

# Mary Jo's Heye-lights

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## FUNDING APPROVED FOR COUNTRY CLUB & HEMPHILL PROJECTS

The Sherwood City Council at its April meeting approved seeking bids for the Country Club Road drainage & widening project and the Hemphill Road extension & widening project. Both projects are to be funded by the three-quarter (3/4) cent sales tax and bond issue approved by Sherwood for capital street & drainage projects in June 2018. The city council's authorization essentially endorsed the administration's designs for both projects. \$4.69 million is the estimated cost of the Country Club project and estimated cost of Hemphill project is \$2.83 million dollars. The mayor is authorized to award the bid to the low qualified bidder provided the winning bid is no more than 25% higher than the preliminary estimate.

The Country Club Road improvement was needed to address drainage issues and not for additional traffic capacity. Traffic counts have been stable on Country Club for decades. However, the drainage problems that have only gotten worse over the years especially between North Hills and Beverly. I questioned if there were street drainage problems between Beverly and Beaconsfield. Council Member Williams stated there are and that this road is only passable by a width of one lane in a heavy rain. The street cross section will remain two travel lanes with only very minor street widening and improvements to the sidewalks.

The Country Club Road project does not address the sewage problems that you may have seen on social media. These improvements address the street drainage problems by improving the storm sewer. The sanitary sewer is a separate system.

The Hemphill Street project has been a more controversial project. This project involves extending and widening (See **HEMPHILL Pg. 2**)

# Mary Jo's Heye-lights

(HEMPHILL Continued from Pg. 1) a narrow, existing street through a relatively sleepy neighborhood. In all fairness, this does require an explanation. The Hemphill Street connection to Maryland has been on the city's Master Street Plan as a designated a Collector street since 1978. The reasoning behind the extension and widening at this time is the connection's value in creating an alternate route from Maryland Avenue to the Kiehl Avenue for residents in Central Sherwood north of Kiehl. Currently, the only major connecting route south for the area between Hwy. 107 and Brockington Road, a distance of 2.5 miles, is Oakbrooke Dr. Additionally, by connecting directly to Lantrip Road across Kiehl, the Hemphill Road connection provides a direct route to the freeway as well. This freeway connection will reduce some of the future growth in traffic congestion on Brockington, already carrying over 24,000 cars a day, by giving residents of the Stone Hill Subdivision area the option of bypassing Brockington altogether. As the City of Sherwood is growing well past a population of 30,000 people, with greater traffic counts coming south to the freeway with every new house built in its northern reaches, each possible street connection can make a difference.

However, this decision has not made the neighborhood happy. Several residents either did not know about the street's Collector status and its possible extension or did not think it would ever actually happen. They were horrified by the prospect of more traffic and the substantially wider street. (Continued above)

The neighborhood balked at this large of a street because of the loss of so much front yard and more critically, the possible loss of the ability to park two cars end-to-end in their driveways. Since they felt like they might not have enough room to park multiple vehicles in their driveways, they strongly wanted parking on the street.

The city administration, in due consideration of the narrowness of the existing street and front yards, offered the area residents the option of whether the road would be 32 feet with parking but less front yard or 27 feet with no parking and more front yard. (See STREET WIDTH Pg. 3)



# Mary Jo's Heye-lights

**(STREET WIDTH** Continued from Pg 2)

The administration had already taken the 36-foot-wide street off the table.

The majority of residents voiced that they preferred the 32-foot-wide street with parking. Unfortunately, at this time, they did not know that the parking issue may not be in the city's hands. The Fire Marshall issued a letter to the city that basically stated that they needed 26 feet of uninterrupted space to get their different emergency vehicles through safely and in a timely manner. Since cars are slightly over six feet wide on average, a 32-foot-wide street would at best barely pass this test and then only if cars were parked on one side only, right against the curb. If cars were parked on both sides of the street, there would not be enough room. This could result in a Fire Marshall's order that parking be on one side only or that it be completely prohibited on either side. The Fire Marhsall doesn't work for the city and does not answer to the mayor or city council. This decision would be totally his call. My fellow City Councilman Kevin Lilly and I were concerned and expressed to the City (**ABOVE**)



Utility Relocation work has started on Country Club

Engineer that the residents did not realize this. We were assured that they would be informed. They were informed shortly before the April's council meeting. However, the city had already made the decision to present the 32 foot option to the city council. The administration had involved the neighborhood and this is why the street size was changed from 36 to 32. However, if it had been left as 36 then parking would not be an issue. Unfortunately, the city's and the residents' attempt to find a workable compromise on this issue may backfire. Its up to the Fire Marshall who will probably take a wait-and-see approach until the new street is opened to see how the parking affects the emergency vehicles.

This is an issue where not everyone will be happy with the outcome. The opening of the new connection is hated by some, but will be welcomed by others. Some in the neighborhood did not want parking on the street at all, while others view it as a necessity for their larger families. The decision by staff was a compromise with a nod to the neighborhood. The street will be 32 feet wide with a separated sidewalk on one side only and on-street parking - for now. What will happen with parking? Only time will tell. If it obstructs the flow of traffic and causes delays of emergency response, it could end. We, too, will have to wait and see.

My hope is that the street improvements will improve drainage, safety and property values. With narrow streets and drop off ditches, this is a dangerous area for pedestrians and bicyclists. Hopefully this will be the beginning of more improvements for this area that has been long neglected. **MJHT**



# Mary Jo's Heye-lights

## Street Overlay Program for 2021

The Public Works Director, Brian Galloway, announced at the Street Committee the plans for street overlay for this year. The priority project that will take up a substantial amount of the overall overlay monies is Brockington Road. The other streets selected for overlays, budget permitting, are Hidden Creek, Rocky Creek, Loop Road (the portion that belongs to Sherwood), DJ Hudson, Reeves, Stalnaker, Brighton, Brighton Ct., and Birnham. The Public Works Department decides which streets get overlaid each year. If your street is in need of an overlay, you can call and request consideration for 2022 at Sherwood Public Works 501-835-3288. **MJHT**



## Engineering Approved for New Roundabout

The City Council approved the funding for the design of a roundabout Oakbrook and Maryland. One of the benefits of roundabouts in neighborhoods is they effectively calm traffic. In other words, they slow traffic down. Further, they are more efficient in moving traffic than a four-way stop. At least that's what my husband tells me – he does have a little bit of history with them. **MJHT**



*Before & after photograph of crepe myrtle tree trunks during the cleaning process. Households detergents and elbow grease produces great results*

## Got Dark Crepe Myrtle Trunks?

A lot of people in Sherwood are dealing with their Crepe Myrtles suffering from bark scale. **Crape Myrtle Bark Scale** is a small insect that appears as a white or gray felt-like encrustation. The scale sucks the sap from the branches and tree trunks. Frequently, the first sign you may see is the black discoloration on the tree **bark**. The **black** is caused by a saprophytic fungus called **black sooty mold** that grows on the sugary exudate that is excreted from the scale insects. Black sooty mold and scale does not always kill the trees. However, it can weaken the tree and affect the tree's ability to bloom.

According to articles found online and from talking to several local nurseries all is not lost. The first recommendation is to scrub the branches and trunks with soapy water (I used Dawn dishwashing detergent) and a medium to soft brush to remove as much of the mold as possible. For the record, this was not a pleasant chore. Then, it is important to apply a systemic insect control. This is usually a liquid that can be poured within the drip line of the tree. This treatment can last up to two seasons; however, it needs to be applied before the tree flowers. In other words, you better get busy. **MJHT**

# Mary Jo's Heye-lights

## Sewer System Rehabilitation

You may have seen on the news or online video showing sewage bubbling up through a manhole in the backyard of the Cummings family. This is near the First Baptist Church on Country Club in the southern region of the city during high rain fall events. This is due to infiltration of the system of the storm water. The sewage (waste water) in this area get their service from North Little Rock. However, the collection systems in Sherwood for both the satellite system (North Little Rock) and Sherwood's South Plant are under the jurisdiction of the city of Sherwood.

The Sherwood Wastewater Utility prepared and submitted to the ADEQ (Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality) a corrective plan. This plan had included creating a video record of the sewer mains in the collection system of both the South Plant and the satellite system's Sherwood Collection System as well as cleaning out areas as needed. This has been done and, based on this information, a Sewer System Rehabilitation Plan has been established for those areas that were identified as needing repair. The city authorized the expenditure of \$144,000 for the engineering of 18 different areas of repair. Council Member Kevin Lilly asked if this would include the home mentioned above and it was confirmed that this line was a priority. MJHT

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## Fun Gardening Tip

*Have you ever heard of using coffee grounds as a fertilizer in your garden? Like with anything, too much is a bad thing and some plants do not like it like roses. However, acid-loving plants like azaleas, gardenias, camellias, and hydrangeas can really benefit. It is used by mixing it into the soil. Do some research and see if this is something that would be beneficial for your plants.* MJHT



## HOME BASED BUSINESSES NOW LEGAL BUT REGULATED

Home based businesses have become a hot topic as a result of the pandemic on both the state and local level. This had been something not "allowed" by the city even though it was happening. The reality is that more people are working from home. Some examples of home occupations are dressmaking or apparel alterations, bookkeeping services, instruction or tutoring, studios where handicrafts or objects of art are created, residential childcare (up to five), etc. The City Council's action means home based business are now legal. However, there are rules:

- \* The business cannot employ a non-resident
- \* It cannot have more than one commercial vehicle
- \* No parked vehicle can serve as advertising
- \* It cannot use an accessory building, yard space, or an activity outside the main structure not normally associated with residential use
- \* No outside storage of equipment or materials visible from the street
- \* It may not alter the external appearance of the home
- \* It may not create noise, vibration, glare, fumes, odors, air pollution, or electromagnetic interference
- \* No hazardous materials
- \* No signage other than authorized by a sign permit
- \* No dumpsters

If you want to review the rules pertaining to home occupation you can review ordinance # 2361 on the city website. MJHT

# Mary Jo's Heye-lights

## Waste Water Consolidation Study

A waste water consolidation study was approved for evaluate the opportunity to share resources of the Sherwood, Runyan Acres, and Gravel Ridge Sewer Improvement Districts. A meeting was conducted on December 17, 2020, at the Sherwood City Council Chambers among representatives of these Districts. They discussed the opportunity to combine or merge facets of the wastewater utilities for the common good of the constituents they serve. The scope of this study will include a collection system evaluation including both gravity and pressure systems, evaluate and recommend where existing collection systems could benefit by expanded partnership utilizing infrastructure between entities including but not limited to combining or eliminating existing pump stations, capital improvements needed to expand service boundaries, identify capital improvements needed for all existing systems for all the Districts.

Why is this potentially important? In order for Sherwood to be able to continue to grow, sewage service is going to need to be extended to lands in the northern part of the city. However, these areas are not under Sherwood's control and it is too far to these new areas to make economic sense for city sewer. The costs to make the improvements to serve these new areas may also be economically prohibitive for these smaller districts which must spread that cost over a smaller number of rate payers versus a much larger city sewer customer base. This is why a complete evaluation is needed in order to make a decision. MJHT

## Editorial: DECISIONS in the DARK

**As a City Council member, it is frustrating that the *FULL* City Council does not get to discuss the street designs before the city spends big monies on the engineering.**

**Is this how all cities operate? No, but this is how Sherwood operates under this administration. Only fully designed projects are brought before the *FULL* city council for approval. Lock, stock and barrel.**

**By not being previously consulted, the City Council members are then put in a position to authorize funds on a design on which we did not contribute input and have not discussed. Further, by that time, if we vote no, then the monies spent on that engineering would be wasted. The project would have to be re-engineered.**

**These projects also have time constraints and, if we vote no, we are putting the city in jeopardy of penalties for not fulfilling the time constraints of the bonds under which they are funded. This could cost the city money. That puts the city council between a rock and a hard place.**

**This process also separates the citizens further from giving real input impacting decisions about these very expensive projects they voted on and are paying for. This exclusion occurs when their elected representatives are excluded from giving substantial, real time input on design decisions made in the dark.**

**In return to an old theme, this is where transparent government should be showing itself, but it is not! MJHT**

# Mary Jo's Heye-lights

