

Mary Jo's Heye-lights

NOVEMBER 2019
Issue 03

Mary Jo Heye

City Council Ward 2 Position 1
501-960-0622
maryjohey@gmail.com
1800 Kristen Ct., 72120



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

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

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

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

Budget Hearings Big Tent or Small Tent?

Transparency and inclusiveness are extremely important in the conduct of public affairs. I have always fought for this and will continue in the future. In this light, the city's "Budget Committee" deserve closer attention. This committee (really a mayoral advisory group) is made up of City Council members, one from each Ward, chosen by the Mayor. In the past, this group's meetings were held in the Mayor's Office, usually on a business day at 2 pm. There was barely enough room for the committee to sit around a table with the department heads in chairs scattered through the room. The only people who got to vote about budget decisions and details were the four committee members at the table.

Other council members were allowed to attend but they had no vote and thus no voice. If you were on the Committee and could not attend due to work or another commitment, then there was no representation from the Ward. There was also no room for those in the public to attend. The announcement of the meeting, although it did meet the letter of the law, did not give the public enough notice to adjust their schedules to be able to even attempt to attend. These budget deliberations were only known and available to those that could attend since there were no minutes or recordings available. This budget was then submitted to the City Council to be passed under the pressure of a deadline. Debate and hearings were discouraged at this point. Details of the budget weren't given, such as what purchases were authorized under Capital Disbursements in the 2019 Budget totaling over \$2 million or 9% of the budget. You had to attend the "budget meeting" to get this information.

Is this situation unique to Sherwood? ABSOLUTELY! In the other cities, these meetings are held before the City Council Meeting and all members of the City Council are given ALL the information and all have an equal voice, not a select group. These special workshop/meetings are announced weeks in advance and are held in the council chambers where they are not only recorded but also video. The public is welcome.

In the history of Sherwood, it was not always done this way. The current format began under Mayor Harmon and continued under Mayor Young (*See BUDGET Page 3*)

Mary Jo's Heye-lights

October 2019 City Council Synopsis

Regarding the zoning and planning items taken up by the City Council, the U-Haul C-4 zoning was approved for the parcels including and beside the current U-Haul business on Powhatan and Warden Road off the Kiehl exit. U-Haul will be expanding their business. This passed 6 to 2 and was sponsored by the Mayor.

No action was taken on the conditional use zoning for 9121 Jacksonville Cato Road. This is the land purchased by the city to be the new site of the city's Physical Plant. This land currently is not zoned for that use and would need rezoning. The city administration made this rezoning request of the Planning Commission and the City Council a few months ago. After the owners of the property adjacent to this site spoke about the potential devaluation of their property and their quality of life, I made a statement that I agree that Public Works needs to be moved allowing the Animal Shelter to expand. However, I am not sure that this was the best place to locate it. This was the only option presented to the City Council by the Mayor and the Public Works Director. We were informed that they had looked around and this was the best possibility. This is why we originally agreed to purchase the property. However, in the proposed 2040 Master Plan for Sherwood, it shows that area as strictly residential. I stated that at the very least, we do not need to do anything about moving the facility until the street improvements on Jacksonville Cato have been completed since this road floods and the hairpin curves that currently exist are potentially dangerous. No one made a motion thus no additional action on this item sponsored by the Mayor was taken. It will come up for a second reading in December.

Monies were moved around within the street budget to fund additional street overlays. The city has undertaken a broader overlay program this year. The Roundtop area was one mentioned that was in exceptionally bad condition. This was passed unanimously and was sponsored by City Council Member Kevin Lilly.

(See CITY COUNCIL next column)

(CITY COUNCIL Continued from Previous Column)

Council Member Williams sponsored changes to an existing ordinance that would now include regulating the vehicles on all city rights-of-way. This amended Ordinance 1952 that only pertained to vehicles on the actual streets that were creating traffic hazards or obstructions. This came about because of some problems related to people parking in the grass by the street on a hill that obstruct the view of cars coming down the street when people are pulling out of their driveways. This passed unanimously.

A resolution clarifying the Sherwood Retirement Board to the Sherwood Retirement Committee was sponsored by the Mayor and passed unanimously. This was already a committee not a board so the language needed to be cleared up.

An ordinance I sponsored establishing the Sherwood City Council sitting as a committee-of-the-whole as the Budget Committee for the city was Sherwood was read for the first time and no action was taken on this motion. *(Please see the article about this ordinance.)*

The Economic Development Director announced that Holiday Inn Express is coming to Sherwood off the Wildwood exit. This is in large part to the St. Vincent Neuro Center.



Remember as you battle those falling leaves, please do not place the piles in the streets, gutters, or covering the sidewalks. Keep them close to the curb for vacuum pick up.

Mary Jo's Heye-lights

(BUDGET Continued from Page 1)

The excuse given for continuing this through Mayor Young's tenure has been...it was done this way under Mayor Harmon. My Mother always said, "Two wrongs do not make a right."

How are Committees established in Sherwood? Committees are established by ordinance. The current "Budget Committee" has not been created by ordinance like all other committees. Therefore, I submitted an ordinance that would establish a Budget Committee of the Whole including the entire City Council. This new Budget Committee would meet in open Council Chambers no earlier than 5 pm as necessary. As always, these meeting would be open to the public and recorded for viewing online.

The Mayor's job, by State Statue, is to present the City Council with a balance budget by December 1st for their consideration. Our job as a City Council, by state statute, is to pass a budget by February 1st each year. In other words, as we consider the submitted budget, the City Council can pass it, alter it, or even create a new budget. This new Budget Committee would not take effect until the Mayor had submitted the draft budget. Therefore, in no way does this interfere with the statutory obligation of the Mayor to submit a draft budget to the council. This ordinance merely changes the procedure so that all council members are involved and have an equal voice in the budget review process. It would also open the annual budget process up to public review and input. I made a statement that we have all been elected by the people in the same manner. This is not just our money but all the citizens' monies and they have a right to know how and why it is being spent the way it is.

If you would like to see these changes take place, *please reach out to all the City Council Members listed through email and let your opinion and voice be heard before November 25th.*

Would You Like More Police Officers Living in Sherwood?

July 2018 at a Mid-Year Budget Meeting in the Mayor's Office, I suggested creating a positive incentive for our police officers to live in Sherwood. I have a degree in economics and look at things through a cost/ benefit efficiency lens. Our officers have a right to live were they choose and many live outside the city. What if we incentivize officers to live inside Sherwood? We already kind of subsidize them living *outside* the city. Let me explain:

The administration decided to allow police officers to drive their cars home. The Police Chief stated this policy is not unusual around the state. The gas, tires, and maintenance is paid by the city. This allowance is free to the officer anywhere inside Pulaski County. If a police officer lives outside of Pulaski County, they have to pay \$100 a month for the privilege to drive their police car to and from work no matter where they live and how far away it is.

Police cars are expensive because they are not like buying just a normal vehicle. They are built more robustly and still are typically replaced more frequently than a normal vehicle. In 2017, Sherwood spent \$225,622 on Police Car Expense plus 179,367 on Maintenance Contract. In 2018, it went up to \$263,000 for Police Car Expense and 171,000 for Maintenance Contract. Up again in 2019, these items were \$280,000 and \$175,266 respectively. This is a significant expense with, if measured by miles, a noticeable portion used outside the city.

Given this information, why not give a financial incentive to live in Sherwood? This is less gas, less wear and tear on the vehicles thus, extending the life of the vehicle. It also makes our community safer to have police officers – and their **(See POLICE Page 4)**

Mary Jo's Heye-lights

Indianhead Park

I have requested through the Parks Department new playground equipment for the Indianhead Parks. The Parks Director, Sonny Jenson, agreed at the Parks Committee Meeting that this park needs attention. Sonny stated that he would go to the A & P Commission, that has had a dramatic increase in their revenue due to the increase in restaurants in Sherwood, for the funds. Hopefully, we will find out soon if the funding will come through.

Parks are more than just play areas for children. They are gathering places and community builders. They are places for neighbors to meet, friendships to form, and memories to make.

Now we need sidewalks so that they can safely get there!

(POLICE Continued from Page 3)

police cars - living in our community rather than some other community. These officers would be investing in our community, shopping in our stores, etc. I think that it could be a wash expense-wise when you look at less gas, tires, maintenance, and extending the life of these expensive vehicles. Maybe for an additional \$50 or \$100 a month, an officer would look at calling Sherwood home instead of another community. Right now we are actually giving an unintentional incentive to live elsewhere.

I will bring forth this idea again at budget time. Let me know what do you think? maryjoheye@gmail.com

REMINDER....

As we approach the 2020 budget time, it is important to make your opinions be heard. Each of the City Council Members' and the Mayor's contact information are listed on the front page of each newsletter for your convenience. Always remember that your voice is impactful.



TENNIS CENTER



Coming Soon...The new Tennis Center is on track to open early Spring 2020!

