



**Florence City Council  
Business Meeting  
Tuesday, August 11, 2020  
6:00 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

The City Council of the City of Florence, Kentucky, met in regular session on Tuesday, August 11, 2020, at 6:00 p.m. at the Florence Government Center, 8100 Ewing Boulevard, Florence, Kentucky, with Mayor Diane E. Whalen presiding as chair.

**CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME:**

Mayor Diane E. Whalen called the regular meeting to order and declared the regular session open for the presentation of all city business.

**ROLL CALL:**

The roll was called, and the following four (4) members of council were present: Mel Carroll, Duane Froelicher, David Osborne, and Gary Winn.

Councilmember Dr. Julie Aubuchon (Vice-Mayor) and Councilmember J. Kelly Huff were absent.

Staff members present were: City Coordinator, Joshua R. Wice; City Attorney, Hugh O. Skees; CFO/HR, Linda Chapman; Chief of Police, Tom Grau; Fire/EMS Chief, Scott Knoll; Business & Community Development Director, Joshua Hunt; Public Services Director, Eric Hall; City Engineer, Bill Viox; City Clerk, Melissa Kramer; Event Consultant, Victoria Wells; and Videographers, Spencer Foreman and Jay Gordon.

The following were also present: Family of Fire/EMS Department new employees, Candice Biltz and Michael Stanton; Fire/EMS Assistant Chief, John Black; Boone County Schools Superintendent, Matt Turner; Trish Scheyer, The River City News; and Channel 9 News.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to approve the minutes of the July 28, 2020, business meeting. Councilmember Winn motioned to approve the minutes with a second from Councilmember Froelicher. **All councilmembers present voted aye.**

**OATHS OF OFFICE:**

Scott Knoll, Fire/EMS Chief, introduced the newest members of the Florence Fire/EMS Department, Candice Biltz, Firefighter/Paramedic and Michael Stanton, Firefighter/Paramedic.

Candice is an ECU graduate with a degree in Health Studies. While at ECU, she was also a member of the volleyball team. She obtained her paramedic certification in 2019 and worked for Georgetown/Scott County EMS and the Dry Ridge Fire Department.

Michael Stanton is a graduate of the University of Cincinnati where he obtained degrees in Sports Administration and Emergency Medical Services. He obtained his paramedic certification in 2016 from the University of Cincinnati-Blue Ash Campus and worked for the city of Ft. Mitchell Fire Department.

Both started their orientation training this week and are doing a great job. Chief Knoll stated the department is looking forward to having them on shift.

Mayor Whalen administered the oath of office and welcomed them to the City of Florence Fire/EMS Department and informed them we are glad to have them as part of our community. Mayor Whalen stated while Florence is a busy department, she feels we are a great department. She is very proud and pleased with the quality of people that work with us and for us in the city, from our first responders to our Public Services Department. Mayor Whalen let them know they entered a place second to none and she is hopeful they will retire here with the city.

#### **PRESENTATION – BOONE COUNTY SCHOOLS:**

Mayor Whalen introduced and welcomed Superintendent of the Boone County Schools, Matt Turner. Superintendent Turner began his tenure on July 1, 2020. Superintendent Turner thanked Mayor Whalen and city council for inviting him to the meeting.

Superintendent Turner recalled back to March and feels since then, time has slowed as everyone has worked through the pandemic and struggling with various difficulties within the community. In March, he was the Principal of Ryle High School and was contemplating how to honor their seniors. Now, in his new role as Superintendent of the Boone County Schools, he has taken on the challenge of implementing a plan to start school. He is very proud of his staff as they have navigated this new territory and undertaken a tremendous amount of work to come up with a plan. Keeping everyone safe and educating the students is a priority. Superintendent Turner expressed concern if kids are not in school, they will fall further behind. Especially the younger students with regard to their growth and development. The reopening of school and formulating a plan has been a very challenging and difficult task. In formulating a plan, he has taken into consideration the priority of parents and their jobs and how the pandemic has affected all involved.

Superintendent Turner presented the plan which has been implemented and set forth prior to the new recommendations. At this time, he has no new information based upon the recommendation set forth yesterday by the Governor regarding virtual only instruction until September 28, 2020. The school district is processing this information and working through what this will look like for our schools. Anticipates having additional information within the next few days based upon those new recommendations.

Superintendent Turner discussed his presentation with regard to the reopening. The current plan in place is the Boone County Pathway to School Re-entry with options for families. As part of the decision, he felt it was important to give families the opportunity to choose whether their student would attend school in person or virtually. He felt decisions are unique and personal to families.

Superintendent Turner offered examples of decisions and scenarios including the possibility of a child becoming infected at school and transmitting the virus to a grandparent or family member. There are multiple issues families contend with. Superintendent Turner felt giving families a choice of either Option 1: In-Person Instruction, or Option 2: Virtual Instruction was important. However, these options challenge and add complexity to ensure they will work. In the best of conditions, starting off the school year is difficult with all of the employees, students, and details involved. As a result of the current conditions, color-coded levels have been set up as a structure of green, yellow, and red as part of Option 1. Knowing the current conditions in our district and area, things may change and it will be important to be flexible with Option 1 should parents have chosen that option.

As part of Option 1, the “Green” level will be full in-person and school is normal as we know it. The “Yellow” level is a hybrid of blending in person and virtual instruction. As part of this level, guidelines set forth by the state or localities will be followed. The “Red” level is strictly remote instruction. This level will not be similar to the plan in place in March. When schools went virtual in March, it was an emergency requiring immediate changes. Since then, teachers and administrators have had time to plan and institute how they will teach students virtually.

The yellow level allows in-person and remote learning. This level will allow students to be limited in the buildings and provide social distancing. As part of this level, spacing would need to be minimized by 50%. A typical classroom normally has 20-30 students. Due to social distancing, only 10-15 students are allowed in the same place. Wearing a mask could potentially allow closer distance, however, science now states that may not be true. It will be the best option for everyone to wear a mask as much as possible. Another difficulty is lunchtime. Students are unable to eat lunch with a mask on. Many of the cafeterias are not spacious. Reducing the capacity within the cafeteria by 50% would require double the time to have lunch, or double the space to allow students to eat. Feeding students in a reasonable amount of time or doubling the space will be difficult.

As a result, hybrid models were explored. Instituting a hybrid model would reduce the amount of students in the building. Dividing the students and implementing an A/B schedule as part of Option 1, helps alleviate some of the capacity within the schools. Across the country, schools have implemented an A/B/C schedule. Superintendent Turner felt this option would allow a reopening of the schools. As part of Option 2, virtual instruction, those student will not be in school and will learn remotely.

As of right now, the schools are currently at the yellow/red level based on the new recommendations set forth yesterday. Superintendent Turner is very hopeful to eventually return to the green level and have full in-person instruction sometime this year. To accomplish this, he requested help from everyone in the community. In terms of safety precautions, wear a mask. Not only at school, but at work, home, and in the communities. One of the biggest fears right now is returning to school may spread the virus more. Students contracting the virus at school and taking home to their families.

The yellow hybrid model will have two groups, “A” and “B”. “A” group will attend in-person school on Monday and Tuesday. The “B” group will attend in-person school on Thursday and Friday. This will allow ability to service the needs of three groups, the “A” and “B” groups, and the virtual students.

Instituting how to service the needs of the three groups was an immense process to work through as a district. It was not feasible to have three sets of lesson plans. Through collaboration with the principals and leaders of the schools within the district, they were able to plan the school year as a virtual lesson for everyone. Teachers are continuing to work on the process and formulating adjustments accordingly for the in-person learning. Based on this concept, every Wednesday will be a “WIN” day. The acronym for “What I Need”. Previously, New Haven Elementary used this concept to have Wednesdays as a review day. Through conversations with elementary school principals, it was highly recommended to allow time to review the lessons with the younger learners, especially for basic reading and math skills. All felt Wednesday was crucial to allow students to catch up and the teachers touch base. Middle schools and high schools will use Wednesdays for the same purpose. Only staff will be in the buildings on Wednesdays and will use the time to help the students needing additional instruction.

As part of the hybrid model, all of the schools have been working together to divide the students into “A” and “B” groups. Everyone felt it was a priority to have family members in the same “A/B” groups and this has been accomplished. The groups should be released soon after a decision is made based upon the new recommendations.

The “Red” color status is fully virtual and will require minimizing the number of people in the buildings. No students will be allowed and only a few teachers. This status is completely virtual. Superintendent Turner is hopeful to be able to flex back to yellow and once conditions improve, back to green.

Teaching will look different than it has in the past. Various online tools have been created which will allow a structure that parents and students will be able to access for teaching and learning.

Superintendent Turner expressed concerned regarding the social and emotional health of the students. As an adult, Superintendent Turner stated “this has been the hardest four months of my life...” personally and professionally. He is aware of the impact on adults and kids and recalls the looks on the student’s faces when this initially began. Moving into this school year will be a challenge and is taking a toll on our children. Superintendent Turner stated he wants our students back in school, however, we must do this safely and effectively.

The floor was opened for questions. Councilmember Winn thanked Superintendent Turner for attending and inquired as to the percentage of parents electing in-person versus virtual. Superintendent Turner stated as a district approximately 70% requested in-person schooling and 30% requested virtual. There was a variance by school with some schools at 80/20 and some 50/50. Using the 70% as an example for the hybrid model, this would only have approximately 35% of the students in the school at one time and allow the students to socially distance.

Councilmember Osborne welcome Superintendent Turner to the city. He inquired whether there would be any extracurricular activities or sports this fall. Superintendent Turner stated the schools are following the requirements in place with Kentucky High School Athletic Association. This has allowed for some small groups to gather. However, based upon the recommendations of the governor, Superintendent Turner stated “...nothing official and from my own perspective, it will be very difficult”.

Mayor Whalen inquired whether when parents took the survey if they were aware of the hybrid model. Even with the hybrid model, parents will still have challenges with childcare and transportation. Mayor Whalen questioned what the busing and transportation will look like with regard to transporting the students. Mayor Whalen relayed to Superintendent Turner his job was not one anyone envies in attempting to “balance all of these pieces and trying to please the parents of 20,000 plus kids in district”. She inquired whether he has received any positive reinforcement from parents.

Superintendent Turner responded he has received a wide range of emotions as expected. Families are faced with the difficulties of balancing work, family, and childcare. Daycare limitations have exacerbated issues for parents trying to go back to work. Unfortunately, there are no easy solutions and they are attempting to do their best to keep everyone safe at school. Transportation will be challenging. Many of the current bus drivers are retired employees working in a second career. Those individuals may have concerns with driving the buses and health risks. He is hopeful they will be able to maintain all of their bus drivers. Superintendent Turner felt at the current time, transportation is in good shape. However, the situation could change and pose to be a new challenge. He is also trying to accommodate requests of staff with medical situations. Trying to accommodate medical requests from employees and ensuring safe accommodations to allow those individual to work as well. A concern is losing a large number of teachers and inability to staff the classrooms with certified qualified teachers.

Mayor Whalen questioned whether teachers were given options. Superintendent Turner stated those staff with documented medical issues are being accommodated with their requests.

Mayor Whalen inquired regarding the stance of the recommendation of the KEA that teachers should not be going back to school. Superintendent Turner replied those recommendations have impacted their decisions and working diligently to listen to their teachers. Continuing to meet with the Boone County Education Association counsel and working through concerns.

Regarding loss of learning, Mayor Whalen expressed concern to those students not having access to the internet or a parent willing to help their child. She inquired as to how the schools will track those students to save them and ensure they will receive an education which can sometimes pose a challenge in a regular year. Superintendent Turner acknowledged this will take a great deal of time and effort on teachers and staff. It may also involve visiting those children and having conversations. One of the greatest worries when working through their decisions was ensuring kids can go back to school safely and none will be left behind.

Mayor Whalen inquired regarding the “blanket passing” of grade to grade. Superintendent Turner responded “No”. He explained when the pandemic began, that was a different situation. Students were placed in a challenging stressful situation and the district felt there was a certain amount of grace which needed to be applied. Moving into this school year, there will be requirements of students including expectations of maintaining contact with their teacher and demonstrating their learning. Expectations and framework have been set and students will be graded on whether they have learned and demonstrate the required skills. Each grade level K-12 will have detailed requirements.

Councilmember Carroll questioned whether parents are able to switch options once they have chosen either Option “1” or “2”. Superintendent Turner stated students will be unable to switch

and have requested a one semester commitment from the Option 2 students. If students desire to change following the semester, they will be able to do so.

Councilmember Carroll inquired as to the certification of teachers and whether all subjects would be covered. Superintendent Turner stated that was another challenge when instituting their plan. While devising a plan, they had to train themselves to work through completely the process and problems which could arise. If the plan did not work, they would start over and begin again.

Councilmember Froelicher congratulated Superintendent Turner on his position. He inquired with regard to the wide range of languages of students at Florence Elementary and how these children will be taught. Superintendent Turner replied very carefully. There is a tremendous amount of diversity within the district. Working with those students will require a collaboration with the classroom teachers and the English teachers. There will be specific times to touch base with those students either in person or virtually to help them through their content. There is concern regarding students learning English, special needs students, and the youngest learners and ensuring the will not fall further behind.

Mayor Whalen inquired as to whether Kindergarten and Preschool student were participating in the options for schooling. Superintendent Turner stated there will be a few unique schedules with some the schools and on a limited basis as well.

Mayor Whalen thanked Superintendent Turner for attending. She sympathized and understands the difficulties he will face. Mayor Whalen encouraged everyone to understand the best interest of the community is at heart. Mayor Whalen stated "God bless you". She knows what he is doing is not easy but understands he is doing what is best for the kids.

Superintendent Turner thanked Mayor Whalen. He stated he has the best interest of the children and is dedicated to helping them learn as everyone continues to work through the challenges ahead.

### **MAYOR'S REPORT:**

- The City of Florence offices are open to in person business by appointment only. This was necessitated by the closure of Boone County Clerk's Office on the lower level due to staffing issues.
- If you come to the Florence Government Center, there is a sign by the front doors with a list of numbers to contact. Please call the specific department for which you need to conduct business.
- The Boone County Clerk's office is closed on the lower level, please call Justin Crigler's office in Burlington for additional information.
- The Boone Circuit Clerk's office for driver license is also closed. You are able to renew and obtain a license in their Burlington office.
- Owen Electric lobby in the Florence Government Center remains closed. Their drive thru is open.
- We have additional copies of the City of Florence "Essential Workers Cookbook". Anyone interested in purchasing a copy, the cookbooks are \$20.00. Please contact the Administration Department at (859)647-8177 for more information.

**RECOGNITION:**

Mayor Whalen asked if any of the following desired recognition:

City Coordinator, Joshua R. Wice:

Mr. Wice did not desire recognition.

Department Heads:

Fire/EMS Chief, Scott Knoll:

Chief Knoll did not desire recognition.

Public Services Director, Eric Hall:

Mr. Hall did not desire recognition.

Chief of Police, Tom Grau:

Chief Grau did not desire recognition.

Members of City Council:

None desired recognition.

Audience:

No one in the audience desired recognition

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to go into Executive Session pursuant to KRS 61.810 (1)(b) acquisition/sale of real property - where publicity would be likely to affect the value of property to be acquired for public use or to be sold by the city.

Councilmember Winn so moved with a second from Councilmember Froelicher. **All councilmembers present voted aye, the time being 6:43 p.m.** Mayor Whalen advised that no further business is anticipated to take place after the executive session.

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to come back into session after the Executive Session. Councilmember Winn so moved, with a second from Councilmember Osborne. **All councilmembers present voted aye, the time being 7:03 p.m.**

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**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business to come before the Council, Mayor Whalen called for a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Winn so moved, with a second from Councilmember Osborne. **Councilmembers present voted aye**, the time being 7:04 p.m.

**APPROVED:**

/s/ Diane E. Whalen  
Diane E. Whalen, Mayor

**ATTEST:**

/s/ Melissa Kramer  
Melissa Kramer, City Clerk