

Community Ward Meeting for **Wards 2 & 6** was held at Bedford City Hall on Monday, March 31, 2014. Mayor Koci called the meeting to order at 7:03 P.M.

Present: Council Members: Mayor Stan Koci, Don Saunders and Walter Genutis. Absent: Sandy Spinks, Paula Mizzsak, Marilyn Zolata, Greg Pozar. Also Present: Clerk of Council Lorree Villers. Administration: Acting City Manager and Economic Development Director Mike Mallis, Service Director Clint Bellar, Police Chief Kris Nietert, Assistant Fire Chief Shawn Solar, Recreation Director Randy Lewis, Building Commissioner Calvin Beverly and Finance Director Frank Gambosi.

Mayor Koci and Acting City Manager Mike Mallis welcomed all residents in attendance tonight. Mayor Koci said the most important thing this evening was to hear from the residents. He explained Council was in the process of selecting a new City Manager and dealing with the investigation. The City was dealing with the investigation in a professional manner.

Acting City Manager Michael Mallis started the evening with a PowerPoint presentation highlighting all City Departments. He read the attached PowerPoint in its entirety. He 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 stated it was important not to let the actions of two employees paint everybody with the same brush. There was a current investigation with Cuyahoga County regarding these individuals and these two employees were not currently working in their capacities at the City of Bedford or the Court. The City was cooperating 100% with the investigation. The City would continue to provide for its residents.

- He explained the current situation with Ben Venue and how the closing of this facility had drastically affected the City of Bedford and its own employees. He stressed the City and the State and County Representatives were doing the best they could in regards to the current situation with Ben Venue. The cuts the City Administration and Council had to deal with were \$2.3 million from the closing of Ben Venue and \$1.7 million from the State of Ohio. The City managed to maintain the \$5.8 million in Reserves plus operate on a balanced budget in 2014. Many of the departments gave money back to assist these cuts in 2014. The City was able to operate smoothly in 2014 because of the severance packages and bonuses Ben Venue paid out but 2015 was going to be a very different situation. The concerns were the business and the buildings could be dealt with differently; the business sold and then the buildings torn down with zero liability. He assured everyone the City was in very close contact with Ben Venue and the City remained optimistic. It was important that Ben Venue consider the drastic impact this closing has had on Bedford.
- The City was able to receive the old Taylor Chair property for future development.
- He expressed his appreciation regarding the new company Art of Beauty that moved into the vacant Taylor Chair building and the pleasant visual exterior upgrades plus the 50+ jobs.
- West Grace was scheduled for resurfacing; from Broadway toward the dip.
- The City was considering an extension of the Metroparks into Bedford with bike paths.

- The Broadway Avenue and Forbes Exit enhancement and waterline. This was a major entrance into Bedford. A lot of the issues needed to be addressed by ODOT.
- Crack sealing was necessary on the streets that were paved in 2013.
- Implementation of the Regional Dispatch Center would be a combination of Maple Heights, Bedford Heights, Garfield Heights and Bedford. This would be paid by a \$3.3 million grant. The center would be at Bedford Heights in the Municipal Center.
- The Recreation Department was working closely with UH Medical Hospital for senior type programs. Anne O'Neill was a licensed social worker which was a huge benefit for Bedford.

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

**Police Department:** This department ran on a \$4,929,890.00 million budget. Two new cars were purchased in 2014. Mr. Mallis urged everyone to utilize the Code Red, NIXLE, Facebook, E-NEWS and Twitter.

**Fire Department:** This department ran on a \$3,568,820 million budget.

**Roads, Cemetery and Refuse:** This department ran on a \$1,601,830 million budget.

**Administration and Miscellaneous:** This department ran on a \$2,797,201 million budget.

**Service Department:** This department ran on a \$1,700,450 million budget.

**Recreation Department:** This department ran on a \$1,255,955 million budget.

**Municipal Court:** This department ran on a \$2,689,670 million budget.

**Water & Waste Water:** This department ran on a \$7,484,910 million budget.

**General Fund Debt:** This department ran on a \$1,339,610 million budget.

**Health Insurance:** This department ran on a \$2,472,920 million budget.

**Operating Budget:** Bedford's total budget was \$31,804,294 million; it took a lot of money to run the entire City of Bedford with all the repairs and maintenance.

**Bedford Auto Mile Dealerships:** A lot of the dealerships were making fantastic improvements to their facilities to the tune of \$25 million of improvements. The City was very pleased that these dealerships were still dedicated to Bedford. The Projects of Scale estimated at a construction value of \$12,850,000.00.

**Ellenwood Renovation Project:** This project would cost over \$150,000 that would address the men's restroom, senior lounge, front entranceway and primary meeting room.

**Councilman Genutis reported the following for Ward 2:**

- urged everyone to ask questions and voice their concerns,
- informed everyone he was new in this capacity and was in the learning process,
- thanked everyone for their support during the election,
- he was very impressed with the knowledge of the employees that conducted the everyday operations for the City,
- he was eager to meet the residents in Ward 2 so he urged the residents to contact him,
- he was born and raised in Bedford and graduated in 1971,
- he felt becoming a Council member allowed him the opportunity to give back to the City where he has lived.

**Councilman Saunders reported the following for Ward 6:**

- urged everyone to ask questions and voice their concerns,
- noted Ward 6 was the center and the oldest section of the City,
- informed everyone the infrastructure was very old but it was being addressed,
- urged everyone to participate in the FriDates, Arts & Cultural, the Strawberry Festival's 50th Year Anniversary and all the wonderful events on the City Square,
- urged everyone to get involved with the programs and events in hopes to encourage the youth to get involved.

Mayor Koci explained Demetrius St John spoke at the March 24, 2014 Ward meeting; however, he was not able to attend this evening so he dropped off some information regarding "Issue 7 - Sin Tax". This tax kept Cleveland's Progressive Field, Quicken Loans Arena and First Energy Stadium facilities strong. The idea was to keep Cleveland strong. He urged for everyone to vote "yes" for Issue 7. (see attached)

Acting City Manager Mallis and Mayor Koci opened the meeting to questions from citizens.

A resident had concerns of the school closing over the years and how it affected the City. Mr. Mallis explained several schools that had closed over the years because the "times had changed". The closings were out of the City's control and it should have no reflection of Bedford as a whole. The City had to address some of these type issues behind closed doors without making the details public but things were happening. The Administration was concerned about the numerous empty buildings and it was being addressed.

Mayor Koci invited everyone to join the free FriDates concerts for excellent entertainment. Joyce Daunch pointed out 30% - 40% of these people were visitors from outside Bedford. The FriDates events were a success. The Arts and Garden Club had joined forces for another event.

A resident asked if Ben Venue had any type of incentive or tax abatements for the next owner. Mr. Mallis said there are several different incentives on this property and business for various buildings. He thought about three to five years were left on a few of these abatements. The rumor of Johnson & Johnson/Jansen situation was a short term opportunity for Bedford.

A resident asked about the situation at the YMCA and if the Ellenwood Recreation would consider installing a pool. Mayor Koci said the City was being very careful making any future decisions regarding spending money because of the Ben Venue situation. Building a new indoor pool was out of the question.

The YMCA facility was a very old building with many needed repairs. Mr. Mallis explained the City of Bedford Recreation Center was completely empty during the day even though the City of Bedford offered a rebate to its residents.

A resident suggested two Ward meetings throughout the year. The Mayor said this could be a topic of discussion; the meetings could be held at a church in its Ward. Mr. Genutis explained he hardly knew any of his neighbors so this might be a good idea. A resident stated she did not think it was the City's or government's responsibility to hold additional meetings. It was the responsibility of the residents to make the effort to have Block Parties and for them to become more active in the community. There were two publically held Council meetings a month that residents had an opportunity to attend.

A resident asked if the City had a map that showed the streets in her Ward. Mayor Koci replied, yes.

A resident suggested the City utilize cable TV to get information out to the residents. The thought was the City could work with the schools to get information on their channel. Mr. Gambosi explained that was a school program and the City did not have an access channel for that program. The school would have to give the City permission. Mr. Mallis explained the City was working with AT&T for its U-Verse technology. To make this possible there was a need for hardware updates. U-Verse was available but not the TV portion. It was determined cable companies determined what areas they wanted to do business.

A resident had concerns regarding the City owned homes. It was explained the City was in the process of listing them with an actual real estate company so the MLS listing was available for others to view. The homes varied in price starting at \$60,000 to \$120,000.

A resident said his neighbor had 15 deer in his backyard the other day. Mr. Mallis explained the City worked with the Metroparks in culling of the deer but there seems to still be an issue. It was determined the Metroparks did not report to the City the number of culled deer. Even with the increased population of coyotes the deer were multiplying, however, the cat population was decreasing.

A resident asked if someone could live in their home during the remodeling process. Mr. Beverly explained once a permit was issued for construction or additions the permit was valid for one (1) year with an option of two (2) additional extensions. The resident pointed out there was a home on Archer that had an RV parked in the backyard. She was not allowed to park in her yard so they should not be allowed. Mr. Beverly noted the Building Department was in the process of addressing this particular home for several violations.

A resident suggested some type of Youth Diversion Program for certain things around the City. Chief Nietert said the City had this type of program; it was run by Penny Jarrell. The work varied from season to season plus Ms. Jarrell took recommendations from the residents. The resident said she contacted Ms. Jarrell three (3) weeks ago and has not heard from her. At a previous Ward meeting a resident suggested the Boy Scouts, Youth/Young Marines, Youth Ministries or different organizations. There were different organizations that had programs specifically for youths that needed to build community hours.

Ms. Gnoddie had concerns regarding the new Regional Dispatch Center. She wanted to know if a study conducted on how the response time could be affected by the size or busyness of the center plus the loss of the Dispatchers. The current Dispatchers were familiar with the City even by landmarks. Mayor Koci said the response times would not be affected; the new facility would be state of the art equipment. Chief Nietert stated with the new technology it was very interesting to watch. He agreed the landmark portion would be lost but with the GPS mapping the system was phenomenal. When the call was received it was

mapped automatically. The Dispatchers would not be working in the blind but in an electronic world. Mr. Mallis stated the Chiefs studied this before application was made for the grant and this was very well thought out. Bedford had the best Dispatchers in the area and the Administration believed these employees had a very good chance of being hired. Mayor Koci explained Council discussed and considered the possible loss of jobs for its employees. It was determined the new Regional Dispatch Center would be located at Bedford Heights City Hall.

A resident said the house located at 194 E. Taylor had been empty for three (3) years. The mismatched colors were not too much of a concern for her but rather that it had been empty for years. The grass/yard was maintained but it remained empty. The new Building Commissioner Calvin Beverly, Council and the Administration as a team would be very focused on exterior maintenance. Mr. Mallis said the appearance from the street was just part of the focus; there were a lot of concerns that were going to be addressed and the City was on top of it and being proactive. Bedford currently had 350 vacancies which was less than some of the surrounding cities so the Building Department was in the process of mailing letters to the property owners regarding grass cutting, yard maintenance and snow removal. Ms. Gnoddie noticed many of the businesses had not shoveled their sidewalks this past winter. She was told she had to file a complaint for each individual business for the issue to be addressed. She was assured snow removal was going to be addressed proactively. In being proactive, the Building Department would be contacting the residents advising them that their grass, lawns, bushes and trees needed to be maintained. The Building Department was working closely with the Water Department monitoring water usage. If there was no water being used, then the Building Department would notify them the grass and yards needed to be taken care of. This proactive notification would be their initial notification and if there was a violation it would be addressed immediately at their expense.

A resident pointed out the motorcycle was still in the living room window on Columbus Road and it had been there for the last six months. Mayor Koci said it had been in the window for three (3) years. Mr. Beverly would address this.

A resident suggested the blue bags be delivered by using senior citizens. Mr. Mallis explained the recycling blue bags and the new resident guide would be delivered to the residents. He stressed to be a good neighbor and to help your neighbors. A resident noted the poor delivery of the blue bags in the past.

A resident asked if the snow plow companies had to register with the City. Mr. Beverly said these companies had to register with the Building Department each season. The question was whether these companies were required to shovel the sidewalks as well. Mr. Beverly replied, no; the requirement was to keep the snow on the same property as it was being removed from.

A resident noticed there were three (3) Tattoo Parlors in the Historical District in town and he thought they were not allowed to be there. Mr. Mallis pointed out Tattoo Parlors were zoned as Art Studios. He also pointed out the Administration was in the process of looking into different options to market the City. He was focused on a business type brochure to assist interested parties or spark interest for Bedford. He hoped to involve the business owners so the City could assist them in being successful. A business owner was present at a previous Ward meeting that seemed interested in participating with the City. Mr. Beverly clarified the only business prohibited in the Historic District were Day Cares. The City Codes were being rewritten to address certain issues. The City could not dictate who or what type of business a landlord/property owner rented to.

A resident was disgusted with the rags or bed sheets that some residents had hanging in their windows for curtains. More troubling to him was that some of the residents were driving very nice new cars. Mayor Koci said people had the right to be a slob in their own home but this basically fell under "personal pride".

A resident thought the signage should be better for the closing of the Columbus Road Bridge. Mr. Mallis explained AT&T and Dominion East Ohio had to agree to allow the temporary one-way road to be built for traffic. A signal light would be placed at each end to control traffic flow. The County was the deciding factor as to why this bridge was closed; not the City. Cuyahoga County only gave the City a two week notice of the closing of the bridge. It was determined the bridge would be closed for over a year; the temporary road construction would be started very soon.

A resident complained about the loud car stereos that were becoming more prevalent since the weather was warming up. It was determined she could call the Police Department with a license number and an Officer could give them a verbal warning but the law stated the Officer had to witness the violation for them to be cited.

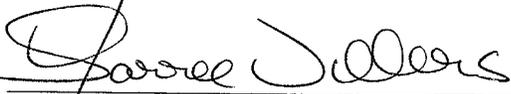
A resident complained about the very poor condition of the rental building on Solon Road across from the Service Department. She felt it had to be uninhabitable because of the outside condition. Mr. Mallis briefly explained the City had been addressing issues with this landlord and had not been very successful. The thought was this landlord had too many rentals and he was not able to maintain them adequately. The Building Department had previously cited this landlord which ended up in Court. The City has been reviewing the 26 - 27 properties this landlord owns and was in the process of addressing multiple issues. These types of issues cannot be accomplished overnight. This landlord has another Court date soon.

A resident asked about the train activity and a dislike for the train noise. Mr. Mallis said this was an ongoing issue which was started years ago. In January 2013, the new information requested was: an Ariel photo of the West Grace and West Glendale area to include renderings of the installation of the barriers and updated information regarding both of the railroad lines (Cleveland Commercial Railroad and Norfolk Southern). He pointed out once the barriers were installed some of the streets would become One-Way streets with several right hand turns. If the barriers were approved, then there would be a series of meetings that needed to take place. Others agreed the trains were noisy.

There was discussion regarding the new improvements to the Ellenwood Recreation Center. Mr. Mallis explained the grant had to be used for certain criteria not monies to be used for whatever the City chose. The City Administration prided itself for applying for every grant possible; this project would cost over \$150,000 that would address the men's restroom, senior lounge, front entranceway and primary meeting room. The entranceway canopy was much needed because this area was deteriorating.

Mayor Koci, Mr. Mallis, Councilman Saunders 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 8:39 P.M.

  
Clerk of Council

  
Mayor Stanley C. Koci