

Meet the Mayor

Saturday, January 12, 2019 10:00 am

Local Coffee of East Ridge

The first Meet the Mayor event occurred this past Saturday and approximately 35 citizens attended throughout the meeting. Assistant City Manager Kenny Custer attended along beside me for the open discussion session with citizens.

The goal of this meeting was to initiate an open dialog with East Ridge citizens and business owners that would be the beginning of a continued collaborative effort in moving our city forward and better together.

There was an informal agenda prepared to ensure certain items were discussed and covered. Once the meeting began many of these agenda items were immediately brought forward by citizens.

Below are the agenda items and discussion items, notes and citizen input (in no particular order):

Hire City Manager

The city has received 48 resumes/applications during the application window. These individuals were narrowed down to the top 9 at the request of City Council based on qualifications and experience. All 9 applicants have been contacted and are still interested in the position. From these 9 applicants each City Councilmember will bring forward 5 applicants they would like to interview to the next council meeting on January 24, 2019. This will be a priority for me (as I believe it is with the entire council) to hire a City Manager as soon as possible BUT to also preform the due diligence to put the best candidate in the leadership of our administration.

City Vision/Mission Statement

East Ridge has long needed a Mission Statement and Vision. This is a requirement for us to brand our city and provide a direction and goals to achieve (long term and short term). A question was asked early in the meeting by Mr. DeGarmo "how will the mission statement be devised?" I assured him that any mission statement would not come from top down and would include citizen's input. This is something we as a group should develop and we will actively start this process by discussions with citizens and determine if we should assemble a focus group or committee to spearhead this initiative.

Policy Review

Immediately after the assignment of the Asst. City Manager position to Mr. Custer he started and initiative to review and update city policies. Then during citizen input in the December 13, 2018 meeting, Mr. John Britt brought forth a request to review the police force policy. Mr. Custer has engaged MTAS (Municipal Technical Advisory Service) to review our polices. We will continue to update the public of the progress of this review and policy updates

Animal Shelter/Dog Park

During the January 10th council meeting this was a discussion item and was requested to be placed on the January 24th agenda as an action item to vote on whether to purchase the proposed land. If purchased, this land would become a dog park until the funds were appropriated to build a new animal shelter. The purchase of the land for the dog park would be reimbursed by the Border Regions. In addition to the location proposed, many citizens suggested and liked the idea of having additional dog parks on currently owned city property (i.e. Springvale Park & Camp Jordan). We have intentions to utilize the fencing that will be removed from Camp Jordan for the dog park fence.

High School, High School Fields & Potential New Field House

Several conversations came forward concerning our schools. From our school being at a failing level to the staff needing support. Most importantly it was apparent there was a consensus from citizens to form an East Ridge School committee to help evaluate the shortcomings of our schools. We believe this would be a great opportunity to form a body that could bridge the gap between the Alumni Association, HCDE, Teachers and City Government. This body could aid and assist in providing possible help with existing needs of our schools through support, guidance, fundraising and mostly a liaison for communication throughout all parties. I have reached out to our HCDE School Board Member Tucker McClendon and will start briefing him on our intentions of providing help toward our local city schools.

There have been several iterations of design of a new football field house at East Ridge Schools. After talking with Tim James, a new location and design has been suggested. The new proposed location of the field house and weight room would be partially on 2 of the existing tennis courts. This design would eliminate 2 existing tennis courts. I want to confirm this would not cause an issue with the HCDE. In addition, the rough estimate of costs (no engineering plans or engineered estimate) is upwards of \$460,000. With the ERAA (East Ridge Alumni Association) donation of \$75,000 and Hamilton County Commissioner donation of \$50,000 leaves East Ridge with an estimated \$335,000 in cost to complete. This is not a budgeted item in this year's budget therefore if approved it would come from our general fund which we have a required minimum to keep and not dip into reserves.

Business Development / Debt Service Breakdown / Border Regions

A breakdown of our city's current debt service was provided. As of the beginning of this fiscal year, we had a total of approximately 16 million in debt. Of that 16 million, 12.6 million are being reimbursed by Border Regions money and 1.1 million were being paid by hotel/motel tax. That leaves 2.2 million that we the citizens are paying through the general fund.

Then a brief explanation of the Border Regions Act was provided. This Act was granted to East Ridge to attract business development and growth. We are one of three cities that were granted this incentive. This incentive provided the ability to redirect the 4.125% state sales tax to our city for economic development expense reimbursement. The Act captured the total city sales revenue in 2012 as a base line. Then any additional sales tax revenue generated over that base line each year could be eligible for reimbursement of qualified economic development expenses.

Example:

East Ridge enters into a development agreement of 70% business 30% city for Border Regions reimbursement with terms and conditions that must be met by the business for the city to provide Border Region money. Business AAA buys land and builds a business for 2 million dollars and in the first year they have \$1 million in sales. Business AAA provides the detailed expenses for the \$2 million of their expenses. East Ridge submits these to the State of Tennessee and would be reimbursed for the expenses over a period of time by the addition \$1 million dollars of sales they generated for the year. The the border regions 4.125% state tax incentive would be \$41,250 that year and of that \$28,875 would go back to the business and \$12,375 would stay with the city. This incentive would continue if the city agreed terms were continually met, and the revenue continued to be maintained or increase until the \$2 million in expenses were reimbursed or the Border Region term length met.

Other items of discussion

Mosquito Control – Complaints of standing water that breeds mosquito growth. Questions if we still spray or have the equipment to. Mr. Custer stated we do not have that equipment nor if it is really providing help in the reduction of mosquito's.

Drainage Ditches – Complaints of drainage ditches being stopped up and retaining water. Mr. Custer stated that these were, often times built by the subdivision owners/developers and are now inaccessible to clean out or repair due to being on private property. Mr. Custer asked for any issued to be forwarded to City Hall and they would evaluate the ditch to see if the city could repair or clean out.

Community Pool - Several citizens express an interest in building a pool like the city has before stating it was a place for people to gather and be a community.

New Home Construction – Several citizens mentioned that our city is the most densely populated city in Tennessee, and we do not need any additional homes being built.

Camp Jordan Christmas Lights – A request was made to bring back the Camp Jordan Christmas lights. It was explained as to some of the reasons they left was due to flooding. Mr. Custer will reach out to them to see if they would be interested in returning to Camp Jordan.

Rinngold Rd. Signage - Mack Smith Road leading to the new lanes going across the interstate. Out of towners are expecting to turn left to get on the interstate and they actually need to turn right. Need something to help people know which lane to get in.

Frawley Rd Signage – One resident requested a sign at Frawley Road that says 'Not a Thru Street' once the construction starts.

Street Light Timing - Comments about traffic lights from side streets holding too long. It was explained that timing was changed recently to accommodate rush hour traffic on Ringgold. This change could cause more of a wait on side streets. Mr. Custer asked that if the wait seems overly excessive please note the side street impacted and contact city hall.

Speeding - McBrien Road speeding – Mr. Custer said Police Traffic Dept is working on this.

Osborne Plaza - Any plans to have meeting with Henry Luken and Pryor-Bacon to discuss opportunities on the upper end? There have been plans shared in the past of a new design of Osborne Plaza but no movement yet. Mr. Custer and I will reach out to Mr. Luken and discuss the planned streetscaping on Ringgold Rd. with hopes this will initiate a revitalization of the plaza.

New Fire Hall – A question was asked if we used any Border Regions money for the new firehall? It was explained that Border Region funds were not used however after conformation with our Finance Director all the costs were submitted for Border Regions reimbursement.

Clean & Green - Discussion of having clean up events similar to the Annual Clean & Green event that Chattanooga does. This is a similar project to “River Rescue” that has been done for the past 30 years by Mr. Clark along Spring Creek. Clean & Green is an ongoing initiative that include trash collection to greenery efforts throughout the year.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.