



City of Fort Wright

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City of Fort Wright Council Meeting Minutes Wednesday – March 4th, 2026 6:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Hatter called the City Council Meeting to order at 6:00p.m., followed by The Pledge of Allegiance and moment of Silence. City Clerk Kerrie Holland called the Role.

Mr. Jason Collins	Present
Ms. Donna Ross	Present
Mr. Scott Wall	Present
Mr. Jay Weber	Present
Mr. Bernie Wessels	Not Present
Ms. Margie Witt	Present

Also present were Mayor Hatter, City Attorney John Brooking, Police Chief Jonathan Colwell, Public Works Director Jeff Bethell, City Clerk Kerrie Holland, and Finance Clerk Nyoka Johnson.

CITIZEN COMMENTS/GUESTS:

Judge Executive Kris Knochelmann, Kenton County Update

Kenton County Judge Executive Kris Knochelman provided updates on several key initiatives, including Consolidated Dispatch led by Ashley Hawks, with CodeRED in place since 2017 and a regional radio system upgrade completed three years ago to improve safety and communication across departments. Fort Wright accounted for approximately 7,600 911 calls last year, about 3% of the county's total, with Campbell County already using the same CAD system and Boone County expected to join soon. Marc Fields highlighted detention center efforts focused on national drug treatment initiatives, while Steve Hensley noted cities can participate in county-led projects. Economic development includes a \$16 million redevelopment of the former Sims Furniture building into a collaborative business space, and the 225-acre Fox Run Park designed by Greg Wolnitzek, featuring recreational amenities and expected to be completed by June 2028. Additional redevelopment plans behind the county administration building include a 250-space parking garage, with 125 additional residential/after-hours spaces, offering free parking for employees and customers.

Joe Redmond, Professional Sealants – Old Madison Pike Ingress/Egress

Not present as of 6:01 pm, Council will proceed with next item on agenda(Kenton County Update) 6:47pm end of Kenton county Update presentation, still not present.

MINUTES:

Minutes from the February 4th, 2026 City Council Meeting

Councilman Weber made a motion to approve the minutes as written; Councilwoman Ross made a second. With no further discussion, Ms. Holland called the roll.

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

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

Minutes from the February 18th, 2026 City Caucus Meeting

Councilman Collins made a motion to approve the minutes as written; Councilwoman Ross made a second. With no further discussion, Ms. Holland called the roll.

Councilman Collins-Yes; Councilwoman Ross-Yes; Councilman Wall-Yes; Councilman Weber-Pass; Councilman Wessels-Not Present; Councilwoman Witt-Yes

MOTION CARRIED 4-0

Agenda Amendment

Mayor asked for a motion to amend the order of the agenda to accommodate John Chamberlain’s time, in order for him to present his presentation first. Councilman Weber made a motion; Councilman Collins made a second. Ms. Holland called the role.

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

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

NEW BUSINESS

Fiscal Year 24-25 Audit Presentation – John Chamberlain, Chamberlain Owen & Co.

Mr. Chamberlain emphasized the importance of maintaining public trust as a top priority, noting that local government is ultimately accountable to its citizens. Appreciation was expressed to the Mayor, staff, and particularly Ben Harrison for his work in closing the books annually. The audit resulted in an unmodified opinion, indicating that all financial statements are presented fairly with the highest level of assurance. A review of internal controls, including cash handling and credit card transactions, as well as compliance with debt requirements, federal fund expenditures, and Kentucky Revised Statutes, revealed no issues. Adjustments were made related to opioid funds and CERS/OPEB obligations, and the City’s cash position continues to steadily improve, with approximately \$1.98 million covering three months of current liabilities. Revenues and expenditures were reviewed by department, with no findings of noncompliance or management concerns. The Mayor thanked staff for adhering to the budget and noted coordination with Dean Dorton to ensure responsible stewardship of public funds, including maintaining proper separation of duties as staffing increases. Officials also discussed the OpenGov transparency portal, including a question regarding potential cybersecurity risks.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Fire/EMS Department Year End 2025 Report – Presented by Chief Steve Schewe

The Fire Department continues to operate out of a single station and in 2025 hired three additional part-time personnel, bringing the total to 16 part-time staff, while also leaving open a full-time position at year’s end, but that was ultimately filled in January 2026. Which now brings the total of full-time staff to 8, for a total of 24 staff members for the Fire Department. The department responded to 1,261 calls, with a ratio of approximately 10 EMS calls for every one fire call. In the event of a structure fire, the Chief will issue direct notifications. The prescription drug drop box program remains successful, collecting 162 pounds of medications, with a total of 250 pounds received, though some items could not be processed. Liquids and vitamins are not accepted; Lithium battery collection is also active and successful-items are held until collected by the Cincinnati Reuse Center for proper disposal. Ambulance specifications have been completed, and representatives will attend a conference in Indianapolis in March regarding fire department apparatus, after which information will be prepared for the bid process. Mutual aid activity included 11% of calls providing aid to other departments and 5% received. Hydrant maintenance includes clearing snow manually with pickup trucks and shovels, checking hydrants prior to freezing conditions, and conducting routine maintenance and testing twice annually. The Fire Department report will be posted on the city website. The Mayor expressed appreciation to neighboring cities for their mutual aid support.

NEW BUSINESS CONT'D

2026 Street Program – Project Bid Results Review & Project Award.

Bid opening-Jefferson contracting, low bid-worked with them before (23) Bid awarded to Jefferson, Verdantas recommended Jefferson. With no further discussions, Mayor asked for a motion to approve the 2026 Street Program bid selection. Councilman Weber made and a motion and Councilwoman Witt made the second. Ms. Holland called the role.

Councilman Collins-Yes; Councilwoman Ross-Yes; Councilman Wall-Yes; Councilman Weber-Yes; Councilman Wessels-Not Present: Councilwoman Witt-Yes

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

Salt Storage Building Proposal – Verdantas

The Council discussed plans to construct an on-site salt storage facility, with the tot lot playground identified as the preferred location. A report was provided in the meeting packet, including a survey costing \$3,500, geotechnical work at \$14,975, and a \$64,075 proposal from Verdantas to proceed. The goal is to have the storage facility and salt in place before winter. Roofing options, including metal and the potential for solar panels, were discussed, as well as whether SD1 has been notified or has concerns. Contingency plans were considered in case the storage building project does not proceed, along with the possibility of expediting a new playground on the former Civic Club property. The tot lot is intended to be removed due to its age and condition.

With no further discussion, Mayor asked for a motion to approve the contract from Verdantas and to proceed with the demolition of the Tot-Lot. Councilman Weber made a motion and Councilwoman Ross made the second. Ms. Holland called the role .

Councilman Collins-Yes; Councilwoman Ross-Yes; Councilman Wall-Yes; Councilman Weber-Yes; Councilman Wessels-Not Present: Councilwoman Witt-Yes

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

Law Enforcement Navigator Program Update

At the last caucus meeting, Amanda Peters presented updates to the contract, including adding exact contribution amounts and revising some language. Council discussed whether to proceed with the Law Enforcement Navigator Program. The Chief and CAO recommend moving forward for a two-year period then reevaluating needs and usage numbers. Mayor supported proceeding with the program. Chief Colwell, was initially hesitant due to its association with opioid services, noted that the program also provides valuable child and adult services, making it a broader resource. Council members expressed support, with Councilwoman Ross in agreement and Councilwoman Witt suggesting a one-year trial with later reassessment. The item will be tabled for further discussion at the next caucus meeting.

Legislative Updates, Discussions, and/or Actions.

Mayor attended KLC night in Frankfort, spoke to State Senator Chris McDaniel in regard to legislation being considered. Resolutions for the following bills need to be signed off and sent.

·Resolution 01-26 supporting HB189 – An Act related to safety of State ROW.

With no further discussion, Mayor Hatter asks for a motion to submit resolution 01-26 in support of HB189. Councilman Weber made a motion and Councilwoman Ross made a second. Ms. Holland called the role.

Councilman Collins-Yes; Councilwoman Ross-Yes; Councilman Wall-Yes; Councilman Weber-Yes; Councilman Wessels-Not Present: Councilwoman Witt-Yes

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

·Resolution 02-26 opposing HB333 – An Act related to Faith-Based Housing.

With no further discussion, Mayor Hatter asks for a motion to submit resolution 02-26 in opposition of HB333. Councilman Wall made a motion, and Councilman Collins made a second. Ms. Holland called the role.

Councilman Collins-Yes; Councilwoman Ross-Yes; Councilman Wall-Yes; Councilman Weber-Yes; Councilman Wessels-Not Present: Councilwoman Witt-Yes

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

·Resolution 03-26 supporting SB132 – An Act related to Regulation of Massage Therapy Businesses.

With no further discussion, Mayor Hatter asks for a motion to submit resolution 03-26 in support of SB132. Councilman Weber made a motion, and Councilman Wall made a second. Ms. Holland called the role.

Councilman Collins-Yes; Councilwoman Ross-Yes; Councilman Wall-Yes; Councilman Weber-Yes; Councilman Wessels-Not Present: Councilwoman Witt-Yes

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

·Resolution 04-26 opposing HB612 – An Act related to Alcoholic Beverage Regulation & Fees.

With no further discussion, Mayor Hatter asks for a motion to submit resolution 04-26 in opposition of HB612. Councilwoman Witt made a motion, and Councilman Collins made a second. Ms. Holland called the role.

Councilman Collins-Yes; Councilwoman Ross-Yes; Councilman Wall-Yes; Councilman Weber-Yes; Councilman Wessels-Not Present: Councilwoman Witt-Yes

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

·Resolution 05-26 opposing HB75 – An Act related to Property Tax Exemption.

With no further discussion, Mayor Hatter asks for a motion to submit resolution 05-26 in opposition of HB75. Councilwoman Wall made a motion, and Councilwoman Ross made a second. Ms. Holland called the role.

Councilman Collins-Yes; Councilwoman Ross-Yes; Councilman Wall-Yes; Councilman Weber-Yes; Councilman Wessels-Not Present: Councilwoman Witt-Yes

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

·Resolution 06-26 supporting HB589 – An Act related to Rehiring Retired Fire/EMS Emergency Personnel.

With no further discussion, Mayor Hatter asks for a motion to submit resolution 06-26 in support of HB589. Councilwoman Weber made a motion, and Councilwoman Ross made a second. Ms. Holland called the role.

Councilman Collins-Yes; Councilwoman Ross-Yes; Councilman Wall-Yes; Councilman Weber-Yes; Councilman Wessels-Not Present: Councilwoman Witt-Yes

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

Mayor added that the legislature session is winding down, and there are lots of bills that are detrimental to local government. Mayor explains what the “home rule” is. It allows local government(us) to make decisions on behalf of residents.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Finance Committee reported meeting with a representative from RedTree, noting an average investment return of 4.07%, with 45% of funds maturing and in need of reinvestment. Further discussion on reinvestment strategies will take place at an upcoming caucus meeting. The Mayor stated that the City’s investment program continues to generate additional revenue, with approximately \$236,000 currently invested. Council discussion included whether to consider establishing a cap on investments. CAO Bailey mentions that the City is always trying to constantly balance how much money we have in cashflow, and how much we can flip over to the seeder’s investments, we’ll move money from the general fund into the investments funds because we want to earn higher interest rates. CAO Bailey noted the need to coordinate with Verdantas regarding funding requirements for upcoming street projects, including the significantly higher cost anticipated for Mt. Vernon. The item was tabled for inclusion on the next caucus meeting agenda.

CAO REPORT:

The City is coordinating with Maddox to schedule upcoming landscaping work. Additionally, the 2026 calendar of events was provided in the meeting packet, with Spring Clean-Up Day scheduled for April 18.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Administration/ Finance – City Clerk Kerrie Holland and Finance Clerk Nyoka Johnson

Nothing new to report in addition to the Clerk reports that were submitted and sent in the packet.

Police Department- Chief Colwell

Officer Capps will report to the Academy next Sunday. Hosting women’s self-defense class in April. Class is full and another one will be scheduled for those who didn’t get in for this class.

Public Works – Director Jeff Bethell

Covered everything in the road project discussions.

Fire/ALS Department – Chief Schewe

New Full time Fire fighter, Glenn Caminiti is fitting in and doing well. Will get him at the next meeting for all to meet.

Legal Counsel – John Brooking

Nothing to report

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Employee Recognitions/Special Thank You's.

Thank you to Chief Colwell for hosting the CHNK tour of the Admin Building

COUNCIL COMMENTS: No comments

EXECUTIVE SESSION: NONE

ADJOURNMENT

With nothing further on the agenda to discuss, Mayor Hatter asks for a motion to adjourn. Councilman Collins made a motion; Councilwoman Ross made a second. Ms. Holland called the role.

Mr. Jason Collins-Yes; Ms. Donna Ross-Yes; Mr. Scott Wall-Yes; Mr. Jay Weber-Yes; Mr. Bernie Wessels-Not Present-Yes; Ms. Margie Witt-Yes

MOTION CARRIES 5-0

Meeting officially adjourned @ 9:00p.m.

The next city Council Meeting is Scheduled for April 1, 2026 @ 6:00p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Dave Hatter, Mayor

ATTEST:


Kerrie Holland, City Clerk