

Mary Jo's Heye-lights

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\$7.3 Million Approved for Country Club Road Project A Questionable Street Replacement Project East Of Beverly Is Tacked Onto A Great Drainage Project West Of Beverly

A special city council meeting was called for October 11th with the sole purpose of raising the official amount of money allocated for the Country Club Road project. Previously, at its April 26th 2021 meeting, the Sherwood City Council had authorized a budget of \$4.7 million for Country Club Road & Drainage Improvements. At the special city council meeting, we were being asked to approve a new budget of \$7.3 million - an increase of an additional \$2.6 million.

This project was originally identified as a bond issue project because of the flooding/drainage problems from Sherwood Avenue to Beverly. Apparently, in an area ward meeting prior to the tax vote in 2018, a complete street overhaul from North Hills to Beaconsfield was mentioned. The original street design by the city administration wanted to expand the street one foot on each side all the way down to Beaconsfield. At Beaconsfield, Country Club widens into a more modern street width continuing on to Wildwood. The purported purpose of the widening was to make the old road look more like the new road. At Street Committee, I personally argued against making the road only one foot wider because this would greatly increase cost, but add no real benefit. "Aesthetics" was not a good enough reason. Thankfully, this widening project eventually got scrapped due to right-of-way issues.

The city council at its April meeting was presented a diagram showing the proposed improvements to Country Club (see diagram last page). Country Club from Beverly to Beaconsfield would essentially keep the same street cross section with 11-foot travel lanes (matches existing), expand the sidewalk from 4 foot to 5-foot, adding sidewalk where it was missing on both sides, and, most importantly, **reusing existing pavement**. However, in the October meeting we learned the scope had changed. Instead of using existing pavement, this road will now be completely torn up to the dirt from Beverly to Beaconsfield. And still, but for a little new spot storm drainage, **the street will be rebuilt essentially the same**. At a cost increase of \$2.6 million dollars, we get the same street. The City Engineer, Richard Penn, stated that the reason for the increase was the new design and the increase in costs.

Because Central Arkansas Water's Paid Engineers Said We Need To
I asked Mr. Penn, a few days before the special city (See COUNTRY CLUB Page 4)

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SHERWOOD IS READY FOR A CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

The finance affairs of Sherwood are currently fall under the duties of the elected City Clerk. We have a wonderful City Clerk in Angela Nicholson who has fully and capably handled the financial & accounting needs of the city as well maintained the traditional job of a City Clerk as the keeper of records. However, at some point she will no longer be the City Clerk and then this important responsibility is left to who is elected next. This arrangement has generally worked out fine when we were a little town. However, we are no longer that little town and we can no longer take this risk. In the General Fund alone, the City of Sherwood's annual budget is over \$24 million dollars. This does not include the A&P budget of \$1.1 million, the Street Fund budget of \$2.9 million, the Waste Water budget of \$1.8 million, the franchise budget over \$2 million, etc.

With so much money at risk, the importance of having a professional with the knowledge of accounting & finance to oversee the city's fiscal responsibilities is just too important for this elected position. 18 of the 20 largest cities in Arkansas have already separated the Chief Financial Officer and City Clerk positions. (Sherwood is 13th largest.) The only other city without a CFO in the 20 largest cities is Cabot and that city's mayor is a CPA. 30 of the 36 cities in Arkansas over 10,000 population have separate CFOs. Sherwood is the largest city in Arkansas without a CFO.

We celebrate the history of Sherwood and its journey from being a small incorporated town to one of the largest cities in the state today. However, our city government can no longer afford to continue to act like that little town of 10,000. It is time to create a professional CFO position whose occupant does not rest on the outcome of an election. **MJHT**



Veteran's Day Celebration is Wednesday November 10th at 9 am at Sherwood Forest. There will be no Veteran's Day Parade. Veteran's Day is November 11th.
Unfortunately, due to my full-time job, I will not be able to attend this service. I would like to say **THANK YOU** to all those who have made the sacrifices to serve our country. And Thank You to all those family members that are holding down the home so that they can serve!

CITY HALLOW Was Well Received!

Sherwood Parks Department thought outside the box and brought this year's event outdoors as a safe fun family event. Using the park by City Hall was a great idea. Using the fish pond as a floating pumpkin patch was really clever. Hopefully, they will build on the success of this year and continue to grow this fun family event. A big thank you to our Sherwood Parks Department for working hard at creating a fun family event.



City Council Member

Mary Jo Heye-Townsell

Meets the Chicken

**At Sherwood's
CITY HALLOW
Saturday, October 30
At City Hall**

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(COUNTRY CLUB Continued from Page 5) Sherwood Avenue needed to be done. That by itself is a multi-million-dollar project. It was the rest of the project I consider unnecessary. We are going to inconvenience people and possibly tear up their vehicles, for what? Further, this construction would increase traffic on the other streets, making their lives more difficult, and putting additional wear and tear on those streets. This process is not going to take days or weeks. Taking this street down to the dirt, changing out storm drain pipes & inlets, etc. can easily run many months to a year or more. 500 hundred feet of the new Baring Cross Road took 9 months. This area is going to be a mess for a long time. Only the CAW water pipe work has been done so far. None of the street & drainage work has even begun. Everything will be torn up again. For over half of this project, over a half mile in length, we will not change the look or the traffic flow of this street one bit for that additional \$2.6 million dollars. Did I mention traffic counts in this area have been flat for over two decades?

The Bond Issue Financing Mr. Penn referenced penalties if we did not have 85% of the first issue of the bond money obligated in three years and mayor mentioned that it could hurt our future bond issue ratings. Therefore, we needed to make a quick decision on this issue because of the impending deadline. It turns out those fears were unfounded. I called our bond underwriter representative to find out if this is true and, if so, what would be the penalty. According to our bond representative, we could have asked for an extension up to **24 months WITHOUT PENALTY**. At no time was this information given to the city council. The bond representative stated that all it would take is a letter documenting the reasons for the delays. She went on to state that these bonds were issued before Covid. It is well known that Covid caused all sorts of problems, slowing down businesses including engineering and disrupting supply chains. I asked if it would affect our bond rating in the future, and she stated *No, as long as the delay did not last past the 24-month extension.*

I take very seriously being a good steward of the taxpayer's money. I truly feel that we are doing a disservice to the residents and potentially not using this money in the most prudent manner.

So Where Are We Now? The bond issue was authorized by voters for up to \$37 million according to our bond representative and it could be drawn to two separate issues. Now, the entire \$22 first issue has now been obligated. All of it and not just the 85% threshold or \$18.7 million. The representative said, the second issue will be \$15 million and she stated that Mr. Penn is expecting that this will be requested in the fall of 2022. The 3-year clock on that issue of bond money will start then. The most expensive **(Finally Concluded Next Page)**



The Sherwood Public Works Department Leaf Vac program begins Monday, Nov. 1, and will continue through Jan. 31. Leaves that are raked to the curb for pick up between Nov. 1 and Jan. 31 cannot be placed in the gutters or the street. If leaves are placed in the gutter or the street, a citation can be issued by the City of Sherwood. Workers will start on the south side of the city and work their way north and repeat in the same direction.

For more information, the Sherwood Public Works Department may be reached at 501-835-3288.

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BROCKINGTON ROAD REPAVING

THE TIRES, THE SUSPENSIONS, AND THE GNASHING OF TEETH

There has been a lot of frustration about the milling of Brockington Road recently and the damage it is doing to vehicles. The decision on which roads get overlaid with new asphalt and when is not a City Council decision. This is an administration decision. The street overlay program is tasked to the Public Works Department. Public Works has a lot on their plate including garbage pick-up. That department has decided that every road in Sherwood should get overlaid every ten years, period. The city assigns that work to a contractor, but the Public Works Department should ensure the contractor not only performs satisfactory work, but also performs that work in a manner that is both safe and convenient to the citizens of Sherwood.

From the complaints I am hearing and from my own experience, the contractor is paying less than the proper attention to the people or cars that must use that street every day. I live east of Brockington Road in an area with over 800 homes whose residents have no choice but to use that street. Because of Sherwood's history of poor street planning there are plenty of others who have no other option but to use this street.

Here are a few points about the work. Do streets need automatic overlaying every ten years? Many people have said Brockington Road was not in bad shape. Did it really need to be overlaid?

Many other progressive cities use (Next Column)



Brockington Road: still a tire graveyard almost a month after starting work

pavement assessment contractors each year to assess the actual pavement quality on all city streets. This would let the city only overlay streets that really need the work. This could potentially save money.

Hot mix asphalt should be temporarily added to the sharp edges that must be left after grinding. Grinding must leave certain sharp edges at the finish street height. This includes manholes, curb edges, and at the joints with side streets. The added hot mix can easily be scraped away right before re-paving. This temporary hot mix placement allows car tires to ramp over these obstacles rather than slam into them, saving tires and alignments in the days between grinding and repaving. For the care of its citizens, the city should demand its contractor take this extra step.

The contractor should take more time to clearly "maintain" traffic flow. I have frequently had to decide which lane to take when turning onto Brockington with no help from the contractor. All I can see is a line of cones running down the middle of the north or south bound lanes. "Okay, you're working in one lane, but which lane should I take?" The working lane should have cones blocking that lane at every side street. Please communicate with the drivers. This should be standard practice; the city should demand it. **Sherwood let's strive to be better! MJHT**

SAVE THE DATE
Sherwood Christmas Parade
Saturday, Dec 4th
at 2pm

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(COUNTRY CLUB Continued from Page 1) council meeting, why we are taking this street down to the dirt? His response was that the engineers working for Central Arkansas Water (CAW) said that the base was in terrible shape. Mr. Penn went on to say that the road was failing and was not safe. I asked if any soil or base coring had been done and he responded "no." I asked how knows the base was bad and the street was failing? Well, this is what the CAW engineers told him. I lived on Beaconsfield Road for years and that area between Beverly and Beaconsfield was never in bad shape. At the time of the special city council meeting, it was not in bad shape nor was it failing. His response was that this would be a City Council decision.

He mentioned that with the street surface being replaced, CAW was going to use this opportunity to replace the pipes located under the street. I stated, of course they are, because we're replacing the street surface for them and saving them thousands if not millions of dollars. It should be CAW's responsibility to tear up a perfectly good road and replace it if their water lines need to be replaced. The tax payers of Sherwood should not be stuck with that bill. This is after the Sherwood residents pay 40% higher water rates than NLR and LR residents.

How do you know a street is failing?

To learn, I did some research. A local city official from another city put me in touch with their city engineer. *(A real civil engineer. Our city engineer is not a civil engineer. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, civil engineers design, build, and supervise street & drainage infrastructure projects.)* I asked the question, "How do you know when a road is failing?" He said typically you will see signs like a two-rut tractor pattern in the street followed by chunks of the asphalt coming up from the ruts causing potholes. I was literally driving on Country Club Road while listening to him. I pulled over and told him that I could not find any signs of this. He said it did **(Next Column)**

not sound like a failing road, however, the only way to know for sure was to get a geotechnical report with subgrade analysis from a professional engineer in roadway design. This costs approximately \$14,000 and takes about two weeks. He said for his money spending \$14,000 versus before potentially wasting \$2.6 million is what he would do. Agreed. I also asked how much his city was seeing in bid price increases for street work. He stated about 25% above estimates. For the record, a cost allowance 25% above the \$4,689,085 bid estimate was already approved in April by the city council, if needed. The difference between the original and new project price is a 56.2% increase.

THIS IS CRITICAL

We have a limited amount of bond money to do major street projects to move traffic through our community. I am very concerned, at this rate, we will run out of money to finish critical or strategic projects. This is one time money that doesn't grow on trees. It has been decades since we raised new taxes to fund major street projects. We don't need to waste this opportunity. A laser focus is needed to address critical local projects like fixing Jacksonville Cato, serving two schools with hairpin corners and impassable in heavy rains. A laser focus is also needed on strategic projects like the opening of Brockington Road up to four travel lanes to and from Hwy 67/167. Brockington carries three times as many cars as Country Club Road - 30,000 cars a day. Brockington is strategic; Jacksonville-Cato is critical local; Country Club is just local. **(Continued Page 5)**



Trail of Lights

OPENS NOVEMBER 19TH
NEW THIS YEAR...ENTER THE TRAIL FROM
DEE JAY HUDSON INSTEAD OF BEAR PAW!

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(COUNTRY CLUB Continued from Page 4)

The Reason For The Extended Project Is Aesthetics?

The original reason for extending the Country Club project east of Beverly was to improve the aesthetics on the street from Beverly to Beaconsfield. I personally do not understand how digging up a street and putting it right back down as it was, changes the aesthetics. Changing lighting, signage, putting the electrical underground is how you change the aesthetics. But this is not what is happening. Further, this design doesn't even add needed safety features to the street. For example, wouldn't adding a turn lane on Country Club at the traffic light to the school make sense? The traffic light that is just beyond a small hill? Apparently not!

Why, why, why? Not Safety? Not Aesthetics? For much of this project we are just digging a hole and putting the dirt back into it. Why are we doing anything more to Country Club than that one needed section of drainage west of Beverly?

Too Great A Cost

At the special council meeting, I stated this total project cost was too great for what we were getting and that there was no evidence that rebuilding a perfectly fine street was even necessary. I emphasized that I was concerned that we were going to run out of money. I suggested that we just fix the drainage problem between Beverly and Sherwood Avenue and not rebuilding the entire street without even knowing if it was necessary. Remember the sidewalks and the new curbs were already included in the original project. We should use this extra money on other projects that are critical and strategic necessities first.

Accused Of Not Caring About "Old Sherwood"

The statement was then made that I do not care about "Old Sherwood." This is completely false. I stated this is a good project is part. I do think the major street flooding over between Beverly and **(Continued Page 6)**

THORNHILL: THE WRONG WAY TO ONE WAY STREETS

If you do not already know, Thornhill is now a one-way street. This change was requested by the Police Department at the October Street Committee Meeting. The Street Committee approved the change even though little advance warning was given and with no public input. The street signs were changed out that week.

By law, city committees are advisory only. In my opinion, it would have been more proper for the committee to vote on a recommendation and then have this go to the City Council where there would have been a chance for neighborhood input. Unfortunately, sometimes people do not see the unintended consequences when making quick decisions. Public input does provide a chance to catch these unintended consequences in advance.

In this particular case, by making Thornhill one way all the time, more traffic is being pushed onto Autumnbrook Circle and Holly Drive. So, the city is pushing traffic off of a nonresidential street onto residential streets. Some in the neighborhood are unhappy and feel like their voices do not count and are not heard. The city council members are the representatives of the people. If issues like these do not come before the council, then how do the citizens get represented? The members of the street committee are doing the best job that they can, but Street Committee Agendas are not published in advance. Committee members do not know the agenda until they arrive at the meetings. Nor is the public notified so that they can speak. Conversely, City Council Agendas are published in advance so the public can speak. Hopefully, this issue can be re-addressed in the near future. We should hope issues like this can be handled differently in the future. **MJHT**

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ANOTHER YEAR! COOLHURST & DEERFIELD STILL AWAIT SIDEWALKS

The funding for sidewalks on Coolhurst and Deerfield was approved at the end of 2019. Nearing the end of 2021, we are still waiting for these projects.

Coolhurst was specifically selected because of pedestrians using this street to get to places like Dairy Queen, Subway, and the park on Windchime. This is a long-standing cut-through street between Country Club across the creek to Club and Lee. However, with construction on Country Club, traffic has already picked up. This makes it even more dangerous for bikers and walkers. Even though city funded, the city received a 2019 ArDOT TAP grant. These federal funds make the process longer and increases the cost. However, waiting two years for sidewalks on a level street with curbs and gutters is just not acceptable. This project should have been expedited knowing the increase in traffic from the Country Club project. Neighborhood safety is at stake.

The Deerfield sidewalk was approved at the same time. Even though there is no grant money associated with this project, the residents in this area are still waiting. Since we don't engineer sidewalks in house and money was already designated for this project, why the wait?

Sidewalks are so important for health and safety of Sherwood residents. They improve neighborhood and lives. We have got to be more aggressive as a city in getting them built where there are none. **MJHT**

**Sherwood City Hall
& The Harmon Center**

**Will Be Closed For
Veteran's Day
Thursday, November 11**

**Thursday's Garage Routes will be
Run on Friday**

(COUNTRY CLUB Continued from Page 6)

scheduled project coming up next will be Jacksonville Cato with estimates ranging well over \$10 million dollars. Oddly, given the dwindling money, the part that is the most complicated and expensive, the part that floods with 90-degree corners, is going to be the second phase. Consequently, the most needed section of Jacksonville-Cato is the section most at risk of the money running out.

A Fading Hope for Brockington

I have hoped that part of the bond money could improve the huge bottleneck on Brockington from the intersection with Kiehl to 67/167. This is state highway, but to get projects moving faster, ArDOT asks cities to bring more money to the table. Typically, cities are asked to share costs with ArDOT at 20% city - 80% state. To speed up a project a city needs to offer more than 20%. This is called overmatching. We have engaged ArDOT to study this area. This study will still not fund the project, but it's a start. By all considerations, this is the most important, even strategic, traffic problem in the city, not only for today but also for our future. 30,000 car a day use this road and that number is growing very fast. Brockington Road is the only interstate exit in Sherwood on a major arterial that reaches into a huge commute area beyond the city. This street will get residents in Sherwood's growth area to the interstate the quickest. Traffic is only going to get worse. We must hope Brockington can be part of this \$35 million dollar bond issue.

For the record, the Country Club Road Project increase passed 7 to 1. In all honesty, when city council must rely on incomplete information given to them by the administration, some of it inaccurate like the hard deadline on the bond issue, you cannot blame the city council on this one. Please remember that one "No" vote if the city runs out of money without fixing Brockington Road. **MJHT**

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CITY WARDS TO BE REDRAWN AFTER 2020 CENSUS

With the 2020 Census in, it is time for Sherwood to look at ward redistricting. As stated in the City & Town Magazine, city councils in cities of the first class under the mayor-council form of government have a duty to ensure that "each ward has as nearly an equal population as would best serve the interest of the people of the city." From Ark. Code Ann. 14-44-311(1)(1)(B). The City Council has not seen the current break down of the population numbers. However, it is obvious that the two wards (areas of the city) that have grown the most would be Ward 4 (North Sherwood including the Gravel Ridge area) followed by

Ward 2 (east of Brockington & south of 67/167) Ward 3 (south central "Old" Sherwood) have the least growth.

At the October Council Meeting I asked when the city council will be addressing redistricting. The answer was that we should have some options to look at by next month's council meeting. I think it is fair to say that council members primarily will be looking to have balance in the Wards. Half of the Council will be up for re-election in 2022. Let's hope the redistricting is transparent and open to full public consideration and comment. **MJHT**

COUNTRY CLUB ROAD STREET CROSS SECTION DIAGRAM



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via email?



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