



City of Fort Wright

409 Kyles Lane | Fort Wright, KY 41011 | www.fortwright.com | 859.331.1700

City of Fort Wright Council Meeting Wednesday, November 2, 2022 – 6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

The Council Meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Mayor Dave Hatter. Mayor Hatter led the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence. City Clerk Maura Russell called the roll.

| | |
|---------------------|---------|
| Councilman Abeln | Present |
| Councilman Feinauer | Present |
| Councilman Wall | Present |
| Councilman Weber | Present |
| Councilman Wessels | Absent |
| Councilwoman Witt | Present |

Also present for the meeting were:

City Administrative Officer Jill Bailey
City Attorney Tim Theissen
Fire/EMS Chief Steve Schewe
Police Captain Jonathan Colwell
Public Works Director Jeff Bethell
City Clerk Maura Russell
Finance Clerk Kelly Perry

CITIZEN COMMENTS/GUESTS

There were no citizen comments or guests.

APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES

Councilman Feinauer made a motion to approve the minutes of the Council Meeting held on Wednesday, October 5, 2022. Councilman Weber made a second. Ms. Russell called roll.

| | |
|---------------------|---------|
| Councilman Abeln | Abstain |
| Councilman Feinauer | Yes |
| Councilman Wall | Yes |
| Councilman Weber | Yes |
| Councilwoman Witt | Yes |

MOTION CARRIED

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2nd Reading Ord 11-2022 – Repealing Motor Vehicle Tax – Mr. Theissen read Ordinance 11-2022, an Ordinance of the City of Fort Wright, in Kenton County, Kentucky, rescinding and repealing the motor vehicle tax effective January 1, 2023, and amending Section 37.02 of Title III, Chapter 37 of the City of Fort Wright Code of Ordinances relating to taxation implementing the termination of the tax on motor vehicles.

Councilman Abeln made a motion to approve the second reading of Ordinance 11-2022. Councilwoman Witt made a second. Ms. Russell called the roll.

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Councilman Abeln | Yes |
| Councilman Feinauer | Yes |
| Councilman Wall | Yes |
| Councilman Weber | Yes |
| Councilwoman Witt | Yes |

MOTION CARRIED

Ms. Bailey confirmed the repeal will be effective January 1, 2023, and the appropriate county and state agencies will be notified of the decision.

NEW BUSINESS

Fort Wright Time Capsule – Ms. Bailey advised a time capsule was recently located in the cornerstone of the City Administration Building but there have been no plans located for the time it should be opened or what may have been placed inside the capsule. She added that they do not even know what the type of box or container was that was placed in the cornerstone.

It was decided among Councilmembers that the cornerstone and time capsule would be left alone until 2041, allowing it to be in place for 50 years and until the centennial of the City formation. Ms. Bailey said she will have a plaque created to acknowledge the location.

Municipal Order 06-2022 – Disposal of Surplus Property – Mr. Theissen read Municipal Order 06-2022, an order declaring surplus property and authorizing disposal of such property by destruction and/or recycling.

Mr. Bethell advised this property is a pallet of red brick pavers leftover from the construction of the Veteran's Memorial in front of the City Building. He said when new veterans are added the pop an existing brick out of the memorial walk and have it engraved, so this many additional is unnecessary.

Mayor Hatter reminded residents they can have bricks inscribed with their name, branch, and dates of service to be added to the Veteran's Memorial by contacting Mr. Bethell or Ms. Bailey.

Councilman Feinauer made a motion to approve Municipal Order 06-2022. Councilman Wall made a second. Ms. Russell called the roll.

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Councilman Abeln | Yes |
| Councilman Feinauer | Yes |
| Councilman Wall | Yes |
| Councilman Weber | Yes |
| Councilwoman Witt | Yes |

MOTION CARRIED

COFW State of the City Address – Mayor Hatter discussed the points that he recently sent out via email and social media regarding the State of the City. He said he believes it has been another great year in Fort Wright

and thanked the staff, Councilmembers, and residents and business owners. He provided his contact information and asked residents to reach out to him directly if they had questions.

[Attached to these Minutes is a copy of the 2022 State of the City report.]

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Community Improvement Committee – Chair Councilman Feinauer – Councilman Feinauer said the Committee did not meet in October. He said there has been a small hiccup in the gateway sign program and color options will need to be discussed.

Finance Committee – Chair Councilman Wessels – Councilman Weber said Joe Violand from RedTree Investment Group attended the Finance Committee meeting this afternoon to discuss selling some funds to get better rates in different investment areas. After discussion, Council decided that they would like to hear more about RedTree’s proposal and requested RedTree attend an upcoming meeting to hear their suggestions.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Administration/Finance – Ms. Russell advised property tax bills were sent and are due December 30, 2022. She said the department has been maintaining steady passport acceptance appointments and rentals for South Hills Civic Club.

Fire/ALS Department – Chief Schewe announced that two new part-time positions have been offered and he is waiting to hear back on their acceptance. He also said the ambulance issues seem to have been fixed and it is back in operation.

Legal Counsel – Mr. Theissen had no report.

Police Department – Captain Colwell had no report.

Public Works Department – Mr. Bethell said the department has been working on street and sidewalk repairs. He also said the street program is almost wrapped for the year, with final steps occurring in the next week.

Mayor Hatter thanked the Public Works Department for the holiday decorations around the City.

CAO REPORT

Ms. Bailey advised the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet has reached out to advise of an upcoming neighborhood outreach meeting on Thursday, December 1st at 7:00 PM. She said this meeting is in partnership with the Ohio Department of Transportation, but she does not have an agenda or any additional information at this time. Ms. Bailey said she will share information as soon as it is available.

Ms. Bailey said the Top of the Hill Newsletter has been relaunched in electronic format, with the first edition sent last week. She asked for articles and topics that Councilmembers would like to have in the newsletter so the next edition can be built.

Ms. Bailey announced the Employee Appreciation Lunch will be held on Wednesday, November 23rd, and invited Councilmembers to attend.

Ms. Bailey advised that John Chamberlin of Chamberlin Owens will present the audit on December 7th. She said she has had great feedback so far and thanked Ms. Perry, Ben Harrison, and Ms. Russell for their hard work on the audit preparations.

Ms. Bailey addressed the gateway sign project, saying supply chain issues have caused the originally chosen color to not be available. She presented options now available, and Councilmembers requested a sample of the black background with white lettering.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Employee Recognitions/Special Thank You's – Mayor Hatter reminded residents of the Veteran's Day event held at Highland Cemetery on Sunday, November 13th, at 2:00 PM, and encouraged everyone to attend.

Mayor Hatter read from a Thank You letter from the staff of Walgreens on Dixie Highway for Officer Getz, Specialist Wiesner, and Captain Colwell that was received following an incident there, and another for paramedics who responded to a resident issue on Augusta. He also read a Letter of Commendation to Officer Mike Gross from Chief Ed Butler following an incident that led to the apprehension of an armed robbery suspect and accomplices.

Mayor Hatter thanked the Fort Wright Garden Club and Councilwoman Witt for the acquisition of a new tree to be placed in front of the City Building which will be used as the City's Christmas Tree for the lighting on December 3rd. He also reminded residents of the Hazardous Waste Recycling Event on November 5th. Finally, he wished a Happy Birthday to his son's fiancée Jillian.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Feinauer reminded residents that Daylight Savings Time ends November 6th and Veterans Day is November 11th.

Mayor Hatter reminded residents that Election Day is Tuesday, November 8th, from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM and both precincts in Fort Wright will vote at the Fort Wright Civic Club.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no need for an Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

Councilman Abeln made a motion to adjourn the Council Meeting. Councilman Weber made a second. Ms. Russell called the roll.

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Councilman Abeln | Yes |
| Councilman Feinauer | Yes |
| Councilman Wall | Yes |

Councilman Weber Yes
Councilwoman Witt Yes

MOTION CARRIED

The Council Meeting adjourned at 7:22 PM.

 Respectfully submitted,
Dave Hatter, Mayor

Attest:


Maura Russell, City Clerk



City of Fort Wright

409 Kyles Lane | Fort Wright, KY 41011 | www.fortwright.com | 859.331.1700

2022 State of the City | Tax Reductions | Audit

Dear Neighbors,

I have recently had a few residents ask me about tax cuts and City finances, so I thought I would take a moment to provide some insight into what has shaped up to be another fantastic year for the Fort Wright community, thanks to our residents, businesses, City Council, and Staff.



In light of rising inflation that increasingly affects us all, I am incredibly pleased that City Council recently voted to reduce our tax burden to the lowest rate since 2011. Our Real Property Tax Rate was reduced from .265 per thousand to .248 per thousand, a roughly 6.5% cut, while our Personal Property Tax Rate was reduced from .409 per thousand to .380 per thousand, a roughly 7% cut.

Council also reduced a part of our occupational licensing fees for local businesses and took steps to eliminate a long-standing motor vehicle tax levied on your vehicles. These reductions ensure that we will continue to be one of the lowest taxing agencies in Kenton County in 2023.

Despite tax cuts, we have come in under budget each fiscal year for the last five consecutive years. Smart operational and financial decisions coupled with rising property values and growing residential and commercial tax bases has allowed us to build substantial financial reserves, in fact, we could operate for nearly a year with no additional income in the event of a catastrophe. Additionally, we have no long-term debt obligations and maintain a robust Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) designed to ensure that we pay cash for all capital items such as our 5-Year Street Improvement Program.

To make your money work even harder for you, Council has engaged a local firm that specializes in government investments to safely invest a portion of our reserves to yield better returns which allows you to keep more of your money. We also follow interest rates closely and have worked with our bank to get a better rate on our deposits which generates significant revenue and helps to keep our taxes low.

We have also aggressively pursued grant funding to augment our finances, and we have been extremely fortunate to receive more than 4.6 million dollars in grants over the last 10 years! These funds have been used for major infrastructure improvements such as the reconstruction of Amsterdam Road and for improving our emergency service response capabilities with new life saving equipment for our First Responders.

While the money makes it all possible, it is not all about the money. Council and I are laser focused on the safety and security of our residents, businesses, and guests; and to that end continue to invest in our team and our equipment. Due to higher demand for services and a growing community we have added staff in both the Police and Fire Departments and have invested in employee recruitment and retention to ensure that we can hire and keep the very best staff.

We also understand that continued investment in our infrastructure is critical for public safety, ensures that our property values continue to grow and ensures that we remain one of the most desirable communities in Greater Cincinnati. On this front, we spend more than \$600,000 annually on streets as part of our rolling 5-Year Street Improvement Plan and we recently completed major renovations to the South Hills Civic Club and Volunteer Park. These investments in infrastructure and staff have played a key role in driving an **overall property value increase of nearly 150 million dollars in the last decade** - allowing us to reduce the tax burden on our residents and businesses while increasing the services and amenities we can provide.

Others are taking notice, a recent SmartAsset study ranked us #6 in the top ten "best suburbs" in the U.S. based on jobs, affordability, and livability. You can view the study here: <https://smartasset.com/data-studies/best-suburbs-to-live-in-near-a-large-city-2022>.

Looking towards 2023 and beyond, we are committed to ongoing infrastructure investments such as further park improvements, community enhancing signage and gateway features added to key community access points like branded public benches and trash cans.

We will also continue to sponsor annual cleanup days and paper shredding events, host our Spring and Fall Yard Sales, along with our quarterly community blood drives, Santa's Neighborhood Visit, and our Annual Christmas Tree Recycling Program. We encourage you to stay tuned for more information about these efforts in our e-newsletter, on our website, and on Facebook and Twitter, which we use to provide timely and topical information to keep you informed.

Also, I encourage you to attend or tune in to our upcoming December 7th, 2022, City Council Meeting to hear our annual audit presentation given by independent auditor Chamberlain Owen CPA. Their audit team has been on-site reviewing our finances and our practices and we are eagerly anticipating another excellent audit review and opinion. Sadly, we will also be wishing a very fond farewell to long-time Councilmember Adam Feinauer who is retiring after 22 years to serve as a Deacon at Saint Agnes. As best we can tell, Councilmember Feinauer holds the record for the longest consecutive tenure on City Council and we owe him a sincere debt of gratitude for his many years of dedicated and devoted service to our community. Adam leaves behind huge shoes to fill, and he will be sorely missed by me and our entire team. If you see Adam out in our community, please thank him for his service.

If you miss the meeting, you can review this year's audit as well as previous audits, budgets, and other important financial information including our Financial Transparency Portal on our website: <https://www.fortwright.com/departments/administration/finance>.

In closing, I want to thank my colleagues on City Council, none of these successes would be possible without their hard work, wisdom, dedication, and support. It is my privilege to serve beside them, and as resident, I am grateful for their deep and ongoing commitment to making the City of Fort Wright a wonderful place to live, work and play. I also want to thank our Staff for their hard work and dedication, we are truly fortunate to have top-notch professionals serving our community!

Keep an eye out for our relaunched email newsletter, it should appear in your mailbox soon; and if we can be of service to you, please contact our offices at 859.331.1700, visit our website, or email us at info@fortwright.com.

Thank you for the privilege to serve as Mayor here in my hometown, may God bless you and the City of Fort Wright. Together we are Neighbors Helping Neighbors.

Best Regards,

Dave

Mayor Dave Hatter

