

**City of Fairfield Minutes
Regular Meeting of City Council
January 27, 2025**

Council-Manager Briefing

None.

Business Meeting Call to Order

Mayor Rhodus called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Prayer/Pledge of Allegiance

Councilmember Pennington led in prayer and Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Councilmembers present included:

Councilmember, 1st Ward Leslie Besl
Councilmember, 2nd Ward Dale Paullus
Councilmember, 3rd Ward Debbie Pennington
Councilmember, 4th Ward Adam Kraft
Councilmember, At-Large Tim Meyers
Councilmember, At-Large Matt Davidson

Councilmembers excused included:

Councilmember, At-Large Gwen Brill

Councilmember Davidson, seconded by Councilmember Kraft, moved to excuse Councilmember Brill. Motion carried 6-0.

Agenda Modifications

None.

Executive Session Requests

Councilmember Davidson, seconded by Councilmember Meyers, moved for Executive Session to discuss the appointment, employment or compensation of public employee or official. Roll call vote. Motion passed 6-0.

Special Presentations

None.

Citizen Comments

Christine Helton, 6372 Robert E Lee Drive - addressed Council regarding issues with the Income Tax Division. She requested that someone look into the many issues with that division, including lost returns and paperwork. Mayor Rhodus referred her to Finance Director Diana

Davenport to look into the issue further.

Council Reports

Councilmember Davidson addressed the increase in cryptocurrency scams. He would like to explore possible legislation or other actions to take to help protect residents from losing their hard-earned money.

Councilmember Meyers addressed concerns regarding background checks for boards and commissions. He stated that it may be necessary to clarify information that will be pulled and that it doesn't include credit reporting. He also thanked Public Works for the quick excessive water use alert email today due to a water hose being left on while it was frozen and then started running when it thawed out.

Councilmember Besl announced the Wine, Women and Song and Fairfield Footlighters events at the Community Arts Center.

Mayor Rhodus gave kudos to the Fire Department for their great work at a fire in the city and Public Works for helping with the water all over the road that was freezing. Councilmember Besl seconded that regarding two calls for EMS for her parents. Mayor Rhodus thanked Public Works for their great work on the streets during snow events and said he had some great conversations with Governor and state officials at the inauguration last week

Public Hearing(s)

None.

Approval of Minutes

1. Regular Meeting Minutes - January 13, 2025

The Regular Meeting Minutes of January 13, 2025 were approved as written and submitted.

Old Business

1. Community & Public Relations - Councilmember Tim Meyers

- a. Simple Motion: Formal recognition and/or approval of Council assignments and appointments dated January 1, 2025.

Councilmember Meyers stated that this item would remain tabled for further discussion.

2. Development Services - Councilmember Matt Davidson

- a. Ordinance amending Ordinance No. 166-84, the Codified Ordinances of Fairfield, Ohio, Section 130.01(B)(2), the City of Fairfield, Ohio, Zoning Map.

Councilmember Davidson presented the third reading of this ordinance.

Councilmember Matt Davidson, seconded by Tim Meyers, moved to adopt. Motion Yes 6, No 0, Abstained 0.

ORDINANCE NO. 6-25. APPROVED 6-0.

3. Public Works - Councilmember Adam Kraft

- a. Resolution declaring the necessity of repairing sidewalks (including aprons).

Councilmember Kraft presented the second reading of this ordinance.

New Business - Motion to Read All New Business by Title Only

Councilmember Leslie Besl, seconded by Debbie Pennington, moved to read all New Business by Title Only. Motion Yes 6, No 0, Abstained 0.

1. Development Services - Councilmember Matt Davidson

- a. Ordinance amending Ordinance No. 166-84, the Codified Ordinances of Fairfield, Ohio, Section 1130.01(B)(2), the City of Fairfield, Ohio, Zoning Map.

Hillwood Investment Properties is proposing to redevelop a portion of the former Forest Fair Mall site. The redevelopment will include demolishing the entire mall and the associated four story parking garage. Once demolished, Hillwood is proposing to develop a business park consisting of three light industrial buildings on 54 acres on the eastern side of the property. The buildings will range in size from 250,000 – 355,000 square feet. The majority of the development will be located in Forest Park, with only 8% of the development located in Fairfield. The remaining front portion of the mall site that has direct access to South Gilmore Road will remain with the current property owner and could support a mixed use redevelopment in the future.

Concurrent with this rezoning request, Hillwood is requesting a zone change for the +/- 50 acres in Forest Park from Planned Business (PB) to Industrial Park (IP). A public hearing for the Forest Park rezoning has been scheduled for January 27. It is anticipated that a vote by Forest Park City Council will occur in February.

Forest Fair Mall was constructed in the late 1980s and opened to the public in 1989. The 1.5 million square foot building sits on 90.43 acres, straddling two cities, two counties and three school districts. Approximately one-third of the mall is located in Fairfield and the remaining two-thirds is located in Forest Park. The mall has changed ownership many times and a major upgrade was completed in 2004 that included both interior and exterior renovations. Over the years, owners of the mall have struggled with acquiring and retaining tenants resulting in the decline of the mall, including the structural integrity and exterior appearance. Several years ago, the Fairfield Fire Department ordered the closure of the parking garage due to the failure of the fire suppression system. More recently, the mall was condemned by the City of Forest Park in 2022 due to health and safety concerns. Bass Pro Shops left the mall in January 2024. Kohls has recently announced it will be closing

this store in April 2025, leaving the entire mall vacant.

Councilmember Davidson presented the first reading of this ordinance and set the Joint Public Hearing date for February 10, 2025.

2. Public Utilities - Councilmember Debbie Pennington

- a. Ordinance to authorize the City Manager to execute a real estate exchange agreement with the City of Hamilton, Ohio.

The City of Fairfield desires to exchange certain properties with the City of Hamilton for future development purposes.

In accordance with the provisions outlined in the draft Real Estate Exchange Agreement, this legislation will authorize the City Manager to execute the agreement and appropriate the funding necessary for the exchange.

Councilmember Pennington presented the first reading of this ordinance.

3. Finance & Budget - Councilmember Gwen Brill

- a. Ordinance establishing salaries for certain exempt and salaried employees of the City of Fairfield, Ohio, to repeal Ordinance No. 118-24 and all amendments thereto and declaring an emergency.

The proposed modification is driven by a commitment to operational excellence and efficiency. The changes include the broadening of scope and responsibilities of the position of Tax Administrator. The change in classification of the position offers benefits including retention of the incumbent in the current role and strategic succession planning for the organization. The Tax Supervisor position existed in prior Service Delivery Charts, and its revival will allow for flexibility in future staffing decisions pertaining to the Tax Division, once the full scope of new duties assumed by the Tax Administrator/Assistant Finance Director is evaluated. At this time we do not anticipate filling the position in the short-term

Tax Administrator/Assistant Finance Director (Proposed)

The current position, Tax Administrator, focuses exclusively on operations in the City Income Tax Division. To further enhance the city's operational efficiency, it is proposed the position be reclassified to include more diversified duties and responsibilities that are managed in the Finance Department.

- Tax Administrator (Existing Position)
 - o Responsible for overseeing all aspects of the daily operations of the Tax Division.
 - o Directly supervises Analysts and Clerks in the auditing of tax returns and enforcing compliance with the filing requirements of residents and businesses
 - o Primary focus is income tax administration and customer service

- Tax Administrator/Assistant Finance Director (Reclassified Position)
 - o Responsible for all duties and responsibilities of Tax Administrator role
 - o Assist the Finance Director with budget preparation and financial reporting
 - o Assist the Finance Director with compiling and analyzing data to conduct treasury investment, risk management and debt management activities
 - o Assist the Finance Director with overseeing adherence to and compliance with City purchasing policies and procedures
 - o Compile labor costing figures to assist in collective bargaining

Key benefits of this addition include:

- Increased Capacity: The addition of finance specific duties and responsibilities will increase the capacity of the City's Finance Department, allowing for greater focus on budget planning, policy development, and enhanced financial analysis.
- Improved Succession Planning: The addition of the Assistant Finance Director classification will strengthen the City's succession planning efforts, ensuring that there are qualified individuals in place to take on leadership roles in the future.
- Improved Service Delivery: Expanding the current Tax Administrator role will provide additional oversight and improve the quality and efficiency of City services.

The reclassified Tax Administrator/Assistant Finance Director position description has been presented and approved by the Civil Service Commission, Immediate Manager, Human Resources Manager and the City Manager. The reclassification of the Tax Administrator position is a strategic investment in the future of Fairfield. There is already an approved position description for the Tax Supervisor role. By enhancing leadership, increasing capacity, and improving service delivery, these moves will help the City to achieve its goals and create a more prosperous and sustainable community.

The proposed modifications represent a strategic investment in the city's future. By reclassifying the Tax Administrator position and reviving the Tax Supervisor role, the City can achieve significant improvements in operational efficiency, and service delivery, while advancing organizational goals.

Councilmember Meyers presented the first reading of this ordinance.

Councilmember Tim Meyers, seconded by Adam Kraft, moved to suspend second and third readings. Motion Yes 6, No 0, Abstained 0.

Councilmember Tim Meyers, seconded by Matt Davidson, moved to adopt. Motion Yes 6, No 0, Abstained 0.

ORDINANCE NO. 7-25. APPROVED 6-0.

- b. Ordinance to amend Ordinance No. 158-24 entitled "An Ordinance to make estimated appropriations for the expenses and other expenditures of the City of Fairfield, Ohio, during a period beginning January 1, 2025, and ending December 31, 2025."
Contractual Appropriations: \$355,000 total (see attached for detail - \$250,000 real

estate exchange; \$105,000 contingency funds restored)

Councilmember Meyers presented the first reading of this ordinance.

Councilmember Tim Meyers, seconded by Matt Davidson, moved to suspend second and third readings. Motion Yes 6, No 0, Abstained 0.

Councilmember Tim Meyers, seconded by Debbie Pennington, moved to adopt. Motion Yes 6, No 0, Abstained 0.

ORDINANCE NO. 8-25. APPROVED 6-0.

\$105,000 - Contingency funds restored - Professional and Technical Services related to Multi-Sensor Robotic Inspection – Public Utilities

- c. Ordinance to amend Ordinance No. 158-24 entitled “An Ordinance to make estimated appropriations for the expenses and other expenditures of the City of Fairfield, Ohio, during a period beginning January 1, 2025, and ending December 31, 2025.”
Non-Contractual Appropriations: \$161,848 total (see attached for detail)

Councilmember Meyers presented the first reading of this ordinance.

Councilmember Tim Meyers, seconded by Leslie Besl, moved to suspend second and third readings. Motion Yes 6, No 0, Abstained 0.

Councilmember Tim Meyers, seconded by Leslie Besl, moved to adopt. Motion Yes 6, No 0, Abstained 0.

ORDINANCE NO. 9-25. APPROVED 6-0.

\$52,000 - Wastewater Division Wet Well 2 Channel Grinder (Public Utilities)

\$30,000 - Water Division SCADA Integration (Public Utilities)

\$15,000 - Water Division - Valve Boxes (Public Utilities)

\$25,000 - Miscellaneous Traffic Signal Upgrades / Spare Parts (Public Works)

\$39,848 - Water Division - Manhole Castings (Public Utilities)

Executive Session of Council (if Needed)

Council recessed to Executive Session at 7:32 PM. Open session reconvened at 8:02 PM.

Councilmember Tim Meyers, seconded by Dale Paullus, moved to amend the agenda to add an ordinance relating to the City Manager's employment agreement. Motion Yes 6, No 0, Abstained 0.

Ordinance to authorize the Mayor and Finance Director as Acting City Manager to enter into an employment agreement with Scott W. Timmer for the City Manager position and declaring an emergency.

Councilmember Meyers presented the first reading of this ordinance.

Councilmember Tim Meyers, seconded by Adam Kraft, moved to suspend second and third readings. Motion Yes 6, No 0, Abstained 0.

Councilmember Tim Meyers, seconded by Adam Kraft, moved to adopt. Motion Yes 6, No 0, Abstained 0.

ORDINANCE NO. 10-25. APPROVED 6-0.

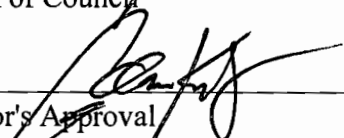
Council reconvened Executive Session at 8:04 PM.

Adjournment

The Regular Meeting adjourned at 8:48 PM.

ATTEST:


Clerk of Council


Mayor's Approval
Date Approved: 2/10/25