

Bedford City Council held a Community Ward Meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, May 24, 2010 for residents of Wards 1 and 2. Present: Mayor Dan Pocek, Councilman Warner Batten, Councilman Stan Koci, Councilwoman Marilyn Zolata, Councilwoman Paula Mizsak, Councilman Greg Pozar, Councilman Don Saunders, City Manager Henry Angelo, Finance Director Frank Gambosi, Service Director Clint Bellar, Fire Chief Dave Nagy, Building Commissioner Phil Seyboldt, Recreation Director Randy Lewis, Police Chief Greg Duber, Economic Development Director Mike Mallis and Clerk of Council Kathleen Lynch.

Mayor Pocek welcomed all residents in attendance tonight. It is his great pleasure to be serving in his eleventh year as Mayor. There are some interesting things happening in the City. Mayor Pocek thanked the residents again for their support of the Safety Force Levy that passed in November. It has been heartening to know it was done with 71% of the vote in these difficult times. The residents should be commended for their participation in the City. He also thanked them for their support for the schools in May, 2009. The City has been able to maintain and will continue to maintain, the finances are a little better. Mr. Gambosi, the Finance Director, has done yeoman's job and continues to monitor all of the finances on a daily basis.

Mayor Pocek said the new City Manager, Hank Angelo, was sworn in on March 8, 2010. There was a small reception after that and it has been a wonderful experience for him being here in the City of Bedford. We are all pleased to have him here with a tremendous background.

At this time, Mayor Pocek introduced members of Council in attendance.

Councilman Batten said a large project is due to start this year in Ward 1, the resurfacing of Rockside Road. It will be from the Maple Heights border to the Bedford Heights border. It will be done in three phases. The first phase from Broadway to Center Road; then from Center Road to Northfield Road; and last from Northfield Road to Bartlett. It is scheduled to start on July 6, 2010 and should be completed in November. They will maintain two lanes open for traffic and all businesses will be open during that time. There will be some temporary signs put up to help people travel through. Mr. Batten said the residents that live on Grand Blvd. and Willard will probably see an increase in traffic during the construction.

Councilman Koci thanked everyone for coming to the meeting tonight. Unfortunately, without a newspaper the word does not get out as well. The message for the meeting went out through the City's Code Red system, if you didn't get the Code Red stop to see Chief Duber or call the Police Department to have your number added to the system. It is not just used for meeting notices, it is most importantly used for emergencies. The Police Department can notify residents very quickly.

Mr. Koci said the blue recycle bags and City newsletter were delivered today. Mr. Mallis and his department take care of the newsletter and do a great job. The Recreation Department also passed out the Senior Club activity book. All new residents receive the good neighbor guidelines and if anyone wants to see one there are extras up front after the meeting. The guide goes over some of the more popular ordinances for the City; such as when to put out your trash, grass cutting, etc.

Councilman Koci said 564 Heather was purchased by the City and it will be part of the Housing Program. At the last meeting, a home on Northfield that was becoming an eye sore has been declared a nuisance and now the bank that owns it has to fix it up or it will be torn down.

Another good thing that is taking place is the Minister's Civility Task Force. It is a partnership between the City, local pastors and the School Board.

Mayor Pocek received a phone call from our former City Manager Bob Reid, now the Sheriff apologizing for not being able to be here tonight. Over the next five or six months, the Mayor wants to make sure that whoever the next County Executive is that he reappoint Bob Reid as Sheriff. He has done a commendable job and brought integrity back to that office.

The Mayor said the gentleman that replaced Mr. Reid is an exemplary person himself and that is our new City Manager, Henry Angelo, who has been here almost three months. He is former resident of Warren and now lives in the City of Bedford. He was also the former Mayor of Warren. Mayor Pocek got to know Mr. Angelo through his full-time position as a marketing representative for an engineering firm. He admired the way Mr. Angelo conducted himself in running the City of Warren. The City of Warren is in Trumbull County and is a little larger than Bedford. Politics there is referred to as a blood sport and through that he kept his integrity and dignity. When he stepped down as Mayor, they maintained their friendship. When the City Manager position became available, Mr. Angelo was successful out of the 41 applicants that applied. Council has been very impressed with him.

Mr. Angelo said he is starting his third month and he has been blessed in so many ways, one of them becoming the City Manager. He works for seven wonderful Council members and works with six or seven department heads that he will introduce shortly. As Mayor of Warren it was a different form of government, there it was statutory and here it is a charter. There is some adjustment but what is good about the City of Bedford is that there are seven Council members willing to work with each other. It is not to say they agree on everything, but they do agree on what is best for the City. It is a much different atmosphere and he is very appreciative of that. Mr. Angelo has a great staff and introduced the department heads in attendance.

At this time Mr. Angelo gave a power point presentation.

The Housing Rehabilitation Program through the Building Department was discussed. The range of construction that goes into these houses includes; new windows, roofs, doors, remodeled kitchen and bathrooms, new carpet, flooring, fresh paint, electrical, plumbing. Mr. Angelo said this is helping to ensure the City of Bedford has good neighborhoods. The City obtained two grants for this program, the first was a \$500,000 grant for the renovation of homes in the Presidential District. The City also received a \$100,000 grant for one home, on Flora. The City has renovated 23 homes, successfully selling 7. The money received from the sale of the homes, goes back into the program to renovate more homes. There may be some that are beyond repair and will need to be demolished. The program has been recognized by the National League of Cities and was up for a national award.

Mr. Angelo said the City received another grant in the amount of \$276,000 through CDBG, Community Development Block Grant funds. The total amount of the project will be over \$300,000 and that will include the resurfacing of three streets and welcoming banners in the Presidential District.

There is also a partnership with the Ohio Rail Commission, no local money is going out. There will be about \$750,000 in upgrades to North Park and Powers railroad crossings and the closing of South Park and Monroe railroad crossings.

Mr. Angelo said something everyone has been waiting for, the Rockside Road reconstruction project. Again, this is outside money, no local money being used. The advertising was done on April 12, 2010 and the bids are to be open on May 4, 2010. The total project is broken down into three sections. The first being Broadway to Center; Center to Northfield and Northfield to Bartlett. All the sections in Bedford should be done this year. The project is scheduled to begin on July 6 at Broadway and Rockside.

In 2009 and 2010, there were two \$35,000 grants for new playground equipment through the Cuyahoga County Office of Development. The first one was just installed at Ellenwood and Interstate Park will be the second site. The City also received a \$5,000 grant for a community garden and that will be behind Central School.

The power point presentation was completed.

Lenny Krivanka, 457 Terrace, asked if there was any possibility if Bedford could bring a Half Priced Books into one of the vacant stores here?

Mr. Mallis said a couple times a year the Economic Development Department puts together a list of businesses and companies the City markets to. The City of Bedford has not marketed to Half Priced Books but will put a letter of interest out to them.

The Mayor said a bookstore just opened in one of the downtown stores.

Stan Kobus, 53 Dewhurst, asked about the property at 10 Dewhurst, it is a disaster? Mr. Seyboldt does not know about the property but will check into it. Mr. Batten said it is the first house on the right. Mr. Seyboldt believes there is a buyer for that house right now, so the house should improve fairly quickly.

James Slifka, 130 Grand Blvd., said one of the businesses at the corner of Grand Blvd. and Broadway, the old Dodge dealership, is in bad shape and asked what the status is? Mr. Batten said that property has been reported to the Building Department.

Mr. Angelo went on a driving trip with Councilman Batten last week and one of the things they did was put together a list of houses, businesses, etc. and sent a letter to them to be brought up to code.

Louis Sounik, 686 Wellmon, said while he was away from his home the City planted a tree in his tree lawn and he would like to have it removed. It is nice tree but he does not want it there, it was planted on top of his sanitary sewer line.

Mr. Bellar said Mr. Sounik came in to discuss his concerns about the tree. It is the City's right of way, trees add value to the property and make streets look nicer. Mr. Bellar discussed with Mr. Sounik that he had his entire sewer replaced with pvc piping so there will not be a root problem now. Once someone has been paid to plant it, the City will not remove it.

Mr. Sounik had problems year after year with his basement flooding. He was given a can of something to put down the drain to help clean it out. He said with talk about beautifying the City, all the larger trees have been butchered up from the telephone and electrical lines. Mr. Bellar said smaller species of trees are being planted under the wires, and larger trees where there are no wires.

Terry Svagerko, 96 Tudor, said if Rockside is being resurfaced, he asked when the sewer system on Broadway would be fixed? Also, the City has ordinances on pit bulls and vicious dogs, there are 10 to 20 cats in his neighborhood. He has to have his dog on a leash and properly maintained, why can't people with cats have the same type of requirements. If they have a collar do not euthanize them, but if they don't they should be euthanized.

Mr. Bellar asked where on Broadway was he specifically talking about? Mr. Svagerko said if you are going South on Broadway by the U-Haul, there are two sewers on the bend, water does not even go down them. Mr. Bellar said there are crews out cleaning the sewers every day, he will make sure they get over and get those two on Broadway.

Mr. Angelo said there was another call in regards to cats. He spoke with Mr. Seyboldt and the Law Director, Mr. Schuman, and there is no ordinance on the books that deals with cats like we do for dogs. The City is going to look at other cities and how they deal with stray cats. The only ordinance says that a household may have two cats or two dogs or one of each. It is something the City has to look into.

Edward Evanko, 37 Greencroft, asked about the stores by Wal-Mart that are partially completed, what is the status of these stores? Mr. Angelo and Mr. Mallis met with the developer of that property and part of the problem is there are three or four large tenants that have long term leases. One lease goes until the year 2018, so there is not a lot of incentive for the developer to move and have tenants because he is collecting on those leases. The City is trying to figure out how to make the developer move and there are some areas that need to be cleaned up. As for the vacancies, Mr. Mallis has been working to get other vendors into that area. Part of the problem is working with the developer.

Mr. Mallis said the old Tops, Target and CVS are all in a lease. The three leases end in 2015, 2016 and 2018. There is not much motivation if you are the owner because he is still collecting on these properties. The City hopes to work with the owner to see those stores filled. Mr. Mallis said there were rumors of a Chipolte going into the new stores in front of Wal-Mart, but Chipolte works with two or three others in the same building. The owner has had conversations with them and he told the City there are a couple of new vendors that should be in there around summer. Mr. Mallis contacted the owner last year about his rental/lease rates. Businesses look at all their options, especially in an economy like this. One of the businesses in that shopping center moved to Oakwood, and Dollar Tree is going to Maple Heights. Both of these businesses new leases are half of what they are paying now. However, the property owner at Meadowbrook keeps the buildings in great shape, they are ten times nicer than those in Maple Heights or Oakwood. The owner is trying and the City is going to continue to work with him.

Jean King, 267 Bexley, picked up the list of events for the Square this summer today. The Strawberry Festival has a car show and this is the first time she has seen it advertised. She believes this draws many people to Bedford, because people follow those shows. She is not sure what else is being done to advertise it but she is glad to see it being done. Ms. King said there is an event scheduled in August, what is a Pagan Pride Day?

Mr. Angelo said legally they have the right to use the Square and have whatever kind of festival they would like to have. They are going to work with them to make sure it all done properly and conducive to downtown.

Mayor Pocek said it is being sponsored by a downtown business, Spirit Apocethary. They profess to be pagans. They approached the City a year ago about hosting this festival, but they were not a 501-C3. They have since became a 501-C3.

Chief Duber said the pagans celebrate the Earth. They have a celebration for Spring, Summer and Fall. This would be the celebration for the Fall. He has had conversations with the Ohio State Patrol and FBI and there have been no problems with any of these festivals. There have been festivals like this in downtown Cleveland before. There was no type of violence reported by the Ohio State Patrol or FBI.

Chris Sweet, 97 Thames, said as far as the advertising for the car show, it is out there and is geared toward people that are involved in other car shows. It is on the website for the Historical Society, so the advertising is out there. Again, without a local paper it is more difficult to reach people.

The Mayor said a question was brought up about the old Taylor Chair site. Mr. Mallis said last year the owner of the property, Ryser Properties, lost everything when the housing market fell. There are a few liens on that property. Mr. Seyboldt did a good job with the concerns on the Northeast side of the property, it was just a pile of debris. The owner had no money and was not going to do anything with the property. The City cleaned up the property and assessed the property for approximately \$60,000. The owner went from 35 to 40 employees to 2. Mr. Mallis said the owner was also developing property off of Miles Road, by the old drive-in, and only half of the homes were finished and now are boarded up with graffiti. The property at the old Taylor Chair site does have the infrastructure in place, the problem is finding someone to come in on that property with the liens and assessments. All the people that did work on that property did not get paid. There was some rumor that the Cleveland Metro Parks wanted to buy the property and that is absolutely false. Mr. Mallis spoke with the Metro Parks and there is no interest in the property. About eight months ago, Mr. Mallis and Mr. Schuman contacted the owner and said if he could do anything such as finish the road and plant grass, the owner said he would consider doing that. The property was being foreclosed on, but it was saved.

A resident asked if it could be rezoned as light industrial. Mr. Mallis said the infrastructure in place is for residential homes, but that could be something worth looking into.

The Mayor said the owner of the property lost \$35 million in 2008. It is unfortunate, but the City is constantly monitoring the status of the property.

Jim Slifka, 130 Grand, said a lot of people use Grand Blvd. instead of Rockside to get from Broadway to Center Road. There are people that will pass him up when he is going the stated 25 miles per hour. When the construction starts on Rockside it will increase the traffic, can it be monitored? Chief Duber said yes it will be monitored.

Stan Kobus, 53 Dewhurst, said there are a lot of new neighbors in his area that rent homes. He asked how they would get Good Neighbor Guide that Councilman Koci spoke about? He said it used to come with the blue bags.

The Mayor said it is given to new homeowners and renters. Chief Duber said when the permit goes through the Building Department a list goes out to the Police and Fire Departments. Every month those two departments rotate delivering those packets that include that guide.

The Mayor said Council is doing everything they can to enforce the quality of life issues. Most Bedford residents have been here for a long time, and there is a certain expectation we all have for those issues. It is important to maintain those values that are important to us. If a resident sees something that is wrong, call either the Administration or Council.

Lenny Krivanka, 457 Terrace, said a neighbor neglects his front lawn, who should he call or what can he do about this? The Mayor said to call the Building Department. Mr. Seyboldt said once the Building Department receives a complaint the grass is already starting to get high. The Building Department members drive around the City once per week to look at properties as well. There are already almost 200 properties that have received a warning. Those homes that are vacant are checked regularly. Mr. Seyboldt said if the grass is 6 inches high, that is when a warning goes out.

Chris Sweet, 97 Thames, asked what the policy was on four wheel off road vehicles, as far as driving them in the City on the street or in yards? Chief Duber said they are allowed in yards but not on the streets. Mrs. Sweet said since her street is a dead end it has become a major playground now and people are riding those vehicles up and down the street.

Edward Evanko, 37 Greencroft, asked about the City's farmer's market? Mr. Mallis said two years ago the City was trying to get three or four different vendors there. There were only two that committed to doing it. Last year, Gabor's came to the City and said that people and/or vendors are not coming. Gabor's said if other vendors were there they would not come, so the City went with Gabor's. They had some staffing issues, and because of this they contacted a number of other vendors and there has not been interest. There was an individual through the Chamber of Commerce that contacted him last week and is very interested. The City has offered to help with advertising.

At this time, the Mayor discussed the Minister's Civility Council. Both Mr. Angelo and Councilwoman Zolata have been very involved. Mr. Angelo said he was just coming on board here at the City when this began. There were 14 ministers at the first meeting. They are doing some very positive things here in the City.

Mr. Angelo said one of the things the Mayor was concerned about was the value and quality of life in Bedford. In a lot of ways it seems like society has changed and one of the things the ministers are looking at is what can they do to present the City's values and quality of life issues to those that may not be that interested. Mr. Angelo said they formed seven key points to address. One deals with working with the City as far as appreciating the employees that we have. Another thing they want to do is establish a chaplaincy program, and have ride along in the police vehicles. They are also looking at a home resource program, not to do the work for the homeowner but to help teach people that don't have the tools or the knowledge. One of the City employees that belongs to the Church of the Nazarene is going to Chair that program. Councilwoman Zolata is involved in the program to welcome new residents. There will be a welcome picnic on August 15 at Ellenwood with the Police and Fire Departments and School Board officials in attendance. This will help to get the information out there of what it is like to live in Bedford and what is expected. There are certain values the City has and they have to be passed on. Rev. Doug Boquist says there is a history in Bedford, and those coming into Bedford have an opportunity to write their page in that history book.

Councilman Koci said there is also an anger management program through the schools and an advisor will be in the schools to speak to them one on one. Mr. Angelo said they are already at Heskett Middle School working with students, being a mentor. There are a number of programs going on.

Councilman Koci said the ministers are able to do some things the City cannot do. It is going to be a positive thing for the City. They want to educate people.

Louis Sounik, 868 Wellmon, asked about the bullying issues at school. Mr. Koci said that is part of having an advisor at the school. They're not preaching religion but teaching good citizenship and fellowship. This is a long process.

The Mayor has been thinking about this collaborative with the ministers over the last two or three years. The problem with technology is that it is dominating our lives. The bottom line is that civility has been lost in our society, we do not know how to speak to each other. We want to teach the younger generation that you have to be able to talk to each other and what proper behaviors are. Only 40% of households have both parents, most are single parents. The City will continue to enforce those quality of life issues, but there needs to be a broader reach and that is why the clergy is being brought in. The Mayor said the City was handed down to him as a responsibility, and when he steps down from Mayor he wants to pass it on to the next individual in the same fashion it was given to him. The foreclosure crisis was a crime on the American people, this Council and Administration is doing everything they can to try and do their best. The professionalism of our Police Department throughout the shooting that occurred is second to none, Chief Duber and his officers are doing a phenomenal job. What Chief Nagy is doing with Maple Heights and the services they provide is wonderful.

A resident asked about the emergency siren that the City has. The Mayor said it is tested the first Saturday of the month.

At this time, Mr. Tench our School Board Representative spoke about the status of the schools. Nothing seems to be as important to citizens as quality of life issues, and it is impacted so much by our adolescents in this community. If the Bedford City Schools just had to deal with the City of Bedford it would be a much easier job, but there are four communities to represent. The high school should be the jewel we have, and it is but it is also their biggest issue. It is something the School Board is tackling head on.

Mr. Tench thanked the residents for passing the levy a year ago. It is instrumental to provide a quality education to the students of the district. If a levy does not pass in Bedford, then it does not pass for the district.

School funding in Ohio is an issue for every public school district. It is difficult when you are trying to provide quality education to the students of this district, while the State and Federal governments continue to take money. It is important to know that over the past five years, \$1 million has been cut every year out of the budget. Staffing, closing a school, services, they have been able to keep those cuts out of the classroom. How do they continue to provide quality opportunities? There are more opportunities here in Bedford than there are at the private schools.

Mr. Tench said the schools have to be very prudent in how they handle their finances, and they have done a very commendable job over the years. The schools are going to continue to look at viable changes to implement without affecting the educational process. It is a difficult job. There are some difficult decisions that have been made.

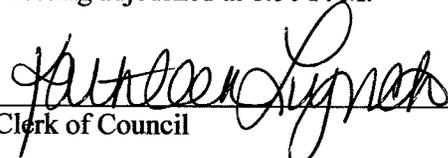
Mr. Tench said an issue they are very proud of is the way the school's have addressed the issue of illegal residency in the district. This is just as big an issue of quality of life as are other concerns. The people that do not live here and enroll their children here, the taxpayers are paying for it. They are stealing from every resident in the district. There is a group of individuals at the Board of Education in charge of finding out who is not a resident. In the last ten years, these are the number of students that were removed from the schools; 2001 - 125; 2002 - 79; 2003 - 58; 2004 - 63; 2005 - 86; 2006 - 167; 2007 - 205; 2008 - 112; and 2009 - 138. During this year, there have been approximately 105. This year the school has recovered \$15,000 owed to the district, with over \$77,000 still pending. Two years ago a woman from Maple Heights owed close to \$20,000 and the school settled, but you are not going to be able to get blood out of a turnip. If a resident sees something that doesn't look right, call the School Board.

Mr. Tench said they are in the process of hiring a new principal at the high school. They had narrowed it down to four people, but have decided to start the search over. That is not all that bad, because it is important to find the right person, not just to hire someone to fill the position. If there needs to be an interim person than that is what will be done.

Mr. Tench said there are a lot of unsung heroes in the district. The schools received a grant from the Cleveland Browns Foundation for an exercise area at Heskett Middle School. It will be dedicated this Wednesday.

Mr. Tench wished everyone a good summer.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 P. M.


Clerk of Council


Mayor - President of Council