



**Florence City Council
Business Meeting
Tuesday, March 26, 2024
6:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

The City Council of the City of Florence, Kentucky, met in regular session on Tuesday, March 26, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at the Florence Government Center, 8100 Ewing Boulevard, Florence, Kentucky, with Mayor Julie M. Aubuchon presiding as chair.

CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME:

Mayor Julie M. Aubuchon called the regular meeting to order and declared the regular session open for the presentation of all city business.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mayor Aubuchon and Members of City Council recited the invocation.

All attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL:

The roll was called, and the following four (4) members of council were registered present: Mel Carroll, Lesley Chambers, David A. Osborne, and Gary Winn. Councilmembers Jenna Kemper and Patricia Wingo were absent.

Staff members present were: City Attorney, Thomas R. Nienaber; CFO/HR, Linda Chapman; Fire/EMS Assistant Chief, John Black; Chief of Police, Tom Grau; Public Services Director, Eric Hall; Director of Administration/City Administrator, Joshua J. Hunt; City Engineer, Bill Viox; City Clerk, Melissa Kramer; Videographer, Perry Weber; and Police Lieutenant, Roger Allen.

The following were also present in the audience: West Point Cadet Nathan Wells; West Point Field Representative, Dan Tobergte; Police Captain Eric Bowles; Police Captain Greg Rehkamp; Police Lieutenant Jeff Mallery; Police Lieutenant Nathan Rettig; Police Sergeant Chris Billiter; Police Sergeant Sam Riley; Police Officer Ki Ransdall; Police Officer Josh Dalton; Police Officer Derek Jackson; Police Corporal Zach Eagler; Police Corporal Ben Kolkmeier; Police Sergeant Tim Crowley; Police Officer Jake Whitford; Police Officer James Wilbers; Police Officer Cobi Allgeier; Police Officer Brady Proffitt; Police Officer Brandon Brockman; Police Administrative Clerk, Jackie Hart; Police Administrative Clerk, Sarah Hayden; Police Data Analyst, Leslie Runge; Members of the Florence Police Department; Family and friends of Chief of Police Grau; Fire/EMS Commander, Ryan Born; Former Florence Mayor, Diane E. Whalen; Family of Betsy Conrad and spouse, Stephen Conrad; Resident of Florence, Nancy Corman; President of the Northern Kentucky Beekeepers Association, Betsy Rossi; Owner of Grateful Skate Shop, Alex Evans;

Resident of Florence, Thomas Judd; Cincinnati Skate Collective Founder, Gabrielle Larkin; and Northern Kentucky Tribune Reporter, Trisha Scheyer.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mayor Aubuchon called for a motion to approve the minutes of the March 5, 2024, special meeting. Councilmember Carroll motioned to approve the minutes with a second from Councilmember Winn. **All councilmembers present voted aye.**

PRESENTATION – CADET NATHAN WELLS OF WEST POINT:

Mayor Aubuchon introduced Cadet Nathan Wells of West Point, a Simon Kenton High School graduate and member of the Cadet Public Relations Council (CPRC). Cadet Wells, in his third year ("Cow" year) at West Point, is majoring in Defense and Strategic Studies Major, participating in club hockey and Sandhurst (an international military competition), and is a part of Company C4. He is on the Environmental Engineering Track, has studied German, and plans to branch Infantry following in his grandfather's footsteps.

Cadet Wells was accompanied by Dan Tobergte, West Point Field Force Representative for the Fourth Congressional District, who assists students in achieving an appointment to West Point in the Hudson Valley of New York. Dan, interned at the City of Florence in the early 1980's and worked with Northern Kentucky Tri-ED for over 25 years and has a son and daughter-in-law who are both 2014 West Point graduates.

Cadet Wells thanked everyone for the opportunity to attend the meeting and stated he had been working with Mr. Tobergte in public relations while he was home. Cadet Wells grew up in Independence and currently resides in New York. Cadet Wells chose to follow the path of his grandfather, a Vietnam combat veteran, and Green Beret. He is currently in his third year at West Point, developing his leadership style and leading others.

Mayor Aubuchon thanked Cadet Wells and Mr. Tobergte for attending the meeting.

FIRST READING ORDINANCE O-6-2024:

Mayor Aubuchon read Ordinance O-6-2024. An Ordinance of the City of Florence, Kentucky, changing the name of Holiday Drive to Betsy Conrad Way.

This Ordinance changes the name of the public way presently known as Holiday Drive to Betsy Conrad Way.

The full text of Ordinance O-6-2024, including its exhibits, is available for examination in the office of the City Clerk of the City of Florence, Kentucky, in the Florence Government Center, 8100 Ewing Blvd., Florence, Kentucky, during regular office hours.

Mayor Aubuchon called for a motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance O-6-2024. Councilmember Winn motioned to approve, with a second from Councilmember Carroll.

Councilmember Carroll stated Betsy held various roles in government, working for both Boone County and the City of Florence, including serving as a city clerk and on city council. He recalled Betsy being an exemplary individual, family member, and community member. Councilmember Carroll stated her passing a few years ago was a significant loss for her family and the community and he acknowledged her husband, Steve, in the attendance.

Councilmember Osborne stated he had known Betsy for a long time, as well as her husband Steve, and their daughter who works at the airport. He commended Betsy's dedication to her family, her job as a city clerk, and her education. Councilmember Osborne acknowledged her absence and expressed happiness that a street was being named in her honor. He also expressed his joy that her family was present in the audience.

In honor of Betsy, Mayor Aubuchon read the complete Ordinance into the record:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF FLORENCE, KENTUCKY, CHANGING THE NAME OF HOLIDAY DRIVE TO BETSY CONRAD WAY.

WHEREAS, Betsy Conrad's legacy is underscored by her 22 years of dedicated service as Florence City Clerk/Human Resources Director, as well as her role as a two-term member of the Florence City Council (2005-2008), and

WHEREAS, Betsy Conrad was instrumental in creating the Northern Kentucky Municipal Clerk's Association and was named Clerk of the Year twice, and

WHEREAS, Betsy Conrad's impactful volunteer efforts, including her leadership as President of the Florence Woman's Club and the Boone County Historical Society, have left a positive mark on various organizations within Florence and Boone County, and

WHEREAS, Betsy Conrad's recognition as the Florence Rotary Citizen of the Year in 2004, coupled with her Kentucky Colonel membership, further exemplify her commitment to the City, and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and members of City Council deem it appropriate to honor her memory and pay tribute to her remarkable contributions by naming a street in the City in her honor.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF FLORENCE, KENTUCKY, AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION I

That the public way presently known as Holiday Drive, more particularly described on Exhibit "A" attached hereto and as shown on Exhibit "B" attached hereto, is hereby renamed BETSY CONRAD WAY, and will forever be known by that title.

SECTION II

That the appropriate officials of the City are hereby authorized and directed to take such actions as are necessary to accomplish the renaming herein authorized.

SECTION III

This Ordinance shall be published by posting on the City's internet website.

No further discussion was necessitated and based on the motion to approve Ordinance O-6-2024 by Councilmember Winn and seconded by Councilmember Carroll, Mayor Aubuchon requested a Roll Call Vote. Councilmember Carroll, yes; Councilmember Chambers, yes; Councilmember Winn, yes; Councilmember Osborne, yes. **Roll call recognized four yes votes approving the first reading of Ordinance O-6-2024 by unanimous vote.**

Mayor Aubuchon recognized former Mayor Whalen in the audience. Mayor Aubuchon stated Betsy served under Mayor Whalen for many years and thanked her for her support.

FIRST READING ORDINANCE O-7-2024:

Mayor Aubuchon read Ordinance O-7-2024. An Ordinance of the City of Florence, Kentucky, changing the name of a section of Cardinal Drive and Commerce Place to Tom Gill Way.

This Ordinance changes the name of a portion of the public way presently known as Cardinal Drive and Commerce Place to Tom Gill Way.

The full text of Ordinance O-7-2024, including its exhibits, is available for examination in the office of the City Clerk of the City of Florence, Kentucky, in the Florence Government Center, 8100 Ewing Blvd., Florence, Kentucky, during regular office hours.

Mayor Aubuchon called for a motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance O-7-2024. Councilmember Winn motioned to approve, with a second from Councilmember Osborne. Mayor Aubuchon requested a Roll Call Vote. Councilmember Carroll, yes; Councilmember Chambers, yes; Councilmember Winn, yes; Councilmember Osborne, yes. **Roll call recognized four yes votes approving the first reading of Ordinance O-7-2024 by unanimous vote.**

RESOLUTION R-1-2024:

Mayor Aubuchon read Resolution R-1-2024. A Resolution of the City of Florence, Kentucky, adopting the Northern Kentucky 2024 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Mayor Aubuchon and Assistant Chief Black expressed their support for the plan that was reviewed by the departments. Mayor Aubuchon stated city personnel had attended workshops and worked together with other cities and Boone County to identify hazards such as tornadoes and flooding to formulate appropriate responses.

Mayor Aubuchon called for a motion to approve Resolution R-1-2024. Councilmember Winn motioned to approve Resolution R-1-2024 with a second from Councilmember Osborne. Mayor Aubuchon requested a Roll Call Vote. Councilmember Carroll, yes; Councilmember Chambers, yes; Councilmember Winn, yes; Councilmember Osborne, yes. **Roll call recognized four yes votes approving the Resolution R-1-2024 by unanimous vote.**

RESOLUTION R-2-2024:

Mayor Aubuchon read Resolution R-2-2024. A Resolution of the City of Florence, Kentucky, amending its Non-Exclusive Franchise to Kentucky Backhaul Transmission Networks, LLC, thereby Amending Resolution No. R-7-17.

Mayor Aubuchon called for a motion to approve Resolution R-2-2024. Councilmember Winn motioned to approve Resolution R-2-2024 with a second from Councilmember Carroll.

Mayor Aubuchon called upon Joshua Hunt, Director of Administration/City Administrator, with regard to the Resolution. Mr. Hunt explained that franchise agreements permit utility companies to operate within public rights of way. He stated the agreements typically include a \$50,000 bond to cover potential damage or permit violations. Therefore, franchise agreements ensure utility companies can operate while protecting the city's interests. This Resolution was for a name change based on the agreement in 2017.

No further discussion was necessitated and based on the motion to approve Resolution R-2-2024 by Councilmember Winn and seconded by Councilmember Carroll, Mayor Aubuchon requested a Roll Call Vote. Councilmember Carroll, yes; Councilmember Chambers, yes; Councilmember Winn, yes; Councilmember Osborne, yes. **Roll call recognized four yes votes approving Resolution R-2-2024 by unanimous vote.**

MAYOR'S REPORT:

- Mayor Aubuchon thanked all the city staff who assisted with the Florence Police Department Annual Easter Egg Hunt. She stated the event was well attended and everyone had a great time.
- Mayor Aubuchon announced city offices will be closed Friday March 29.
- Mayor Aubuchon reminded everyone Florence Aquatic Center memberships go on sale April 1. Memberships will be sold online only through the city website. For more information, please contact 859-371-5491.
- Mayor Aubuchon reminded everyone the Family Nurturing Center Blue Ribbon Ceremony would be held on Friday, April 5 at Tom Gill Chevrolet from 11:30-1:00 p.m. The event is a kick-off to Child Abuse Prevention Month in April.
- Mayor Aubuchon reminded everyone the city was hosting a second blood drive on April 11.
- Mayor Aubuchon announced Spring Clean Up week was scheduled for April 22-28. Call the Public Services Department at 859-647-5416 for additional information.
- Mayor Aubuchon reminded everyone the Great American Clean Up Event would be held on Saturday, April 27 from 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Volunteers will register, receive cleaning supplies, and be transported to various locations throughout the city. Free lunch will be served to the volunteers. Contact Victoria Riley at 859-647-5425 for more information or to sign up.

RECOGNITION:

Mayor Aubuchon asked if any of the following desired recognition:

Members of City Council:

None desired recognition.

Department Heads:

Fire/EMS Assistant Chief, John Black:

Assistant Chief Black 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.

Director of Administration/City Administrator, Joshua J. Hunt:

Mr. Hunt did not desire recognition.

Members of the Audience:

Betsy Rossi, President of the Northern Kentucky Beekeepers Association, expressed her desire for changes to zoning regulations in Florence that currently prohibit beekeeping in single-family residential zones. She stated the issue arose when a member of their association was instructed to remove their beekeeping equipment due to the city regulations. Ms. Rossi believes that with education and dialogue, a mutually beneficial solution could be found and urged the city to reconsider.

Alex Evans, owner of Grateful Skate Shop in Florence, expressed his interest and urged councilmembers to consider extended hours and lighting the Boone/Florence Skate Park. He stated the park is very popular and highly used. He believed that lighting would benefit not only park users, who often are in school or work during the day, but also local businesses in the area due to increased traffic at the park. Mr. Evans gathered 1000 signatures in support of his initiative and believed that the change would create a safer and more accessible community space.

Gabrielle Larkin, founder of the Cincinnati Skate Collective (CSC) and resident of Cincinnati, expressed her support for the skate community in Cincinnati and surrounding areas, including Florence, by providing free education, support, and resources to skaters at the Florence Skate Park. She stated they frequently used the Florence Skate park for their events as Cincinnati did not have an adequate park. She urged council to increase the park usage and support the skate community by turning on the lights already installed at the park for evening use.

PROCLAMATION:

Mayor Aubuchon acknowledged and thanked Chief of Police Tom Grau for his service as the Chief of Police for the Florence Police Department and his many years of service to the City of Florence.

Mayor Aubuchon recognized Chief Grau and issued a Proclamation proclaiming May 1, 2024, as Chief Tom Grau Day reading the following Proclamation into record:

***WHEREAS**, on May 1, 2024, Chief of Police Tom Grau will retire from the City of Florence Police Department, marking 29 years of dedicated public service to the City of Florence and the community; and*

***WHEREAS**, Chief Grau, having graduated from the University of Cincinnati with a degree in Criminal Justice in 1995, commenced his tenure with the City of Florence Police Department on May 1 of the same year. He holds the distinction of being the final officer hired by Mayor Evelyn Kalb and Chief of Police Charlie Callen and is a proud member of the Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice Academy Class #240; and*

***WHEREAS**, Chief Grau has demonstrated exceptional leadership continuously progressing through the ranks holding every rank within the department including Corporal, Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain and ultimately Chief of Police; and*

***WHEREAS**, throughout his career, Chief Grau has served in every unit within the department, including but not limited to patrol, detectives, community resource, Crime Suppression Unit/Drug Unit and has served as an Accident Reconstructionist, Hostage Negotiator, Field Training Officer, and Public Information Officer, showcasing his versatility and commitment to public safety; and*

***WHEREAS**, Chief Grau has continuously enhanced his expertise and knowledge, completing the Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command Class #250 in 2007, thereby enriching his leadership skills and contributing to the advancement of the department; and*

***WHEREAS**, Chief Grau has been duly recognized for his outstanding contributions as the 2009 Officer of the Year by the Florence Rotary Club and the 2011 Kentucky Court of Justice Award for his innovative efforts in establishing the Teen Academy for first-time youthful offenders' diversion class.*

***NOW, THEREFORE**, I, Julie M. Aubuchon, Mayor of the City of Florence, and on behalf of the members of Florence City Council, express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to Chief Grau and do hereby proclaim May 1, 2024, as:*

“CHIEF TOM GRAU DAY”

for his dedicated service, unwavering commitment, and invaluable contributions to the safety and well-being of our city. We extend our heartfelt wishes for a well-deserved retirement filled with happiness, fulfillment, and fond memories of an outstanding career in law enforcement.

***IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the City of Florence, Kentucky, to be affixed hereto, this 26th day of March 2024.*

Councilmember Carroll stated that Chief Grau's leadership shaped the police department, emphasizing his service and community outreach. He praised Chief Grau's ability to balance law

enforcement with a social work approach, noting his non-confrontational yet effective style, and expressed that Chief Grau will be missed.

Chief Grau expressed gratitude for the opportunities offered to him twenty-nine years ago by former Mayor Evelyn Kalb and Police Chief Charlie Callen. Chief Grau shared his journey from interning in Cheviot to becoming a police officer in Florence, guided by advice from Officer Ed Taylor. He acknowledged the support he received over the years from his family, colleagues, and city leaders, and expressed his gratitude for their contributions to his career. Chief Grau stated as he steps aside, he reassured everyone that the department is in capable hands with a talented group of young officers ready to lead. In his closing remarks, Chief Grau stated that the Florence Police Department will continue to be one of the best in the region, stating the department's commitment to community engagement reflected his daily message to them.

CLOSED SESSION:

Mayor Aubuchon called for a motion to go into Closed 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 Carroll. **All councilmembers present voted aye, the time being 6:37 p.m.** Mayor Aubuchon advised they would return to the room to adjourn and did not anticipate any further business taking place following Closed Session.

Mayor Aubuchon called for a motion to come back into session after the Closed Session. Councilmember Chambers so moved, with a second from Councilmember Osborne. **All councilmembers present voted aye, the time being 6:58 p.m.**

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Council, Mayor Aubuchon called for a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Chambers so moved, with a second from Councilmember Osborne. **Councilmembers present voted aye, the time being 6:59 p.m.**

APPROVED:

/s/ Julie M. Aubuchon
Julie M. Aubuchon, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/ Melissa Kramer
Melissa Kramer, City Clerk

