



City of Fort Wright

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City of Fort Wright Caucus Meeting Wednesday, August 16, 2023 – 6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

The Caucus 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	Absent
Councilman Collins	Present
Councilman Wall	Present
Councilman Weber	Present
Councilman Wessels	Absent
Councilwoman Witt	Present

Also present for the meeting were:

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

CITIZEN COMMENTS/GUESTS

There were no citizen comments.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

5-year Road Plan – 2023 to 2028 – Marty Hellmann, CT Consultants – Mr. Hellmann reviewed the information he previously presented to Council and then included the updates members requested based on budget information. He advised that there is an anticipated year-over-year increase because of labor shortages and increased costs on materials. Mr. Hellmann presented a breakdown of costs with two comparisons of maximum budgets of \$660,000 per year over 25 years and \$570,000 per year over 30 years. He said this kind of extension will stretch the life of and may cause a lower level of service for the roads.

Based on discussions on maintenance work needed and budgets, it was decided to bring the information back to the Finance Committee for full review.

George Huser Sidewalk/Concrete Channel Project – Mr. Theissen advised he has researched the option to do a special assessment against the owner of Tower Hill Plaza based on the water coming off the parking lot and undermining the roadway and sidewalk. He said the City could develop a special assessment program and policy to fund road and sidewalk improvements and charge the property owners along the project route, like other local cities. He then went on to say that the drainage system was put in place under regulations that existed at

the time of installation and the property owner has not done anything wrong recently, or even then, that would have gone against ordinances or laws. Mr. Theissen summarized by saying it is up to the City to fix this issue and he does not feel it is right or fair to assess this property owner in this one situation.

After discussion, there was no consensus to assess the owner of Tower Hill Plaza. There was discussion on asking the Sanitation District of Northern Kentucky to do a cost-share program, and Mr. Hellmann advised his firm could begin that request process.

Dixie Highway/Christ Hospital Sidewalk Extension Project – Ms. Bailey reviewed the option of using Dixie TIF [Tax Increment Financing] funds to add a sidewalk connection on Dixie Highway in front of the Christ Hospital area. She said the proposal CT Consultants put together would cost approximately \$570,000, which is more than was anticipated. Ms. Bailey said there may be other funding available to supplement on a federal level, or the City could approach Christ Hospital for assistance.

Mr. Hellmann said the main challenge in this project is the increased sloping from Dixie Highway down to the parking lot, ranging from two to seven feet which would require additional supports for the sidewalk and a retaining wall. He also said decorative fencing would drive up the cost.

Councilwoman Witt suggested applying for various funding options then readdressing the project if funds are found. It was agreed that CT Consultants would work on locating some funding, in addition to staff having discussions with Christ Hospital and state legislators.

Dixie Highway/Sleepy Hollow Sidewalk Update – Mr. Hellmann said the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet was originally going to rework the sidewalk and crosswalk at Dixie Highway and Sleepy Hollow Road to make it safer, but KYTC would have been required to purchase the Lookout Motel property to make those changes. He said that agency does not have the funding necessary to relocate the motel, so the crossing will remain partway down the street on Sleepy Hollow Road. Mr. Hellmann advised the contract was let in June and upgrades, including new signage and sidewalk ramps with detectable warnings, will be put in place this fall.

Z21 Zoning Update – Cody Sheets, PDS Associate Planner – Ms. Bailey advised that Councilman Collins has met with PDS staff to come up to speed on the Z21 proposal. Mr. Sheets reviewed the information discussed at the first and second meetings he attended and said the next step is for the City to review and make any suggested changes and then present that information to the Z21 Committee of the Kenton County Planning Commission. He said that those reviews will occur then Council can authorize the City's application to KCPC to being the public hearing and authorization process.

There was discussion on changes other cities have made to the PDS-proposed Z21 and Mr. Sheets advised that a list of those changes can be provided. It was the consensus of Councilmembers that Ms. Bailey and PDS would review that list and then move forward with the approval process.

Motor Vehicle Tax Repeal Update – Mr. Theissen reviewed the recent history of the City's attempt to repeal the motor vehicle tax. He said the Department of Revenue advised him that the City could move forward with completely repeal the tax and that department would not challenge the City. Mr. Theissen added that he was warned that a class-action suit could be filed if even one resident is motivated by an attorney to challenge the

constitutionality of repealing the tax. Mr. Theissen encouraged Council to keep the tax at the already approved \$0.02 per \$100 level that will go into effect on January 1, 2024.

Mayor Hatter agreed that continuing with this abolishment of the motor vehicle tax would be foolish if a lawsuit would cost the City even more money if challenged.

HR 3372 – Regarding Increase Weight Limits on Trucks – Ms. Bailey reviewed a letter she received from GoRail regarding a federal highway administration bill that proposes a 10-year pilot program to test an increase on heavy truck weight from 80,000 to 91,000 pounds.

After discussion, it was agreed that the City would defer participation in the lobbying of this matter.

Lookout Heights Civic Club Update – Mayor Hatter advised that he and Ms. Bailey and Mr. Theissen met with the LHCC Board President Ron Sallee and their legal counsel, Ryan Reed, and were advised that Mr. Sallee and the board determined it was no longer viable to continue to maintain and operate LHCC, in large part due to the imposition of real estate taxes and the organization losing their tax-exempt status. He said Mr. Sallee and the board are interested in transferring the real estate to the City of Fort Wright as a donation with a stipulation that the property be used for some public purpose that enhances the immediate neighborhood, but they are opposed to multi-family expansion.

Mayor Hatter said they did tour the building and it is not in good condition and may need to be demolished, but that would be explored further by appropriate individuals. Mr. Theissen said the LHCC board is willing to sell the land and building for the cost of the taxes owed and that no concessions have been made for the future purpose of the site, but he is continuing to work with their attorney. There was a suggestion of using the cash assets remaining of approximately \$19,000 to construct a memorial of some kind to the organization.

Mayor Hatter added that LHCC is already committed to hosting the 2023 election in November and he has instructed Mr. Theissen to move forward on an agreement to have everything wrapped up and closed by very soon after the election.

There was also discussion about the Fort Wright Civic Club and that board's desire to possibly transfer ownership to the City. Mayor Hatter said those discussions are ongoing, but not dissimilar to the ongoing matters with LHCC and an update would be provided as soon as more information is available. There was also discussion about possible polling locations within the City if both LHCC and FWCC are closed down and become unavailable for voting purposes.

Crack Sealing Options – Mr. Bethell told Council about the issues he has encountered in performing necessary crack sealing on City streets, as the company previously used has sold and is no longer available. He presented the option of splitting the cost of a crack sealing machine with the city of Fort Mitchell. After discussion by Mayor Hatter and Councilmembers, it was determined that Mr. Bethell would work with Riegler Construction or similar to complete these projects in the City. It was also requested that grass cutting for City property be put back out for bid to see if the City can save time and money for the Public Works Department.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no need for an Executive Session.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

There were no Council Comments.

Ms. Bailey advised she attended an open house at new-to-Fort Wright business JAVAD in the Wrights Summit complex. She said this company is one of ten in the world that handle this specific type of precision engineering and they are already anticipating an expansion of the office, as they are having great success recruiting from local engineering colleges and universities.

Mayor Hatter provided an update on the City phone upgrades, saying the process to transition has begun. He also provided an update on cybersecurity for the City, saying they are waiting on a proposal from a company in Dayton, Ohio, to upgrade the City's cybersecurity options.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE CAUCUS MEETING

Councilwoman Witt made a motion to adjourn the Caucus Meeting. Councilman Wall made a second. All voting in favor.

The Caucus Meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Hatter, Mayor

Attest:



Maura Russell, City Clerk