



**Florence City Council
Business Meeting
Tuesday, June 9, 2020
6:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

The City Council of the City of Florence, Kentucky, met in regular session on Tuesday, June 9, 2020, at 6:30 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 six (6) members of council were present: Dr. Julie Aubuchon (Vice-Mayor), Mel Carroll, Duane Froelicher, J. Kelly Huff, David A. Osborne, and Gary Winn.

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; Public Services Director, Eric Hall; Business & Community Development Director, Joshua Hunt; City Engineer, Bill Viox; Community Projects Administrator, Kevin Burton; City Clerk, Melissa Kramer; Assistant City Clerk, Brandi Roundtree; Sean Kreke and Matt Miller, Videographers; and Police Officer, Dustin Zink.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2020, special meeting. Councilmember Huff motioned to approve the minutes with a second from Councilmember Aubuchon. **All councilmembers present voted aye.**

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 2, 2020, special meeting. Councilmember Winn motioned to approve the minutes with a second from Councilmember Huff. **All councilmembers present voted aye.**

FIRST READING OF ORDINANCE O-6-20:

An Ordinance adopting and approving an amendment to the fiscal year 2019-2020 budget of the city (Amendment #2). The purposes of this amendment are as follows: (a) to reflect increases in the General Fund Revenue due to expanded storm water charges resulting from re-measuring affected areas, together with increases in fees from Code Enforcement Citations; (b) to reflect a decrease in General Fund Revenue resulting from the delay in Occupational License filing

deadlines caused by the COVID-19 crisis; (c) to reflect an increase in General Fund Expenditures due to an increase in Fire/EMS Department unscheduled overtime and ongoing apparatus maintenance issues; (d) to reflect an increase in expenditures from the Health and Dental Fund based on a higher level of year-to-date claims; and (e) to reflect an increase in the Water and Sewer Fund expenses for higher levels of water purchases caused by increased water usage from families sheltering in their homes.

Mayor Whalen requested any comments or discussion prior to proceeding with the amendment. Councilmember Huff inquired as to the climate today and felt maybe there could possibly be more churn in the police department. Councilmember Huff recommended possibly hiring additional officers in light of the current world events. If not, he suggested proposing to increase the police department's budget by \$1.00. Mayor Whalen advised Councilmember Huff this was the amended budget for 2019-2020. Councilmember Aubuchon clarified with Councilmember Huff as to whether he was proposing to amend the 2019-2020 budget. Councilmember Huff realized his error and proposed in light of the events occurring with defunding police departments, he proposed the \$1.00 increase to show support for our police department and a morale booster.

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance O-6-20. Councilmember Aubuchon motioned to approve, with a second from Councilmember Osborne. **All councilmembers present voted aye.**

MAYOR'S ANNUAL BUDGET ADDRESS AND STATE OF THE CITY:

Mayor Whalen presented the annual Budget Address and State of the City:

Every year as we prepare to present our annual budget, I have the honor to deliver the State of the City and Budget Address. As I prepared my 22nd address as Mayor, I quickly realized that this year is unlike any other. The first half of Fiscal Year 2019-2020 started out pretty much as we planned. Great economy, record building starts, hotel construction boom, and no end in sight. Our focus was on meeting the challenges facing brick and mortar retail and what the next generation of retail might look like.

2020 was on track to be one for the record books. But, it is a Leap Year, and it seems that February 29th was a leap, not into March, but into the twilight zone. A global pandemic made its way to our community. COVID-19 and social distancing became household phrases, and life as we knew it was about to change abruptly. As the country and the state began to gear up for the battle, the city was quickly making the necessary adjustments to protect our essential workers. We knew they would be on the front lines, and it was imperative that we have a plan in place so that they would be safe and healthy as they continued their work serving and protecting you.

It's hard to work on a budget address where we have always celebrated our successes while knowing that many have lost their jobs, some businesses won't survive the "Healthy at Home" shutdowns, and the future remains a mystery. What I can say is that we are committed to navigating our way through it, and thanks to years of sound fiscal management and growth, we have the resources to continue to provide the services you deserve and have come to expect.

With the encouragement and shared vision of this council, we continue to focus on the city's core municipal responsibilities of providing the best and most reliable services to all of our stakeholders. Our city department heads are working at our direction in concentrating on economic and community development efforts and helping Florence to continue to lead the region with an innovative and positive business-friendly atmosphere.

In conjunction with City Coordinator Josh Wice, our city departments, led by CFO/HR Manager Linda Chapman; Police Chief Tom Grau; Fire/EMS Chief Scott Knoll and Public Services Director Eric Hall have been at

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the forefront in leading us, and the COVID-19 crisis is no exception. Josh has stayed up to date on the changing directives and Executive Orders issued by Governor Beshear as well as working daily with the Northern Kentucky Health Department on enforcement and interpretation of the orders. With more than 100 years of combined experience, nearly all of it with the City of Florence, our city is blessed to have the best of the best leading us and our departments during this unprecedented time. They are dedicated and passionate about our community.

We will remain strong, and this upcoming year should be one of hope and a well-executed vision. We will continue our hard work on your behalf and find our way through these challenging times. So to that end, I present our 2020-2021 State of the City and Budget Address. The budget for fiscal year 2021 represents a comprehensive spending plan for all city funds. The budget reflects all known and estimated increases in costs as well as the estimated projections for the various sources of revenues. Our occupational license fees, insurance premium tax, payroll tax receipts, and real estate tax revenues are all dependent on economic conditions and as such, these numbers are subject to continued analysis and review throughout the fiscal year for adjustment.

The general fund budget proposal for 2020-2021 totals \$44.2 million. This includes operating and capital expenditures, which include transfers to other city funds. The City of Florence's operating costs are \$27.6 million, which is an overall 1.7% increase over those budgeted for the Fiscal Year 2019-2020. This is mainly due to a rise in operating expenses over the prior year. The City of Florence has planned expenditures for capital items of \$13.1 million, which is a 5% decrease from last year.

The Administration and Finance Departments account for 8% of the city's total budget. These departments are responsible for executing the city's responsibilities with the management of all city departments. This includes economic and community development, city event planning, and safety and risk management. The Finance Department staff members are responsible for the collection of all revenues for the city, disbursing all payments, administering employee benefits program, and coordinating the city's information technology vendor relationship.

For sixteen consecutive years, our CFO and Finance Department has been recognized by the Government Finance Officers Association for excellence in financial reporting through the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, which is the highest recognition award for a municipality's financial reporting. Furthermore, the city received its sixth consecutive Government Finance Officers Association "Distinguished Budget Presentation" award. I would like to thank the City's CFO, Linda Chapman, for her expertise and delivery in this area.

The next department I would like to discuss is the Florence Police Department. The primary goal of the Police Department is to provide a safe environment for our residents and visitors by working cooperatively with other city departments. The 67 men and women of the Florence Police Department are committed to achieving that goal. The department strives to keep Florence safe by combining active patrol and investigation with community and business partnerships. The total departmental budget for the next fiscal year is \$9.1 million. The Florence Police divisions include patrol, detectives, drug investigations, and community resources. This year, the department observed a small increase in the number of requests for police services, which totaled 57,096 calls for service.

Those requested services resulted in a total of 83,978 officer responses.

Unfortunately, one of the city's three canines passed away after a brief illness. "Det" served the community of Florence and the Police Department for seven years under Officer Josh Dalton. Officer Dalton and Det had a special bond. We are grateful to Det for his service to our community. We will miss him.

As the world continues to spin out of control, I wanted to acknowledge and personally thank police officers as a whole, and particularly the men and women of the Florence Police Department. The City of Florence is committed to hiring the best, training to the fullest extent possible, and supporting our departments with the things that are necessary to do their jobs safely and without reproach. I will entertain no discussion on "defunding" our Police Department and commit to them and to you that we will continue to offer them our full support. You cannot condemn an entire profession for the acts of a few. The vast majority deserve our respect and appreciation for the job that they do every day in spite of the rhetoric. We are grateful for the support shown our officers and the very positive difference they all make in our community.

The next department I would like to discuss is Fire & EMS. The Florence Fire/EMS Department provides fire and rescue services, emergency medical services, fire & safety code compliance, and public fire education. The department has 65 employees and a budget for the next fiscal year is \$8.9 million.

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Over this past year, the department responded to over 8,300 medical emergencies and 230 fires throughout the community. Those fires resulted in over \$2.3 million in damage; although, through the diligent work of the Fire/EMS Department, \$198.2 million in property was saved because of quick responses and action. We are very fortunate that the city had no significant injuries or fatalities related to the fire responses in the previous year.

Members of the Fire/EMS Department continue to be recognized for actions that go above and beyond. Some awards received this year include Lt. Jonathan McNamara being awarded the St. Elizabeth Paramedic of the Year and retired Battalion Chief Troy Webster being awarded the Chief Officer of the Year from the Northern Kentucky Firefighters Associations.

Unfortunately, the department suffered a loss when Lt. Phil Bender passed away unexpectedly while off duty on December 8. Our department and city came together to honor his service and to support his family. While he left a void, our city will always remember Lt. Bender and his service to our community. Again, the community support and outpouring of love and concern for the members of the Fire/EMS department is encouraging and heartwarming.

The next department I would like to discuss stands ready at every hour to provide the services that Florence residents, businesses, and visitors expect and deserve. The department's 65 employees and budget of \$13.3 million consists of eight divisions, including facilities, fleet, street, grounds division, water, sanitary sewer, Infrastructure Support Services, and Community Support Services.

Daily preventative maintenance on hundreds of miles of underground utilities may go unnoticed, but when an emergency occurs, you can always count on Public Services to deliver. Your commute to work is made possible by the transportation crew that works tirelessly to build and repair roads to keep you moving. Our fleet division maintains nearly 200 emergency and Public Services vehicles that always stay ready to keep you safe.

In the upcoming year, the budget includes infrastructure improvements on 12 streets through contracted work and 50 streets through in-house work. Proposed water line replacements will take place on Dell Court and Dell Street. Sanitary sewer relining will take place in the Biggs sewer shed. Stormwater improvements are slated along Ted Bushelman Boulevard, Utz Drive, and Lapalco Court.

Finally, park and facility improvements for the coming year include the replacement of the Orleans Park playground surface and renovations to the Lincoln Woods restrooms. Additionally, we will add new tennis courts next to Boone County High School and install security cameras at all parks as an added safety measure.

Thanks to the efforts of the City's Urban Forest Commission and the willingness of this and prior City councils to fund projects. A few projects undertaken this past year include the installation of trees along Safeway Drive, Orleans Park, Blue Orchard Court, and Kentaboo Park. The city's commitment to its urban forestry and beautification strategy is favorable to our city.

Even during a time of financial concerns and overall economic unrest, our economic development staff works tirelessly to ensure projects are moving forward. We are thrilled to be working on the new Turfway Racing and Gaming project, directly with Churchill Downs leadership. This \$150 million project will include a brand new state of the art racing and gaming facility, new track, and infrastructure upgrades. Horse racing has a long history in Florence, and we are happy with the reinvestment guarantees made by Churchill. If you happen to drive by the construction site today, you will notice that the original 5-story grandstand building is no more, it marks an end to an era, but creates a bridge to a promising future.

Construction is ongoing on the ranch-style townhomes known as the Villages of Florence on Hopeful Church Road and its sister project, Villages of Weaver, located on Weaver Road, and Duluth Trading Company on Meijer Drive. Some upcoming developments are: Drury Hotel, Hilton Garden Inn, Texas Roadhouse, St. Elizabeth Endoscopy building addition, Hopeful Trace Townhomes, Farmview Apartments, and Tom Gill Digital Motor Sales.

The Main Street Fire Station is currently under renovation. Some of the new improvements include the restoration of exterior features, new concrete patio, construction of restrooms, and other code compliance upgrades, which will be available for business growth on Main Street.

Those are just some of the highlights, and we would encourage you to read the city's latest Development Update published quarterly on our website. It contains details about all the new development occurring in Florence.

The City completed a new strategic plan. The plan reflects input of engaged citizens, community and business partners, myself, Council Members, and City staff. The City began the strategic planning process in 2019.

The City's mission, vision, and values provide the foundation for the plan's five key goals:

- *Goal 1. Improve transportation infrastructure and coordinate with regional and state partners to ensure efficient traffic flow.*
 - *Goal 2. Identify and stimulate opportunities for existing and emerging business sectors.*
 - *Goal 3. Enhance the quality of life and community amenities for Florence residents and stakeholders.*

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- *Goal 4. Foster sustained fiscal health through continued long-term planning, staff development, and employee recruitment efforts.*
 - *Goal 5. Build strong connections with community partners, residents and employees.*

Every ten years the United States conducts an official Census. According to the 2010 Census, the residential population of Florence was 29,951, estimated now at 33,294 in 2018. Once the 2020 Census is completed, we will have a new, official count of our residential population. This residential census data, while necessary to the city's overall story, is crucial in determining the distribution of federal funds. Please complete your census and help make sure that your federal tax dollars are returned to community.

As I have said many times, I live in a community I love, and I am grateful to be its mayor. I live in a community where I have seen the transformation and recognize the visionaries that made it happen. Even in these strange and unprecedented times, we are a community that pulls together rather than apart. In a time like no other in our lives I encourage you to believe half of what you see and none of what you hear. If you want reliable answers, don't ask Facebook. Don't let the narrative get lost in the rhetoric. In conclusion, with the supportive attitude and commitment of our current city elected officials, Julie Metzger Aubuchon, Mel Carroll, Duane Froelicher, Kelly Huff, David Osborne, and Gary Winn, and our department heads and staff members, I continue to be excited about our future together knowing that our community can continue to flourish.

Even with all that is occurring, the state of our city is strong. No one person can do this alone. We are all a part of an ongoing commitment to the progress of our community. Together we will keep it moving forward.

I offer my sincere thanks to each and everyone one of you. Our residents, our business owners and their employees, and the dedicated public servants who come to work every day to keep our city on track. Our success is because of you.

Thank you for allowing me to serve and God Bless.

Councilmember Froelicher addressed Chief Knoll and Chief Grau regarding the rhetoric occurring nationally about defunding police departments. Councilmember Froelicher feels it is “pure utter nonsense” and wanted to let Chief Knoll and Chief Grau know “we have their back”. Mayor Whalen and Councilmember Aubuchon agreed.

FIRST READING OF ORDINANCE O-7-20:

Further discussion was held regarding the annual budget. City Attorney, Hugh Skees, addressed Councilmember's Huff addition of a dollar to the Police Department Budget. Attorney Skees advised the Ordinance would need to be updated. Councilmember Huff stated to amend the ordinance. Attorney Skees relayed the Ordinance would not need to be amended, as it had not passed yet.

Mayor Whalen recommended the Ordinance pass as written. She relies on Chief Grau to request the needs of the police department, and those requests will be handled upon receipt. Should Chief Grau have new hires he would like to be considered for the police department, it is certainly something the city will review. Any requests will be brought forth before council.

The Ordinance has a cost of living increase for employees and council will have the option for a step increase in January. Any changes made in the interim will be reviewed by council. Mayor Whalen does not agree and will not be defunding the police department. Any training and changes required will be adopted and therefore adapted by the department. Mayor Whalen desired to pass the 2020-2021 budget and address concerns as they arise.

Councilmember Aubuchon commended the selection process and requirements of the police department's candidates. Councilmember Aubuchon believes we have always supported and funded our police department and will continue to do so. Councilmember Aubuchon trusts our officers will always execute with professionalism and with the public safety in mind. Councilmember Aubuchon stated the Florence Police Department has the caliber and quality of officers that is worthy of our continued support and respect.

Mayor Whalen read Ordinance O-7-20. An Ordinance adopting and approving the fiscal year 2020-2021 budget of the city, including the General Fund, the Municipal Aid Road Fund, the Infrastructure Fund, the Asset Forfeiture Fund, the Aquatic Center Fund, the Water & Sewer Fund, the World of Golf Fund, and the Health and Dental Fund. Budgeted resources and expenditures are as shown on Exhibit "A".

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance O-7-20. Councilmember Huff motioned to approve, with a second from Councilmember Winn. **All councilmembers present voted aye.**

FIRST READING OF ORDINANCE O-8-20:

An Ordinance amending Ordinance No. O-23-19 relating to personnel policies, job descriptions, authorized positions and the pay plan revising the City Personnel policies by eliminating one Administrative Secretary position and adding one Administrative Clerk position; adding one Code Enforcement Officer Position; and adding one Mechanic position; and providing an addition of a 2.3% cost of living increase.

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance O-8-20. Councilmember Carroll motioned to approve, with a second from Councilmember Huff. **All councilmembers present voted aye.**

RESOLUTION NO. R-3-20 – CARES ACT:

Mayor Whalen presented Resolution No. R-3-20 with regard to the CARES Act. Pursuant to the process of receiving funds, allocated by Governor Beshear to local governments, an application is required. Linda Chapman, CFO/HR, submitted the application for reimbursement. The application is pending approval.

Resolution No. R-3-20 authorizes the City of Florence to file the Coronavirus Relief Fund ("CRF") application for reimbursement of incurred expenses in CRF funds with the Department for Local Government ("DLG"); authorizing and directing the Mayor to execute any documents which are deemed necessary by the DLG to reimburse the city; and authorizing the Mayor to act as the authorized correspondent for reimbursement.

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to approve Resolution No. R-3-20. Councilmember Winn motioned to approve, with a second from Councilmember Osborne. **All councilmembers present voted aye.**

MAYOR'S REPORT:

- Pursuant to the guidelines set by the Northern Kentucky Health Department and Governor Beshear, the City of Florence Parks have been closed and entrances blocked to restrict visitors. Walking trails have remained open. Discussions have been held and as the restrictions have been lifted, the parks will begin to reopen. The Skate Park barriers were removed and the park was opened on Monday, June 8, 2020. The barriers are set to be removed from the city parks on Friday, June 12, 2020. The playgrounds and tennis courts will be open.

Shelter Reservations are now being accepted and will be available on Monday, June 29, 2020 for gatherings of less than 50 guests.

Basketball hoops and volleyball courts remain closed.

Mayor Whalen recommended parents and visitors be diligent in washing their hands and using sanitizer. Do the best to socially distance on the playgrounds.

- The 2020 Census Team is currently hiring. Wages are \$18.50 per hour in Boone County. Apply online at www.2020census.gov/jobs. Be sure to complete the 2020 Census.
- Mayor Whalen announced that the Annual Independence Day Celebration will be fireworks only on Friday, July 3, 2020 at 10:00 p.m. The fireworks display will be held at the Florence Public Services Facility. This will allow the fireworks to be more visible. Guests can park at the Florence Mall parking area and at the Florence Government Center. As a result of the social distancing guidelines, the city is unable to have the celebration as originally scheduled. Mayor Whalen encouraged visitors to view the fireworks and adhere to the social distancing guidelines.

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 thanked city council and Mayor Whalen for their continued support of the police department. Chief Grau believes we have one of the finest professional police department's and the public shares the same feeling. Our police department is always evolving and will continue to do so. Chief Grau stated it is very hard as officers to watch the tragic events that occurred. As a result of the event, he believes positive change will happen. The Florence Police Department will apply any necessary changes and will be a better police department. Chief Grau appreciates the support provided.

Mayor Whalen thanked Chief Grau and the men and women of the police department for continuing to go out and do their job every day. Mayor Whalen thanked Chief Grau for his leadership.

Councilmember Froelicher asked Chief Grau about panhandling within the city. Chief Grau explained the Ordinance in effect only allows our officers to proceed with action if the individual steps into the roadway. Mayor Whalen relayed if the individual is on private property, unless the organization calls and has the individual removed, we are unable to step in.

Councilmember Carroll requested if anything could be done with the state legislature and the panhandling issue. Attorney Skees stated there is numerous case law and the panhandlers have advocates. State groups are also in place to advocate for the individuals. Chief Grau periodically calls Attorney Skees attempting to remedy the situation. This issue is a concern and will continue to be reviewed.

Councilmember Aubuchon questioned Chief Grau whether there has been an increase or decrease in calls during the COVID-19 pandemic. Chief Grau stated it was too early to tell whether there has been an increase. Our officers have been taking the necessary precautions due to COVID-19 and will continue to follow the guidelines in place.

Mayor Whalen stressed the city has, with the guidance of the department heads, been at the forefront from the beginning of the pandemic. The necessary steps have been taken to protect our employees and ability to allow them to take care of their families. The building has reopened and meetings are continuing to be limited. Glass that was put in place last year for safety has allowed the city to continue to provide services to the residents. Mayor Whalen is grateful for our essential workers and for them to continue to show up every day and work. Mayor Whalen relayed we have been blessed and fortunate to continue to work. The city is financially sustainable because of the planning and this will ensure the city continues to operate. As a result of the excellent financial advice and council allowing the officials to do what needs to be done, we are going to be okay.

Mayor Whalen informed council Churchill Downs is proceeding with the renovation of Turfway Park. Representatives from Churchill Downs will be here next week to discuss their plans.

Councilmember Osborne stated all of the departments within the city have done a good job. For the past 20 years, and compared to the 20 years prior, he believes you can see a difference. The enthusiasm of the people working within the city, whether they are a department head or the

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grounds crew. Councilmember Osborne is proud of City Council, Mayor Whalen, and what has been done with the employees.

Mayor Whalen wished Councilmember Osborne a Happy Birthday.

Audience:

No one in the audience desired recognition

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 Aubuchon. **Councilmembers present voted aye**, the time being 7:27 p.m.

APPROVED:

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

ATTEST:

/s/ Melissa Kramer
Melissa Kramer, City Clerk