



# City of Fort Wright

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## City of Fort Wright Caucus Meeting Wednesday, May 19, 2021 – 6:00 PM

### CALL TO ORDER

The Caucus Meeting was called to order at 6:02 PM by Mayor Dave Hatter following the conclusion of the Special Council Meeting.

[Councilwoman Witt left the meeting at the conclusion of the Special Council Meeting.]

### CITIZEN COMMENTS/GUESTS

There were no citizen comments.

### ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

**Ramage Civil War Museum & Battery Hooper Park Parking Issues** – Mr. Bernie O'Bryan, President of the James A. Ramage Civil War Museum, was present to discuss parking issues. He said the Museum and Park have lost over 60 parking spaces since the Community of Faith Presbyterian Church sold its property next door at 1400 Highland Pike to developers. Mr. O'Bryan presented pictures of areas at the Park where he suggests the City implement parking.

Mayor Hatter said he is against any green space being turned into parking. He said from his perspective, the City purchased the land to use as a park, not a museum. Mayor Hatter recommended volunteers and visitors to the Museum park at the City Administration Building and shuttle back-and-forth or in the neighborhood directly behind the Park.

Ms. Bailey advised Mr. O'Bryan that she did get a proposal from CT Consultants and the only viable option will cost \$254,000. Mayor Hatter reiterated that he is against doing anything for parking for the Museum. He said he will only consider options that benefit the Park and the residents of Fort Wright.

Councilman Wessels said he has walked the grounds and thinks the house needs to go, as it is falling apart. He said a new master plan needs to be created, including maintenance of the existing building, the driveway into the Park, additional restrooms, and utilities. He suggested to Mr. O'Bryan that the Museum Board begin finding outside-the-box funding opportunities, including grants, to expand the budget.

Councilman Wall said that he thinks part of the property is on an historic register, saying he has tried to research that in the past. Mr. O'Bryan said he thinks the entire Park is on an historic register. Councilman Wall asked him to find out that specific information because there may be restrictions on how much work can be done.

Ms. Bailey reviewed the budget for the Museum, saying it brings in about \$6,000 to \$7,000 in revenue, with expenses around \$10,000 to \$11,000, each year. She said the Museum is quickly running out of cash assets in its checking account. Ms. Bailey said there is about \$4,000 in the account now, but on July

1 an insurance payment will be deducted for \$2,500 and the Board has requested security updates to cost \$850. She said there will not be enough to pay utilities past September without a cash infusion from the City. Ms. Bailey asked Councilmembers what they would like to do regarding utilities, because those are currently in the City's name.

There was continued discussion about the funds the Museum has used in the past, with Ms. Bailey saying the funds were co-mingled with City funds for a long time, so soft costs like utilities were paid without hitting the Museum budget directly. She said that is now separate with the new budgeting system, so each cost is credited toward the Museum to show the true amount of money being spent. Councilman Wessels suggested the City should continue paying utilities in the interim until a resolution is found and suggested that happen through the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

Discussion continued about parking, with Ms. Bailey asking how the Museum will hold events if they do not think they have adequate parking. Mayor Hatter reminded Mr. O'Bryan of the parking options mentioned earlier and added that TANK [Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky] may be willing to offer shuttle services as well. Mr. O'Bryan asked if they could be allowed to park on the grass in the Park. Ms. Bailey said that she does not believe anyone will object to that, but the Museum needs to be submitting all events to City Council for approval, and they need to be reviewed by the Police Chief and Fire Chief for traffic flow and safety response. Mr. Bethell added that it is not ideal to park in the grass if it has rained, as the grass has been ruined in the past and the City had to pay for restoration.

Councilman Weber mentioned a museum in Aurora, Indiana, that had been in a similar position as the James A Ramage Civil War Museum. He said that city did not have the funds to help the museum further, so the board of directors came up with alternate fundraising methods. He said they are now self-sufficient and require no funding from their local municipalities. Councilman Weber recommended to Mr. O'Bryan that he reach out to this museum to learn about their plan and how they worked their way out of a similar situation.

Mayor Hatter added that the Museum should be looking for support from local historical societies, Kenton County, the State of Kentucky, or other historically minded organizations for assistance. Ms. Bailey asked Mr. O'Bryan if the Museum has the volunteer structure and dedication to put in the hours of work it will take to find and write grant applications.

Councilman Feinauer said he is on the fence with his support. He suggested revisiting the original plan developed at the time the Park was purchased. Councilman Abeln had the sustainability plan that had been developed in 2008 by a group from Thomas More University. He said there is a three-page summary identifying recommendations centered around engagement and fundraising, and he does not believe he sees the energy and focus in achieving the goals recommended there. Mr. O'Bryan countered that the Museum has done almost everything on the list.

Mayor Hatter asked what the economic value of the Museum was for the residents of Fort Wright, as he said most people in the City do not know the Museum exists. He asked why residents should continue to pay for the Museum. He added that he will fight against spending more of residents' money and that the Museum needs to figure out where their funding will come from.

Ms. Bailey said that she previously managed an 80-acre park for 20 years. She said it cost \$300,000 per year to run, with a shelter house that was rented every weekend, and it never made money. She said

without paid staff, operations become challenging. She asked Council to decide if they want to be in the museum business, what they want the Park to be, and what they will support. She also encouraged Mr. O'Bryan to reach out to other organizations for support and funding.

Mr. O'Bryan brought up entrance fees, saying the Museum does not charge for admittance or parking, and he feels they are restricted by the lack of ability to develop these revenue streams. Ms. Bailey said there are tax implications that must be factored into those decisions. Mayor Hatter asked about cash handling issues and Ms. Bailey said the Museum volunteers are already subjected to Fort Wright's handling policies for their cash register and donation box.

Councilman Wessels asked Mr. O'Bryan to advise Ms. Bailey and Council what grants he intends to apply for, as there may be specific protocols for grants that require City approval. He said bidding procedures must be followed, as well as any matching grant information needs to be presented to Council prior to approving application.

Councilman Wall said he has a feeling Mr. O'Bryan wants the parking areas before events this summer. Mayor Hatter said that is not possible and reminded him of the parking areas previously discussed. Councilman Wall reminded Mr. O'Bryan that Chief Butler and Chief Schewe need to review traffic flow for events. Ms. Bailey also reminded Mr. O'Bryan that all events need to be turned in for review by Council, including reviewing emergency response and insurance details. She said the previous Board President would submit a list of events and then she would respond accordingly after review.

There was discussion about insurance and items at the Museum, whether they are owned by the City or on loan from local families, and Ms. Bailey said she is confident the insurance company has that information. Mayor Hatter mentioned the previous request for security updates, saying that will need to be discussed at the next Council Meeting, as well as funding utilities until a decision is made on the ultimate outcome of the Museum. He said the decision will need to be made on providing a cash deposit and for how long.

**Rumpke Waste Collection Agreement & Addendum** – Ms. Bailey reminded Council that they recently instructed her to renew the contract with Rumpke, so she sent in the required documentation and asked them to provide some documents, including insurance information. She said they responded by sending a proposed addendum to the contract that allows Rumpke to charge for additional items, such as fuel surcharges and tipping fees. Ms. Bailey said when the contract was initially written, it specifically stated the City will not pay for fuel surcharges, tipping fees, and additional charges. She said everything was sent to Mr. Theissen and he confirmed the City does not have to sign the addendum.

Mayor Hatter asked to confirm there is no legal obligation to accept this addendum, and Mr. Theissen confirmed that is correct. Ms. Bailey said she has all correspondence and, while Council cannot act this evening, she needs direction on if it will be signed or not.

Mayor Hatter asked if he can, independent of Council, say that the City will not be signing the addendum. Mr. Theissen confirmed that is within his powers. Mayor Hatter said that he does not want the addendum signed.

**COVID Emergency Orders, and Related Policies** – Mayor Hatter stated he did not like having the Executive Order placed in March 2020 giving him emergency powers still in place and wants to see it rescinded as soon as possible. He said he spoke with Ms. Bailey and there were concerns about government funding tied to this Order being in place, so it may need to stay for now.

Ms. Bailey said she spoke with Steve Hensley [Director, Kenton County Homeland Security and Emergency Management], who told her other communities have also asked about the emergency orders. She said Mr. Hensley is asking that these orders stay in place because it may affect FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] funding, as well as the state of Kentucky's ability to receive funding. Ms. Bailey said the hope is that all communities will be able to release these emergency orders at one time.

A resident in attendance, Mr. Jason Worms of Pickett Drive, asked if there was a way for Council to restrict the Mayor's emergency powers without removing them. Mayor Hatter said he was not sure, but he just does not like the precedence that is set with the emergency order in place for so long. Ms. Bailey reminded the Mayor that, because Council has been able to meet so consistently throughout the pandemic, there have not been any actions taken without Council's input. Mayor Hatter said this would be revisited when the state of emergency is lifted.

Ms. Bailey asked to provide a couple Finance Committee related items. She said she will have the budget finished by this weekend, and the Committee will meet again on Wednesday, May 26<sup>th</sup> to begin review.

Ms. Bailey also said the Finance Committee met with RedTree Investment Group this afternoon to discuss investments. She said the money has been put in several different areas, including commercial paper products and short-term securities, and asked if anyone on Council has issues with City investments going to non-United States products. Mayor Hatter said he does not want the City's money going outside the United States. Councilman Wessels added that, by law, the City can only invest in A-rated products and they are trying to stay focused on Northern Kentucky investments. He asked if there was objection to foreign investment products as long as they are within the rate guidelines. Mayor Hatter said he is dead set against Chinese investments but would be okay with Canadian investments. He said he would rather support US corporations.

Ms. Bailey brought up the Park Hills EMS contract, saying the Finance Committee is recommending a two-year contract that would be \$90,000 plus billing the first year and \$95,000 plus billing the second year. She said they had previously been paying \$86,000 plus billing. Mayor Hatter said he understood there was some push-back, with Park Hills wanting representation on equipment purchasing and department operations. He said he does not think they should have input on the City's fire operations, as they are a customer and not a partner.

Councilman Wessels added that they recommended two meetings per year with each city's Finance Committee. Mayor Hatter agreed to that, saying there should be transparency and visibility. Council agreed to the two-year contract proposed.

## COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Weber – He said Happy Public Works Week.

Councilman Feinauer – He reminded residents of the City's Memorial Day Ceremony on Monday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, at 10:00 AM. Mayor Hatter added that more information will be coming via email and social media.

Mayor Hatter asked Mr. Bethell how the Amsterdam Road project is moving along. He said it is going well and the section from General Drive to Morris Drive is open for some traffic.

Ms. Bailey reminded Councilmembers that the Administration Department will be running with less people once Susan Ellis [City Treasurer/Senior Deputy Clerk] departs, as she has put in her resignation notice. She asked Council to be patient with any requests they ask of the Department. Mayor Hatter asked everyone to share the job posting once it is available.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no need for an Executive Session.

## ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Councilman Feinauer made a motion to adjourn the Caucus Meeting. Councilman Wessels made a second. Ms. Russell called the roll.

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

MOTION CARRIED

The Caucus Meeting was adjourned at 7:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
  
Dave Hatter, Mayor

Attest:



Maura Russell  
City Clerk