witt made a motion to adjourn, and Councilman Wall made a second. Ms. Holland called the roll.

Councilman Collins	Yes
Councilwoman Ross	Yes
Councilman Wall	Yes
Councilman Weber	Not Present
Councilman Wessels	Not Present
Councilwoman Witt	Yes

MOTION CARRIED

Meeting officially adjourned at 8:37p.m.

ATTEST:



Kerrie Holland, City Clerk

Respectfully Submitted,



Dave Hatter, Mayor