



**Florence City Council
Business Meeting
Tuesday, February 23, 2021
6:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

The City Council of the City of Florence, Kentucky, met in regular session on Tuesday, February 23, 2021, 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 five (5) members of council were registered present: Mel Carroll, J. Kelly Huff, David Osborne, Josh Walton, and Gary Winn. Absent was Dr. Julie Aubuchon (Vice-Mayor) (present at 6:03 p.m.).

Staff members present were: City Attorney, Hugh O. Skees; Chief of Police, Tom Grau; Accountant, Jason Cobb; Public Services Director, Eric Hall; Community Services Superintendent, Jeremy Kleier; City Engineer, Bill Viox; City Clerk, Melissa Kramer; Videographer, Spencer Foreman; and Police Officer, Tara Ruschell.

The following were also present: Jones Middle School – Principal, Ryan Montgomery and Assistant Principal, Dr. Jennifer Hickey.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 9, 2021, business meeting. Councilmember Winn motioned to approve the minutes with a second from Councilmember Huff. **All councilmembers present voted aye.**

RESOLUTION R-3-21:

Mayor Whalen read Resolution R-3-21. A Resolution of the City of Florence, Kentucky authorizing the Mayor to sign and file a Community Development Block-CV Grant Application in the amount of \$200,000.00 to provide utility relief funding to residents.

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to approve Resolution R-3-21. Councilmember Winn motioned to approve Resolution R-3-21 with a second from Councilmember Huff. **All councilmembers present voted aye.**

PRESENTATION – JONES MIDDLE SCHOOL:

Mayor Whalen introduced and welcomed Jones Middle School, Principal, Ryan Montgomery, and Assistant Principal, Dr. Jennifer Hickey.

Mr. Montgomery thanked Mayor Whalen and city council for inviting them to the meeting. Mr. Montgomery stated the majority of students at Jones Middle School reside within the city limits of Florence. Jones Middle School is comprised of grades – 6th, 7th, and 8th. Jones Middle School is currently labeled a Comprehensive School Improvement (CSI) by the Kentucky Department of Education, which places the school academically in the bottom five percent. Mr. Montgomery and the staff do not believe this is representative of the students. Mr. Montgomery and his staff are attempting to provide a core focus of work in accordance with aligned acts of improvement with standards, instructional strategies, data analysis, assessments, culture, and safety nets.

Dr. Hickey stated she has been at Jones Middle School for ten years. Sixteen percent of the students are active English Language (EL) learners. Jones Middle School is the eighth highest English Language learner population and is the thirteenth most diverse middle school within the state. The school started with one English language teacher and have since been able to obtain three additional certified English language teachers with five paraeducators to assist. With their assistance, Jones Middle School is on track to meet the goals set forth by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Mr. Montgomery and his staff have implemented improvement priorities for their CSI status. The first improvement priority is to implement operational processes and procedures to ensure organization effectiveness in support of teaching and learning. The two main elements are positive behavior intervention systems and a teaching and learning system.

The second improvement priority is based on the curriculum. The staff at Jones Middle School adheres to the motto “Victory in the classroom”. They are aware of the challenges they face. While they are unable to control the external environment, the teachers and staff do expect the students to do their best and try to create a family atmosphere. Within the past year, Mr. Montgomery believes the teachers and students are more connected than they have ever been.

As a result of their CSI status, Jones Middle School has been able to apply and receive multiple grants totaling over one million dollars in the past two years. These funds have enabled the school to accelerate the turn around.

To help assist the school in removing their CSI status, Mr. Montgomery has established an Instructional Leadership Team. The team is comprised of himself, Dr. Hickey, two administrators, three counselors, a family resource counselor, and two instructional coaches. The team works daily with the OSSI leadership, leads, and educational recovery leaders.

Upon entering Jones Middle School, many of the students are two grade levels behind academically. By implementing a tier system, Mr. Montgomery has set forth standards to close the “achievement gap”. Each grade is divided into two families, one with special education and the other with the English language learners. Mr. Montgomery stated even with the current pandemic and restrictions, the staff have been able to increase the reading level of the students.

Jones Middle School is growing and accelerating. Mr. Montgomery provided two illustrations of how the school helps motivate and reward the students.

A video titled “Highlighting who we are at Jones” was played. At the conclusion of the video, Dr. Hickey stated the motto of Jones Middle School, “Once a Jet, Always a Jet”. She attended Florence Elementary, Jones Middle School, and Boone County High School. While she attended Jones Middle School, Dr. Hickey faced difficulties at home and persevered. Dr. Hickey was honored by the staff with the establishment of the Dr. Jennifer Hickey “Once a Jet Always a Jet” Scholarship. The \$500.00 renewable scholarship is available to any student who attended Jones Middle School and any Boone County District High School.

Mr. Montgomery concluded his presentation and invited the Mayor and councilmembers to attend their Florence Flag Ceremony. Mayor Whalen thanked Mr. Montgomery and Dr. Hickey for attending and sharing the success of Jones Middle School. Mayor Whalen stated the city has not forgotten the east side of town. She was appreciative of all the hard work the staff at Jones Middle School is doing. Mayor Whalen’s dad was one of the original teachers at Jones Middle School. Jones Middle School holds a special place in her heart, as well as, many of the councilmembers. Mayor Whalen thanked them for accepting the challenge, raising the bar, and investing in the students.

Councilmember Carroll thanked Mr. Montgomery and Dr. Hickey for attending. Mr. Carroll stated as a former educator, he recognizes the challenges they face and commended them.

DISCUSSION AND MOTION TO AUTHORIZE:

Mayor Whalen called upon Eric Hall, Public Services Director, with regard to extending the City’s solid waste contract with Rumpke for two years beginning April 1, 2021.

Mr. Hall stated the prior solid waste contract expired and was re-bid in 2019. There were two bidders, Rumpke and Best Way. Rumpke was the lowest bidder and therefore the city entered into a contract with Rumpke. The term of the contract was for two years with four optional two year extensions for a possible contract of up to ten years if the city exercised the extensions. The city is at the end of the initial contract. Should the city exercise the extension, the residential waste collection would increase from \$6.00 per month to \$6.30 per month, and the voluntary residential recycling rate would increase from \$4.00 per month to \$4.20 per month. A fuel surcharge could go into effect on April 1, 2021 based on the U.S. Department of Energy’s published rates.

Mr. Hall would like to exercise the extension based on Rumpke’s lowest rates and excellent customer service. If the city agrees with the extension, the next step would be to authorize the Mayor to provide written notice to utilize the first extension.

Mayor Whalen requested a motion to allow her to proceed with a request to provide written notice extending the City’s solid waste contract with Rumpke for two years beginning on April 1, 2021. Councilmember Osborne motioned to approve, with a second from Councilmember Walton. **All councilmembers present voted aye.**

MAYOR'S REPORT:

- The city received an application for a Special Events Project known as “The Floral Heart Project”. The project has identified March 1st as a National Day of Mourning for COVID-19 victims. A floral heart will be placed in the Florence Community Plaza at 8001 Mall Road on Monday, March 1, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. The event is only one day, however the flowers will remain in the park as long as they are viable. The Northern Kentucky Hidden Rock Group has also been invited to participate in the event.
- Kentucky will begin phase 1C of COVID vaccines on March 1. Phase 1C includes anyone over 60 years old, anyone over 16 years old at high risk from COVID-19, and all essential workers. The winter storms last week delayed the vaccine rollout. For more information visit the Northern Kentucky Health Department website at nkyhealth.org and their website will direct you to the vaccination sites.
- Mayor Whalen thanked the Florence Public Services Department for all their hard work clearing all the snow from our city streets. Their work allowed the Florence Police Department and Florence Fire/EMS Department to continue to do their job. She appreciates everyone’s hard work.

RECOGNITION:

Mayor Whalen asked if any of the following desired recognition:

Department Heads:

Chief of Police, Tom Grau:

Chief Grau did not desire recognition.

Public Services Director, Eric Hall:

Eric Hall did not desire recognition.

Members of City Council:

Councilmember Osborne commended the Public Services Department for their hard work and removal of snow during the past few weeks.

Audience:

No recognition requested from the audience.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Council, Mayor Whalen called for a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Huff so moved, with a second from Councilmember Winn. **Councilmembers present voted aye**, the time being 6:47 p.m.

APPROVED:

ATTEST:

/s/ Melissa Kramer
Melissa Kramer, City Clerk

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

