



City of Fort Wright

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City of Fort Wright Special Council Meeting Wednesday, April 15, 2020 – 6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

The Special Council Meeting was called to order at 6:01 PM by Mayor Hatter. Mayor Hatter led the Pledge of Allegiance and Councilman Feinauer delivered an invocation. City Clerk Maura Russell called the roll.

Councilman Abeln	Here
Councilman Feinauer	Here
Councilman Wall	Here
Councilman Weber	Here
Councilman Wessels	Here
Councilwoman Witt	Here

Also present for the meeting were:

City Administrative Officer Jill Bailey
City Attorney Kyle Winslow
Fire/EMS Chief Steve Schewe
Police Chief Ed Butler
Public Works Director Jeff Bethell
City Clerk Maura Russell

CITIZEN COMMENTS/GUESTS

There were no citizen comments or guests.

APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES

Councilman Weber made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2020, Special Council Meeting with one correction: on page four, within the "2020 Street Paving Project Update" discussion, updating "Councilman Weber asked about cutting less off" to "Councilman Weber asked about cutting more off." Councilman Wessels made a second. City Clerk Maura Russell called the roll.

Councilman Abeln	Yes
Councilman Feinauer	Yes
Councilman Wall	Yes
Councilman Weber	Yes
Councilman Wessels	Yes
Councilwoman Witt	Yes

MOTION CARRIED

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

CAO REPORT

Ms. Bailey reported that operations are continuing as normal. Staff are working remotely and rotating on-site work. The City Building is not open to the general walk-in visitors but are still conducting business and continuing to function as an essential business.

Ms. Bailey said that all department heads have turned in their budget proposals, as those were due today. She said they will start working on salary surveys and formulating a new budget for the 2020-2021 fiscal year, which will go to the Finance Committee and ultimately to the City Council for review and action. She said she is analyzing the current budget and the impact of the pandemic on finances. Ms. Bailey said Councilmembers were sent financial reports of gross receipts and payroll taxes for comparisons to 2018-2019 and the last five years to review. She said calculations are ongoing based on what businesses are still open or have closed, and she welcomes Councilmember input on any information they have on local business operations.

Mayor Hatter echoed Ms. Bailey's budget projection and impact concerns. He said a Kentucky League of Cities article announced larger cities may see as much as a 25% drop in income, but does not think that will happen to the City of Fort Wright. Mayor Hatter said the information Ms. Bailey sent also includes forecasting tools to allow for "what-if" scenarios, as well as looking at the top 25 businesses and their actions. He said they are trying to be sound with the budget planning and analyze any potential expenses that may not be necessary at this point.

Councilman Wessels asked if it would be appropriate for the Finance Committee to meet with Ms. Bailey. Mayor Hatter said that would make a lot of sense for a virtual meeting to bring a plan forward. He said any discussion should be about minimizing expenditure and maximizing revenue. Ms. Bailey said she would reach out to the Finance Committee members to schedule this meeting.

Ms. Bailey also said the reports she sent indicate there is currently a \$600,000 to \$700,000 shortfall for gross receipts and payroll tax because two quarters of income will be delayed because the extension to file has been extended to July. She said there is cost savings built into the budget, but she wanted to be sure the Mayor and Council were aware of the information. Mayor Hatter requested clarification on this, and she said the first quarter income would have come in April, but with the IRS extension there will be a delay in receiving those funds. Mayor Hatter confirmed this is a timing issue, not an inability to collect.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Administration/Finance – Ms. Bailey reported the Administration team is fully functional even with the operational change. She said the finance information in the Councilmember's packets has information through the end of February. Ms. Bailey said the City's bookkeeper has not been in the office the last few weeks and they are working on scheduling so he can balance the books for March.

Fire/ALS Department – Chief Schewe said the department has been quiet, and it is slow all over Kenton County. He said the department is in good shape with PPE [personal protective equipment - masks, gowns, gloves], and he has found other places to secure equipment. Councilman Wessels asked about

the ambulance. Chief Schewe said that there was a transmission wiring issue and they are using a loaned ambulance from Kenton County with no issues. Mayor Hatter asked about the new ambulance and Chief Schewe said the Horton factory in Columbus has not been shut down, but he is not aware if their staffing is affected and has not been notified if the June delivery will be affected.

Chief Schewe extended a special thank you for the public that has wrapped their arms around the Fire/ALS Department. He said they have received food, candy, homemade and donated masks, and restaurants have donated food, and the department is so appreciative of the support. Mayor Hatter commented that he has seen that across the City and said it is a testament to what a great community this is and how many people care and want to help. He said he feels blessed to live in a great place where people care, are willing to stay calm, and willing to help each other out.

Chief Schewe closed with announcing the new pumper truck is now in service, so residents should expect to see it out and about.

Mayor Hatter expressed thanks to resident Jessica Nienaber and volunteers who worked with the Fire and Police departments to put on the impromptu Easter parade on Sunday morning. He said he hopes to make it an annual event as people were extremely appreciative.

Legal Counsel – City Attorney Winslow said he has been working on a lot of projects with City Administrator Bailey the last few weeks. Mayor Hatter mentioned House Bill (HB) 484 that passed the Kentucky Legislature and was signed off on by Governor Beshear. He said the City is in support of this passing and it achieves some of the objectives of the City's lawsuit, to free the County Employee Retirement System (CERS) from the Kentucky Retirement System (KRS). He said he is working on a press release to residents to explain the City's perspective on the separation going forward, because the lawsuit is not just about the separation. He said this press release will discuss what was and was not accomplished, and why the City will continue the lawsuit that is currently at the Kentucky Supreme Court. He expressed thanks to City Attorney Winslow for his assistance, as well as former City Attorney Todd McMurtry, Attorney Ron Parry, City Council, Representative Banta, former Representative St. Onge, and Senator McDaniel.

City Attorney Winslow reiterated that a big goal of the City's was to separate the CERS and the KRS. He said the lawsuit alleges improper investment of CERS funds and the City will continue to pursue that. He said the Supreme Court has not yet decided if they will hear the case and he hopes for resolution soon.

Police Department – Chief Butler said everyone on his staff has remained healthy, as have their families. He echoed Chief Schewe's and Mayor Hatter's earlier sentiments of appreciation to the community for their support.

Councilman Weber asked Chief Butler how it felt to be back in uniform. Chief Butler said it feels good, he enjoys it, and is thankful for the opportunity.

Mayor Hatter congratulated Officer Robert Griffin for his recent promotion to Sergeant. He said three officers applied for the opening with a written exam and verbal interviews for the position, and Sgt. Griffin did very well on those assessments. Mayor Hatter said he thinks Sgt. Griffin will do a great job in his new role.

Public Works – Mr. Bethell said things have not changed much with his team, who continue mowing, cleaning drains, picking up trash, and repairing concrete. He said he and Ms. Bailey met with engineers recently regarding the Amsterdam Road project. It is slated to start mid-May with the installation of the pier wall between Morris Road and General Drive. He said he anticipates closures for that being long-term and will get more information out as it gets closer to the start date. Mr. Bethell said the 2020 Street Program bid period will begin at the end of April and bid opening will be May 14.

Mr. Bethell said the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet has begun working on the right turn lane at Kyles Lane and Dixie Highway, and will move to the other side when finished. He said the weather has been cooperative and light traffic has helped also. Mr. Bethell said the Sanitation District of Northern Kentucky (SD1) will place their directional board on Fort Henry the week of April 27 announcing the work to replace the sanitary line that broke when the hill slid. He said letters were sent to residents in the area, and he anticipates Fort Henry being closed for 24 hours when SD1 pulls the pipe back, but it will be about a month before they do that.

Councilman Abeln brought up that there is a telephone pole in the middle of the island at Kyles Lane and Dixie Highway where the construction has started and asked if that would stay there. Mr. Bethell said he also noticed that but did not have an opportunity to ask about it when he was on-site this afternoon. He said there is equipment in place, and they will be boring across to work on lighting infrastructure.

Mayor Hatter reminded residents that there will be a lot of road work in the City and he recommends residents follow the City on Facebook and Twitter and subscribe to receive email updates. He said as these dates firm up and get closer for these projects, social media and email will be the fastest way to know what is going on. He requested patience from residents and said a lot of money is being spent on these projects to make great improvements, but it will be painful along the way. Mayor Hatter reminded residents they can reach out to him or Ms. Bailey anytime with questions.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Hatter mentioned the enormous outpouring of support from the community. He said there were too many people to mention, but said that he, Councilmembers, and staff sincerely appreciate the support. Mayor Hatter said he hopes everyone will continue to be calm, patient, and help the City help you help each other. He said he wants everyone to continue to work together to support and be there for one another.

Mayor Hatter announced that, based on guidance from the Governor's office and what other cities are doing, all upcoming events, including Clean Up Fort Wright Day, have been cancelled through the end of April to encourage everyone to stay safe at home and minimize the spread of CoViD-19. Events for May, including the Memorial Day ceremony, will be reevaluated closer to the end of April. He said he is hopeful that the Clean Up Fort Wright Day will be rescheduled for later this year.

Mayor Hatter also reminded residents to complete their US Census. He said he looked at numbers before today's meeting and the state of Kentucky had a 51% response rate, Kenton County had a 55% response rate, and the City of Fort Wright had a response rate of 65.9%. He reminded residents that the Census is so important because so many things come from it, including federal dollars and congressional representation. He said it only takes a few minutes and encourages everyone to do it.

Mayor Hatter said there are a lot of great businesses and restaurants in the community that are still open, and he hopes residents are continuing to support them as they can. He said he does not want to

lose any of those businesses, and he appreciates people continuing to support those businesses who have chosen to make Fort Wright their home.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Wessels – He said he appreciated those watching from home via the Facebook live feed, including former City Councilman Joe Averdick.

Councilwoman Witt – She said that even though Clean Up Fort Wright Day has been postponed, she hopes that as people are out taking walks, they will take a garbage bag with them to do pick up on their streets. She said any little bit helps. Councilwoman Witt also said some residents have asked her if they can pick up trash in certain areas of the City, as long as they are practicing social distancing, and she expressed appreciation for those who want to be involved in the community in that way. Mayor Hatter reiterated that anyone who is out and about can pick up whatever they see laying around. He also reminded residents that a lot more people are out walking, so he asked that people slow down and be careful as they are driving through the City.

Councilman Feinauer – He said even though everyone has always said this is a great City, this pandemic has proven how great Fort Wright is with businesses and residents fluidly and not effortlessly coming up with ideas. He said Fort Wright is a great City and he is proud to be a part of it.

Councilman Weber – He thanked Councilman Feinauer for the prayer at the beginning of the meeting and echoed his thoughts about Fort Wright being a great City. He said he appreciates each person who contributes to the whole and does a great job.

Mayor Hatter thanked everyone for being calm and willing to help where they are able. He said there are many things across the region available if anyone wants to help, and the City has set up an email address to let the administration know if someone is elderly, cannot get to the grocery store, or needs help in any way. The email address is help@fortwright.com. He said if a message is sent there, the staff will do what they can to get the person assistance or connected to an organization who can help. He said not one person has reached out requesting assistance yet, but it is available if anyone needs it.

Mayor Hatter also said a special thank you to everyone on the team. He said he meets daily with Ms. Bailey, Chief Schewe, Chief Butler, and Mr. Bethell to stay in touch with updates from the Northern Kentucky Health Department, Kenton County Emergency Management, regional agencies, and at the state level to be sure the City is doing everything it can for staff, including PPE. Mayor Hatter said they are trying to stay on top of the situation as best as they can and get the information out as fast as possible, and reminded residents to stick to reputable sources like the CDC and Health Department, as those are the resources the City will share. Mayor Hatter thanked staff for all they have done and being able to constantly adapt. He expressed appreciation for Councilman Feinauer's prayer at the start of this meeting. Finally, Mayor Hatter again thanked residents and businesses for all they do to make this a great community. He will update everyone on if the next meeting will be in person or virtual once he has more information.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no need for Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

Councilman Feinauer made a motion to adjourn the Special Council Meeting. Councilwoman Witt made a second. City Clerk Maura Russell called the roll.

Councilman Abeln	Yes
Councilman Feinauer	Yes
Councilman Wall	Yes
Councilman Weber	Yes
Councilman Wessels	Yes
Councilwoman Witt	Yes

The Special Council Meeting adjourned at 6:42 PM.

MOTION CARRIED

Respectfully Submitted,


Dave Hatter, Mayor

Attest:



Maura Russell
City Clerk