

Minutes
Committee of the Whole
March 3, 2025

The Committee of the Whole met on March 3, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Conference Room at the City Building. The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Vice Mayor April Robles. Attendance was as follows:

Members Present: April Robles, Jodi Woffington, Cindy Peebles, Dan Driehaus

Staff Present: Rusty Herzog-City Manager, Dennis Brown, Fire Chief; Brooke Brady-Police Chief; Jeremiah Caudill-Finance Director; Rob Nicolls-Public Works Director; Megan Statt Blake-Community Development Director

Others: Tim Weber-Wyoming City Schools Superintendent; Ronda Johnson-Treasurer; Mike Ruetschle-Architect

School Swing Space at Friendship Methodist Church

Rusty Herzog introduced the main agenda item, which focused on the school's proposed swing space location at Friendship Methodist Church. He invited Superintendent Tim Weber and his team to present the details. Mr. Weber provided an overview, accompanied by Ronda Johnson, the Treasurer, and Mike Ruetschle, an architect from Ruetschle Architects. They explained that the primary schools, Vermont, Hilltop, and Elm, required temporary housing during construction. The final redevelopment plan was approved in November 2024 with 69% voter support for a \$72.5 million budget to rebuild the schools on their current sites. Initially, the swing space proposal included modular classrooms at the high school softball field and the middle school.

During the evaluation of alternative sites, several locations were considered. Hilltop Park was ruled out due to proximity to water storage and fall zone restrictions of the water tower. St. James was deemed viable but was contractually infeasible. The Civic Center and parks such as Crescent, Grove, and Oak were rejected due to space limitations, traffic concerns, and infrastructure constraints. The middle school backyard and high school softball field were initially selected but posed challenges related to traffic flow and facility limitations. In December, Friendship Methodist Church proposed its space, which was found to be superior due to cost savings, better access, and improved student facilities.

The benefits of using Friendship Methodist Church as a swing space include significant cost savings, allowing for increased classroom sizes and additional special education spaces in the new schools. The location provides better access, a full gym, a cafeteria, and an overall improved student experience. Additionally, using the church preserves the high school softball field for athletic use and supports the church's mission by utilizing underused space.

The proposed timeline for the swing space implementation begins in the summer of 2025, when Hilltop will relocate to Friendship Church. In December 2026, Hilltop will return to its new building, and Vermont will move into the church. Vermont is expected to transition back to its new building by spring 2028. Elm will relocate to modular units in the middle school backyard between the summer of 2026 and summer of 2027.

Traffic and safety considerations were also discussed. The proposed plan includes traffic entering from Fleming Road and exiting right onto Springfield Pike. Modifications to traffic lights at Fleming and Springfield Pike and Pendery and Springfield Pike will be made to improve traffic flow. Additional crossing guards will be placed at key intersections, along with signage control and fencing to prevent unsafe pedestrian crossings. Parking and stacking issues will be mitigated by utilizing the municipal lot as a relief zone and adjusting striping on Fleming Road to accommodate right-turn lanes. Public engagement efforts included a neighborhood meeting and a Planning Commission review, where concerns regarding traffic and safety were noted and will continue to be addressed.

Council Discussion & Feedback

During the discussion, Council Member Peebles clarified the budget reallocation and expressed appreciation for the reinvestment into permanent school facilities. Council Member Woffington raised concerns over high school driver safety near the swing space. Vice Mayor Robles requested pedestrian route adjustments to accommodate walkers and bikers. Council Member Driehaus noted community concerns regarding traffic cut-throughs and speeding on Fleming Road.

Planning Commission & Approval Process

The Planning Commission recommended approval of the project. The Development Plan Exemption process was explained, with city staff and the school district continuing to address the concerns raised.

Miscellaneous Agenda Items

Mr. Herzog presented a draft proclamation to stand against hate crimes. Council Member Peebles suggested revisions for clarity and grammatical correctness. Feedback will be sent to the Mayor and city staff for further refinement.

Chief Brady provided a report on police department activities, stating that February saw a rise in fraud cases related to tax season. Additionally, an indictment was secured against a scammer who defrauded a local resident of \$10,000.

Ms. Statt Blake provided an update on the transition of West Side Brewery, which took over food and beverage operations from Gilligan's on the Green. The transition is ongoing, with a shift toward a more casual brewpub concept. Infrastructure repairs, including HVAC and plumbing, are underway, and St. Patrick's Day is planned as a major relaunch event.

Mr. Herzog informed the Council Members that updates on upcoming road projects are expected at the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

Adjournment

Council Member Woffington made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Council Member Driehaus. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Rusty Herzog, City Manager