

MINUTES
Wyoming City Council
August 21 , 2023

The Wyoming City Council met in regular session on August 21, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. Mayor Monich called the meeting to order. In attendance were:

Council Members:

Dan Driehaus
Grant Hoffman
Melissa Monich
April Robles
Sarah Stankorb Taylor
Jodi Woffington
Chris Woodside

Others:

Rusty Herzog, City Manager
Emily Supinger, City Solicitor

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:

Ms. Woffington moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Hoffman seconded the motion. There being no discussion, the motion to approve the following items on the Consent Agenda carried with all voting yes:

- July 17, 2023 City Council Meeting Minutes
- Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Enter into a Joint Agreement Between the Board of County Commissioners, Hamilton County, Ohio, and the City of Wyoming Ohio to Administer a Community Revitalization Grant Awarded for Infrastructure

SPECIAL REPORTS/MINUTES:

No comments were received.

VERBAL REPORT FROM THE CITY MANAGER:

Mr. Herzog thanked the community for their patience during this active construction season.

The Wyoming Car Show returns this weekend. The event will be held on Saturday, August 26th from 5:00-8:00 p.m. on Wyoming Avenue. The show will feature over 40 exotic super cars and there will be live music by The Evan Mathews Band, with food and drinks from our local businesses. This is a family-friendly event that is great for all ages.

The last day the Family Aquatic Center will be open will be on Labor Day from noon until 6:00 p.m. From 7:00-8:30 p.m. The Aquatic Center will be hosting the annual Dawg Days of Summer. Spectators are welcome. The cost is \$5 per dog, humans are free. This is a rain or shine event.

REPORTS OF STANDING COUNCIL COMMITTEES:

No comments were received.

REPORTS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES:

No reports were received.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:

No comments were received.

BUSINESS:

A. Update from Commissioner Driehaus on Current County Business and Opportunities:
Commissioner Driehaus introduced herself and thanked Council for the opportunity to speak. She is setting a goal to visit the 49 jurisdictions of the County to say hello and to try to be a better partner. She distributed a “Menu of Opportunity” to share the many County resources that are available for local governments and communities.

Commissioner Driehaus shared that the County is preparing its annual budget at this time and is setting priorities to maintain its status as an employer of choice. This is being accomplished by paying employees competitive wages, providing benefits such as a parental leave policy and tuition reimbursement. When she last visited Wyoming in 2017, she was not able to share these benefits as it was not the case at that time. Since then, things have shifted, and the County has more resources available to stabilize the workforce. The County is still experiencing challenges, as many businesses are, in hiring more staff. The need currently exists with emergency communications, the jails, and in the juvenile child services division. While the County is now providing competitive wages, it is still seeking people that want to be part of the community and to serve the County. If anyone is interested in County employment, she encouraged them to contact her.

Additionally, Commissioner Driehaus shared that the County is moving towards a more sustainable operation with the installation of solar panels in some of its buildings. Also, EV vehicles are being purchased for County use and charging stations are being installed in parking garages and lots as well.

Currently, the County is studying the Mill Creek Bike Trail and whether it can fund portions that can benefit the County. Ultimately, bike trails have been shown to be a successful economic development tool and provide a good quality of life for residents. The County has also begun a new program called the 513Relief Bus which travels around to various communities to provide things such as health screenings and social services such as access to the FreeStore Food Bank. The bus is also a mobile medical bus and is equipped with the technology to provide an array of services from healthcare to enrolling in relief programs for Hamilton County residents. The bus will travel to a municipal building, school or a church and provide these services to the communities.

Commissioner Driehaus shared that she is the founder and chair of the Commission on Women and Girls and shared that the Commission was recently able to have state legislation passed that gives funding to provide free period products for girls in schools. The state has allocated \$5 million in its budget to fund the dispensers and for the products for the first year. She noted that a group of high school girls brought this issue to the Commissioners, and they were enlightened to the fact that families struggling with poverty also may have difficulties in buying period products and so the Commission was happy to be able to make inroads here.

Ms. Driehaus reported that the County is in negotiations with the Bengals on a new lease for the stadium which expires in 2026. Some may recall with the last lease negotiations, the County residents participated in about 98% of the funding to build the Bengals stadium and the Reds stadium. With this new lease, it is anticipated that financial support will also be provided by the team, the NFL, and the state.

Commissioner Driehaus thanked the City for being a partner with the County. In 2023, the City received a \$25,000 grant for the Residential Recycling Initiative program, approximately \$9,000 for the Waste Reduction Innovation Grant, a \$20,000 Small Event Grant for Fall Festival,

and just passed this evening, acceptance of a \$250,000 grant for the pavilion at Village Green. This partnership only works when we work together.

Mayor Monich commented that Rachel Leininger recently researched many of the smaller grants from the County that the City has received which totals \$451,966. The City is very appreciative to have that kind of partnership to allow us to take on some of our projects that we may not be able to handle with our regular budget. It all makes Wyoming a better place and the City thanks the County for its partnership.

B. Public Hearing on the Development Plan Application for the Brave Like Brayden Community Dog Park Located at 514-520 Van Roberts Place and Amending the Zoning Code:
Mayor Monich opened the public hearing.

Mr. Herzog presented the staff report in a PowerPoint presentation. The content of the slides was as follows:

Brave Like Me Foundation

- Brave Like Me Foundation would like to gift a dog park to the City of Wyoming.
- The Foundation would complete fundraising for the project with the goal of building a dog park for the City sometime in 2024.

- Concept discussion began December 2022
- Recreation Commission April 6, 2023
- City Council at Committee of the Whole April 24, 2023
- Development Plan Application July 10, 2023
- First Reading City Council July 17, 2023
- Second Reading and Public Hearing at City Council August 21, 2023
- Third Reading City Council September 18, 2023

Project Input

- City staff
- Community members
- Local businesses
- Neighbors
- Recreation Commission
- Planning Commission

Potential Challenges

- Parking
 - We can add 4 parking spots to the lot on Wyoming Ave.
- Noise
 - Adjust hours of park if necessary.
 - Most activity at the park would probably take place during non-business hours.

Development Plan

- 514-520 Van Roberts Place (owned by the City of Wyoming).
- Currently zoned 'E' Commercial District.
- Prepared by John Otten with Brave Like Me Foundation.
- Property enclosed by 5-ft tall decorative aluminum fence.

- Artificial turf surface includes irrigation system for cleaning and heat management.
- Landscaping installed between Hike/Bike Trail and fence and additional areas in park.
- Approved by Planning Commission.

Master Plan

- Connections between the Master Plan and the proposed dog park:
 - Fostering Community Engagement and Social Connections
 - Promoting Walkability and Active Lifestyles
 - Enhancing the Business District and Economic Vitality
 - Strengthening the Sense of Place and Character

Candace Woodside, 609 Van Roberts Place, stated she has serious reservations about the proposal, and many are tied in with other issues. Under a previous Administration, Van Roberts Place was singled out and targeted as a blighted area. Suggestions were made to make Van Roberts Place a dead-end street or make it a one-way street; to the dismay of many people that lived on the street. This has led to healthy skepticism of City Council and the City Manager.

She believes that there are other places that would be more appropriate for a dog park. She read on Facebook that someone was very upset that the temporary dog park was where it is because of the Village Green construction and that they felt dogs were going to jump over the fence and get hit by a train. She suggested alternative dog park locations such as North Park and outside Oak Park next to the Hike/Bike Trail and the Mill Creek. There is also the space adjacent to the Civic Center and along Bonham Road as well.

Ms. Woodside expressed concern regarding the evergreen type trees that were planted across from her house when the old water treatment plant was demolished. The evergreen trees that were planted to help shield the sounds of the trains had died and they were never replaced by the city. A plant buffer that is well maintained would be highly desirable whether there is a dog park built or not. She does not have much faith in the promise that the dog park will be heavily landscaped.

Ms. Marily Huffman, 515 Van Roberts Place, addressed Council and stated that she lives directly across from the proposed dog park. Ms. Huffman provided Council with a history of Van Roberts Place and how the residents were treated by a past administration. This past administration expressed desire to acquire her house to expand the Hike/Bike Trail down Van Roberts Place as well as other redevelopment suggestions. After the residents had expressed displeasure of the idea of making the street a one-way street, it was determined that the area was considered blighted. This method of acquisition did not work as well and was followed by a Building Department employee conducting property maintenance inspections.

Ms. Huffman explained that many decades ago, Van Roberts Place was an old black neighborhood and at that time the blighted label was applied to the street, there was a large number of black parents who still lived on Van Roberts Place. It was a hardship for them to have to fix all the things that the City wanted them to fix. Everyone did what they needed to do and this attempt to take ownership of the homes did not work as well.

This was followed by the Police Department claiming a high level of drug activity was happening on Van Roberts Place although it was happening in Lockland, people were cutting through Van Roberts. Then, the idea of closing off Van Roberts Place from Wirtz Way to Wyoming Avenue was attempted. Which also did not work. If it had, it would have landlocked her house.

Ms. Huffman stated that she does not have any negative feelings towards the installation of the dog park but at this point, she cannot be in favor of it.

Ms. Karen Daughy, 519 Van Roberts Place, addressed City Council. She stated that she understands that a dog park is desired. She stated that she had a traumatic event that happened to her when she was bitten by a dog. Some people allow their dogs off their leash to let them run but she is very fearful of dogs and musters up the energy when walking her neighborhood. She knows that dogs can sense her fear and she tries to not live in fear but she will forever be fearful of all dogs.

Additionally, Ms. Daughy expressed concern that there will be events held at the dog park and parking is already a significant issue on Van Roberts Place during events. She grew up attending May Fete events and enjoys the events. However, now that she is older, when she arrives home, she just wants to have peace and to be able to park on her street near her house, but she is not able to do that. For these reasons, she is opposed to the dog park.

Ms. Cori Besse, 346 Hilltop Lane addressed City Council. She stated that she is the compliance officer for the Brave Like Me Foundation and can understand Ms. Woodside's concerns. She stated that when the Foundation began talking about a dog park, the board vetted every possible location within the City and felt that the Van Roberts Place greenspace is the best location for any number of reasons. When the idea was first discussed with the Recreation Commission, the proposal did not check off all the necessary boxes for the Recreation Commission members to feel comfortable enough to forward a recommendation. The Foundation sought input and feedback and addressed every concern that came up. Following a return discussion and review, the Recreation Commission was then able to unanimously recommend that the dog park idea proceed. The Planning Commission also voted unanimously to approve the dog park.

Ms. Besse explained that the proposal before Council was completed with intention. It has been done thoughtfully and carefully to be exactly the kind of amenity that the City needs. The dog park is a gift to the City and because residents have been asking the City for years to build a dog park, it is a gift to the City from the Foundation.

She stated that all possible places in Wyoming have been vetted. Ms. Besse stated that she is not familiar with the history of the issues that Van Roberts Place residents have had with the City but explained that the landscaping will be paid for and installed by the Foundation, not the City. As far as Ms. Dougherty's concerns about dogs being off leash, this concerns her as well, but the dog park will accomplish safety in this context. Instead of community members having their dogs off leash, walking around on the streets and sidewalks, they will have an enclosed place for them to be off leash.

Miss Allison Besse, 346 Hilltop Lane, spoke to City Council. She stated that she firmly believes that this dog park would help the community greatly. There are many people with pets in the community and there is a need for a dog park. The concerns of the people of the community regarding noise and safety is something that should be thought about and something that could be a major concern, but it is something that we can work together as a community to solve, letting us all have these things that we want.

Ms. Woodside addressed Council again and stated that she is 70 years old and was born and raised in Wyoming first living in her parents' home at Wyoming Avenue and Springfield Pike

and she has lived in her Van Roberts Place home for 30 years and Ms. Huffman has been in her Van Roberts Place home almost as long. She wished to point out the fact that she and Ms. Huffman live on Van Roberts Place and the previous commenters live on Hilltop Lane.

Mr. John Otten, 361 Circlewood Lane, addressed City Council. Mr. Otten stated that there have been plenty of facts shared tonight that he will not dispute with anyone beyond his opinion that he loves this community. Ever since he has lived here, he has loved it and wants to give back even though he cannot give back everything the community has given him in support of his son and his memory. He does not have the history that other people have had as he has only lived here about ten years, but it has been some of the hardest years of his life, if not one single summer, but it is still the best place for him. No matter what the decision is, he thanked City Council and everyone for being the community that we are. He would like to do something for the City that brings other people into the community and lets them see just a little of what Wyoming has to offer.

With no further comments from the public, Mayor Monich closed the public hearing.

C. Second Reading of the Ordinance Approving the Development Plan for the Brave Like Brayden Community Dog Park Located at 514-520 Van Roberts Place and Amending the Zoning Code: Ms. Stankorb Taylor asked clarification as to how many votes are necessary for the Ordinance to be adopted. Ms. Supinger stated that a simple majority vote is necessary to pass the Ordinance. Mayor Monich noted that this is the second reading and set the third reading for the September 18, 2023 City Council meeting.

D. First Reading of the Ordinance Amending Codified Ordinance Section 145.05, Unclassified Service, and Declaring an Emergency: Mr. Woodside moved to suspend the rules. Ms. Robles seconded the motion. By roll call vote, the motion to suspend the rules carried with all voting yes. Ms. Stankorb Taylor moved to adopt the Ordinance. Ms. Woffington seconded the motion. By roll call vote, the motion to adopt the Ordinance Amending Codified Ordinance Section 145.05, Unclassified Service, and Declaring an Emergency carried with all voting yes.

E. First Reading of the Ordinance Appropriating Revenues Within Certain Funds, Transferring Revenues From Certain Funds and Transferring Certain Funds Within Designated Accounts: Mr. Driehaus moved to suspend the rules. Mr. Hoffman seconded the motion. By roll call vote, the motion to suspend the rules carried with all voting yes. Mr. Driehaus moved to adopt the Ordinance. Mr. Hoffman seconded the motion. By roll call vote, the motion to adopt the Ordinance Appropriating Revenues Within Certain Funds, Transferring Revenues From Certain Funds and Transferring Certain Funds Within Designated Accounts carried with all voting yes.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Ms. Woffington thanked the Public Works Department, everywhere she goes they are there, working on something. There is so much work getting done and it is exciting to see so much activity happening in the community. Construction can be a little painful at times, but the Compton Road work will be awesome, and we appreciate it. She also stated that it is awesome that residents can come together to have a nice discussion in this forum as a community, it would be boring if everyone agreed on everything. It is nice to be able to listen to each other and respect each other's opinions and care about what we are being asked to bring to the community. She appreciates everyone that came to the meeting to talk about something they feel passionate about and share their positions on. It is the hallmark of a great community and great dialogue.

Mr. Hoffman thanked Officer Harrigan for his help with an accident that he experienced while working on his Twelve08 business. You oftentimes do not think about the emergency personnel that exists in the community until you need them, and he needed them. Officer Harrigan even helped get him lifted into the ambulance. That is not necessarily part of his job, but he appreciated it none the less. It took three people to help load him into the ambulance because some of the equipment was not working but they did their best and made the best of the situation. He appreciates all the extra help and support that he received and a quick response time as well.

Mr. Driehaus thanked Commissioner Driehaus for coming and for recognizing the collaboration between our jurisdiction and the County. He mentioned the period products that Commissioner Driehaus shared earlier with the \$5 million funding accomplishment. The Commission on Women and Girls, which is unique to Hamilton County, along with the three democratic Council Commissioners working with the state legislature, which is vastly republican, and under a republican budget, to include this funding in its budget is something for us to be proud of and he is very proud of this accomplishment.

He shared that he appreciates Ms. Woodside, Ms. Huffman, and Ms. Doughty coming to Council and sharing the history of their street. He also expressed appreciation to Mr. Otten, Ms. Besse, and other Foundation members who have navigated the space and the tools that are available through their Master Plan, the Recreation Commission for helping to work towards a solution that can work for a lot of residents. City Council is not voting on the dog park tonight, but the presentations were very helpful. As Miss Besse mentioned, it is nice to think about people working collaboratively, and not necessarily a republican or democrat subject but it is a community and listening to residents and working together to come to common solutions. He appreciates this spirit of collaboration, and the period product grant is a significant achievement that the County should be proud of.

Mr. Woodside commended the staff members of Wyoming that are seeking out and writing grant applications for funding. There are many people across the country that are hired and get paid a lot of money to do this for local governments and corporations. It is a testament to the amount of good money coming into our community that our staff is doing this work almost as a side portion of their jobs. We are very thankful for all the progress this hard work is making to uplift our city.

As for the dog park subject, sometimes a messy and emotional conversation must be had before you can get to the right side of the decision making. He is hopeful that the Van Roberts Place residents that spoke this evening feel that their voices are being heard and that the City will put into action what it says will happen. The 30+ years that Ms. Woodside, Ms. Huffman, and Ms. Doughty have lived on the same street will be taken into consideration. He added that he appreciates the work that the Foundation has done in supporting this wonderful cause and everyone will work together to come up with something that is good and worthy of Brayden and everything that he meant to this community.

Ms. Robles expressed appreciation for the ability for the County to work collaboratively with some of our neighborhoods to work together on projects, such as the Streetscape Project. She thanked the County for that opportunity. Ms. Robles stated that she is excited about the new Mug Club at Gilligan's on the Green that they will kick off at the car show this weekend. This will be a great opportunity for our community to help support its newest incoming business.

Lastly, she stated that she is proud of Sarah Stankorb Taylor on the release of her book, and she is glad to honor her in a professional way with her pursuits.

Ms. Stankorb Taylor recognized Rachel Leininger specifically for the grant writing that she has done. Many of the figures that the Mayor shared and Commissioner Driehaus shared are contributions to our community are thanks to Rachel; she has cracked the code of grant writing and we are all benefiting.

She stated that she would be remiss thinking about what we heard during the public hearing this evening. There is a sense of what it means to have history in Wyoming and that history can be measured in years. It can be measured in hurt feelings and actions and not being treated right a long time in the past. It can also be measured in a short period of time with great intense emotions and the friendships forged on one street and across the community, and she believes both were heard. She is hopeful, as we look forward, that trust can be reestablished and that the current Council and Administration are not the people that treated the Van Roberts Place residents so poorly in the past but that we are listening to the feelings they are having right now. She believes that the spirit is in the investment and instead of seeing any street as a blight, seeing it as a place where we can continue to pour the community into it and be valuable for the residents and to figure out how to make as many people as possible comfortable with that and at the same time doing it in the member of Brayden Otten who meant a lot to people in a short time. This is a lot to balance, and she is glad for all of people for coming tonight to make sure all these messages were heard.

Mayor Monich commented that Council is generally not used to having so many important things to discuss in one night. She would like to reinforce that there is no one on Council that does not want to earn the trust of every single citizen in Wyoming. This is extremely important to all of Council. Council works for every person to try and make Wyoming better for them individually and for all of Council as well.

Mayor Monich thanked Bobbi Strangfeld. She is the chair of the Urban Forestry & Beautification Commission. She has stepped down after serving many years due to an impending long-distance move. She has put a lot of passion into serving Wyoming and we are thankful for her service.

EXCUSAL OF ABSENT MEMBERS:

All members were present, there were none to excuse.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

There were no items for Executive Session.

ADJOURN:

With no further business to discuss, Ms. Stankorb Taylor moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Robles seconded the motion. All voted yes, the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debby Martin, Executive Assistant

Karen Zeilman, Clerk of Council

Melissa Monich, Mayor