

# Mary Jo's Heye-lights

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## WORK STARTS ON FIRE STATION #4

### SHERWOOD FIRE DISTRICT STARTS PLUGGING HOLE IN COVERAGE

Ground has been officially broken for Sherwood's newest fire station on Rapid Water Drive just off Brockington. City officials gathered with the Sherwood Fire District Commissioners to turn shovelfuls of earth on January 4 on the site of the new Fire Station #4. This project represents the culmination of years of work by Sherwood Fire Commission to plug a long-standing weak spot in coverage in the northern Brockington Road area. The Commission purchased the land, hired an architect, prepared the site, and they are now going forward with the construction.

Fire Chief John Sawyer is very excited about this new station and how this will allow the fire department to be able to provide better response times and services. He said that much consideration went into the design of the fire station. They wanted to build a station that the city would be proud of and that would look appropriate for its surrounding area. It will also be a big improvement in living conditions for those that will be stationed there.

I have been a longtime advocate of this new station because of the distance the upper Brockington Road neighborhoods are to our (See FIRE STATION Page 2)

## Groundbreaking for the New Fire Station on Rapid Water



Local officials break ground on the new Fire Station #4: (left to right) Greg Williams of Nabholz Construction, Chief John Sawyer, Council Members Beverly Williams & Mary Jo Heye-Townsell, Mayor Virginia Young, Fire Commissioners Stephen Partridge, Mike Anderson, Chairman Tom Brooks, Linda George, and Elaine Jones

# Mary Jo's Heye-lights

**(FIRE STATION Continued from Page 1)** current fire stations. I campaigned on this huge need in my last election. Increasing traffic issues on Brockington Road have dramatically increased travel time to get to those neighborhoods. Of course, the congestion at rush hour can be deadly. As I stated in my last campaign, people do not realize that when there is a medical emergency, the fire department is typically the first medical assistance on the scene. For many medical emergencies, those seconds and minutes can be the difference in a favorable or unfavorable outcome. We not only have two nursing homes in this area, but also three senior dominated housing developments. Overwhelmingly, most of the senior housing for our city is in this area. And seniors are not the only ones who have emergency medical needs.

The next fire department project will be relocating and building a new Station 2. Station 2 is currently located near Wildwood Avenue on 505 Sherwood Avenue. This station should be moved a little north so as to improve response times by centering it more in its coverage area. The current facility is so old that continuing to pour money into just does not make sense. However, the building can be repurposed for vehicle storage for the police department. The police need a place to store their S.W.A.T vehicles and equipment. Although this building is no longer acceptable for living conditions for the firefighters, it is fine for vehicles and equipment.

Sherwood Fire Station 1 is located at 400 Lantrip Road. This is also where the fire district's administrative offices are located. Sherwood Fire Station 3 is located at 10205 Arkansas 107. The Gravel Ridge Fire District is still a separate fire district serving citizens and property in the northern areas of Sherwood. **MJHT**



**Sherwood Fire Station #1 and District Administrative Offices on Lantrip Road**



**Sherwood Fire Station #2 at 505 Sherwood Avenue**



**Sherwood Fire Station #3 at 10205 hwy. 107**

# Mary Jo's Heye-lights

## A Modest Proposal

### Create Improvement Funds for Each City Ward

At the December City Council Meeting, I suggested designating a small amount of money in the budget for projects in each ward to be determined by the city council members in those wards. I suggested \$100,000 per ward. This would be a very small portion of the budget and would not negatively impact the budget in any substantial way. These ward improvement monies would only be spent for public improvements of some kind on public property, and not for any private improvements on private property. This would enable the ward aldermen to make public improvements outside of the normal slow city bureaucracy.

This suggestion mimics successful practices in other cities such as North Little Rock. Examples of ward projects in North Little Rock this past year include building new sidewalks, adding a walking trail in a park, and fixing a localized drainage problem. These projects are small, but they represent a greater responsiveness to people's needs. These impact people's lives in important ways. Under the current system in Sherwood, the council can allocate funds, but ultimately the projects are determined solely by the administration, another level up and away from the people. As I said at the city council meeting, the two council members from each ward would have to work together to determine what project or projects could be accomplished and funded in their ward.

People typically run for city council because they want to make their city better. However, even city council member's voices are often ignored and administratively negated. An example of this is the Deerfield sidewalk. The city council approved the monies to build this sidewalk over two years ago. . For two years now, Kevin Lilly and I have asked about the status of this project, only to be told it is in engineering.

Do I think it is now currently in engineering? I hope so. Do I think for the past two years it has been in engineering? No. There is no way that it would take over two years to engineer a sidewalk. Was this a case of the money not being there? No, the money has been sitting there waiting. \$125,000 was in the budget for sidewalks in 2021, but only \$1,000 was spent. Is the government working for the people in this case? No, absolutely not!

I pushed hard for improvements at Indianhead Park. Were Kevin and I allowed to give any input? No. We are the ones that talked to the citizens and who knew what they were hoping for in that park, but in the end, it did not matter what the neighborhood needs or wishes were. Or Kevin's and my wishes for that matter. The administration did what they wanted to do.

By shutting out council members' opinions and wishes, and ignoring their voices, you are also shutting out the voices of the people they represent. This is the current situation in Sherwood and it is a shame. I truly believe in representative democracy and the importance of the government working on behalf of its citizens to improve their community and way of life. Is this the way our peer cities are operating? No. This is just the way our city is managed. We can do better. **MJHT**

**The Sherwood basketball program is no longer suspended.**

**Call 835-6893 for more information**



# Mary Jo's Heye-lights



## Sherwood Hires New Aquatics Director

Claire Bristow has been hired as Sherwood's new Aquatics Director. Claire spent her youth as an elite competitive swimmer for the Arkansas Dolphins and Little Rock Central High Swim Team. She was a scholarship athlete for OBU and transferred to UALR as a scholarship athlete. She began lifeguarding in high school and managed pools and taught lessons when she was in college. Upon graduation she accepted the Assistant Aquatics Director position in Searcy. She is also a USA certified coach and has coached for the Arkansas Dolphins, ATAC Swim Team, and Searcy Sharks. Welcome to Sherwood, Claire! **MJHT**



## City Ward Redistricting

Sherwood is in the process of redrawing the Ward boundaries, as mentioned in the last newsletter. For some folks this will mean their city council representative will change. The law requires that city council wards must be within 10% population of each other. That means whatever the new population of Sherwood is, divided by four, delivers a certain population number and each of the four wards must be within 5% of that number. Relatively equal ward population is important if you want each citizen's vote to count about the same as every other citizen's vote. As mentioned in the last newsletter, relatively equal wards equate to equal representation.

Ward 1 currently has 7,998 people, Ward 2 has 8,592 people, Ward 3 has 6,759 and Ward 4 has 9,382 people. Ward 1 is represented by April Broderick and Charlie Harmon. Ward 2 is represented by myself and Kevin Lilly. Ward 3 is represented by Beverly Williams and Marina Brooks. Ward 4 is represented by Tim McMinn and Mike Sanders.

Ward 2 increased by 5% of total population over the past decade and Ward 4 increased 14.65% in relation to the total population. In the last decade, Ward 1 decreased in percentage of total population by 2.26% and Ward 3 decreased by 17.4%. Ward 2 had growth in the Trammel Road area. Ward 4 had even bigger growth along Oakdale with Millers Glen along with new phases of Stone Hill, Millers Heights, Millers Garden, and Hidden Lakes subdivisions.

This is never a fun process. City council members never like losing areas that they represent and the people that they have come to know. This is my second time through this process and there will be some more unhappy than others. I have requested that we do not split up neighborhoods, if possible.

The City Attorney has been instructed to take the city council (See **REDRICTING ON Page 6**)

# Mary Jo's Heye-lights

## MULTI-FAMILY, MIXED USE, & GOOD PLANNING

At the December City Council meeting a zoning request to change a single-family property to multi-family (apartments) on west Kiehl was denied. This was a long, narrow piece of property in an already congested area.

Sherwood must be careful and strategic about rezoning for multi-family. We currently have some places like on Johnson Road that are currently zoned for multi-family that are no longer a good place for multi-family. We cannot change the zoning because it has a property right the city has granted when it zoned the property. In our property rights state, we would have to buy back that right priced very dearly. Further, we hear there are many places across the city being considered for multi-family. We will watch closely and judge accordingly.

What we do not have in Sherwood is higher end rentals like many other cities for higher income singles and people between houses. A young professional recently told me that they wanted to live in Sherwood, but could not find an apartment. They rented in North Little Rock.

*Publisher's note: good apartments depend on good management, in part. This makes it tricky because it is common for apartment complexes to get sold soon after they are developed. And if apartments are not well managed, they can spiral downward into something that is not needed or in demand. With vacancies, rental prices and maintenance start to decline. This leads to problems for the community..*

As a planning best practice, apartments should be located next to our busiest streets, such as Hwy. 67/167. You do not want a lot of multi-family located in the interior of your city because of traffic congestion. However, cities everywhere struggle to balance of

multi- and single-family housing.

On a recent tour of Northwest Arkansas, a city delegation was taken to several mixed-use projects which are being promoted by some in the administration. Mixed use projects put residential units together with commercial and office uses. On paper, this sounds great. What's not to like? Retail or office on the bottom, residential on top? All right together? However, how successful can this be in Sherwood? Mixed-use projects have been successful in urban downtown areas like Little Rock, North Little Rock, and, even to a degree, in Conway. They have been successful in Fayetteville and Bentonville where thriving downtowns are surrounded by an easily walkable residential grid of streets exists. Sherwood does not have that. At least not yet.

Mixed use projects are primarily found in areas with dense populations where land prices are at a premium. Why build up when land is available to build out? Mixed-use facilities flourish where the walking public can access them like in a true downtown and without having to drive door to door like in suburban areas. And mixed-use projects cannot front on four-lane roads like Kiehl Avenue. Of course, the current retail climate is a major obstacle for the success of mixed-use developments right now.

Sherwood must be careful about mixed-use developments when under "sheep's clothing Multi-family comes along. We cannot let "mixed-use" be a subterfuge for unnecessary multi-family. We allowed one mixed-use project recently. We should wait & see how it works before we start allowing more.



# Mary Jo's Heye-lights

## CITY SEEKS MORE COMMUNITY INPUT ON PARKS

Yay! You have another chance to make a difference in our parks system. You will again be asked to help our city develop a better vision of what our community wants for parks.

Sherwood has been engaged in a new parks & recreation study with Crafton Tull for many months now. It was announced at the Parks Committee meeting on January 10<sup>th</sup> there will be a new community parks survey to get more public input. It was suggested to mail out a postcard to all residents with a QR code that would open the survey. I brought up the problems with the last survey and was assured that this new survey would not kick people out like the last one.

It is important to get more community input. I will make sure that you will be made aware of this survey. Please, when it comes out, take the time to answer it. If you cannot open the survey, let me know. I will try to find a way for you to take the survey. Our parks need to be more reflective of the Sherwood Community. Please participate. Be specific, be broad, and be bold! MJHT

## REDISTRICTING

(REDISTRICTING Continued from Page 4) members' comments and requests to the staff GIS specialist who will consolidate the suggestions into new draft maps to present updated options to the city council. The process to set new ward boundaries will move quickly now and should be decided soon.

For me, it does not matter where a person lives. When making a decision, we should always be looking at what is best for the city overall. However, ward boundaries can determine who runs for which seat on the city council. Perfect world aside, who represents you matters. Some people will only looking out for themselves or what is best for their Ward or some other purpose to the detriment of the rest of the city. MJHT



The City of Sherwood is not known for its beautiful, well designed fire stations. They tend to be more utilitarian in nature as metal buildings with sheet metal siding. The architectural rendering of the new Station #4 is distinctly a move away from that approach. Chairman Tom Brooks and Chief John Sawyer have deliberately tried to upgrade the design of this station to make it a community asset. From the architectural rendering above, the Sherwood Fire District Commission has certainly put that intention in action. Well Done.

*Thank You, Sherwood Fire District Commission*

City of Sherwood  
Offices will be closed  
January 17, 2022 for  
Martin Luther King  
Jr. Day.

# Mary Jo's Heye-lights

## A Promise Fulfilled: Mary Jo's Heye-lights Gets Sherwood News to Our Citizens

One of my most important promises when I ran for office was to produce this newsletter. I feel that an informed citizenry is a more engaged citizenry. This makes Sherwood a stronger community. I also feel it is important to be transparent and explain how I feel about issues facing the city. This is my 15<sup>th</sup> issue of the newsletter. It has been a lot of work, but I do feel like it is important to communicate to our citizens as a city council representative.

I have and will continue to promote sidewalks. I feel like this is a quality-of-life issue for our citizens. Everyone in this city should be able to safely walk in their neighborhoods and along city streets. I think we should be actively building sidewalks throughout the city as a priority.

I have and will continue to encourage Sherwood to be a bike friendly community with trails and bike lanes. When I first got on the Council in 2010 and spoke about the importance bike lanes, most of the Council and the administration didn't give them much credence. Biking has since become mainstream and these long overdue ideas are finally taking hold. Even those resistant to these ideas are realizing just how behind we now are and are beginning to take the first steps in that direction.

I will continue talking about the need for better, more creative parks and facilities, as well as looking for opportunities to beautify our city. I hear and agree with the concerns of the citizens about how disappointing the city streets and common areas look and are not representative of a community with so much pride of ownership and beautiful neighborhoods.

I will continue to speak about the need to be thinking strategically with long term planning and development. We have missed so many opportunities and created problems that could have been avoided if this city would have embraced city planning a long time ago. I wish I could get rid of the "It is what it is" attitude in which our city operates. However, this is just not possible as a City Council



Member. The fact of the matter is that this administration sets the current culture of the city government and I truly believe that is not what the majority of citizens Sherwood now desires.

Are things like sidewalks, bike/ped paths, better parks, and strategic planning critical to making a good city? No. Police, fire, garbage pickup and sewer are critical to making a good city. And Sherwood does these things well and needs to continue to in the future. However, all cities are expected to do these things. What makes a city great are these other things; things that increase a community's quality of place beyond what is normally expected and raise the quality of life for all its residents. These things are what make a community special and give it a better future among the best cities.

I still believe that Sherwood has so much potential. I believe it is possible to change course so that Sherwood can have a grander future. I will be writing more about this in upcoming issues. Thank you faithful reader. MJHT

**Please email this newsletter to  
friends and encourage them to  
sign-up at  
[maryjoheye@gmail.com](mailto:maryjoheye@gmail.com)**