

**SPECIAL COUNCIL WORK SESSION
ELLENWOOD RECREATION CENTER GYM
TUESDAY, AUGUST 21, 2012**

7:00 P.M. PROMPT

* * * * *
* * * * *

- **DISCUSSION OF 2013 FIREWORKS WITH RESIDENTS**

Bedford, Ohio

August 21, 2012

Bedford City Council met in a Special Work Session at the Bedford Recreation Center Gym on Tuesday, August 21, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Council Members: Mayor Daniel Pocek, Warner Batten, Stan Koci, Marilyn Zolata, Paula Mizsak, Greg Pozar, Donald Saunders. Also Present: Clerk of Council Lorree Villers. Administration: City Manager Henry J. Angelo, Deputy Chief Kris Nietert, Fire Chief Dave Nagy, Law Director Ken Schuman, Assistant Fire Chief Shawn Solar, Recreation Director Randy Lewis. Absent: None.

Mayor Pocek and City Manager Henry Angelo welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the meeting this evening. The main focus was to give the resident's an opportunity to ask questions, make suggestions and voice their concerns or ideas regarding the 2012/2013 fireworks. The meeting was for Council and the Administration to listen to what the residents had to say and take into consideration their suggestions and ideas regarding the fireworks in general. They both mentioned that there were concerns because of the unruly and disrespectful children/young adults that were at this year's fireworks and whether there should be fireworks in 2013 for the July 4th celebration. The Bedford fireworks display was considered a Bedford tradition but some of the children/young adults that were coming from surrounding communities were attempting to ruin the celebration. They both expressed this was a regional issue and not just a Bedford or surrounding area issue. It was clear some of the younger generation did not have respect for anyone or anything. There were 10 arrests total that evening and the majority of the arrests were not Bedford residents. They both felt it was important to provide these types of traditional events for the residents but also keeping the residents, employees and visitors safe. The residents would determine the outcome of the event and whether the City should use the money it usually spent for the fireworks for something else. Mr. Angelo explained there were 40-50 children/young adults at one given time in different areas causing problems. The police officers used pepper ball pellets and used a tazor on one young male. He added the children/young adults had caused issues even in Wal-Mart and Get-Go and the stores had to be closed for up to three (3) hours. He stressed there were no injuries reported that he was aware of. Mayor Pocek and Mr. Angelo assured everyone that Bedford was not the only city that had these types of problems during their fireworks. Other surrounding communities had the same actions of disrespect and unruly behavior from the children/young adults and one young adult male was arrested at two different events. These children/young adults were traveling from city to city just causing problems.

Mr. Angelo explained the Code Red message he had sent to all the residents and the great coverage it had because the City no longer had a local newspaper. He asked for a show of hands of those that had not heard about this situation. There were several that had not even heard of the arrests or the situation that occurred.

Mayor Pocek started the question and answer session. He would be fielding questions from one side to the other.

Most of the residents present this evening had lived in Bedford anywhere from 5 to 80 years and were familiar with all the other events and enjoyed them. Out of the audience of approximately 50-80 people only 10-15 people actually attended the fireworks this year. One gentlemen stressed he would never attend another fireworks display because of what he experienced three (3) years ago. He said there was a huge crowd just running as a group through the area which he felt was a safety issue.

Several residents thought the money should be spent elsewhere on either new Fire or Police equipment, additional staff or just toward something "positive" even though the fireworks were wonderful but the cost of someone possibly getting hurt was not worth it.

Some residents commented the reason they continue to live in Bedford was because of the great events and services that were offered to the residents including the fireworks.

Several of the residents thought the Bedford residents should "stick together" and not allow these "knuckleheads" to control Bedford. Bedford residents needed to stick up for themselves, not get pushed into a corner or allow them to take their life or freedom away because the events gave Bedford a sense of togetherness. Even though several agreed that the "times" have changed but the Bedford residents should not give in. They felt if they gave in they would let the "knuckleheads" win.

One resident was not scared for his family/children and he would continue going to the fireworks. He stressed Bedford Police Officers were the best and these young adults were just troublemakers and if Bedford gave in, it would leave Bedford with a sense of no community.

A few residents thought a wrist band type tag or ticket should be issued in the Bedford utility bill so only Bedford residents could attend the event. Over the years, other surrounding communities attended for free but did not contribute in the costs. Maybe the surrounding communities should be excluded from the grounds or be charged a \$20 cover charge since they didn't want to participate in the costs. If a wrist band or ticket was issued, the Administration would have to make sure the apartment renters got their pass.

A few residents wondered if these types of actions could be "gang" related. Deputy Chief Nietert assured them it was not. In the past three (3) years, there had been minor offenses, fighting and these young adults had a different type of mentality than what people were used to. His main concern was the danger aspect for the visitors, employees and residents. The Bedford Police Department had to call the Cuyahoga County Sheriff, Bedford Heights and Maple Heights Police Departments for additional help. Others wondered if Solon or other areas in a different region had the same problems. Nobody knew.

One resident asked for a show of hands as to how many wanted to continue the fireworks or spend the money for other things. According to Mayor Pocek, the show of hands was about the same. One resident commented he was called the noisy neighbor because he turned his neighbors in by calling the police when he thought they were doing something wrong. He felt these "knuckleheads" should be dealt with in court and Bedford should not give in. It would allow them (the "knuckleheads") to win.

Mr. Schuman referred to a few cases that he had recently dealt with in court regarding three of the young adults that got arrested on the night of the fireworks. Even though the Judges do a very good job, he had hoped that they would have given these young men a stiffer sentence. He suggested jail time but the Judge sentenced the one male to two (2) year's probation. He felt anyone breaking the law needed to be dealt with accordingly and a stiff sentence would send a message to the others. He was born and raised in Bedford and has enjoyed his 40 years here, so he too, doesn't want to see Bedford deteriorate.

One resident suggest more meetings be held to keep the residents informed. Someone suggested she start coming to the monthly Council meetings. Mr. Angelo noted several ways the City currently informed the residents to "get the word out". He added it was a two way street.

Everyone agreed the Bedford safety forces were outstanding, fantastic, the best and very well trained. So if someone questioned something in their neighborhood, they were to call the Police and let the qualified officers do their job. One resident thought events like this puts Bedford safety forces in harm's way plus every city has problems. Someone might get harmed or killed so he suggested a fireworks moratorium and Bedford residents should attend some other city's events like Hudson. One resident suggested all the fireworks be held on the same date. This way these "knuckleheads" couldn't attend them all causing problems in several different areas.

Everyone agreed that one of the main problems with some of these children/young adults was the lack of family unity and this was definitely a regional problem and had become a national problem. One resident thought these troublemakers should be used as an example and publically humiliated with their faces on a large billboard. She asked where their parents were.

Mr. Tim Tench, President of the Bedford School Board, commended the safety forces, Council and the Administration for doing a great job. He stressed this was a nationwide problem and felt it needed to start locally – “Enough is enough”. The question was where Bedford should draw the line. He explained the school had been enforcing their dress code for the past five years and being persistent paid off. The school has received several compliments regarding the enforcement of the dress code. He was in favor of the ticket idea and somehow restricting the crowd. Making whatever adjustments needed to be made to keep the “knuckleheads” out of the event and outside of the district even if it meant closing Wal-Mart for three (3) hours. If they couldn’t get in the event and Wal-Mart was closed, they would have no reason to come and cause trouble. Take away the reasons why the “knuckleheads” were coming here. He thought the surrounding communities should join together for this once a year fireworks display so everyone can enjoy the holiday. He thought it would be worth the efforts.

One resident invited family and friends to her home for the celebration so she was in favor of keeping the fireworks because they could watch them from her home. Another resident thought there should be crowd control and everyone should be seated before the fireworks were started.

One resident felt some of the residents were acting like cheerleaders at a pep-rally. She stressed 15 officers could not control a crowd of this size that was out of control. She felt someone was going to get hurt and Council and the Administration were the ones going to be blamed because they were very aware of the problems. She feared for the safety of her family and friends. She told a story about an out of control incident that happened on her road several years ago.

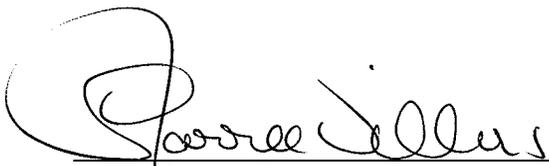
Several still thought the events, festivals and the fireworks made Bedford what Bedford was and nobody should take a back seat. We should continue all the events.

One resident asked what the costs were. Mr. Angelo replied about \$25,000 for the fireworks display, which included the fireworks and employee costs. This did not include the parade costs. This resident thought the costs were too high and even though he loved Bedford, he felt the money should be spent for a better cause.

Mayor Pocek and Mr. Angelo thanked everyone for attending this evening. They explained the decision was going to take several more meetings. This was going to be a tough decision. They would consider all the comments, seriously look at both sides and evaluate all their options.

Discussion of the Special Work Session agenda was concluded.

The Special Work Session adjourned at 8:00 p.m.


Clerk of Council


Mayor – President of Council