

# Mary Jo's Heye-lights

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## Mary Jo Heye-Townsell

City Council Ward 2, Position 1  
501-960-0622  
maryjoheye@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

## SHERWOOD JOINS THE PELOTON\*

Metroplan, the transportation planning agency for Central Arkansas, has dedicated itself to development of a regional bike/pedestrian greenway in its four-county footprint. Further, it has pledged half of its federal funding for the next decade, a projected \$55 million dollars, towards its development. Not to be left behind, and after long advocacy on my part, Sherwood has also determined to create a Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan to serve its citizenry and to integrate a future city system into the larger regional greenways plan.

Regional greenways have become a huge quality-of-life amenity around the nation. They greatly strengthen the lifestyle choices in regions by immediately appealing to all ages and abilities. Being an unstructured activity, use of greenways are available any time for any schedule. Business folks in popular bicycling regions speak of the economic benefits from these public investments, regarding business opportunities and culture, they generate. Employers also follow possible employees who seek lifestyle and culture over staid business locations. Bicycle culture creates economic development, in other words.

The success of the Arkansas River Trail and the Big Dam Bridge locally and the Razorback Greenway in Northwest Arkansas are testaments to this appeal.

**But why should you have to drive to enjoy?** These efforts will combine to help Sherwood bring those benefits directly to our city.

Both planning efforts are seeking input right now. To participate in Metroplan's *Central Arkansas Regional Greenways Survey*, go to the following link: [www.centralarkgreenways.com](http://www.centralarkgreenways.com)

To participate in the Sherwood BikePed Survey, go to the following link: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/SherwoodBikePed1](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SherwoodBikePed1)

\* "Peloton" is defined as "the main group or pack of riders in a bike race." Think Tour de France. It just seemed like an appropriate way to say Sherwood is joining the regional group effort. It was a little joke, probably smaller than I thought

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## **WHY I ADVOCATE FOR BIKE& PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES**

I am a runner. Or, I was until my doctor said no more. Then I became a bicyclist. I have run a full marathon, a number of halves, 10Ks & 5Ks. I have even participated in triathlons. After picking up biking, I have ridden all over the city and north part of the county. I have ridden the full 100 Mile Big Dam Bridge Ride. I even spent Labor Day weekend last year with my new husband, Tab Townsell, Executive Director of Metroplan, riding the Razorback Greenway in Northwest Arkansas, from stem to stern and back.

I understand the need for transportation options, the economic and life style opportunities these options generate, and I know that our citizens would enjoy these amenities (necessities, in many cases) just as much. I am also a Registered Nurse who knows the health benefits an active lifestyle can bring. With its demographics, community safety, and proximity to existing biking assets along the river, Sherwood is perfectly set to take advantage of the efforts towards a regional greenway system, if we give it the necessary push to start.

Personally, I take great pride in my long-standing advocacy of increased bicycling opportunities and more sidewalks in Sherwood. I am a persistent voice for annual funding in the city budget to build more sidewalks and drafted the ordinance to establish a fair, citywide, scoring system to choose which sidewalks get constructed. More needs to be done to build sidewalks, but so far this has not been a priority for this administration.

The powerline bike/ped path I advocated in my last campaign and asked the city GIS folks to map two years ago, for which the city applied and received a Metroplan engineering grant last year, would be part of the city plan and could possibly be part of the regional greenways plan when built.

I am glad that biking and pedestrian improvements seem to be an interest of the city. It needs to be a priority for the future. It needs leadership to champion it.



## *Gone Fishing*

**Don't Have a Rod?**

**Rods & Reels & Bait are available for  
check out at the Harmon Center**

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## GOLF COURSE BONDS REFINANCED

### Lower Interest & Shorter Term Saves Money

At the June City Council Meeting, the council took action to refund the existing golf course bonds and reissue new bonds at 1.75% with a maturity date (term) of March 1, 2033. This represented both a significant drop in both the interest rate and the term. The gross cash savings to the city is \$925,000 over the remaining life of the bond issue with a net present value benefit of \$628,000.

The city purchased the golf course known as the Greens in 2008 for \$5 million plus fees. This controversial purchase generated a lot of attorney fees for several reasons including a court case that ended up with a settlement. To make this large purchase the city received interim financing in the form of a bank note from Twin Cities for \$6.1 million at 6% interest.

In 2010, the City issued bonds as a source financing which paid off the bank note plus \$1.3 million in new capital improvement funds for projects such as irrigation system improvements and new cart paths. The new interest rate was lower at 4.8% with a term until 2040.

In 2016 the council voted to refinance the bonds to the lower rate and decreased the term, saving the city money. The true interest cost was decreased to 3.32% and term shortened to 2038. ( Next Column )

The bonds are paid through the franchise fees that we primarily receive from North Little Rock Electric. The franchise fee is 4% for all utility companies. However, North Little Rock Electric agreed to pay around \$480,000 per year as a supplement for 20 years. This contract was signed in 2012.

In 2020, the city collected \$2,097,000 in total franchise fees. The city paid \$392,048 in golf course bond payments. The city then transferred \$1,633,000 from franchise fees to the General Fund. The General Fund covers many of the salaries and operations of the city including the police department. Obviously, the sooner that we can get these bonds paid off then the sooner that we can use these moneys for other things.



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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPER COLLEEN CARR SAYS GOODBYE



Colleen Carr, Sherwood's Director of Economic Development, has accepted a position in the Economic Development Office in North Little Rock. Ms. Carr began working in economic development for the city of Sherwood in January 2018. Previously, she had worked for the North Little Rock Chamber of Commerce.

I sat down with Ms. Carr to get some insight about the city from her perspective. I asked what accomplishment she was most proud of. Her response was connecting the left hand to the right hand. She said what she means by this is being a conduit between businesses and business developers and the city. She stated that she was proud of building bridges to solve problems internally as well as with businesses and/or developers.

She also felt like one of the most productive things was the city hiring of Market Strategies, a business recruitment firm. Market Strategies gets us in front of many businesses that can be difficult to get an audience with. She said that it was through Market Strategies that we were able to get a Tropical Smoothies, for example. Hopefully, even more interesting national restaurant and lifestyle chains will announce in the near future, she teased.

I asked why we struggle in Sherwood with getting restaurants, retail, etc. She feels that

often we are looked at as a secondary market. We sit side by side with larger, more commercial North Little Rock becoming part of that city's "market," so to speak. However, once that city's retail/restaurant holes are filled then we should get more attention. For example, Chick-fil-a Corporate is expanding in North Little Rock by opening up a new store concept, Chicken Salad Chick, in The Other Center (across from McCain Mall, behind McDonalds). She said that those holes will eventually fill, but it will take time. She also said that when Chick-fil-a wanted to open up a new "regular" store, they leapfrogged Sherwood to Cabot because they did not have a store in the broader Cabot area. They felt Sherwood was too close to North Little Rock, thus the skip to Cabot offered the regional area better coverage. While it looks like the city must play a long game, a factor for change is continued population growth in Sherwood. A larger population creates a bigger and more visible market. Remember, North Little Rock and Cabot are part of our market too. It goes both ways.

When asked about the food desert in the northern part of our city. Ms. Carr stated that she has reached out to all the different grocery stores. She said major developers like the Ashley Company and Metropolitan Realty have also been reaching out to them. These developers (DEVELOPMENT Page 6)

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## JUNE STREET COMMITTEE

Ms. Madonna Hinchey came to the Committee to request a three way stop sign at Summit and Glenhaven. This was granted due to the unusual circumstances of this situation. This street is adjacent to a park with no sidewalks, narrow street with drop off ditches, the police stated that there is not a good radar place, and a long history of problems with speeding on Summit. All other measures, such as putting the speed limit on the street, have been exhausted. Following this meeting, the Public Works Director quickly got a stop sign installed with a streetlight on adjacent to a utility pole so that the sign would be more visible at night. Ms. Hinchey reported that this has made a big difference.

Council Member Kevin Lilly requested a No Outlet sign on Merriwood Ct. and it was approved. Council Member Lilly also brought up the ongoing drainage problems at 8210 and 8214 Holiday. He requested that the city see if anything could be done. The Public Works Director stated that this has been looked at and there is not an easy fix. Council Member Lilly requested that this be looked into further.

There will also be a 14-foot bike ped path on the new Jacksonville Cato Road and a sidewalk on the other side. It was also recommended from the committee to include three pedestrian crossings on this street that will be below grade as passageways below the street. I had spoken strongly in support of this after not only having experienced below street passageways as a cyclist and pedestrian in North Little Rock,



Conway, and throughout the Razorback greenbelt in the Northwest Arkansas area but also after talking to city officials in these communities and doing the research. Bike/ped underpasses could not have been more strongly recommended by the communities that have them. I brought underpasses to the attention of the Street Committee along with the City Engineer several months ago. to look at as part of the design of this street. This street will have housing developments down both sides with two schools on it. The final approval for the design will need to be given by the City Council. However, they will be included in the design. The City Engineer has done a great job on directing the design of this road making it modern with the standards that we are seeing in the more forward-thinking communities of our state.

Council Member Lilly asked for an update on Indianhead and Laramie drainage problems. The City Engineer stated the FTN Engineering was studying this area and Whitewood.

Public Works reported that there are positions available in street, drainage, and sanitation. The overlay projects for this year are moving forward with the contract being awarded to Cranford and Contractor Specialty. Brockington Road is the priority.

There was no Street Committee in July.

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## STREET IMPROVEMENT REPORT

Richard Penn, Sherwood City Engineer, reported on the various bond issues projects and other street work at the June meeting of the Street Committee.

- E. Maryland Widening- Contractor is now onsite. Comcast is moving their lines. AT&T will “cut over” their fiber in mid-July. Full construction activity expected by August 1,2021. Construction materials are already being stockpiled onsite.
- E. Maryland Extension - Clearing of trees of city's portion is 100%.
- Country Club Road Improvements - AT&T and CAW are working on line relocation. This is going to be a long process so please be patient.
- Hemphill Road Improvements-Temporary construction asements are being acquired. Advertising for bids will take place in mid-summer.
- Jacksonville-Cato Road Improvements- This project will be in two phases. The first phase will be from Cato Elementary to Mr. Jerry Rider's property. All utilities have been notified and moved by end of the summer or early fall. The engineering designs are 50-60% completed.
- Oakbrooke roundabout engineering & design work is underway. This is being paid for by a Metroplan grant that Penn hopes will lead to a full construction grant..



(DEVEOPMENT Continued from Page 4) developers have large plots on Brockington and desperately need an anchor. The issue always seems to come back to alcohol sales in grocery stores. Most of those large undeveloped parcels in Northern Sherwood are still in the township that prohibits grocery stores from selling beer & wine. Just look at recent remodels of Kroger's and the Walmart Super Center to see amount of new space devoted to wine and beer sales. If an entire town is dry like Conway, then it isn't as critical. However, if you have to compete with a nearby store that can sell beer and wine, then you are reluctant to invest. On top of that, large box stores, including grocery stores, are being very cautious right now with new investments. Online retail is thriving but brick and mortar is struggling. Construction prices are not helping either. In short, there is more to be done at the political level to help this along.

Going forward, Ms. Carr's advice was that we have to focus of quality-of-life issues. Small town thinking, although it can be charming, can hold us back. *Sherwood is already over 30,000 people. What kind of 50,000-person city does Sherwood want to be?* But don't give up hope! Exciting, new store announcements may be just around the corner, smiled Ms. Carr.

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## AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

This year the After School Program will be partnering with Arkansas Game and Fish to bring some exciting new learning experiences for the kids. They will be giving the kids instruction in areas like introductory archery, instruction on reptiles, and fishing.

As of this publication, the plans are for the After School Program to be back to full capacity. Full capacity is 90 kids. Registration is in person at Sherwood Forest. The number to call to get more information is 501-835-8909. Registration is on a "first come, first serve" basis. Do not wait, if this is something you need or are interested in. They are hoping that registration will open up the week of the 19<sup>th</sup> of July. To save your child's spot, you will need to pay the \$100 registration fee per child and set up the monthly automatic bank draft. The registration fee covers all field trips.

Transportation to the After School Program is provided from the following elementary schools: Cato, Clinton, Oakbrooke, Sherwood, and Sylvan Hills. On school in service days the hours are 7am to 6 pm, except when it is a city holiday. And on school days it is from the end of school until 6 pm.

The afterschool program utilizes the Harmon Center. The kids get homework help, snack time, game time and activities both indoor and outdoors, and even movie time.

The cost of the program for 2021 is 1 child- \$80/mo., 2 children - \$115/mo., 3 children - \$150/mo., 4 children - \$185/mo.



## 2021 First Responders Service Award Winners



### Congratulations to the 2021 Sherwood Service Award Winners from the Sherwood Chamber of Commerce

Police Officer of the Year	Officer Jamal Hockaday
Sherwood Firefighter of the Year	Captain Josh Clay
Gravel Ridge Firefighter of the Year	Chris Howey
MEMS Crew of the Year	EMT Jonathan Bell Medic Mitchell Weaver
Dispatcher of the Year	Morgan Holt

### 25 Years of Service Police Chaplain Program Brother Tim McMinn

## OTHER POLICE NEWS

Sherwood Police Department was excited to announce that 5 new officers were hired and started initial training in June. A New Communications Center Supervisor was also hired and began interviewing for new dispatch positions in June as well. As of mid-June, the Police Chief said they still had openings in patrol and dispatch

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## **JULY 12<sup>TH</sup> PARKS AND RECREATION MEETING**

The Parks & Recreation Committee in their July Committee meeting heard the city swimming pools and splashpad have thrived this summer. More season passes have been sold than the Parks Director can remember. With the increased activity, the committee discussed the need for a concession/office at the Splashpad. We also discussed creating a fenced in area for eating at the Splashpad.

A big topic that emerged was the need for more information about parks and recreation programming, facilities, etc. to be pushed out into the public for the citizens to see. We discussed the need for a Sherwood Parks and Recreation Facebook page. We also talked about plugging all the different sports options through this platform. Small clip videos have proven to be effective for other organizations like the Sylvan Hills High School Athletics.

A citywide park study is underway. Preliminary work is taking place. A steering committee will be forming in the near future and followed by community input. The committee talked about new activities such as archery, pump tracks, volleyball, sand volleyball, and badminton for possible inclusion when looking at the future of parks and facilities. Please be on the lookout for community input opportunities. Of course, I will promote those opportunities when they become available.

Sherwood received a Justice of the Peace Grant from Luke McCoy for \$1000 which was used for a new fence around the basketball court at Cherrywood Park. (Please see the picture below.)

Four portable pickle ball nets have been ordered for plans of using them at Henson Park. I spoke about a request received from a citizen about using the Harmon Center gym for pickleball during slow periods. It was agreed that this could easily be done. We talked about how people of all ages enjoy this sport and how it is sweeping the nation, including Central Arkansas. We talked about the possibility of using the Duran Youth Center courts for this activity also. Portable nets allow for either tennis or pickleball

**SAVE THE DATE**

**Sherwood Fest**

**Sherwood Sports Center      September 26**