



City of Fort Wright

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City of Fort Wright Caucus Meeting Wednesday, August 18, 2021 – 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 Feinauer	Present
Councilman Wall	Present
Councilman Weber	Present
Councilman Wessels	Present
Councilwoman Witt	Present

Also present for this meeting were:

City Administrative Officer Jill Cain Bailey
City Attorney Tim Theissen
Fire/EMS Chief Steve Schewe
Police Chief Ed Butler
Public Works Director Jeff Bethell

CITIZEN COMMENTS/GUESTS

There were no citizen comments.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Mount Vernon Water Drainage Issues (1868 Mount Vernon Drive) – CT Consultants – Martin Hellmann of CT Consultants presented a report based on a review of water flow on Mount Vernon Drive and reports of damage that has been caused to the house at 1868 Mount Vernon. Mr. Hellmann said the water flow direction is hitting the curb at the curve just past Montpelier Court and spilling into the yard and driveway of this house, which does not have a drain adequate to handle large rain events.

Mr. Hellmann presented three options to Council that could address the issue. Council agreed to the option that would replace a portion of the curb and sidewalk between the driveway at 1868 Mount Vernon and Montpelier Court. He advised that the sidewalk would be raised slightly and sloped toward the road and the curb would be raised slightly to match. Mr. Hellmann advised that the preliminary cost for this work is \$22,000.

Mr. Hellmann suggested that Council address this portion of the roadway when it comes back up during the street plan process and recommended adding in storm sewer inlets to prevent issues in the future.

COFW Holiday Calendar – Update – Ms. Bailey presented information about the City's existing federal holiday schedule, along with data she collected from other cities in the Commonwealth. She recommended adding Juneteenth to the holiday calendar to become the 12th City-recognized holiday.

She said this could make the City more competitive to potential employees. Ms. Bailey said the annual cost of this added holiday would be approximately \$10,000 per year for additional pay and Medicare and pension costs.

Council members discussed Juneteenth being added to the calendar, or another federal holiday as the City does not currently recognize Indigenous Peoples Day in October or Veterans Day in November. The decision was made to not add an additional holiday to the calendar.

Waste Collection & Recycling Service Fees for Fiscal Year 2022 and 2023 – Ms. Bailey advised that the contract with Rumpke has been renewed for two years. She said there is a price change to \$196.80, up from \$183.00. She recommended to Council that they charge \$200.00 per household, and that would be the rate for 2021 through 2023. Ms. Bailey also advised that renewing in 2024 would bring another price increase to \$215.88 per unit per year. Ms. Bailey recommended that the charge to residents this year, as a pass-through for this service, be \$200.00 and applied on the 2021 real property tax statement.

Councilman Weber asked how firm these numbers were, including into 2024. Ms. Bailey said the contract is in place and there is also a provision to not apply fuel surcharges or administrative fees to the contract. Councilman Feinauer asked about the additional money, which would be \$3.20 per unit. Ms. Bailey said that money would roll forward as surplus revenue and eventually in the CIP [Capital Improvements Plan] Fund.

Council members discussed various price formats and it was agreed upon to round to the next whole dollar and assess the fee at \$197.00. Ms. Bailey said the waste fee ordinance would be on the agenda for the next Council Meeting for a vote.

Tax Rates FY 2021-2022 – Ms. Bailey provided Council with comparison tax rate information for real and personal property. She said the 2020 tax rate for the City of Fort Wright was seventh lowest out of 17 Northern Kentucky cities.

There was discussion about the insurance premium tax and how to eliminate it. Ms. Bailey presented rate information if Council decided to eliminate this tax and increase property taxes to account for the \$850,000 the insurance premium tax brings in annually. She said it could bring the City's real property tax rate to 0.409 and the personal property tax rate to 0.672, compared to the 2020 rates of 0.265 and 0.409 respectively. It was suggested that an incremental approach be taken, and Ms. Bailey would bring back more information for review.

Ms. Bailey reminded Council that Duke Energy will need to have a franchise tax fee levied to even the playing field in the City. She said this is still being worked on, but there will be a lag between when the fee is adopted and when funds begin coming in, and she encouraged Council to be mindful of the timing between this fee coming in and a rollback of the insurance premium tax. Mayor Hatter agreed to a temporary gap because of timing, but said he did not want to see a substantial cut without expected funding.

COFW Recreational Facility Reviews – Ms. Bailey said that \$25,000 was set aside for consultants to do preliminary work on the direction of what the City's options are with the James A. Ramage Civil War Museum, Battery Hooper Park, and the South Hills Civic Club. She said PCA Architecture of Fort Wright has provided three separate reviews. She said these will be for preparation of renderings for each facility and not for any work to be done. Ms. Bailey advised that the proposal for the Museum is \$17,400, plus an additional \$3,000 for utility review and field measuring, \$38,500 for South Hills Civic Club, and \$98,500 for Battery Hooper Park, which will include the design of a one-story building with an approximate occupancy of 150.

Councilman Wessels added that the review of the Museum includes the firm reviewing everything from light switches to building structure, and everything in between. He said they would provide a cost to fix the building, then the City could determine if it is worth saving. Mayor Hatter did not agree on spending the money on the Museum and advocating for tearing the building down and looking at the Park overall for ideas and what the City wants to put there next.

Ms. Bailey encouraged Council to invite the consultants to come into a meeting and talk about what they want, then hold a public hearing to find out what residents are interested in. She said the consultants would need more input and direction from Council to move forward.

There was further discussion about the Museum operations and Council members' opinions on continuing to fund the Museum. There was also discussion about reaching out to another local museum to discuss acquiring or aiding the Museum. It was agreed that Ms. Bailey would begin outreach efforts.

Community Recreational Zoning Review – Mr. Theissen introduced an issue that has come up with Lookout Heights Civic Club [1661 Park Road], saying they owe the City and county money and recently lost a lawsuit that is now in the appeals court. He said the state of Kentucky has advised them that they owe Fort Wright and Kenton County money, and their lawyer has been in touch with him. Mr. Theissen said the property could be bought up if it goes into foreclosure and suggested maintaining some control over the process by changing the zoning of the land.

Mr. Theissen said zoning laws allow for grandfathering in of current uses, and Lookout Heights Civic Club has been used as a rental facility and has sand volleyball leagues. He said the land is currently zoned R-2, which allows for multi-family dwellings, and this could mean that apartments could be built on the property. Mr. Theissen added that the grandfathering could mean that the property can essentially have a place built that serves food, serves alcohol, could be rented out for parties, and have recreational uses like sand volleyball. He said the property is surrounded by owner-occupied residences, and he did not think that is something the residents would like to have in their neighborhood.

Mr. Theissen suggested being proactive with the zoning and changing it from R-2 to an R-1, which would cut out concerns about certain businesses being able to operate on the land. He said the property may never be developed as single-family homes, but it would force any developer to come in and request a zoning change to do anything else.

After discussion, it was agreed that Ms. Bailey would bring this topic back to the agenda for the September 1st Council Meeting for a vote to allow Ms. Bailey to apply for a zone change with PDS [Planning and Development Services of Kenton County].

Sidewalk Policy & Construction Maintenance Plan – Ms. Bailey addressed Council regarding the existing sidewalk plan Ordinance that was passed in 2017, saying there are updates that need to be made regarding committee corrections, references to a fund that does not exist, and possible zone prioritization changes. Chief Butler said the Ordinance was adopted because of a lawsuit in Owensboro around that time, and the need to have a plan on the record. He said the zones were created only for Precision Concrete’s work, which was completed. Chief Butler said KLC [Kentucky League of Cities] suggested all cities adopt a plan for liability protection.

Mr. Bethell discussed the zone requirement, saying the current Ordinance does not allow for much flexibility in moving between zones to prioritize work. Mayor Hatter suggested removing reference to the zones if they were only necessary for Precision Concrete’s work in the City. Ms. Bailey said the Community Improvement Committee should be reviewing sidewalks annually. She said Mr. Bethell will work with PDS to review and update this Ordinance.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no need for an Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Councilman Witt made a motion to adjourn the Caucus Meeting. Councilman Wessels made a second. City Clerk Maura Russell called the roll.

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

The Caucus Meeting was adjourned at 8:48 PM.

MOTION CARRIED

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Hatter, Mayor

Attest:



Maura Russell
City Clerk