

Mary Jo's Heye-lights

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Sidewalks: Making Some Headway

We had a big win for sidewalks for 2020. Instead of the proposed \$50,000 in Sherwood's proposed 2020 budget, City Council Member Kevin Lilly and I worked together to get an additional \$400,000 allocated for sidewalks out of the excess Street Fund revenue generated in 2019. Moreover, this means certain streets in Ward 2 will finally get sidewalks.

As you know, I have been advocating for quality of life/ quality of places improvements in Sherwood since I joined the City Council. I have strongly advocated for comprehensive infrastructure improvements including street improvements to alleviate traffic, sidewalks, bike lanes, trails for pedestrians and bikers, and improving and building parks. As part of this, the huge lack of sidewalks in our city creates dangerous situations and depresses quality of life. Remember, in 2018, I drafted and championed the City Council's new scoring and selection ordinance for new sidewalk construction. I also submitted a number of sidewalks from the Indianhead Subdivision in the first

year's program. Unfortunately, Sherwood's proposed 2020 Budget did not include sufficient monies to get these projects done. This is where Kevin Lilly and I stepped in.

Some research verified the city had in excess of \$2 million idling in street fund reserves *before* counting 2019's excess revenue. This is not money from the recent Bond issue. This money comes from the accumulations of annual Street Fund surpluses that have been hoarded over the years rather than used. After seeing the meager proposed monies for sidewalks in the 2020 budget, I realized that we could *and should* make this money work for our citizens. While street reserves are important, \$2 million in reserve, equal (See **SIDEWALKS** Page 3)



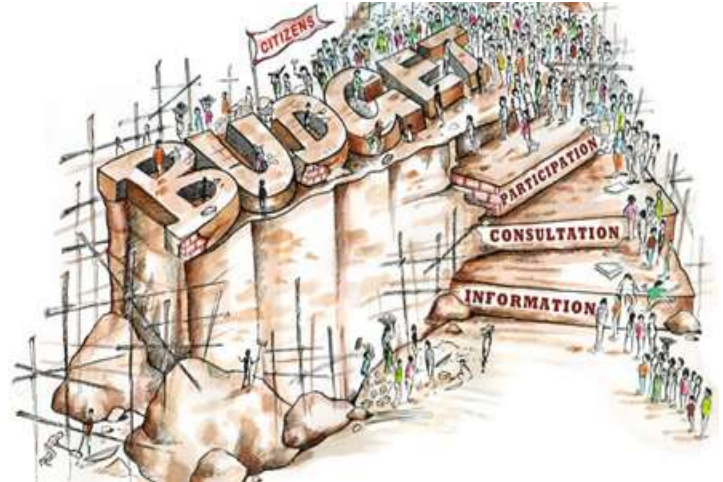
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Small Tent: A Vote Against Transparency & Inclusion

Update on the Ordinance that would have established a Budget Committee-Of-The-Whole. As a reminder, the purpose of this ordinance was to improve inclusiveness and create more transparency. This ordinance established that all members of the City Council be provided the same information, instead of just half of the council. It also required that these meetings be held in Council Chambers where the public could attend, and that they would be videoed so that those at home could view it. And these meetings could not take place before 5 pm. This would give us the same protocol as the rest of Central Arkansas.

In the past, these meetings were held in the Mayor's Office, and only the four selected by the Mayor could have the input to create any changes. They were given all the information while the rest of Council, if they could not take off work for the typically 2pm meetings were left in the dark. These meetings were not recorded nor were minutes kept and there was very little space available. The Council Members did agree that it was a good idea to have them in the evenings and in the Council Chambers.

However, only Charlie Harmon agreed that this should be codified. Charlie tried to explain that all Committees have to be established by ordinance and thus this was appropriate. After negative comments by multiple city council members, Council Member Harmon stated "I have trouble criticizing an ordinance that is simply saying 'Let's include everybody and let's make it open where everybody in the public, in the news media, and everyone can see it and hear it.' It's really hard to criticize that." They did have one 1-hour budget workshop but then



we were to email or call the Mayor with any further questions since we did not have time to cover all of it. Yes, the public can FOI those questions if they were in writing. But why should those questions not be asked in a public setting so everyone can hear the responses?

As I have said so many times, these are your tax dollars and you should know the how and why your monies are being spent. Unfortunately asking questions publicly seems to be frowned upon and I do not understand this! At the end of the day has anything changed? It has yet to be seen what will happen in the future since there are no rules in place. Unfortunately, this was a vote against openness and transparency. I appreciate Council Member Charlie Harmon's support on this initiative. Maybe some day the thinking of our city will change and thus our practice of government will change with it. Until then the city prefers to operate in only a small tent rather than in a big tent. **MJH**



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to Sherwood's entire annual street budget, is excessive.

I contacted my fellow Ward 2 City Council member Kevin Lilly to consider amending the proposed budget and using a portion of these funds. He did his own research and came to the same conclusion. As Chairman of the Street Committee he made the proposal to the City Council which passed it unanimously. I must give a note of thanks to several of you in Indianhead Subdivision who reached out to Kevin after the sidewalk ratings came out. It made a BIG difference. He heard your voices and worked to help. Remember, though, Kevin does not participate in social media, so you have to reach out to him.

The sidewalks to be constructed this next year will be on Coolhurst/Clairemont & Pembroke in Ward 3 and Deerfield & Mohave in Ward 2. Indianhead and Shoshoni Drives in Ward 2 are arguably more dangerous and scored higher the selection criteria. However, these sidewalks will be more costly due to the improvements required for the ditches along the streets. I will resubmit them again this year.

This would not have been possible the Sidewalk Rating Ordinance that was passed in the fall of 2018. There are so many sidewalks that need to be built in Sherwood to make our city safer. My hope is for Sherwood to eventually develop a robust annual sidewalk building program. We need sidewalks built in Indianhead from one end of the neighborhood to the other. Other neighborhoods throughout Sherwood also need sidewalk improvements. Our citizens suffer as we ignore this need. Among other efforts, sidewalk improvements across our city will improve the quality of place for everyone. **MJH**



Indianhead Parks Update in Budget for 2020

Park improvements are coming to Indianhead Subdivision in 2020. I had to stage a small revolt to do it, but it got included in the budget. Arguably, Indianhead Park was in the worst condition in the city. On a recent visit I found so many safety issues that made the park unusable. I brought this to the attention of Parks and Recreation who readily agreed. However, there was no money allocated for it in the Mayor's 2020 Budget. I brought this up at the Budget Workshop in November seemingly to deaf ears. I argued that the Sherwood "Museum" though included in the 2020 Budget was not an immediate or critical need. I suggested that the monies for the Sherwood Museum remodel and the salary for the overseer be paid for by Advertising & Promotion funds which are designed to promote tourism. The monies for the Museum in the 2020 Budget could then be freed to improve this worst of parks. This would cover the \$35,000 the Parks and Recreation Director stated was required to replace the playground equipment. This idea was shot down by the Chairwoman of the A & P Commission, City Council member Marina Brooks, because they had already completed their budget process. (For the record, budgets can be amended.) In the end, the Mayor did move around some funds in the 2020 Budget to make this happen. However, she did not touch the Sherwood Museum monies. **MJH**

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Love Biking? We Need You!

Kimberly Mundell's husband John was an avid cyclist. He was killed this year on Highway 107 by a hit and run driver. Perhaps you have seen the ghost bike memorial on the side of the highway marking the approximate location of this accident. Kimberly has searched for ways to honor her husband, to bring about some good from this tragic accident. She has met with different biking groups in Central Arkansas and has spent a great deal of time studying issues surrounding bike safety. She is organizing a bike advocacy group for Sherwood. This group will be for those that enjoy biking whether on an elite level or who just like to bike around the neighborhood with the kiddos. Sherwood is clearly behind the national and even regional trend in biking despite having a demographic that should support it. Instead, Sherwood does not have sidewalks on all its streets, in many of its neighborhoods, no on-street bike lanes, and few bike-ped trails. Given that reality, more accidents will probably happen, something Kimberly is working hard to prevent. If this effort interests you, please contact Kimberly for more information at kfried3@sbcglobal.net. MJH

Happy New Year!
I hope you had a happy holidays
and are looking forward to a
wonderful new year!
- Mary Jo Heye

Potholes & Street Lights

Thank you to a resident in Indianhead that reached out to let me know about the potholes on Shoshoni. I contacted our Public Works Director and he got it fixed in a few days. Huge thanks to Director Brian Galloway for getting it repaired so quickly. Thank you for letting me know about the problem. I can not be everywhere so it helps if you all can be an extra set of eyes. Please let me know if you have a pot hole or a streetlight out or any other problem. With the approximate address, I can get a "help request" into the proper office quickly.

MJH



Police Follow Up

Due to some of your thoughtful responses, I am delaying an initiative for incentive pay for officers living in Sherwood until I get some more information. I still like the idea, but feel it is necessary to determine the full budgetary impact of such a policy and how many officers will it impact before I advocate for it. I am not giving up on this idea but feel like I need to flesh it out more. Good policy is best determined with good information and good reasoning - think twice, act once. More to come. MJH

