



**Florence City Council  
Business Meeting  
Tuesday, January 28, 2025  
6:00 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

The City Council of the City of Florence, Kentucky, met in regular session on Tuesday, January 28, 2025, 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 five (5) members of council were registered present: Angie Cable, Lesley Chambers, Diane E. Whalen (Vice-Mayor), Patricia Wingo and Gary Winn.

Staff members present were: City Attorney, Thomas R. Nienaber; Finance Director, Jason Lewis; Fire/EMS Chief, Rodney Wren; Chief of Police, Jeff Mallery; 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, Jason Reed.

The following were also present in the audience: Director of Community Development, Todd Morgan; Assistant City Clerk, Brandi Roundtree; Battalion Chief of EMS, Danielle Stiner; Battalion Chief of Training, Matt Pleiman; Assistant Fire/EMS Chief, Chris Miller; Fire/EMS Commander Dave Dannemiller; Fire/EMS Captain Sam Money; Firefighter/Paramedic, Christian Ritchie; Firefighter/EMT Ryan Johnston; Members of the Florence Fire/EMS Department; St. Elizabeth EMS Outreach Coordinator, Josh Cox; Resident of Florence, Thomas Judd; Resident of Florence, James Leach; Resident of Florence, Naomi Liebson; Seva Hospitality Managing Partner, Ravi Narsinghani; and NKY Tribune Reporter, Trisha Scheyer.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Mayor Aubuchon called for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2025 business meeting. Councilmember Whalen motioned to approve the minutes with a second from Councilmember Wingo. **All councilmembers present voted aye.**

**RECOGNITION:**

Mayor Aubuchon announced that Firefighter/Paramedic Christian Ritchie and Firefighter/EMT Ryan Johnston were being recognized by St. Elizabeth Healthcare for their exceptional service. She explained that on November 21, 2024, they recognized a patient was suffering from a stroke and had the quickest door to needle time for the month of November. Through their rapid assessment and notification to the hospital, the patient was able to receive lifesaving thrombolytics treatment.

Mayor Aubuchon introduced Josh Cox, Manager of EMS Community Outreach with St. Elizabeth to present Firefighter/Paramedic Christian Ritchie and Firefighter/EMT Ryan Johnston with certificates from St. Elizabeth Healthcare.

Mr. Cox explained that “Target: Stroke”, a national initiative launched by the American Heart Association in 2010, aims to improve acute ischemic stroke care by reducing treatment upon hospital arrival. Now in Phase III, it emphasizes coordination across the entire care system, including EMS, to enhance patient outcomes through rapid response, identification and transport.

Mr. Cox stated that Firefighter/Paramedic Christian Ritchie and Firefighter/EMT Ryan Johnston played a key role in achieving St. Elizabeth Healthcare’s fastest needle delivery of Tenecteplase in November 2024. With treatment administered within twenty-five minutes, meeting the 30-minute challenge goal, their treatment enhanced the patient’s outcome. Mr. Cox presented certificates, brains pins, and challenge coins to Firefighter/Paramedic Christian Ritchie and Firefighter/EMT Ryan Johnston. Mr. Cox thanked them for their collaboration and exceptional service and expressed appreciation for all first responders.

**FIRST READING ORDINANCE O-1-2025:**

Mayor Aubuchon read Ordinance O-1-2025. An Ordinance Adopting and Approving a Zoning Map Amendment from Commercial Two/Planned Development/Houston Donaldson Study Corridor (C-2/PD/HDO) to Office Two/Planned Development/Houston Donaldson Study Corridor (O-2/PD/HDO) for an approximate 5.3 Acre Area located at 5935 and 5945 Merchants Street, Florence, Kentucky, to allow the development of a four-story, 62,000 square foot hotel. (Seva at Merchants Square II, LLC/Kemba Credit Union, Inc.)

The effect of this Ordinance is to allow a zoning map amendment from Commercial Two/Planned Development/Houston Donaldson Study Corridor (C-2/PD/HDO) to Office Two/Planned Development/Houston Donaldson Study Corridor (O-2/PD/HDO) for an approximate 5.3-acre site located at 5935 and 5945 Merchants Street, Florence, Kentucky, to allow the development of a four-story, 62,000 square foot hotel.

The full text of Ordinance O-1-2025 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-1-2025.

Councilmember Wingo motioned to approve, with a second from Councilmember Winn.

Councilmember Cable inquired about the conditions set forth by the Boone County Planning Commission as she was unable to find the documentation in her packet.

Mayor Aubuchon stated the information should have been included in the packet from the previous week.

Mayor Aubuchon read the conditions recommended by the Boone County Planning Commission, including the additional condition recommended by the Florence Planning and Zoning Committee. A copy of the paperwork was provided to Councilmember Cable.

Councilmember Cable requested confirmation that the conditions addressed the concerns brought up during the public hearing by residents. Director of Community Development, Todd Morgan, confirmed the conditions addressed the concerns.

Councilmember Cable asked about the current hotel occupancy levels in Florence. Director of Administration/City Administrator, Joshua J. Hunt responded that occupancy levels were approximately 70% varying by season. He noted that this would be the thirteenth hotel built in the past nine years and emphasized that the city upholds high architectural standards which the proposed hotel would surpass.

Mayor Aubuchon noted that a significant portion of the hotel traffic is generated from the Ark and Creation Museums.

Councilmember Cable acknowledged the traffic generated by the Ark and Creation Museum and inquired about the bed tax on hotel stays, specifically why the city does not receive those funds.

Mayor Aubuchon explained that the city does not receive the bed tax funds directly. Instead, the revenue is allocated through meetNKY which reinvests in various programs that benefit the community.

Councilmember Chambers asked about specific projects benefitting from meetNKY. Mr. Hunt explained that meetNKY focuses on promoting regional tourism across Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati. He noted that the organization had created advertisements for local restaurants and tourism events. By taking a regional approach, meetNKY aims to attract visitors to convention spaces, ultimately driving hotel occupancy and boosting businesses in the city's shopping districts.

Councilmember Whalen asked if meetNKY still maintained a direct link for Florence on their website. Mr. Hunt confirmed that the link remains active and added that they also promote the area through direct mail campaigns and magazine advertisements. He noted that Florence generated 40% of meetNKY's revenue as most Northern Kentucky's hotels were located in the city.

Councilmember Whalen noted that the city has long discussed how resources are distributed, with a focus often placed on cities closer to Cincinnati. However, she acknowledged that meetNKY has recently been more receptive to Florence's needs and has increased its focus on the city.

Mayor Aubuchon sought clarification that the bed tax should not influence how councilmembers should vote on a zoning issue for a hotel. City Attorney Thomas Nienaber confirmed that the bed tax should have no bearing on a zoning issue.

Based on the motion to approve Ordinance O-1-2025 by Councilmember Wingo and seconded by Councilmember Winn, Mayor Aubuchon requested a Roll Call Vote. Councilmember Wingo, yes; Councilmember Chambers, yes; Councilmember Winn, yes; Councilmember Whalen, yes; Councilmember Cable, yes. **Roll call recognized five yes votes approving the first reading of Ordinance O-1-2025 by unanimous vote.**

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

- Mayor Aubuchon thanked everyone that contributed to the Valentines for Troops and informed everyone that the city collected over 1,600 Valentines.
- Mayor Aubuchon reminded everyone that the Virtual Open House for the Florence Parks Master Plan will be active until January 31.
- Mayor Aubuchon announced the City of Florence, in collaboration with the Hoxworth Blood Center, was hosting a blood drive on February 6.
- Mayor Aubuchon announced that Monday, February 17, Presidents' Day, the City of Florence offices would be open with Presidents Day display in the lobby.
- Mayor Aubuchon announced that on Friday evening, February 28, there would be a "Books & Bottles" event at the Florence Nature Park Event Center. Registration for the Books & Bottle Event was online on the city website and on Facebook.
- Mayor Aubuchon announced the Children's Book Festival would be held Saturday morning, March 1 from 10:00 – 12:00 p.m. at the Florence Nature Park Event Center. The Saturday morning event will include an author story time, puppet show and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

### **RECOGNITION:**

Members of City Council:

Councilmember Wingo stated that she had recently learned servicemembers from Fort Campbell were deployed to the southern border and expressed uncertainty about whether any Renegades were among those reporting.

Councilmember Chambers inquired if councilmembers voted on individuals appointed to the Veterans Commission. Mayor Aubuchon stated members of the Veterans Commission were appointed by Executive Order.

Department Heads:

Fire/EMS Chief, Rodney Wren:

Chief Wren did not desire recognition.

Public Services Director, Eric Hall:

Mr. Hall did not desire recognition.

Chief of Police, Jeff Mallery:

Chief Mallery did not desire recognition.

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

Mr. Hunt did not desire recognition.

Finance Director, Jason Lewis:

Mr. Lewis did not desire recognition.

Members of the Audience:

Naomi Liebson, Resident of Florence, expressed concern the Ku Klux Klan had been handing out flyers in Cincinnati, Covington, and other parts of Northern Kentucky regarding a meeting that would take place in Indiana on February 15. She encouraged the city to step up security and informed everyone that she had already contacted the NAACP to ensure they were aware of the meeting.

**CLOSED SESSION:**

Mayor Aubuchon called for a motion to go into Closed Session pursuant to KRS 61.810(1)(f) appointment, discipline, or dismissal of personnel. Councilmember Whalen so moved with a second from Councilmember Winn. **All councilmembers present voted aye, the time being 6:20 p.m.**

Mayor Aubuchon called for a motion to come back into session after the Closed Session. Councilmember Whalen so moved, with a second from Councilmember Winn. **All councilmembers present voted aye, the time being 7:02 p.m.**

Mayor Aubuchon called upon Vice Mayor Whalen to provide an update regarding the decision to fill the current City Council vacancy. Vice Mayor Whalen stated following the death of David A. Osborne, City Council received many qualified applicants for the vacant seat. During previous Closed Sessions, City Council reviewed and discussed the applicants. Vice Mayor Whalen advised that members of City Council had unanimously chosen David M. Schneider to fill the vacant seat on City Council due to the death of former councilmember David A. Osborne.

**RESOLUTION R-2-2025:**

Vice Mayor Whalen read Resolution R-2-2025 for consideration. A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Florence, Kentucky appointing David M. Schneider to fill the vacancy on City Council Created by the death of David A. Osborne.

Mayor Aubuchon called for a motion to approve Resolution R-2-2025. Councilmember Winn motioned to approve Resolution R-2-2025 with a second from Councilmember Whalen.

Councilmember Chambers expressed appreciation for the many outstanding individuals who applied for the vacant council position. She enjoyed getting to know some of the candidates and thanked all of them for their willingness to serve.

Vice Mayor Whalen noted that there were nineteen candidates and encouraged those who expressed interest to stay engaged and consider joining in the future.

Based on the motion to approve Resolution R-2-2025 by Councilmember Winn and seconded by Councilmember Whalen, Mayor Aubuchon requested a Roll Call Vote. Councilmember Wingo, yes; Councilmember Chambers, yes; Councilmember Winn, yes; Councilmember Whalen, yes; Councilmember Cable, yes. **Roll call recognized five yes votes approving Resolution R-2-2025 by unanimous vote.**

**ADJOURNMENT:**

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

**ATTEST:**

/s/ Melissa Kramer  
Melissa Kramer, City Clerk

**APPROVED:**

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

