CITY OF FLORENCE KENTUCKY®

FLORENCE CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES – REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2015

The City Council of the City of Florence, Kentucky met in Regular Session on Tuesday, June 9, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the Florence Government Center with Mayor Diane E. Whalen presiding in the Chair.

CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME:

Mayor Whalen called the regular meeting to order and declared the Regular Session to be open for the presentation of all City business.

ROLL CALL:

The roll was called and the following six (6) members of Council registered present: Mel Carroll, Gary Winn, J. Kelly Huff, Vice Mayor Dr. Julie Metzger Aubuchon, Duane Froelicher, and David A. Osborne.

Also present were Mayor Diane E. Whalen, City Coordinator Richard J. Lunnemann, City Attorney Dale Wilson, Business/Community Development Director Joshua R. Wice, Finance Director Linda J. Chapman, Fire/EMS Chief Kelly Joe Aylor, Police Chief John McDermond, Public Services Director Eric Hall, City Engineer Bill Viox, Police Officer Ken Osborn, Fire/EMS Volunteer Jerry Wendeln, Fire/ EMS Captain Troy Webster, Fire/EMS Captain Jill James, Fire/EMS Battalion Commander Chris Miller, Student Ambassadors Autumn Byrd, Chalel Crawford, Sam Gormley, Luke Huddleston, Sam Huddleston, and Allison Lindsey, Community Events Coordinator Vanessa Lenear, Kelly Frank (11 Sassafrass Lane), Ed & Lisa Huddleston (8651 Valley Circle Drive), Jayme Byrd (6807 Sebree Drive), Kendall Powell's mother, Videographer Jerry Schrepfer, Videographer Tom Lape, Florence Recorder Reporter Amy Scalf, Northern Kentucky Tribune Reporter Mark Hansel, and City Clerk Joe Christofield.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

May 26, 2015 Business Meeting

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to approve the minutes of the May 26, 2015 business meeting of Council. Councilmember Winn so moved, with second from Councilmember Huff. **Council approved by unanimous vote.**

RECOGNITION:

Retirement Florence Fire/EMS Volunteer Jerry Wendeln

Mayor Whalen recognized Fire/EMS Chief Kelly J. Aylor who introduced Fire/EMS Volunteer Jerry Wendeln. Mr. Wendeln recently retired and was honored for having served 28 years as a volunteer firefighter for the City of Florence. Additional discussion followed.

RECOGNITION:

2014-2015 Student Ambassadors

Mayor Whalen recognized Community Events Coordinator Vanessa Lenear who introduced the 2014-2015 Student Ambassadors (Hailee Carter, Chalel Crawford, Zane Ensley, Sam Gormley, Luke Huddleston, Allison Lindsey, and Kendall Powell). Additional discussion followed.

INTRODUCTION:

2015-2016 Student Ambassadors

Mayor Whalen recognized Community Events Coordinator Vanessa Lenear who introduced the 2015-2016 Student Ambassadors (Cooper Brun, Autumn Byrd, Chalel Crawford, Zane Ensley, Luke Huddleston, Sam Huddleston, and Kendall Powell). Additional discussion followed.

FIRST READING:

Ordinance No. O-8-15

Mayor Whalen presented the following Ordinance for first reading:

ORDINANCE NO. O-8-15:
AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF FLORENCE, KENTUCKY, AMENDING THE BUDGET FOR THE 2014-2015 FISCAL YEAR OF THE CITY. (AMENDMENT #2)

Mayor Whalen read aloud the following summary of the Ordinance:

This purposes of this amendment are to: (a) reflect increased revenues in the General Fund due to refunding of the 2005 bonds; (b) to reflect increases in General Fund Expenditures related to the Police Department vacation pay down, additional Fire Department overtime, to show the carryover amount in the Project Sign Upgrade Account, and to show the debt service increase relating to the refunding of the 2005 bonds; (c) to reflect an increase in revenue and expenditure amounts in the Infrastructure Fund relating to completion of a portion of the state-funded Mall Road Project; and (d) to reflect increased expenses in the Water & Sewer Fund due to the vacation pay down, expense from increased water purchases, and for the payout of water deposits.

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to approve Ordinance No. O-8-15 on first reading. Councilmember Carroll moved, with second from Councilmember Osborne, that Ordinance No. O-8-15 be approved on first reading and be held for second and final reading at the next meeting of Council. **Council approved by unanimous vote.**

MAYOR'S ANNUAL BUDGET ADDRESS:

Mayor Diane E. Whalen

Mayor Whalen gave her annual Budget Address to the City of Florence:

I presented my first State of the City and Budget address in 1999. It is amazing to me and probably many others, that as I begin my 5th term as Mayor, tonight, I will present to you my 17th State of the City and Budget Address. It is my honor and privilege to do so.

This address, like all the ones that preceded it, is filled with many facts and figures about the City operations and finances. We try to give you a glimpse, a snapshot of the things that have occurred during the last Fiscal Year, as well as a little bit of insight into why we do what we do and what we hope to accomplish with the upcoming budget. City government works every minute of every day. We have experienced some big city and urban growing pains, and faced things that we never expected in Florence. We will continue to face our challenges head on. We recognize that everything changes as it grows. We are committed to doing everything in our power to provide a safe and prosperous community where you can live, work and play.

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Our focus on financial management and economic development has established the city as a center of commerce in the Greater Cincinnati and northern Kentucky region. Private investment and job growth continue in the city. Our efforts are paying dividends, and we are experiencing successes from large to small, all of which are very important to our community. These efforts provide an increased and sustainable source of revenue that allow us to provide the best in public safety personnel and equipment, as well as maintain and improve our city

infrastructure through the efforts of the Public Services employees. The fiscal plan and management are in place to make sure that we not only meet those obligations this year, but for many years into the future.

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The budget for fiscal year 2016 represents a comprehensive spending plan for all city funds. The budget reflects all known and estimated increases in costs as well as the estimated projections for the various sources of revenues. Our occupational license fees, insurance premium tax, payroll tax receipts, and real estate tax revenues are all dependent on economic conditions and as such, these numbers are subject to continued analysis and review throughout the fiscal year for adjustments. It is important to note that there has been no increase in the real estate tax rate since 2008. In addition, city council is provided with monthly financial reports that show variances between expected revenues and expenditures so they are able to monitor and recognize any needed adjustments.

The general fund budget totals $32.4 million. This budget figure includes operating and capital expenditures including transfers to other city funds. The operating expenditures are $20.5 million; an overall 4% decrease over those budgeted for fiscal year 2014. The city also has planned expenditures for capital items of $2.5 million.

Our Finance Department continues to be recognized by the Government Finance Officers Association for excellence in financial reporting, the highest recognition awarded for financial reporting for a municipality. In addition, the city received its first GFOA "Distinguished Budget Presentation" award.

Our staff members in the administrative and finance offices perform responsibly by providing general management and coordination of city operations, support in billing and collections, business licensing, human resources, and risk management. Our Administrative Assistant, Donna Smith, retired at the end of February, with 20 years of service at the City of Florence. She also had extensive private sector experience before joining the city. We wish Donna well in her retirement and she and her knowledge of the city will be missed. However, we were fortunate to find a replacement with Deb McCarty joining the Mayor's Office staff as the new administrative assistant. Deb brings an abundance of private sector experience in customer relations and project management – and we look forward to her contributions. We appreciate all the staff members' hard work in assisting businesses and residents with what may be their only direct interaction with city government.

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The police department remained busy this year with approximately 65,000 officer calls – everything from traffic enforcement, to accident investigation, to responding to 9-1-1 calls, and assisting residents, businesses, and visitors with their requests for service.

The Northern Kentucky community as a whole continues to see an increase in the use of illegal drugs. City Council requested information from the police chief regarding adding additional officers to the street to allow for additional investigation and enforcement into this troubling problem. The trickle-down effect of drug use has the potential to touch us all. Council recognizes that any additional employees will have impact on the long-term budget, but we also recognize that we must provide the tools to those who work to make our city and streets safe and try to find as many ways as possible to deal with the problems that drug use creates.

To that end, last year's budget provided funding to the police department to establish a city drug task force. The coming year will see the activation of the new drug unit consisting of three veteran officers and a sergeant. The unit will work full time on drug investigations and other crimes associated with drug activity.

In order to pull experienced officers from the ranks to serve in that unit, the department added four new officers during the year, including Jake Samad, Ethan Manley, Brady Napier, and Kelli Chapman.

The department completed a major overall of the property room. The project included new shelving and a secure one way pass through door which enables officers to deposit the property directly into the secured property room. The project also included new software and computers to log and track property using scanners and bar codes. The entire project was financed with funds from the asset forfeiture account.

The Police Department launched an app that is free to the public. With the app, the public can receive news alerts, leave tips, connect to related sites, and many other applications. The idea for the app originated and was designed by Corporal Ryan Thoman and Officer Justin Reynolds. This application is available in the Apple and Google Play stores.

The department successfully secured state and federal grants for equipment and special law enforcement programs. A technology-based grant was obtained from the U.S. Department of Justice to purchase body-worn cameras for patrol officers. In addition, the department was awarded a highway safety grant from the state for enhanced traffic enforcement.

The Community Resource Unit continues to be active with events throughout the city. This year the unit graduated 650 DARE students, offered two Teen Academies for at risk teenagers, a Citizen's Academy, eight school assembly programs, bike rodeos, parades, and the city's celebrations for Easter, Halloween, Fourth of July, and Christmas. In addition, the unit provided crime prevention training to businesses, community agencies, and other public service agencies throughout northern Kentucky.

In the coming year, the department will apply for grants to upgrade the body worn cameras. The department has been using body worn cameras for six years, and we are in the second year of a three-year plan to upgrade the cameras.

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2014 was again a very busy – but safe – one for the fire department and citizens of Florence. The ambulances of the department responded to 6,655 calls for assistance; nearly 2,804 which were classified as "immediately life threatening," in which our paramedics were required to provide definitive treatment in stabilizing and/or reviving patients en route to the hospital. 110 calls were full cardiac arrests.

The department also responded to 2,614 fire and rescue calls and completed 2,227 fire prevention inspections. Significantly, the fire prevention inspections covered 90% of all properties requiring inspections. Fire code compliance is our first line of defense against catastrophic fires and loss of life.

Highlights from last year included opening the new fire station on Bushelman Boulevard, which allowed us to add a third engine company to better serve the city and fire district population. This has allowed the city, as anticipated, to improve fire and EMS travel times. We also took delivery of a new ambulance last year.

This coming year, we will take delivery of a new fire engine to be placed at the Weaver Road fire station and explore opportunities for live burning and other hands-on training.

There were three promotions last year – Kelly Joe Aylor to Fire/EMS Chief, Scott Knoll to Assistant Fire/EMS Chief, and Adam Begley to Captain/EMS Coordinator.

The city also welcomed several new employees in the fire department, including Becky Mirick as Administrative Clerk, Bill Allen as Training Commander, Jordon Shepherd as Firefighter-Paramedic, and Glenn Laws, Tom Miller, and James Duane as volunteers.

Captain Joy Cutter-McVay retired with 23 years of service at our fire department, Penny Black retired from the Administrative Clerk position, and volunteers Jerry Wendeln and Neal Stone retired with a combined 60 years of volunteer service at the city.

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The Public Services Department continues to keep our community looking first class by professionally managing and maintaining streets, sidewalks, buildings, grounds, fleet services, water, sanitary sewer, storm water, capital improvements, GIS services, urban forestry, code enforcement, and the citizen inquiry program.

Transportation infrastructure improvements are now complete or nearly complete on 94 streets. Improvements include complete replacements, mill and overlays and crack sealing. Various sidewalk and bike path improvements were also completed throughout the city.

During the past year, the department coordinated water main replacement along St. Jude Circle and water main relining along Dixie Highway, in addition to repairing 43 main breaks and 113 service leaks. The department also relined approximately 1,800 feet of sanitary sewer pipe.

Park improvements completed include the replacement of the playground safety surface at South Fork Park and Stringtown Park.

In the upcoming year, the budget includes infrastructure improvements on 25 streets through contracted work and 72 streets though in-house work. Proposed water line replacement will take place on Locust Avenue and New Uri Avenue. Sanitary sewer relining will take place in the Rosetta and Sanders sewer sheds. Storm water improvements are slated in the Bustetter, Coretta, and Kentaboo watersheds. Finally, park improvements are scheduled for South Fork Park and Lincoln Woods. By proactively updating and replacing infrastructure now, future costs and emergency replacement of infrastructure will be kept to a minimum.

Thanks to the efforts of the city's Urban Forest Commission and the willingness of this and prior city councils to fund projects. One of the projects undertaken this past year was the streetscape improvements made along the south side of the KY18/I-75 bridge abutments. The city's commitment to its urban forestry and beautification strategy is a positive to our city. This commitment has allowed the city to be designated for the 23rd consecutive year as a "Tree City USA."

During the past year, the department organized, planned, and implemented 18 special events. A few highlights include the record breaking crowd of over 4,500 in attendance for the Independence Day Celebration, 502 residents participated in the spring and fall cleanup, 31 students were trained and certified as Safe Sitters, and the Public Works Night Out showcased the departments services to over 300 people.

When talking about our Public Services Department, we of course would be remiss if we did not mention the special contributions they make during the winter months. When snow falls and ice forms, and whenever Mother Nature strikes, whether on a holiday or in the middle of the night, our Public Services employees report for duty to help keep city streets clear. Their efforts ensure businesses can open and residents can get to work. Their hard work also allows our other 24 hour a day employees to respond to calls for service within our community. We had another tough winter season in 2015, and we thank you for your contribution towards keeping our community safe.

We welcomed several new employees in the Public Services Department, who filled open positions from retirements or resignations. After working several years as a part-time administrative clerk, after a career working full-time, Kim Gillespie retired, and we welcomed Jennifer Schwierjohann as a new part-time clerk. The city also appointed new maintenance workers Bryce Meier, Michael Setters, Josh Zappa, Jacob Gilbert, and Dylan Valandingham, and systems technician Jacob Wallace.

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This coming year, we look forward to one of the largest regional retail developments coming to fruition with the openings of Costco, Menard's, Dave & Buster's, and Planet Fitness at the Florence Heights development. There are two out-parcels for dining establishments that will open in the future as well.

While the Florence Heights development is the most visible new development in the City of Florence, we continue to be excited about the 2,500 businesses that have chosen to locate and do business in Florence. With such a significant number of businesses, all lending themselves to a diversified, strong economic climate – supporting those who live in Florence or those from around the region who work or participate in commerce in Florence –helping to make Florence the dynamic place that it is.

Our commercial real estate market remains strong, with leasing and purchasing activity in the retail, industrial, and office sectors being very active. On the retail side, our vacancy rate in the city is below 4%, which is one of the best performers in the region, where the regional retail vacancy is 8.4%. The industrial vacancy rate is under 2%, while the overall vacancy rate in the region is 6.7%. And, the professional office vacancy rate in Florence is 12%, with the region's rate at 20.6%. Overall, we fair better than most communities in the region.

All of these factors are very strong and positive indicators of Florence's overall economy. It is truly the perfect time to do business in the City of Florence. The city will continue with its strategic investments and partnerships to keep our economy growing. Specifically, this coming year, we will begin construction of "phase 3" of Mall Road. This will create an access road along the southwest side of Mall Road that will connect two commercial centers with the rest of Connector Drive. This will not only be a benefit to travelers in the area but also to the businesses, future businesses, and property owners in this area.

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As I have said many times, I live in a community I love, and I am grateful to be its mayor. I live in a community where I have seen the transformation and recognize the visionaries that made it happen. It is a busy place – it is a traffic headache sometimes. The busy roads, traffic signals, storefronts, restaurants, and many other businesses are a testimony that we are

doing something right. I am frequently reminded of what a city means: It is people choosing to live together to create a place where people can work, play and educate their children and raise a family. You all have a big role in making that possible for the people in our community. It is our roll to help you be successful.

It was Abraham Lincoln who once said, "I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives. I like to see a man live, so that his place will be proud of him."

In conclusion, with the supportive attitude and commitment of our current city elected officials, Julie Metzger Aubuchon, Mel Carroll, Duane Froelicher, Kelly Huff, David Osborne, and Gary Winn, and our department heads and staff members, I continue to be excited about our future together knowing that our community can continue to flourish.

The state of our city is strong. No one person can do this alone. We are all a part of an ongoing commitment to the progress of our community. Together we will keep it moving forward.

I offer my sincere thanks to each and everyone one of you. Our residents, our business owners and their employees, and the dedicated public servants who come to work every day to keep our city on track. Our success is because of you.

FIRST READINGS:

Ordinance No. O-9-15

Mayor Whalen presented the following Ordinance for first reading:

ORDINANCE NO. O-9-15:
AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF FLORENCE, KENTUCKY, ADOPTING THE OFFICIAL BUDGET FOR THE 2015-2016 FISCAL YEAR OF THE CITY.

Mayor Whalen read aloud the following summary of the Ordinance:

This Ordinance adopts the fiscal year 2015-2016 budget of the City, including the General Fund, the Municipal Aid Road Fund, the Infrastructure Fund, the Asset Forfeiture Fund, the Aquatic Center Fund, the Water & Sewer Fund, the World of Golf Fund, and the Health and Dental Fund. Budgeted resources and expenditures are as shown on Exhibit "A".

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to approve Ordinance No. O-9-15 on first reading. Vice Mayor Metzger Aubuchon moved, with second from Councilmember Carroll, that Ordinance No. O-9-15 be approved on first reading and be held for second and final reading at the next meeting of Council. **Council approved by unanimous vote.**

Ordinance No. O-10-15

Mayor Whalen presented the following Ordinance for first reading:

ORDINANCE NO. O-10-15:
AN ORDINANCE AMENDING PRIOR ORDINANCES RELATING TO PERSONNEL POLICIES, JOB DESCRIPTIONS, AND THE PAY PLAN.

Mayor Whalen read aloud the following summary of the Ordinance:

This Ordinance eliminates the authorized position of Parks and Recreation Administrator; adds the authorized position of Community Events Coordinator; and increases the number of Firefighter EMT and Paramedic positions from 33 to 36.

The full text of Ordinance No. O-10-15, including its exhibits, is available for examination in the office of the City Clerk of the City of Florence, Kentucky, in the Florence Government Center, 8100 Ewing Blvd., Florence, Kentucky, during regular office hours.

Mayor Whalen called for a motion to approve Ordinance No. O-10-15 on first reading. Councilmember Huff moved, with second from Councilmember Osborne, that Ordinance No. O-10-15 be approved on first reading and be held for second and final reading at the next meeting of Council. **Council approved by unanimous vote.**

CITY COORDINATOR'S REPORT:

City Coordinator Richard J. Lunnemann

City Coordinator Richard J. Lunnemann advised of the City's first Neighborhood Night Out of the season, scheduled for Tuesday, June 16 from 5-7pm at Orleans Park.

MAYOR'S REPORT:

Mayor Diane E. Whalen

Mayor Whalen advised of the City's Dive-in Movie, scheduled for Saturday, June 13 at 9pm at the Family Aquatic Center.

OTHER:

Mayor Whalen asked if any councilmember desired recognition; no one responded.

Mayor Whalen asked if any department head desired recognition; no one responded.

Mayor Whalen asked if anyone in the audience desired recognition; no one responded.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

There was no need for City Council to go into Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Council, Mayor Whalen called for a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Winn so moved, with second from Councilmember Huff, and **unanimous approval of Council,** the time being 7:38 p.m.

APPROVED:

Diane E. Whalen, Mayor

ATTEST:

Joseph A. Christofield, City Clerk