



**CAUCUS/COMMISSION MEETING
AUGUST 19, 2024 – 6:00 PM
1843 BRISTOW DRIVE
UNION, KY 41091**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Solomon called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Solomon led all attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

A quorum was present, and a roll call was taken. Mayor Larry Solomon, Commissioner John Mefford, Commissioner Jeremy Ramage, Commissioner Brian Garner, and Commissioner Doug Bine.

DISCUSSION

Grammas Project Update

Nick Grammas and Tony Cook discussed the proposed project on the corner of Brilliance Avenue and US Highway 42. They explained the original project included retail, underground garage, ninety apartments, and townhomes. They are proposing a new project that would include an additional thirty apartments and eliminating the underground garage. The main reason for adjustment is due to the terrain of the property, and the overall cost of the project. The original proposal of retail, and townhomes would remain the same. The additional proposed apartments would give an additional floor to the proposed structure, making the structure approximately fifty feet tall. The exterior of the building would remain the same as what was originally proposed.

Commissioner Garner mentioned even though he was not comfortable with the adjustments to the proposed project, he will give it some thought.

Commissioner Ramage mentioned although excited about the project the addition of more apartments in the area is not part of the growth strategy the city is looking for. The height of the proposed building will be visible from US Highway 42, and not sure that will be appealing.

Commissioner Mefford asked if there was consideration to have a mixture of apartments and condominiums. The developer explained there was no plan to include condominiums in the project.

Mayor Solomon mentioned patio homes would be better suited to meet the needs of the demographics of the residents of Union.

Commissioner Mefford also agreed that patio homes are more in line with what the residents of Union want.

Commissioner Ramage mentioned there has been conversation with the school system concerning apartments and the consideration of how many new students that could be added to already crowded schools.

The next steps would be to propose the project to Boone County Planning Commission. Other options the developer would consider for the property would be to sell to another developer or leave it undeveloped for now.

Union Town Square

City Administrator (CAO) Amy Safran gave updates on a timeline for Union Town Square after meeting with Summit Architects + Engineers, and MKSK last week. The projected plan is to bid the project in March 2025, and award the project April 2025.

Public Works Director Paul Kremer discussed the removal of trees on the property. The goal in the next thirty days will be to start removing trees. Ninety-five percent of the trees to be removed are pear trees. There was nothing unusual with the soil samples received from the property.

CAO Safran mentioned there will be two separate meetings Tuesday August 20, 2:00 PM and 6:00 PM with neighbors who surround the property to discuss the plans for the property and answer any questions they may have. Monthly meetings are scheduled with Summit Architects + Engineers. CAO Safran discussed design plans for the interior of the new city building. The plans include incorporating nature to the inside of the building keeping it unique and natural and incorporating the building in with the park.

CAO Safran gave an update to the proposed debt service 20year schedule for the project. The property pay-off will be due Fiscal Year 2026/27. Any funds left in city growth budget for the first three years will be left in the account to accumulate interest that will be put towards the pay-off of the short-term note. Duke Energy franchise fees revenue have been accounted for this fiscal year but will be an option over the next two years to use towards the property pay-

off. The sale of the current city building is another resource of revenue that can be used towards the property debt.

There was a discussion of costs to maintain the park and building as the city budgets ahead to finance the 20-year project debt service. After the property is paid off there will be a reassessment of funds for maintenance costs.

2024 Tax Rate Calculation

City Administrator (CAO) Amy Safran explained the city has received the 2024-2025 calculated tax rates. The compensating rate is 0.201 per \$100. If the city takes the compensating rate plus four percent that will raise the real property tax rate from the current rate of 0.204 per \$100 to 0.209 per \$100.

The current personal property tax rate is 0.212 per \$100. The compensating rate is 0.193 and the compensating plus four percent rate is 0.200 per \$100. The proposal is to take the compensating rate plus four percent. The proposed 0.209 rate for real property will cover what is currently budgeted for the 2024-25 fiscal year plus add just over \$20,000. The compensating rate will create a shortfall of approximately \$45,000 of what was budgeted. The proposed personal property compensating plus four percent would add just over \$1,700 of what was budgeted. Taking the compensating rate alone would create a shortfall of around \$120.

She explained the city will need to hold a public hearing prior to passing legislation if the decision is made to move forward with the compensating rate plus four percent.

Mayor Solomon made a motion to accept the compensating rate plus four percent on personal and real property taxes. No one seconded the motion. **Motion failed**

Commissioner Garner proposed to keep the current tax rate of 0.204 for real property. After discussion, the commissioners agreed to keep the real property tax rate as the current rate of 0.204 and take the compensating plus four for personal property making it 0.200. They agreed to move forward with the public hearing at the September 4, 2024, meeting. Attorney Voss will prepare legislation to be read at the September 4, 2024, Commission meeting.

Sweet Harmony Sidewalk

Public Works Director Paul Kremer shared the bid results from the bid opening on August 12, 2024, to accept a contractor for the Sweet Harmony sidewalk. The plan is to recommend the lowest bid to Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) for their award approval as part of the grant process. Updates will be provided at the September 4, 2024, Commission meeting. The timeline for completion of the project is September 30, 2024.

Pocket Park Update

Public Works Director Paul Kremer mention the grading plan for the pocket park at the corner of Sycamore Drive and Mt. Zion was approved. The current cost estimate of \$11,000 from Duke Energy is to remove a telephone pole from the property. City growth funds will be used to pay for this expense as budgeted. The full Commission agreed to the expenditure to remove the telephone pole.

The next cost estimate of \$2,000 to \$3,000 will be to install a water line on the property.

Mayor Solomon suggested the city not move forward with further pocket parks until the current property debt of Union Town Square is paid.

Campaign Ethics

Mayor Solomon gave an update to the ethics discussion that occurred at the August 5, 2024, Commission meeting. He commented that on the surface it may sound like there is need to act but he does not feel the City of Union has a controversy. There are two declarations made when running for election either over or under \$5,000 campaign donation/contributions. He stated every Commissioner candidate who ran this last cycle declared the under \$5,000 donation option.

Mayor Solomon mentioned when he ran his last campaign, he raised a lot of money and filed using the over \$3,000 option, which was the current threshold at that time. He legally reported all his contributions and expenditures. Prior to accepting any contributions Mayor Solomon made it very clear they were for good government, honesty, integrity, and most importantly for the good of the City of Union. He stated that no one owns his vote nor will ever deny him his vote.

According to the Kentucky Registry of Election Finance (KREF), each candidate running for office and filing under \$5,000 must report all contribution/donations and expenditures to the exact penny thirty days after the November election. Anyone wishing to see expenditures received during a campaign can find that information at KREF.KY.GOV.

Mayor Solomon feels that state policies and practices cover the preconceived concerns and therefore does not feel an updated policy is needed.

Attorney Greg Voss mentioned KRS 121.025 stated corporate contributions to candidates are prohibited. KRS 121.150 limits the contribution to \$2,000 per person. Campaign contributions are not for the candidate personally, they are to be used to purchase items needed to run a candidate's campaign.

Commissioner Garner would like legislation passed to make campaign contributions as transparent as possible. He referenced both the City of Walton and City of Florence include a

conflict of interest in general standard of conduct policy. Their policies do not prohibit any donations, but they do put the burden on the recipient to disclose any financial interest.

Commissioner Garner reached out to The Kentucky League of Cities (KLC) and was advised the commission can set a limit for campaign contributions. If an issue should come to the city involving the donor, the Commission member would have to state on record why or why not they feel there would be a conflict of interest.

Attorney Voss mentioned that regardless of the amount a candidate receives in contributions they must file with the KREF. If they file under \$5,000, they must file within thirty days after the election.

Commissioner Ramage mentioned he feels there is a perception issue when contributions are made and then committees are established by Commission members. The message is driven by the individual of that committee who then delivers the message to the full Commission.

Commissioner Ramage mentioned not all the Commission members have been given an opportunity to sit in on Executive Committee sessions, the primary purpose of these meetings is to meet with developers.

Commissioner Mefford stated that he has never felt the need to attend an Executive Committee meeting.

Commissioner Garner mentioned the CAO should be the person who is meeting with developers and then relating the information back to the Commission.

Mayor Solomon mentioned Executive committee meetings are a division of labor that have no interest or no connections with campaign financing. They are conducted for the good of the City of Union.

Commissioner Bine does not feel that there is a current issue with the ethics policy. The Commission should always vote in the best interest of the city regardless of who did or did not contribute to their campaign.

After discussion Commissioner Garner stated he will be proposing legislation to update the ethics policy for the City of Union. He feels it is in the best interest of the city for a commissioner to disclose campaign contributions given by an individual especially when an issue that arises that could be a conflict of interest.

LEGISLATION/ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Municipal Orders

MUNICIPAL ORDER NO. 2024-19 A MUNICIPAL ORDER AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO EXECUTE THE CONTRACT WITH SUMMIT ARCHITECTS + ENGINEERS FOR THE CITY OF UNION TOWN SQUARE PROJECT WITHIN THE CITY OF UNION, KENTUCKY

Commissioner Ramage made a motion and Commissioner Mefford seconded that motion. Commissioner Bine voted aye, Commissioner Ramage voted aye, Commissioner Garner voted aye, Commissioner Mefford voted aye, and Mayor Solomon voted aye. **Motion approved 5-0**

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Solomon explained the need to go into executive session citing KRS 61.810 (b) Deliberations on the future acquisition or sale of real property by a public agency, but only when publicity would be likely to affect the value of a specific piece of property to be acquired for public use or sold by a public agency.

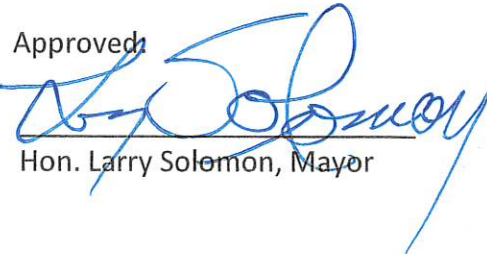
Commissioner Ramage made a motion to enter executive session at 8:40 PM and Commissioner Bine seconded that motion. **Motion approved 5-0.**

After discussion Mayor Solomon asked for a motion to exit executive session at 9:02 PM. Commissioner Ramage made a motion and Commissioner Bine seconded that motion. **Motion approved 5-0.**

Mayor Solomon announced that no action was taken during the executive session.

ADJOURN

Mayor Solomon asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Mefford made a motion and Commissioner Garner seconded that motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:03 PM. **Motion approved 5-0**

Approved: 
Hon. Larry Solomon, Mayor

Attest:


Tammy Wilhoite, City Clerk