Bedford, Ohio March 23, 2015

Community Ward Meeting for **Wards 2 & 4** was held at Bedford City Hall on Monday, March 23, 2015. Mayor Koci called the meeting to order at 7:01 P.M.

Present: Council Members: Mayor Stan Koci, Paula Mizsak, Walter Genutis, Don Saunders, Marilyn Zolata. Absent: Sandy Spinks, Greg Pozar. Also Present: Clerk of Council Lorree Villers. Administration: City Manager Michael Mallis, Superintendent Shawn Frances, Police Chief Kris Nietert, Fire Chief Dave Nagy, Assistant Recreation Director Jeff Fiala.

Mayor Koci and City Manager Mallis welcomed all residents. Mayor Koci said the most important thing this evening was to hear from the residents. He introduced those Council members who were present, spoke about the 2014 challenges regarding former Law Director Schuman and former Judge Jacobs investigations, Ben Venue closing a loss of 20% of the operating budget, City Manager Hank Angelo retired and the three changes on Council, he thanked Judge Melling and Clerk of Courts Day for their professionalism, the hiring of Law Director Montello, hiring of City Manager Mallis, he welcomed West Ward Pharmaceutical, 2014 had no cut of services or layoffs, $9+ million carryover in the General Fund, he commended/thanked the employees for their much appreciated efforts, he thanked Council members for their efforts, the loss of $1.7 million from the State and the loss of $2+ million from the closing of Ben Venue.

Councilwoman Mizsak reported the following for Ward 4:

- thanked the Service Department for snow removal, water and sewer services,
- thanked the Safety Forces for their excellent and professional services,
- was pleased residents kept their sidewalks clear from snow for the mailman,
- pointed out the new rubbish containers which should cut down on the blowing trash,
- invited everyone to the Easter Egg Hunt, Historical Society Concert, Rotary Pancake Breakfast, Memorial Day Parade and all the summer/seasonal events,
- and urged everyone to ask questions and voice their concerns.

Councilman Genutis reported the following for Ward 2:

- was honored to service the community,
- born and raised in Bedford and worked at Ben Venue for 34 years,
- brought a unique prospective to Council being an organic food producer,
- a Cuyahoga County OSU educator, Bedford Garden Club Board member and shared garden leader at the Community Garden,
- he urged everyone to grow vegetables, can produce, bake bread and pies,
- lives on Wellman Street, has two boys and introduced his wife an internationally renowned oil painter,
- and he had very deep roots in Bedford pertaining to the quality of life issues, a grave concern for the legacy of future generations and an extreme gratitude to have the opportunity to serve the community.

Mayor Koci urged everyone to take in the information provided this evening: Parties in the Park flyers, the Code Red registration sheet and the General Information List created by the Clerk of Council.

City Manager Michael Mallis introduced the Department Heads that were present this evening. He noted all the departments work together as a team to ensure quality service. He was proud to be working with the group of employees the City currently had on staff. He started the PowerPoint presentation highlighting all City Departments (see attached).

He added points of interest throughout the PowerPoint presentation as listed:

- 2014 Year End – $3.6 million general fund cash balance, additional State revenue cuts, $5.8 million reserve still intact ant the Closing of Ben Venue,
- Regionalization - The Regional Dispatch Center opened March 19, 2015 with a combination of Maple Heights, Bedford Heights, Garfield Heights and Bedford,
- 2015 News and Initiatives: Columbus Road Bridge update, Partnership with Tinkers Creek Watershed, Trash collection, ODNR regarding deer population, adjustment of Sewer and Chipper services, Potential Taft Park expansion for a dog park,
- Maintaining Neighborhoods – enforcing property maintenance, pursue home demolitions, concerns of the 315 vacant homes,
- Community Outreach – inform residents/businesses using utility bill inserts, Facebook, Twitter and E-News blasts, newly designed Resident Guide, Code Red,
- General Fund Cash Balance – see attached graph for a decline if the City doesn't take steps to avoid losses prior to 2019,
- Administrative Challenges – minimal levels while continuing quality services, change how services were delivered, union negotiations, healthcare changes, wellness program for the staff,
- Potential buyer for the Chanel property, acquisition of the 10+ acre Rysar Properties for development, Metroparks bike path into Bedford, highlight park attractions,
- 2015 & Beyond – work with Hikma representatives, efforts to market Bedford as a whole, develop Taylor/Willis property, collaborate with developers of Meadowbrook Market Square and Hemisphere to market Tinkers Creek Commerce Park.

Mr. Mallis and Mr. Gambosi explained:

- a $1.4 million cut by the State of Ohio annually,
- loss of the Inheritance Tax which was as high as $463,000 annually,
- the local Government Tax reduced from $778,000 to $336,000 annually. (Example: if the Automile sold 1,000 car a year at $25,000 each the Sales Tax sent to the State would give $66 million to the state and the City would only get $336,000),
- the loss of $2 million in taxes from the closing of Ben Venue,
- the loss of $800,000 in water and sewer consumption from the closing of Ben Venue,
- the current $9.5 million in the General Fund was because the City saved for a rainy day,
- the loss/effect of the decrease in real estate,
- every single revenue source was not decrease to the City,
- it was very difficult to continue City services and keep the adequate number of employees,
- the City experienced a loss of 30% of its revenue,
- 1999, 2001 and 2006 were the last high points of revenue sources,
- the City's financial ratings were downgraded to a lower rating,
- 2009 was the last increase in taxes in Bedford which was seven (7) years ago,
- they urged residents to understand the substantial cuts and losses the City was experiencing and facing.

City Manager Mallis and Mayor Koci opened the floor to the citizens.

A resident had concerns of the money spent on rubbish collection regarding the tonnage of specifically grass clippings being bagged for pickup. Mayor Koci urged the residents to mulch instead of bagging it for the rubbish. Mr. Mallis also pointed out the residents that blew the grass clippings into the street because it eventually ended up in the catch basin clogging the storm sewer creating problems.

Residents were urged to maintain their yards and flower beds but how could a resident stop the mailman from walking through their flower beds. Mayor Koci told them to call the Post Office. Mrs. Mizsak offered a phone number to call; however, the resident felt the Bedford Post Office was a joke.

A resident asked what/who was moving into the old Chanel facility. Mr. Mallis and Mayor Koci were unable to make a report at this time because of the current plans being negotiated.

A Bayberry Condo Association resident asked who would own the new Kimball trash cans. Mr. Mallis explained each can would be assigned by serial number to every occupied home. Recycling was urged to save rubbish tonnage costs and it would be more convenient to the residents to place their recyclables into the container. Small containers would be available upon request. If rubbish was blowing around their area the residents were urged to call City Hall.

A resident thought there was an ordinance on the books regarding "littering" and he wanted to know who was responsible for the blowing debris. Mayor Koci hoped the new containers would help with these types of problems. The containers were heavy enough so they didn't fall over and conveniently pickup by the Kimball truck by an arm that clutched the container and dumped it. Mayor Koci stressed it was hard to accuse someone not knowing who's trash it was and the residents just needed to be good neighbors and pick it up. He had witnessed the rubbish collection employees picking up anything they dropped.

A resident was concerned of the private snow plow operators burying the fire hydrants. He was urged to call City Hall or suggest to their neighbor to tell their private snow plow operator. Another resident suggested barricades be placed in front of the fire hydrants. It was determined that this was impossible.

A resident asked if there was going to be a City offered snow plow service for seniors or someone who had a medical condition. Mayor Koci said the City was not going to start these types of services because of the headaches involved, costs of doing it and the costs of repairing any damages. This service was previously discussed with other cities and it wasn't going to be added to the list of free City services. Mr. Mallis reminded the residents of the current challenges the City was facing with reduced revenue and reduced staff. The City currently had a list of registered snow plow operators and they were supposed to offer a reduced rate to the seniors. The resident was urged to call the Recreation Department for the list. The same resident wanted to know if the City could clear the sidewalks. She suggested an employee compile a list of those residents that wanted certain snow removal services. Again, Mayor Koci assured her this was not going to happen with the decreased Service Department staff and additional costs to the City. The City's focus in the winter was to plow the streets and sometimes that was a challenge. He explained the City passed a law that stated it was the responsibility of the homeowner to shovel their sidewalks.

A resident wondered if there was signage at Taft Park for residents to clean up their own dog defecation. Mr. Mallis stated the parks had signage and residents needed to be responsible. She felt Taft Park needed addressed. Mr. Genutis wondered if a Dog Park was a good idea.

A resident hoped since the snow had melted the children would start walking on the sidewalks again.

A resident inquired about the AT&T U-Verse service. It was determined only certain areas currently had it available; however, it would be available in other sections of the City eventually because it was an ongoing project. Mrs. Mizsak said the service would be available about 2-3 months after they were contacted by AT&T.

A resident asked if large boxes needed to be broken down and placed in the bin for recycling. It was determined the resident needed to breakdown the cardboard but if the resident had additional recycling (or rubbish) it could be placed beside the full container for pickup; the service was unlimited. If there were larger items (dryers, washers) the resident should call Kimball prior to putting them at the curb to let them know there was a need for a special pick up or the resident could call City Hall and an employee would call; either way the items would be picked up.

A resident questioned the vacant home located at 416 Avery; she had checked the Auditor's Website and the taxes were not delinquent. She pointed out multiple people had been in the house stripping it and it was only protected by a padlock even though the Axillary Officers checked on it twice a week. Chief Nietert urged her to call the Police Department if she saw someone in the home. There were 315 homes vacant in Bedford and the best protection for these homes were the neighbors. Mr. Frances thought 416 Avery was the home the City boarded up. Mr. Saunders said some of these homes taxes were auctioned off unpaid taxes so the taxes wouldn't be delinquent; taxes could also be paid by monies in the escrow account. Another resident mentioned someone was also parking their cars in this vacant house's driveway. Mayor Koci said in some respects it was beneficial and it was also up to the homeowner whether they allowed someone else to use the drive. She also said someone else parked in a drive across from the old Sunoco gasoline station. Mr. Mallis would have someone check these locations.

A resident asked for an update on the Columbus Road Bridge. Mr. Mallis clarified this was a County project; not the City's. There had been several discussions regarding the traffic concerns in this area and how it affected the daily traffic flow. Emergency calls would not be an issue; Bedford Heights would assist in emergency responses. It was noted there were also surrounding cities that joined together in mutual-aid calls/runs. Even though Maple Heights was currently experiencing financial difficulties they responded/shared as many calls as Bedford. Mayor Koci said he just learned at a seminar from an ODOT representative that explained it was three times cheaper for the County to shut down a project 100%. From a cost standpoint concerning the Columbus Road Bridge it was cheaper and quicker to shut down the bridge in order to facilitate the project. The City understood no project was easy and there's always inconveniences but because of the poor condition of the bridge it was necessary. The bottom line was to fix the bridge or leave it closed and not use it.

A resident spoke about the Greencliff Road Boston Shuttle Van business. Mr. Beverly had already talked to the homeowner and was assured there was only one (1) van driven by a husband and wife team. The resident reported there three (3) shuttle vans in operation seven days a week driven by workers/employees. Mr. Beverly explained a homeowner could have a residential business if it were operated out of one (1) room in the house. The resident wanted to know why the new No Parking sign was removed. Chief Nietert stated the City could not install a sign "selectively to enforce parking" for one house. It would have to be for the whole street not one home. The Administration did not think it was fair to penalize the whole street for one problem resident. Mrs. Mizsak suggested the Building Department do an inspection of some sort at this home.

Discussion was held regarding the 600+ parking tickets that were issued and the numerous towing's. There had been recent discussions on how to address the parking issues throughout the City but it was not fair to punish everyone in the City. There were only about 5% of the residents causing problems. Mr. Mallis urged the residents to file a complaint of the repetitive violators so the specific area/address could be targeted, tickets written and vehicles towed. The Officers can't be everywhere 24/7/365 and the residents have always been urged to bring issues at the City's attention either by calling the Police, City Hall or their Ward Council person.

A resident commented that 787 Archer Road made the Sanford & Son show look like a rose garden. Mr. Deal, the homeowner, had been before Council and the Board of Building Standards & Appeals (BBSA) because of the different and numerous violations issued to him by the Building Commissioner and Police Department. Mr. Mallis explained the City recently received two (2) lawsuits from Mr. Deal who filed against the City and the BBSA regarding the violations. The City was well aware of the problem and the complaints were being addressed. Chief Nietert referred to this specific situation as "vexatious litigation"; defined as "chiefly to cause annoyance to the defendant". Mr. Deal had been and would be again before the Courts for various issues. Mr. Deal knew how to work the system and the City needed to be careful how this situation was addressed. Mr. Deal's wife moved out of the house when the utilities were turned off, it appeared the daughters don't want to assume any responsibilities nor help their own father. Mr. Mallis personally spoke to one of the daughters and she hasn't offered a solution nor did she show at the BBSA meeting showing concern. Mayor Koci said the City was trying to get Mr. Deal help in spite of himself, Mr. Deal was in great need of a bath and this situation was a shame. Mr. Beverly spoke about the lawsuits and the "vexatious litigation" and he had to be careful because of the number of times Mr. Deal had already been cited could be misconstrued as "malicious prosecution". This whole situation was a vicious circle.

In closing, Mrs. Mizsak thought it was a good meeting, she was happy about attendance, she wished everyone a Happy Easter, those to live long and strong and chanted "Go Bedford". Mr. Genutis thought it was unfortunate there wasn't more in attendance because he thought it was hard to get the word to the residents. He researched the cost of postcards and found it very expensive.

Mayor Koci, Mr. Mallis, Councilwoman Mizsak and Councilman Genutis reiterated to the residents to call City Hall or the non-emergency number at the Police Department if they saw something strange, had a concern or a suspicion of something. The City staff could not address issues if they weren't aware there was a problem in the first place.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

Clerk of Council

Mayor Stanley C. Koci