



City of Fort Wright

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City of Fort Wright Caucus Meeting Wednesday, May 20, 2020 – 6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

The Caucus Meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Mayor Hatter. Mayor Hatter led the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence. 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 Justin Whittaker
Fire/EMS Chief Steve Schewe
Police Chief Ed Butler
Public Works Director Jeff Bethell
City Engineer Mark Brueggemann
City Clerk Maura Russell

CITIZEN COMMENTS/GUESTS

There were no citizen comments or guests.

Councilwoman Witt made a motion to amend the agenda to include a discussion on Memorial Day events. 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

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Fort Henry Stabilization/Slide Project

City Engineer Mark Brueggemann from CT Consultants discussed the Fort Henry Road project, which includes stabilizing a slide on the hillside. He reminded City Council about the project a couple years ago when a drill shaft pier wall was created to stabilize the roadway. He said that type of project enabled the City to do all work within the existing right-of-way to avoid getting onto private property and be most economical, and the original project was done to enable an extension of the pier wall if necessary. Mr. Brueggemann also said the Sanitation District (SD1) had a line break because of the slide. He said the project was done to stabilize the road but not the hillside below it. Mr. Brueggemann was questioned on the cause of the new slide, and he said it originates from the initial construction in 1967 where fill dirt was used to grade and develop, and the natural materials are breaking down and decaying.

Councilman Feinauer asked if the construction of the pier wall is having an impact on property owners claiming their property is sliding. Mr. Brueggemann said there was no impact and if the wall had not been constructed the road would be about five feet lower than it is now. Ms. Bailey said she has spoken with a property owner as well and advised him to contact SD1 because of current slide issues. Mr. Brueggemann pointed out where the storm sewer crosses the road and noted that the pipe has failed. He said the existing sanitary sewer section has also separated and failed. Mr. Bethell said he met with SD1 regarding these failures and they are coming up with a design to fix it, but this pipe failure is also a result of the slide.

Councilwoman Witt asked about putting in a guardrail. Ms. Bailey said that is important and Mr. Bethell confirmed that cost would be about \$5,000. Councilman Weber asked if a sidewalk can be placed on top of the pier wall and Mr. Brueggemann said that it is structurally sound and can be done but would be expensive because of railings needed because of the drop. Councilwoman Witt also asked about the makeup of the piers and Mr. Brueggemann said the piers, made of structural support steel, are spaced every six feet, and then plugged with concrete piers which prevents wash-away.

Councilman Wessels questioned the cost of this and Mr. Brueggemann said it would be approximately \$206,000. Ms. Bailey said previously the City has obtained emergency road aid funds but they generally only fund half of a project. Mr. Bethell said the project would have to wait until the Amsterdam Road project is completed because this road is part of the detour. Mr. Brueggemann concurred, saying this work would shut down both lanes.

Ms. Bailey asked about using railroad ties, and Mr. Brueggemann said that would not work because the piers are extremely deep, approximately 40 feet through bedrock. Councilman Weber asked if there will be a need to do any work in the other direction. Mr. Brueggemann said there does not seem to be a need to go north, but in the other direction the material is the same, with the same slope, and logically a slide will occur at some point.

Councilman Wessels asked why this was not addressed initially by the City or by Terracon Consultants. Mr. Brueggemann said it was discussed but it would have cost an additional \$200,000 and there was no slide at the time.

Mr. Brueggemann said if the other side begins to slide there will be additional impact because of the existing gas and water lines, so the utility companies will have an interest in participating in repairs.

Mayor Hatter said he does not think it makes financial sense for the City to put in \$1 million to fix this. He asked if a higher curb could be installed. Mr. Brueggemann said they can look into that, but the concern is the water coming across and impounding at a big height and impacting the surface runoff. He said there is a culvert that runs under the road that possibly belongs to SD1, but SD1 has previously said they will not be taking over culverts.

Councilman Wessels said he thinks the fix needs to happen because of the number of residents that use the road. He said if less people were using it then maybe creating a cul-de-sac would be appropriate, but he would like for the City to apply for the emergency funding to see what may be available. Ms. Bailey said there may be an opportunity to acquire funding from the 3% that the State holds annually. Councilman Wessels asked about the five-year road plan and if the reconstruction of Birchwood and Redwood can be delayed. Mr. Bethell said he believes Birchwood can hold for another year.

Ms. Bailey said with Birchwood and Redwood reconstruction, in theory that would be bid in January. She said she recommends moving forward with the designs so that they are considered shovel-ready which could then be funded through OKI Regional Council of Governments. She also recommended Mr. Brueggemann move forward with a project estimate and design for this to be ready if there are shovel-ready project funds available. Ms. Bailey also said this would need to be timed with the Amsterdam Road project for funding and allocating in the budget, so it does not hit next year's budget all at once. She also said the design fees will be reallocated. She finished by saying the guardrail should be installed.

I-75 Truck Traffic/Vehicular Accidents

Councilman Wessels started by clarifying that this situation is not solely about trucks, but also about the cars and traffic in both directions. He said the accidents do not typically happen in Fort Wright but do affect the City with traffic and backups. He asked Councilmembers if they would be okay with Ms. Bailey reaching out to other city administrators and police and fire departments to get a conversation started about the traffic and its impact on all the cities. He said there are always short-term things that can be done, including signage, but he would like for Ms. Bailey to reach out to set up a meeting with all of the leaders focused on this one issue who see it all the time. Councilman Wessels would also like to see someone from Senator McConnell and Representative Massie's offices present, as he believes the Kentucky Department of Transportation (KDOT) would take the issue more seriously if they were involved. Councilman Weber recommended also including Senator McDaniels and Representative Banta in the conversation. Councilman Wessels would like to see a coalition to fix the issue, as it has been kicked down the road for a long time.

Councilman Weber said he saw a trucker comment on a Facebook post that even when it is dry there is something in the road that forces his truck to swerve. He said there are designs available because the Brent Spence Bridge project was going to require the whole area to be redone through here.

Councilman Wessels asked what the short- and long-term solutions should be if Ms. Bailey is successful in getting a group together. Ms. Bailey said her time is built around projects Council and the Mayor want her to work on, but she would want to know the scope of the project. She asked if they are looking to eliminate accidents or request a new truck path on 275, or something else. Councilman Wessels said he is not here to ban trucks at all, as cars and trucks both speed and cause wrecks. He said he wants to know if there are ideas out there to slow down the traffic and who could spearhead this.

Mayor Hatter said he is not interested in the City of Fort Wright spearheading this project because the City directly sees a low number of wrecks. He said he could ask the police department to write more tickets, but he does not think that is what the resources should be used for, especially since it is a federal and state road and other areas have more resources than Fort Wright. Mayor Hatter said it would be better for the whole region if there were fewer wrecks. Councilman Wessels said no one is taking a leadership role, and maybe with Ms. Bailey's connections and knowledge it could bring OKI to the table for a discussion.

Mayor Hatter said Covington and Fort Mitchell have more concerns about the traffic as well as more resources. He said if Chief Butler wants to apply for grants to work overtime to address speeding, that is fine, but he does not want this done at the expense of residents. He also reminded Council that he is against traffic cameras. Chief Butler addressed Council regarding cameras, advising them that Kentucky does not have a law addressing red-light cameras. He said absent a law granting authority it cannot be done, and police cannot enforce a citation without seeing the offense. He said the state would have to pass a law to allow cameras. Chief Butler also said the Kenton County Fiscal Court met with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet District Six Chief Engineer Robert Yeager about this, and Fort Mitchell has also met with the Kentucky Department of Transportation.

Councilman Weber recommended a sign that had a phone number for travelers to call for traffic information and said the recording could tell callers they are entering a high traffic area and to obey speed limits. Mr. Bethell said additional signage could also say that information.

Councilman Wessels asked if Ms. Bailey could reach out to Fort Mitchell to lend support and see what Fort Wright can do to help because this is affecting all of Northern Kentucky. Ms. Bailey said she would do that. She also recommended using the Waze app to request additional information be added for this area. Councilman Weber recommended contacting trucking unions for assistance.

Memorial Day

Councilwoman Witt said she feels like so much has been done over the last few months during quarantine, including the Easter parade and other small events, and she does not want Memorial Day to go without anything also being done. She asked, because of the cancellation of the program on Memorial Day, if Mr. Bethell and the Public Works Department put out flags in front of the City Building. She also asked if the digital message board could have a message honoring those who died.

Mr. Bethell said his department plans to put flags on the poles and put up the service flags at the memorial in front of the City Building. He said he will check the remaining flags to see if they can put those out along the sidewalk. Ms. Bailey said the digital sign can be updated with a message, and there will be an email going out acknowledging the holiday.

CAO REPORT

Ms. Bailey reported that she and Chief Schewe have been going through the process to hire three full-time fire lieutenants. She said two current part-time employees will be promoted up and one new hire will be coming on the first week of June.

Ms. Bailey said she has been working on the budget, budget amendments, and salary surveys. She said the Finance Committee will do a review and then present it to Council at a budget meeting. She requested anyone who does not want a hard copy to let her know, and that the budget amendment will be a new component this year. She said the budget is in good shape, even with the pandemic she anticipates coming in on budget. She said the City will continue to budget conservatively. Councilman Weber said they are expecting the income to be less because of the shutdowns, but luckily larger entities did not shut down. Ms. Bailey said there will be allocation for a potential decline, but the top 25 payroll tax producers were not impacted as much during the shutdown.

Ms. Bailey said the Finance Committee is looking for investment partners and it has come down to BB&T and Republic Bank. She said an investment policy will be drafted and a final decision will be made to help the City earn extra dollars.

Ms. Bailey said she will ask CT Consultants to move forward on the design for Birchwood and Redwood.

Ms. Bailey said all new key fobs have been distributed because of the new software and panel for access doors, and she thanked Mr. Bethell for his help with that process. She said she is also working to rekey existing interior doors as well.

Ms. Bailey said she has obtained updated W-4 forms from all employees. She asked Councilmembers to turn in a new W-4 form if they have any changes.

Councilman Wall asked Ms. Bailey and Ms. Russell if they have received calls from residents regarding a Rumpke voucher system to dump large or extra items. Both responded that they have not received this request. Ms. Bailey did say she is working to get dumpsters on site one day a month for residents to bring those items and that Chief Butler is working on organizing a shred event for the City.

Councilman Witt asked if other committees could begin meeting since the finance committee has met. Ms. Bailey said the Finance Committee met virtually but any other committee is welcome to schedule if they want to meet. Councilwoman Witt asked Ms. Bailey to schedule a Community Improvements Committee meeting.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Fire/ALS Department – Chief Schewe said they are working on redoing the bedrooms in the fire station for the new full-time employees. He said he is also getting quotes for other projects in the bay that have not been done since the building was constructed. Chief Schewe said he is working on run card changes for interstate accidents to improve response and communication with Covington and Fort Mitchell. He also mentioned that the department's PPE (personal protective equipment) and supplies are in good shape and they are not experiencing a dramatic burn rate. Chief Schewe said there have been no lost workdays for his department because of the pandemic. Chief Schewe also provided an update on the ambulance, saying it should be ready for delivery in July.

Police Department – Chief Butler announced that Specialist Jeff Hoppenjans' last day will be Wednesday, May 27th. He is going to work for the Kenton County Sheriff's Office, and everyone wishes him well. He also announced that Officer Aaron Arnsperger has signed his papers for his intent to retire effective July 1st. Chief Butler said they will be ramping up hiring soon, but that will be complicated

because there is no training academy for the state of Kentucky through July 1. He is anticipating the job advertisement to open to only lateral or retired contract officers. He said he has been working to update internal policies and procedures, especially regarding new statutes with which the officers need to be complying. Chief Butler said the call volume has remained low but as traffic increases, they expect calls to increase. He said the department's PPE supply remains good and they have gone back to normal operating procedures. He said officers are still taking temperatures and sanitizing, and still have the discretion to pull out of a home if they feel unsafe but operating as normal again.

Finally, Ms. Bailey announced that she cannot confirm but believes the pension increases will not occur this year. She said she is anticipating the pension amount for this year will go through again.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Hatter said he received a Thank You card from former City Attorney Kyle Winslow.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

There were no Council comments.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no need for an Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE CAUCUS MEETING

Councilman Weber made a motion to adjourn the Caucus Meeting. Councilman Wall 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 Caucus Meeting adjourned at 7:34 PM.

MOTION CARRIED

Respectfully Submitted,

Dave Hatter, Mayor

Attest:


Maura Russell, City Clerk