

Alderman resigns after contentious meeting

Lee Stubbs
Editor

The Platte City Board of Aldermen has seen quite a bit of change in recent weeks. First, three incumbent aldermen were defeated in the April election by three first-time officeholders. Then, last week, Ward 1 alderman Bill Knighton abruptly announced his resignation.

In a letter sent to City officials, Knight said the reason he resigned was because he and his wife, Jody, were seeking to buy property outside of the City limits. Aldermen must reside within City limits.

"This period of notice will allow a replacement to be appointed to complete my term," Knighton said in his letter.

While Knighton made no mention of any possible friction on the Board in his letter, his resignation came one day after he disagreed with other Board members on two issues.

As reported in last week's Citizen, Knighton moved to approve the appointment of former Alderman Lee Roy Van Lew to the City's Planning and Zoning Commission, but the motion died without a second, prompting Mayor Dave Brooks to question the rest of the Board on its motivations. Knighton was also visibly agitated.

Later, Brooks suggested the board approve a recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission to not review or approve any final plat applications or site plans for Platte Valley Plaza until developer Bill Mann completed promised traffic signal and lane improvements at the intersection of Highway 92 and Kentucky Avenue.

"In other words, we're going to shut him down until he gets the things he said he was going to do done," Brooks said in his introduction of the issue.

The City has been in an ongoing process attempting to coerce Mann into abiding by his promise to improve the street infrastructure in the area. City Administrator Keith Moody said the 18-month extension the City had granted Mann to complete the improvements had expired in December 2006. He said Mann was aware the proposal was on the meeting agenda, and his attorney had yet to get back to him regarding the matter. Board President Aaron Jung suggested the Board table the issue until the City had heard back from Mann's attorney.

"I don't know that any correspondence with the attorney does anything more than just delay this further," Moody said.

Jung and Alderman Ken Brown expressed concern such a move may endanger the City's Transportation Development District (TDD), which is also an agreement with Mann for future development.

"I don't want the language on this to sound like an ultimatum," Brown said. "We don't want to do anything to make him walk away from the TDD."

The board voted to table the recommendation until after a consultation with Mann's attorney, with Knighton and Alderman Todd Sloan dissenting.

The next morning, Knighton delivered his resignation letter to City Hall.

At a special meeting Tuesday night, Mayor Dave Brooks announced a candidate to fulfill Knighton's term, which is set to expire in April of next year. Brooks recommended the Board approve the appointment of Marsha Clark to the post. Clark, who is a member of the City's Parks and Recreation Board, has lived on Main Street in Platte City since 1976. She has owned and operated MCI Express on Main Street since 1990. The company works with airlines at KCI Airport delivering luggage to customers. MCI Express employs seven staffers and 23 delivery drivers.

"I think she is certainly deserving and more than capable of filling the term," Brooks said.

Alderman Andy Stanton said that Clark leases her office space from him and that he "had no problem with the nomination." He did say that he wanted to table voting on the issue until the Board could meet Clark, who could not be at Tuesday's meeting.

Sloan agreed.

"I respect your nomination, but I have never met her," he said. "I would have a hard time voting either way without meeting her first."

A motion was made and seconded to put the item on the agenda for the May 22 meeting.

In other business Tuesday night, the Board heard a presentation from Amy Wetzel, of the Buxton Group. The City has been considering joining the Buxton Community ID program, which targets and attracts retailers for communities, for several months.

Wetzel said the City would see immediate benefits within 60 business days, including aggressive marketing of potential retailers, a reduction of leakage of retail dollars outside the community, an increase of sales tax revenues, and the strengthening of the area's retail sector.

Wetzel said Parkville had already moved forward with the program and was expected to contact several retailers in the coming weeks.

The price tag for joining the program is \$20,000; the City would join in cooperation with the Platte County economic Development Council, which would pay \$5,000.

Floodwaters recede

Citizen Staff Report

With flood waters receding, clean up and repairs are under way across the county, with rural areas and Tracy along the Platte River and Parkville on the Missouri River facing the largest challenges.

In Tracy, Mayor Brenda Ferguson said the City is simply waiting for the area to dry out enough to begin clean-up. The Platte River crested Friday at 32.5 feet, six inches higher than in 1993.

"Everything is still pretty squishy right now," she said.

While one home was surrounded by water, the flood stayed clear of residential areas, instead flooding several businesses at the intersection of Highway 92 and 92 Spur. Ferguson said while in Columbia for her granddaughter's college graduation last weekend, she saw a photo of the Tracy Trex Mart on the front page of the Columbia newspaper.

"I had to get a copy of that," she said. "Really, we got pretty lucky in some ways, and I have to give a lot of credit to the police and the citizens who did a lot to make sure things went smoothly."

As of Tuesday afternoon (May 14) Platte County Director of Public Works Greg Sager said most county roads are open, to varying degrees. He said many roads are still undergoing clean-up or repair, with 27 county roads and bridges damaged or in need of attention.

"The list of what is open really changes from hour to hour, and it will for a while to come," he said.

While he expected most roads to open Wednesday, roads that may still be partially closed, as of press time, are Platte River Road in Farley, Algiers Road one mile north of Mellon Bridge Road, the west end of Mellon Bridge Road, Union Mill Road north of Edgerton and Dick's Creek Road.

In Parkville, the city evacuated the area south of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad tracks, but water never made it as far as those tracks when the Missouri crested below expected levels. English Landing Park filled with water, and the city is seeking volunteers willing to help clean debris from the park once the area dries. For more information, contact Parkville City Hall at 741-7676.

Weston discusses bad roads, bad dogs

Jerry Keuhn
Reporter

On a hot and steamy night with no air conditioning at Weston's City Hall, the Weston Board of Aldermen and other citizens spent much of its time during the May 14 meeting discussing two issues — damaged City roads and a possible pit bull ban or changes to the City's animal control ordinance.

While the air conditioning unit at City Hall was being repaired due to flood waters in the basement, the muggy air upstairs did not stop a group of approximately 10 citizens from approaching the Board about what it perceived to be dangerous road conditions on Middle Road in Weston. Sandra McMillan, who lives on Middle Road, provided a letter to be submitted to the meeting's minutes and started the discussion by relating her own experiences on the road.

"It's extremely dangerous with a lot of potholes that people drive all over the place to avoid," McMillan said. "I would like to request something be done about it before there is a serious accident."

McMillan said the most dangerous stretch of Middle Road occurs on a curve where the potholes have gotten continuously worse, and that she was almost involved in an accident there May 7 when a vehicle

passed her and forced her off the road. According to her letter, it was not just the other driver that made the situation so dangerous, but also the conditions of the road.

“Granted, the guy should not have passed on a curve nor forced me off the road, but the origins and basic danger of the situation, while enhanced by the heavy rainfall, were predicated on the fact there has been extreme neglect, not even the most routine maintenance, of that section of the road by the City for well over a year.”

Resident Mike Head, who also lives on Middle Road, then reiterated that it was time for something to be done.

“We’re concerned and it’s up to whatever you all want to do, but we don’t just want this pushed under the table and we don’t want it just left as gravel,” Head said.

Other residents said the potholes were craters and requested that a sign be placed near the location until road repairs could be done. The board heard the citizens, then turned to other business until the topic came up during its assigned spot on the agenda.

At that time, the Board addressed the situation by reviewing bids to chip and seal not only Middle Road, but also a handful of other roads in Weston. After discussion, the Board approved a bid from Vance Bros. of Kansas City for \$22,305.50 for 16,000 square yards of chip and seal work. The funds for the work came from funds previously approved for road and bridge work in town.

Other residents were also at the meeting to discuss a possible pit bull ban and changes to the animal control ordinance, with Ann Raab and her husband, Mark, asking the City to consider a number of issues after problems had arose with their neighbors’ dogs getting loose and being aggressive.

“There are two specific things we would like to see done,” Ann Raab said. “One is that we would like to see the current ordinance strengthened and enforced, which can be done by reducing the grace period in which licenses can be obtained, by clearly stating that dogs need to be positively restrained and by limiting the number of dogs per property.

“The other thing is whether or not something else should be done above and beyond the current ordinance, such as a ban on pit bulls and other vicious dog breeds.”

In further discussion, Mark Raab said that as more cities ban pit bulls, then the pit bull owners were more likely to move elsewhere, including to Weston.

Resident Jack Frazer, who has owned pit bulls in the past and currently has one at his residence near the Raabs, said he believed much of the perceived problem with pit bulls came from the way the animals were raised, and said that he did not believe his dog posed a problem. He said he had installed a radio fence to restrain his pet and that the dog had not gotten out since.

Ann Raab told Frazer that she did not feel comfortable with electric radio-style fences because while they might keep the dog within the fence the majority of the time, it would not necessarily keep other dogs or children out. She said she believed that all dogs should be restrained either by leash or by a positive restraint such as a fence. She also said she did not want Frazer to have to get rid of his dog, and conversation between Frazer and the Raabs continued to be non-confrontational.

Alderman Greg Hoffman said he was not in favor of banning any specific breed, but he would probably support changes to the ordinance for positive restraint for dogs. Other ordinance changes such as a sliding scale for warnings and penalties were discussed before John Collier asked the Board to table the matter at the current time.

“I think we should table this for now and see if we could get more people together to talk about it and come up with a proposal about how to proceed,” Collier said. “I would like the dog owners to be a part of this and then we could hear some suggestions about what can and should be done.”

The board approved Collier’s motion and said it will review the matter again in the near future after the interested parties could get together for a forum.