

Mary Jo's Heye-lights

August 2022
Issue 21

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The Mayor and the City Council Members for Ward 3, Position 1, Ward 3, Position 2, & Ward 4, Position 2 requested their contact information be withheld from Mary Jo's Heye-lights

What Do I mean by SMART PLANNING? Better Planning Leads to a Better Quality of Life

I have been advocating for Smart Planning practices in my newsletters and in Facebook posts for some time now. What do I mean by that? A recent lunch in town highlighted exactly what I mean.

Consider the photographs below. This view is from the parking lot of Tropical Smoothie on Country Club Road. More specifically, the photo shows the cars in line at the order station of their drive-through window. In the background you can see other cars parked against the property line in the parking lot. Beyond these cars you are looking over the privacy fence of a back yard of a single-family house; right into the windows, so to speak.

Look at that house carefully. The house was built first. It's been there a long time. The Tropical Smoothie is recent. The homeowners put up a six-foot privacy fence. What more is a property owner supposed to do in a subdivision?

Tropical Smoothie was built exactly according to the city ordinances and according to standard industry practices. Fill dirt was brought in to level the building site back to front. The back of the lot was raised more than four feet (See PLANNING Page 2)



Headlights into Resident's Back Windows

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(**PLANNING Continued from Page 1**) above area terrain as a result. Further, the drive-through was located on the back of the building where more fill dirt had been used. As drive-through lines run counter-clockwise around the building, the headlights of any car in line were going to shine right in the back windows of that home.

All this was predictable. As was the added noise from idling cars, the noise from the squawk box repeating orders, the glare of parking lot light and menu boards, normal conversations in the parking lot perched overlooking back yards. Even site drainage issues were predictable in and around an elevated building site covered in concrete and roof.

Some people might say the homeowner should have known what might happen since they were living alongside a vacant lot zoned for commercial. I disagree. Not all commercial land uses are alike and the differences need to be handled differently. First, Tropical Smoothie should have been made to put up a fence. Just that simple fix would have helped this poor landowner immensely. It's too late now.

Second, a sit-down restaurant is different from a drive-through restaurant. A sit-down restaurant has fewer cars than a drive-through restaurant of the same size. They have no squawk box and no glaring menu boards. Sit-down restaurants live alongside other properties much more softly than drive-throughs. Drive-through restaurants adjacent to single-family homes should be "conditional use" restricted so that conditions could be mandated that would minimize or eliminate these issues. The Site Plan Review ordinance and its administrator (a planner) should be equipped with the right tools to address these issues as well.

Good planning officials know to catch these issues. If a city doesn't have good planning ordinances, good planners submit new ordinances or amendments for better ordinances to the City Council to fix the problem regulations. Without good planners and good ordinances, the city will unfortunately just create more

innocent victims of its amateurish efforts at planning. Sherwood has to quit planning like the small town we once were and start planning like the city we want to become.

My heart goes out to this homeowner. It wasn't Tropical Smoothie that did this to them. The city is guilty here. Tropical Smoothie would have done almost anything the city asked. Sherwood didn't ask. This homeowner is paying the consequence.

Sherwood, we can do better. Time For a Change. **MJHT**

SHERWOOD FEST

September 24th

Location: Sports Complex

Time: 10 am- 6pm



Archery Exhibition at Sherwood Fest, Classes Coming Soon

Several staffers were certified in July by AG&FC as Basic Archery Instructors. Come out to see an open type of exhibition shoot at Sherwood Fest.

Plans are also being developed to host introductory archery classes this fall. Details will follow as are available. This is an up-and-coming sport for high school students.

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Political Drama at the July City Council Meeting

Free Speech & Mary Jo's Heye-lights Comes Under Scrutiny By a "Concerned Citizen"

At the July City Council meeting under new business a Sherwood resident raised concerns about my newsletter. She stated, "I will point out that the contact information for the Mayor and City Council is displayed in the left column on page 1 of the newsletter and all appearances of the document indicate that it is an official City of Sherwood publication." I am sorry, what was that again?

First, the name of the newsletter is Mary Jo's Heye-lights. My picture is next to the name along with my contact information. There are no emblems of the city or any wording that would make someone think that the city produced this newsletter. It is not even green. There has never been any attempt to imply or infer such.

Clearly, for any regular reader, this publication is not at all supportive of the present administration. This is one of the reasons why I am running for mayor. I believe strongly in a sense of openness, transparency, and communication. I want to create an atmosphere of involvement and participation of our citizens.

Apparently, this citizen based the allegation of the newsletter being an official publication on the public official contact information in the left-hand column of the first page. For the record, the contact information is on the city website. It is included in the newsletters as a benefit to recipients to make it easier to contact either the Mayor or their city council representative. This has been the exact same newsletter format for 3 and a half years. Back issues are available on my website. Mayor Young asked for her contact information to not be included in the newsletter. Even though this is public information, I will no longer include it. There are three city council members out of the eight that have asked the same thing. All I can say is this speaks volumes. "You don't want it to be easy for your constituents to find you?" Okay!

This citizen mentioned my access to sensitive financial data. I did not disclose any sensitive financial data in the newsletter. Everything in that article is accessible to the

I started *Mary Jo's Heye-lights* over three years ago to shine a light on city government activities & actions not being reported in a city without a newspaper. I think this newsletter serves an important purpose.

- Mary Jo

public and the reports given to the city council actually named names of people and the amounts they received. I didn't. I only reported on averages for each street and did not include names. Still, it is public information. If the city cuts a check to anyone, the public has a right to know - to whom the check was cut and how much the check was for. There is nothing secretive about that. It's called transparency. It's available to anyone to see.

One Council Member expressed to me following the meeting how ridiculous this display was and could not believe it was already happening and it was only July. They went on to say...I guess we should expect this stuff until the election.

Sherwood, We Can Be Better! MJHT

Did you know?

The Sherwood Police Department offers free exterior checks of your home while you are out of town on vacation.

Give us a call at 501-835-1425 and tell us you would like to have a Vacation Check form completed.

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Eight Minutes of What?

For the record, the lady who spoke to the city council wrongly identified the issue of the article. She purported to be a retired engineer for ARDOT and knowledgeable about such things as right-of-way, easements, and temporary construction easements. She offered to "educate" the city council on what these were while assuring the city council that the city was acting completely legally. To be clear, nowhere in the article does it state that the city acted illegally.

The lady further implied that I had extraordinary access to information to confidential information and that I was disclosing it improperly. In fact, the information in that article from Mary Jo's Heye-lights Issue 20 that the lady was referring to was found in the "Bills Paid Report" list that every city council member has in their packet every month. This is public information available to everyone and it raises questions that still have not been answered.

The issue in question from the article "Coolhurst Easements Raise Eyebrows," Mary Jo Heye-lights, Page 1, was not about the differences between these three definitions. Specifically, the issue raised in the article was asking for an explanation for the substantial difference in money awarded for these temporary construction easements in the case of Coolhurst versus the two other streets, especially Country Club Road because it's in the same neighborhood on an adjacent street, and very comparable.

Some Coolhurst residents got substantially more money for temporary construction easements on their property for a sidewalk project than Country Club and Hemphill residents got for street construction on their property. Why? Further, why did only 14 out of 37 affected property owners on Coolhurst get money? Were less than half affected or did over half decline any money? Were temporary construction easements needed on only 14 properties but not the others? Maybe or maybe not! I don't know. The public doesn't know. No explanation was given.

Isn't The Limit Five Minutes?



The time stamps from the city's own YouTube video clearly indicate the "concerned citizen" was allowed to speak for over eight minutes when the normal citizen comment limit is five minutes

The "concerned citizen" ended up talking for more than eight minutes, three minutes longer than the time limit city council procedure allows and the mayor has held other citizens to over the years. In all those eight minutes, the citizen did not explain the difference in monies paid, nor did the mayor or the city engineer take the time to explain the situation at the public city council meeting. It would have been a great opportunity.

It is my job as a city council member to be looking after the interests of the citizens. It is my job to go through the information and ask questions even if they are hard. I am proud of the job I have done on the city council. I will continue to be diligent in this same way until my term as a city council member ends in December. MJHT

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The Long-Considered Bike/Ped Path Project Moves Closer to Reality

Now known as The Powerline Trail, it took its first steps toward reality in the summer of 2019. While I first introduced the idea in my 2018 re-election campaign, I arranged a meeting the next summer with Sherwood's Parks Director, Sonny Janssen, an Entergy Representative, an Attorney for Entergy, and myself to discuss the possibility. We discussed using the land below the Entergy's electric transmission lines for a bike/pedestrian trail. These powerlines run north and south through Sherwood a little ways west of Brockington Road on a broad, clear easement.

At my request, Sherwood's GIS specialist produced a map of that area showing this powerline easement that we could use at a Parks & Recreation Meeting. We were looking primarily at the area between Kiehl and Brockington. October 14, 2019, this possibility was introduced at the Parks & Recreation Committee. Overall, the Committee liked the idea.

The next year the city needed a ready project to put in an application for the 2020 STBG (Surface Transportation Block Grant) program administered through Metroplan. The map that was used at the Parks & Recreation meeting was used to apply for engineering for this project. The project received the grant. This original area designated for the path was between Kiehl to Brockington. A second grant was received in 2021 for the engineering from Kiehl to Clinton Elementary.

On July 26th, the city held a public comment meeting on the project showing the preliminary engineering plans. There was a large crowd in attendance including a sizable contingent from Austin Gardens. The folks from Austin Garden expressed their biggest concern is that they be able to remain a gated community. Since they own the land under the Entergy utility easement the trail would be going through, it was explained to them that when the city has to acquire the right to place a trail on their land, they can negotiate for protective, decorative fence to be installed. This fence could run along the trail when

their neighborhood and would preserve this community's security and privacy.

The other big issue was that preliminary design had the trail continuing going along the property line between part Mr. Lantrip's property and the Baring Cross Church's property. This can be rectified by putting the trail along the front of the Lantrip property along Lantrip Road and then east along Baring Cross Road back to the powerline easement through the Links apartment complex. This change would probably increase usage of the trail by both kids in the apartment complex and kids in the neighborhood on the west side of Lantrip Road. The consultants with the project agreed that this would be a possible easy fix.

Generally, most of the folks that came to the public hearing expressed excitement over the project. There were even folks in attendance that live near the proposed trail as some avid cyclists.

In my opinion, once the two issues involving Austin Gardens and Lantrip/Baring Cross Church are rectified, then this will be a wonderful project for the city. MJHT



SHOW ME THE MONEY

The Powerline Trail could be, in part or in whole, a part of the larger regional bike/ped path system known as the Central Arkansas Regional Greenways. Metroplan has dedicated half of its funding for the next ten years to this project. Between \$55 & \$75 million in regional funding is up for grabs

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City Council Business From July 2022

Rock Region Micro-transit Service Approved

The City Council voted to enter into a service agreement with Rock Region Metropolitan Transit Authority for the provision of micro-transit service to residents of Sherwood. The service will pick up and drop off Sherwood residents anywhere in Sherwood and will access Rock Region's regular bus service at Springhill Baptist Hospital. It will operate more like an Uber service than a bus system and will cost \$2.00 a ride each way. However, this new transit service will not start immediately due to Rock Region's needed ramp up time. They have to purchase a vehicle and hire drivers for this Sherwood area service.

State of Arkansas Gives Police Officers One-Time Bonus

On March 8, 2022, Governor Hutchinson signed a bill which granted on-time stipends of \$5,000 to full-time certified city and county law enforcement officers. At the July City Council Meeting, the Council passed a resolution amending the budget to accept the monies for the officers from the State and to then pay it to the eligible full-time officers. Seventy-one officers qualify for this, and the amount paid out will be \$355,000.

Franchise for Telecommunications Company Approved

A resolution approving a franchise agreement between Uniti Fiber LLC Telecommunication and the city. I did verify before the council meeting that the city cannot discriminate between which telecommunication companies can use the right of way. The City Attorney did speak highly of the way that this company approached the city in comparison to others in the past.



What to do about bamboo?

Please think twice before planting this invasive plant.

It grows quickly and spreads uncontrollably. It

will not just stay on your property and end up being

a nuisance for your neighbors. This is

beginning to be a problem in some areas of Sherwood.

Getting rid of it is difficult, labor intensive, and can

take years.

Johnson Road Rezoning

I have been asked about the re-zoning signs on Johnson across from the Middle School. This property was originally zoned multi-family. This is a terrible place for multi-family because you don't want multi-family in the interior of the city creating traffic congestion. The current owner, Robert Gregory, has petitioned the city to re-zone the land to R-1. This is the single-family home zone and the appropriate zoning for this land. This will come before the Planning Commission on August 9th at 5pm.

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SYLVAN HILLS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Preschool Physicals Available
9921 AR 107, Sherwood
Thursday, August 4 • 4 pm - 7 pm

NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH

Preschool Physicals Available
1821 Edmond Street, North Little Rock
Saturday, August 6 • 9 am - 12 pm

HEAVEN'S LOFT

518 W. 26th Street, North Little Rock
Wednesday, August 10 • 10 am - 2 pm

MARTIN STREET YOUTH CENTER

201 West Martin Street, Jacksonville
Saturday, August 13 • 12 pm - 3 pm

MOSAIC CHURCH OF CENTRAL ARKANSAS

6221 Colonel Glenn Road, Little Rock
Tuesday, August 16 • 12 pm - 2:30 pm

SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY CENTER

6401 Baseline Road, Little Rock
Thursday, August 18 • 4 pm - 7 pm

WEST CENTRAL COMMUNITY CENTER

8616 Colonel Glenn Road, Little Rock
Saturday, August 20 • 10 am - 2 pm

BAPTIST HEALTH COMMUNITY OUTREACH OFFICE

Partnership for a Healthy Arkansas Building
10117 Kanis Road, LR
Monday, August 29 • 3 pm - 6 pm

Backpacks filled with school supplies.

Limited to the first 50 individuals to complete the immunization process at each location.

COVID Vaccines available for children 12 & older

If you have Medicaid please bring proof of coverage.



Baptist Health

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

For more information and to preregister call **(501) 202-1540**.
Walk-ins are Welcome!