

Mary Jo's Heye-lights

June 2022
Issue 19

Mary Jo Heye-Townsell

Mayor for Sherwood, Candidate
City Council Ward 2, Position 1
501-960-0622
maryjohey@gmail.com
1800 Kristen Ct. 72120
www.maryjo4sherwood.com



Sherwood Mayor & City Council Contact Information

Kevin Lilly
Ward 2, Position 2
501-835-5945
klilly@cityofsherwood.net

April Broderick
Ward 1, Position 1
501-920-0072
abroderick@cityofsherwood.net

Charlie Harmon
Ward 1, Position 2
501-920-1914
charmon@cityofsherwood.net

Beverly Williams
Ward 3, Position 1
501-554-4275
bwilliams@cityofsherwood.net

Marina Brooks
Ward 3, Position 2
501-835-8572
mbrooks1616@gmail.com

Sharon McMinn
Ward 4, Position 1
501-772-4766
@cityofsherwood.net

Mike Sanders
Ward 4, Position 2
501-590-2537
msanders@cityofsherwood.net

Mayor Virginia Young
501-835-6620
vyoung@cityofsherwood.net

The City Bike-Ped Master Plan Lands with a Thud How a Community Building Process Went Wrong and Built Mistrust

While Sherwood desperately needs a good citywide Bike-Ped Plan, the recent roll-out blew up in the administration's face. Unfortunately, this process was flawed and mismanaged from the start. Sherwood hired Crafton Tull Engineers to help the city craft the bike-ped plan. While this is the same company that is working on designing the regional trail plans, it appears they are working within tight constraints imposed by the city administration.

The city administration obviously expressed their priorities to the consultants. What were these priorities? The Entertainment District and Henson Trail appear to be the main ones. However, there was absolutely no discussion about priorities with the City Council. Neither were there any discussions about priorities with the Parks & Recreation Department or the city's Parks & Rec Committee or even the Street Committee as it applied. Doesn't this seem like a Parks and Recreation or Streets issue? Yeh, but nope. This was only administration's baby from the start.

In all fairness, the Mayor did select a Steering Committee for more public input and to get "buy in" from the community. By "buy in", I can only assume that this means to go along with the Administration Plan. Of course, Sherwood has major problems in how it selects committees, as I explain below. The following are some of the problems that contributed to this mess:

1. The consultants had clearly already started with a plan that the City Administration wanted which did not include input from the City Council, Parks & Recreation Committee, or Street Committee – the normal groups that would vet ideas. This plan has had very little alterations from when it was shown to the first Steering Committee.
2. The Sherwood Bike-Ped Steering Committee was hand selected by the Mayor with no input from the City (See BIKE-PED Page 2)

Actual Map from Public Meeting with All the Comments



Mary Jo's Heye-lights

(BIKE-PED Continued from Front Page) Council.

There was no communication with the public asking for interested citizens to volunteer. Kimberly Mundel, a Steering Committee member, had asked the Mayor at a Metroplan meeting if she could be a part of this group. As with all committees if you did not have a relationship with the Mayor, you were not considered. Committee formations and vacancies are NEVER advertised to the public.

3. I asked to be a part of this Steering Committee as the only cyclist on the City Council. My request was denied. The Mayor wanted a Council Member *that did not believe in bike lanes*. When the mayor's selected Council Member had to step down, I again to be included on the Steering Committee and was again denied. This time no reason given.
4. Several Steering Committee members that were selected worked in Sherwood, but did not live in Sherwood. That is not enough skin in the game for me. The sad part is there are several very knowledgeable and experienced members of our community that could have been selected had there been an open call for volunteers.
5. The Steering Committee only met twice in two years and the second meeting was attended by only a small fraction of the committee. No materials were given to members ahead of time so that they could come prepared and I don't think there were materials to take home. Their meetings consisted of listening to a presentation rather than truly seeking well thought out opinions or debating options.
6. Only two poorly advertised and poorly attended public input sessions were held. The first public input meeting was held at Sherwood Forrest on a week night. It was posted only ONCE on social media. During this same month there were no less than 4 social media posts advertising City Hallow and 4 posts advertising the Drug Take Back. (Hmmm? Afraid of drawing a crowd, perhaps?)
7. Second public meeting was again advertised ONLY

ONE TIME and it was advertised as a "come & go" event. It turned out NOT to be a come & go event. This was the actual notice:

"Public Meeting Notice — Biking & Pedestrian Master Plan. An open meeting for public input will be held at the Bill Harmon Recreation Center, 51 Shelby Road in Sherwood, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 17, regarding the Biking and Pedestrian Master Plan. The public is invited to drop in to view drawings and displays and record comments."

8. City Council and Steering Committee were only sent the meeting materials on the Monday afternoon before the Tuesday meeting. This was only after much prodding from Steering Committee member Kimberly Mundell. The citywide bike/ped trail draft map was sent out in an electronic file that was VERY difficult to open. Even more interesting was the note that accompanied the map. The following is copied from that email from the consulting firm Crafton Tull:

"I have attached the proposed network map for your information that will be presented tomorrow. As a member of the Steering Committee, we do ask that you and others on this email thread allow this plan to be introduced to the public at tomorrow's meeting, so that it can be explained within the context of the project approach and outcomes. Online public outreach was not included within our contract for this project, so we are rolling the information out in tomorrow's public forum and will have opportunities for participants to review and provide input."

In other words, **"Don't send out the map!"** If Kimberly had not posted a copy of the map on social media the night before and begged people to come out, how would people have known that their homes or property could be impacted by this proposal? A large crowd did turn out. (See BIKE PLAN Page 3)

For more information about
Mary Jo for Mayor
visit her website at
www.maryjo4sherwood.com

Mary Jo's Heye-lights

(BIKE PLAN Continued from Page 2)

9. The "Come & Go" event most definitely was NOT a come & go event. There was a 45-minute presentation with no questions to be allowed afterwards. Attendees had to break out into separate, smaller groups to discuss their issue individually with a consultant. However, again fearless Kimberly Mundel, the frustrated Steering Committee member, forced the consultants to answer her very simple question before the crowd was separated into small groups – "Will this presentation and these maps be made available to the public after this meeting?" Boom! This is just asking for public transparency, right?

The primary presenter stated "NO, the documents would NOT be available to the public after the meeting" and immediately deferred to City Engineer Richard Penn. Penn defended that assertion by stating the plan and the documents were not finished and the city didn't want wrong plans floating around. Or was it "controversial plans?" Certainly, a preliminary plan, clearly marked as such, would have been better for participants to take home rather than sending them home with only their fears and imaginations.

10. By being secretive and not really including the public, you cause anger and mistrust. There was a sizable crowd that night and the people seemed frustrated. And they should be.

11. There were some ridiculous paths on this map. For example, cutting through the middle of the golf course, cutting off a corner of the golf course. Going down Country Club in front of homes with very little front yards already. Going through the original Sherwood with already narrow roads. Cutting right through the middle of someone's backyard. Blowing the 14 foot wide Regional Greenway right through the narrow and beautiful parts of the Henson Trail. And of course...we can't forget - cutting across the all-important swamp.

In short, this is not the way to conduct city business. This is not the way to select a committee. This is not the way to run a committee. This is not the way to request public input. This is not the way to be transparent. This entire process was a disaster.

A citywide bike-ped master plan is a good thing and I support the concept. However, as such a plan affects people's homes and yards and property, the city has to be completely upfront and very inclusive in the development of any plan. This did not happen and, frankly, the plan may be in jeopardy. Not everything in the plan was problematic, but it clearly needs some serious work. In the hands of a Mayor that cares for citizens and believes in real public input, a Sherwood Bike-Ped Plan could be a very good thing. Until then, be on your toes! **MJHT**



Mary Jo examines the beautiful Henson Trail levy with an area homeowner

Mary Jo's Heye-lights



Mary Jo rides the Razorback Greenway in 2020 learning about regional trails

What Would I Do Different?

I have been a bike-ped advocate for years. I have biked all over Central Arkansas and Northwest Arkansas and I am a former distance runner. My husband is the Executive Director for Metroplan so we have been discussing the Regional Greenways plans for a long time. This issue is very important to me. The research is clear. For Sherwood to be competitive in the future, for our city to be able to attract quality businesses and professional young families, we must provide this amenity and excel at it.

So how would I have handled this situation? First, I would utilize the brains and talents in our community. I would have asked for anyone interested in this subject, especially those with experience, to be a part of this process. We have lots of people in this community that have lived in lots of different places or traveled to (See MARY JO'S APPROACH on Page 5)

The Reason for a Bike/Pedestrian Plan

It is imperative for Sherwood to become a more walkable and bikeable community. Young professionals, young families, and active people seek out such cities research shows and today's businesses go where their employees want to live. Trail and path investments make for more prosperous communities with higher property values and even healthier lifestyles. It actually extends the average life span of the people in a community.

Sherwood is already behind most of our peer cities in Central Arkansas. Even those cities that do not currently have these amenities are quickly scrambling onboard to put them into place. The sad part is that a decade ago when I pushed for these things, the city administration looked at the idea as unnecessary and unwanted. Had we started back then, think of where we could be now. Unfortunately, this seems to be how things operate in Sherwood. Instead of planning for the future, we must retrofit and shoehorn things into place after the fact. We could have been acquiring needed right-of-way for years by good planning as neighborhoods and properties were being developed. This is how communities far more successful than ours have handled this issue.

So why are we finally doing something now? Metroplan, the regional transportation planning organization, has dedicated half of their monies for the next ten years for a regional bike-pedestrian greenway that will connect all of Central Arkansas. This will amount to about \$75 million dollar investment in regional trails and paths. The regional greenways system will look like a wheel with the Arkansas River Trail in Little Rock and North little Rock as a hub and five spokes heading out into the region: the Southwest Trail to Benton, a Northwest Corridor to Conway, a Northeast Corridor to Cabot and beyond, an Eastern Corridor to Lonoke, and a Western Corridor through Little Rock out to Chenal. (See REASON on Page 5)

Mary Jo's Heye-lights

(MARY JO'S APPROACH Continued from Page 4) Those insights are so valuable! We can learn from other communities and places about what works and what can be done better.

Secondly, the city administration should have allowed the consultants and a seriously formed Steering Committee to look at Sherwood as a blank slate. They are the experts and practitioners. Let them do their job. priorities such as the non-existent entertainment district and including the Henson trail as part of the Regional Greenway was ridiculous! (See REGIONAL GREENWAYS Article Box)

Third, you bring in the public early, often, and completely. This is how you get valuable public input and how you build trust with the public. Give the public more information than they ask for and give them everything before they ask for it. "Say it all, say it first, and say it yourself" is always good advice.

Fourth, you create a smart, efficient system with broad paths where you can that branch into smaller, nimble paths and sidewalks in more difficult areas. In the final plan, you don't build massive bike paths everywhere. Just like you don't build freeways to your front door, you don't build extra wide paths everywhere. A Regional Greenway will have to be 12 to 14 feet wide. This is not appropriate in all parts of the city. This width can ruin as much as it offers. Sherwood covers a large area. Build a smarter system and build it more completely. **MJHT**

(REASON Continued from Page 4) All of the communities along these routes sit on the board of Metroplan and voted to fund this system understanding they must share the cost. The grant monies, typically an 80/20 split, will be distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis. Sherwood has not done themselves any favors by not being proactive. The only grants the city has received have been for a trail idea I had four years ago in my last campaign. The idea was to use major transmission powerline easements to create some trails.

Follow Mary Jo on Facebook
[MaryJo4Sherwood](#)

Sonny Jenson, former Parks and Recreation Director, and I met with Entergy to see if this was possible and we were told it was. I even had asked our GIS specialist to draw up some preliminary maps to see it on paper. Those maps sat there until approximately two years ago when the map was snatched up to belatedly apply for an engineering grant. I didn't get a thank you for making sure a map was ready.

Why use powerline transmission easements? The land has already been cleared. Moreover, no houses or developments can be built under these lines. Often, as in Sherwood's case, they are near housing developments and on higher ground. It would be as they say...low hanging fruit.

My husband is the Executive Director of Metroplan. While he does advise the Board and directs the staff, he does not get a vote. Only the Board of Directors, which consist of all the local mayors and county judges get to vote, nor does he get to decide who or what projects get grants. The Metroplan Board votes on where the Regional Greenways system goes and which section of the greenway gets funded and built first.

In conclusion, the future that the city administration choose to ignore for over a decade is upon us. Even though we have missed many opportunities to plan more bike-ped paths into our neighborhoods, we can still create an asset for today's citizens and for generations to come. Much can be learned going forward by studying growing communities from our area and around the country. The need for strategic long-term planning becomes obvious. We must stop letting our community develop haphazardly with an "it is what it is" attitude. We can and we must be better. **MJHT**

Mary Jo's Heye-lights

What is the Central Arkansas Regional Greenway?

Metroplan, the Central Arkansas regional transportation planning organization, is developing a regional bike-ped multi-use path plan and dedicating half of its funding for ten years to help make it a reality. There is a significant difference between a Regional Greenways trail and a local trail or path. While Sherwood will be included in this system, it would be good to understand the difference between these paths and local paths. Further, we need to know where to properly build these different, but complimentary systems

A Regional Greenway multi-use path that will connect all major cities in the region. Its primary purpose will be to provide a safe active transportation route between cities. In Sherwood, *the Regional Greenway will be a single linear path* stretching to and from North Little Rock and Jacksonville to points beyond. It will be primarily funded with federal transportation dollars and must follow the federal transportation standards. This will be the major backbone corridor for active transportation across the larger northeast quadrant of the region. To understand what I mean, consider the federal highway system. The Regional Greenways will be like the interstate highway system connecting different cities. This is unlike local paths and sidewalks whose major function is to provide biking and walking access inside the city of Sherwood. These local paths and sidewalks will be stretch across the city in a network bringing walking and biking opportunities to more homes and people.

Being primarily federally funded, a Regional Greenways path must be at least 12 feet wide although the federal standard is expected to increase to 14 feet to more safely accommodate multiple users. Local trails built with local money can be smaller and therefore nimbler in tight places. Let's face it, anyone's front yard can accommodate a 5-foot sidewalk much easier than it can accommodate an 8-to-10-foot local path or a 12-to-14 foot Regional path. The location of a Regional Greenways has to be both strategic and sensitive. (See **REGIONAL GREENWAYS Page 7**)



Mary Jo's Heye-lights

A Regional Greenway Would Destroy Parts of the Henson Trail



A 14-foot regional path along the Henson Trail would consume all the space from the current trail to the backyard fences requiring the removal of all the trees and bushes. The trail would loom over every backyard and destroy any ambiance and privacy

(REGIONAL GREENWAYS Continued from Page 6) Meanwhile, the smaller, more numerous local paths and sidewalks become important ways to get safely to the larger Regional Greenway and or many other destinations in our community. Now we're building an active transportation system.

Obviously, a Regional Greenways trail can't go into an older area like Country Club and Wildwood. The front yards are way too small and the uncurbed streets are just not big enough to carve out a Regional Greenway and still move vehicles. There just is not enough room. However, like on Country Club and Wildwood, sidewalks on both sides on the street can take you to a larger local path or even to the Regional Greenways itself. On the narrow streets of old Sherwood area, serious cyclists will be on the street and walkers and kids can be on the sidewalk. Vehicle speeds are slow enough and traffic counts are low enough in these areas for this to work.

In new neighborhoods with wide, curbed streets, bike lanes are possible. Bike lanes narrow the feel of the road causing motorists to slow down. If there is an area where the houses have deeper front yard setbacks, then you can consider wider, safer side paths. And it is okay for an area to be walking only. For example, the Henson Trail is only 6 feet wide. In the area of the trail on the levy, this narrowness contributes to the beautiful "green tunnel" effect. To maintain its beauty, the trail cannot be widened. It needs to be walking only. You can even get off your bike and walk it if necessary. If you keep the Henson Trail a local trail you can keep its beauty and use it to access the Regional Greenway. That's the best of both worlds. MJHT

Mary Jo's Heye-lights

In Memoriam, City Council Member Tim McMinn

"To give real service you must add something which cannot be bought or measured with money, and this is sincerity and integrity." - Douglas Adams.

Sincerity and integrity are definitely two of the words I would use to describe late City Council Member Tim McMinn. I had the pleasure of serving with Brother Tim for over a decade now. I have so much respect for him. We may not have always looked at an issue the same way, however, I knew he always tried to approach each issue with an open heart and mind. He was never a vindictive person and truly cared for this city and all of its citizens.

Brother Tim McMinn moved to Sherwood in 1976 when he was called to be the pastor at Sylvan Hills Community Church. He married Sharon on January 31, 1991. These two made such a great team. For those who do not know, Sharon has an amazing singing voice and is quite the musician. She has given piano and voice lessons for many years. Sylvan Hills Community Church has been blessed.

Brother Tim was appointed to serve on the Civil Service Commission in 1985. He served through 1994. He always had a special love for Sherwood's police. In 1994, he saw the need for a Police Chaplain program and volunteered to take on this project. He developed the chaplaincy program and served in that capacity for many years. In 1996, he had the vision of creating the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast. Each year this event has grown and gotten stronger.

Brother Tim was appointed to the position of City Council Member of Ward 4, Position 1 on February 22, 2010. He ran for a full term in 2010 and won the city council seat outright over an opponent. However, Bro. Tim had not had one since. As a City Council Member, Tim has served on the Street Committee and the Senior Citizen Committee. Tim has always enjoyed working with our senior citizens and their annual fish fry was one of his favorite events. One could always find him working hard out on the patio with the fish frying team. Serving on the Street Committee, he was always most concerned for the safety of the citizens. This made sidewalks a priority for him. He is especially passionate about the need for sidewalks all the way down Kiehl Avenue.

Brother Tim said that when he was running for office in 2010, he told people that he would NEVER lie to them. He promised that a person may not like what he had to say, but that he would always tell them the truth. He was proud that he never broke this campaign promise.

Sadly, Tim was diagnosed last year with Stage 4 cancer. He announced his diagnosis with so much strength and dignity at the January 2021 City Council Meeting. He announced his plans to continue serving the community on City Council as well as preaching and ministering at Sylvan Hills Community Church for as long as he was able. Tim truly had a servant's heart. He had no fear of dying and embraced each day as a gift. Brother Tim was called away on May 20, 2022.

On a personal note, I considered this man to not only be inspirational but also a friend. Serving alongside of him was such an honor. I loved the fact that he was always open to new ideas and appreciated the open exchange of ideas and debate. We did not always agree, but with mutual respect, we cared for each other's opinion. This is the way it is supposed to be!

Please keep Sharon in your prayers as these days of loss and pain are physically difficult and exhausting. Our city has been made better because of this family and this man! **MJHT**



Sharon McMinn Selected to Complete Husband's Term

At its May meeting, the Sherwood City Council named Sharon McMinn, wife of the late City Council Member Tim McMinn, to complete the rest of her husband's term through December 2022. Who better than Sharon to know how Tim felt about issues facing the city?! I personally have admired the pillar of courage and unwavering support that she was to Tim throughout his illness. I personally look forward to serving with her and think she will do a wonderful job representing the citizens of Ward 4.

Mary Jo's Heye-lights



Reverend Tim McMinn
October 29, 1946 – May 20, 2022
Sherwood City Council Member

Do you want to be on Mary Jo's mailing list?



Send your name & email address to

maryjoheye@gmail.com



MaryJo4Sherwood Website

MaryJo4Sherwood Facebook