



**Florence City Council
Business Meeting
Tuesday, March 9, 2021
6:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

The City Council of the City of Florence, Kentucky, met in regular session on Tuesday, March 9, 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 four (4) members of council were registered present: Dr. Julie Aubuchon (Vice-Mayor), J. Kelly Huff, David Osborne, and Gary Winn. Absent was Mel Carroll and Josh Walton (present at 6:02 p.m.).

Staff members present were: City Attorney, Hugh O. Skees; CFO/HR, Linda Chapman; Business & Community Development Director, Joshua Hunt; Public Services Director, Eric Hall; City Clerk, Melissa Kramer; Videographer, Spencer Foreman; and Police Corporal, Rick Saint Blancard.

The following were also present: Dr. Michael Shires, Boone County Preschool Achievement Center; James E. Parsons, Attorney; and Trisha Scheyer, The River City News.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 23, 2021, business meeting. Councilmember Winn motioned to approve the minutes with a second from Councilmember Huff. **All councilmembers present voted aye.**

PRESENTATION – BOONE COUNTY PRESCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT CENTER:

Mayor Whalen introduced and welcomed Dr. Michael Shires, Director of Early Childhood Learning at the Boone County Preschool Achievement Center. Dr. Shires stopped by the Administration Department and delivered artwork from the students which was appreciated. Following a recent tour of the facility, Dr. Shires wanted to have the opportunity to provide city council with an update on the center.

Dr. Shires thanked Mayor Whalen and city council for inviting him to the meeting. Dr. Shires stated the Boone County Preschool Achievement Center is located at 7627 Ewing Boulevard. The center previously partnered with Children's, Inc. Following the cease of their partnership, Kathy Reutman with Boone County Schools discussed with him the possibility of bringing students to the Preschool Achievement Center from Florence Elementary, Collins Elementary, and Ockerman Elementary. Dr. Shires stated these three schools tend to fill up the quickest. As a result, the preschool students have not been required to be bused to a different school other than their "home" school. Previously, once the preschool openings were at capacity, they were required to bus the children to the next available school for preschool.

Within the county, there are approximately four hundred students in the preschool program including fifty employees comprised of paraeducators, interventionists, speech pathologists, and clerical. Students must qualify for preschool by either income eligibility or a disability as a four year old. Students are eligible to enter into preschool all year. Preschool is a half day program with a morning and afternoon session with a maximum of twenty students in each class. The Preschool Achievement Center is staffed with five preschool teachers that work together and have also created a professional learning community.

Dr. Shires stated the work of Economist, James Heckman, has concluded that the investments for early childhood education returns higher rates of high school graduation, less remediation, less special education service, college attendance, higher income levels, and less incarceration. Dr. Shires believes if we invest in early experiences, the students will perform better throughout their lifetime. Dr. Shires stated brain research indicates that ninety percent of the human brain is developed in the first five years and therefore we need to take advantage of those years.

Dr. Shires stated, "The best intervention is prevention". Many of the student attending the center will attend Jones Middle School in Florence. In speaking with the schools, he learned eighty percent of the students at Florence Elementary were not ready for Kindergarten based on the Brigance Screen. He believes having children attend preschool will help aid in the readiness.

The center is currently looking to expand the program and possibly build a permanent location as they are renting their current facility. Dr. Shires believes there are many more children eligible to attend preschool which are not currently utilizing the service. Dr. Shires encouraged everyone to visit the Boone County Preschool Facebook page and invited councilmembers to tour the center.

Councilmember Winn inquired as to how many languages are spoken within the center. Dr. Shires stated within Boone County, there are approximately fifty-one languages spoken and a very diverse population. The application for the center is in French, Spanish, and English.

Councilmember Aubuchon inquired as to how many more children could attend should they be able to or be aware of the program. Dr. Shires believes there are many more children which could be attending the center based on home visits.

Councilmember Aubuchon stated when she was on the board of the Boone County Success By 6, some of the lower performing students on the kindergarten readiness test, were children which stayed at home and did not attend preschool. Dr. Shires stated the Brigance Screen has documented

those scores as well and believes it is very important to read to children and engage with them. Dr. Shires believed universal preschool would be a good investment.

Mayor Whalen thanked Dr. Shires for attending and sharing the information. She encouraged councilmembers to tour the center.

MAYOR'S REPORT:

- Spring Forward Saturday night as Daylight Savings time begins on March 14, 2021.
- Continuing to work through the challenges of the pandemic, the Florence Police Department will hold an Easter Candy Drive Through Event instead of their annual hunt. The event will take place at the Florence Government Center on Saturday, April 3, 2021 beginning at 9:00 a.m. For more details contact the Florence Police Department.
- Reservations are now available. Rentals begin on April 5, 2021. Check availability on our website or to make a reservation, please call the City Event Consultant, Victoria, at (859)647-5425.
- Our Florence Y'all Water Tower was nominated by the ELGL(Engaging Local Government Leaders) Association for the March Madness of Local Government bracket. The water tower survived the first round of voting and we made it to the Sweet 16. The link to vote is on our Facebook page. Voting for the Sweet 16 will end on Monday, March 15, 2021.

RECOGNITION:

Mayor Whalen asked if any of the following desired recognition:

Department Heads:

Public Services Director, Eric Hall:

Mr. Hall did not desire recognition.

Members of City Council:

None desired recognition.

Audience:

No recognition requested from the audience.

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 and KRS 61.810 (1)(g) discussions between the city and representatives of a business entity where open discussion would jeopardize the siting, retention, expansion, or upgrading of the business.

Councilmember Huff so moved with a second from Councilmember Winn. **All councilmembers present voted aye, the time being 6:21 p.m.** Mayor Whalen advised they would return to the room to adjourn and did not anticipate any further business taking place following Executive Session.

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to come back into session after the Executive Session. Councilmember Walton so moved, with a second from Councilmember Winn. **All councilmembers present voted aye, the time being 7:09 p.m.**

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 7:10 p.m.**

APPROVED:

ATTEST:

/s/ Melissa Kramer
Melissa Kramer, City Clerk

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

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