

# Meet the Mayor

Saturday, February 16, 2019 10:00 am

Local Coffee of East Ridge

## **Update: Hire City Manager**

City Council members were asked to bring forward 5 applicants of the 8 that met qualifications to the next council meeting on January 24, 2019. I suggested that we engage MTAS (Municipal Technical Advisory Service) to conduct a review and score the applicants based on a scoring index/matrix. Council agreed with the engagement of MTAS, but from the 5 council members all 8 were mentioned and we decided to proceed with all 8 into the reviewing and scoring phase. We received the scoring back the first week of February and I distributed it to council. We met this week and decided to proceed with the top 6 candidates with the highest scoring on the matrix from MTAS. We will now reach out to all six and check availability and schedule in person interviews. These will more than likely require a called meeting or two to accomplish the interviews. These will be open to the public. In addition, I have asked council and received consensus to engage citizens questions via East Ridge News Online to field all questions, categorizing them and combining them and Mr. Cook will present a preset number of questions to each applicant during the interview.

## **Update: City Vision/Mission Statement**

MTAS has been engaged concerning the input and scheduling of a Strategic Planning seminar. This will help facilitate and guide us in:

- The creation of a Mission Statement – why does the City of East Ridge exist?
- Conduct an environmental scan – what are the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing our city.
- Create a Vision Statement – based on the results of the environmental scan, where/what does East Ridge want to be in the future.
- Goals – what are the goals that will help ER to obtain its vision?

## **Update: Policy Review**

We are still in the process of our policy review.

### **Update: Animal Shelter/Dog Park**

As you may already know, we made an offer and it was accepted to purchase land on Rebecca Dr. However, it was later determined that the signer of the contract did not have ownership nor authority to sell or sign a contract to sell the property. We tried to engage the church organization to purchase the land, but they sold it to someone else and did not give us an option to counter or negotiate. We will continue to pursue options for a dog park and animal shelter.

### **Update: City Schools**

A discussion with our city attorney concerning the formation of a City Council appointed Education Board has begun. Also, a conversation with an experienced facilitator on focus groups has begun as well. A determination needs to be made regarding which path would be best to move forward with the objective to collaborate, aide and assist with our shortcomings within our local schools. The Assistant City Manager and I have met with the HCDE Superintendent Dr. Johnson and began a dialog between our city and HCDE. We expressed our desire in creating a group to assist with our school system and he welcomed the idea. Also, HCDE has started a master facilities study to evaluate the schools and identify repairs and up to new schools built. They are very aware of our East Ridge Schools issues.

### **Update: High School Fields & Potential New Field House**

Concerning the new football field house, at the January 24<sup>th</sup> council meeting we approved to proceed with applying for an NFL facility grant to help in covering the potential cost of a field house. We have been given additional hope that the Hamilton County Commission and/or HCDE may assist in the providing some funding toward the new field house. We would like to see a Recreation Center that serves a dual purpose of housing the field house and bathrooms for the high school athletics as well as a fitness area for the community along with an outdoor basketball court and tennis courts.

## Meeting Notes:

Tennis Courts: It was asked/mentioned that USTA would build new tennis courts. It was explained that we have reached out to them and other grants to aid in the cost but have not received any monies/grants to date. There is \$25,000 in the budget to resurface tennis courts; however, initial research indicates due to deep cracks on the tennis court the cost to resurface will cost more than budgeted. Staff plans to explore alternate vendors to get additional recommendations / pricing to fix the tennis courts.

Beautification/Streetscaping of upper end: Asked if it would coincide with the I75/I24 interchange reconfiguration. If so, would it make sense to hold off on the this until after the I75/I24 work is completed? We understand that the traffic on Ringgold Rd. will be extremely heavy due to the reconfiguration of the interchange. There will be lots of traffic dropping off I75 and I24 and coming up the back roads to circumvent the interchange work, however we have invested lots of time and work and believe we should continue with Ringgold Rd streetscaping and not delay for a year or more.

When does the Border Regions run out? The Border Regions Act was in 2012 and had a 10 year period for submission of costs for reimbursement. This meant the expiration for submission was 2022 however last year there was legislation passed that extended this period by 5 years. So now we have up to 2027 to submit expenses for reimbursement with a payout on these expenses until 2042.

Light timing on Ringgold Rd: Can we adjust the timing of the lights once the I75/I24 construction starts. Absolutely we can change the timing of each or all the lights.

Adam Wilson – Parks and Recreation Director gave a comprehensive presentation

Pioneer Playground: There were concerns that citizens didn't have a chance to be involved in the playground redesign and asked why can't we have another community build for the replacement? The initial meeting with the public was held on March 26, 2018 @ 5:30 pm.

Notes from City Manager recapping the meeting:

**Pioneer Frontier Park Public Input Meeting.** Amanda Miller and I attended the public input meeting on Monday, March 26th in the Community Center hosted by representatives of GameTime, a Playcore Company (Fred Wiechmann, Justin Killingworth, and Stephanie Riggs), in reference to updating Pioneer Frontier playground (bring the play apparatus into compliance with ADA) with the inclusion of a splash pad on the site. There were approximately a dozen residents in attendance, including several who were involved in the original playground. Please recall that the City is working with Michael Frixon, SETDD, on an application for an LPRF State recreation grant in the amount of \$500,000 for this project. Mr. Wiechmann presented a "pioneer theme" that included thematic elements of a stagecoach, rocking wagon, climbing features, a high swing to accommodate couples, etc. He asked the group what part of the old playground one wanted to incorporate into the new one. In summary, the group wanted to keep the plaque and handprints from the old, retain a pioneer theme, blend the old with the new, incorporate good site lines, and design it with a "feel good theme." GameTime will now draft a preliminary design from the input gathered from the meeting attendees.

Adam stated there are industry standards that are required and due to grant monies, there could be some stipulations. Adam will continue to check into this.

Others want to continue meetings on the playground and would like to see more community involvement.

City staff will reengage with citizens concerning Pioneer Frontier redesign.

What happened to the Zip Line: Up and operational. Open from April to September.

What happened to the fencing that was taken down in Camp Jordan? The fencing that can be reused is stored in the shed. Staff salvaged some of the black outfield fencing that was located at Fields 1-4 and it is stored in the tractor shed lot. It was deemed to be residential and not very durable long-term.

Thought the sewer in the camping area of Camp Jordan was shut down: Adam will have to check into that and provide an update on the waste dump. Per conversation with city staff the sewer dump is operational. To date, there are leaks in the campground that have not totally been identified, so staff has the water turned off. The pavilion and dump station have separate water, so they are still operational.

*Southeastern Development worked with community what happened with that results?* I mentioned the results of the plan and offered everyone to review my copy. This is a comprehensive recreation facilities plan prepared by the Citizens of East Ridge, East Ridge City Council, East Ridge Department of Parks and Recreation and Southeast Tennessee Development. The plan includes an overview of existing public recreation facilities along with suggested improvements and proposed future amenities at publicly owned recreation sites in East Ridge.

*Request for more activities for seniors:* Adam mentioned several current activities available. A request was made for computer classes and maybe a place to play cards, shuffle board and badminton. Currently, senior programs include the Senior Fit program, Walk with Ease, Aerobics, Pickleball and monthly luncheons to name a few.

*What activities do we have for people with disabilities?* Parks and Recreation desires to explore inclusive programs and amenities for individuals of all abilities. Staff will search opportunities where we can offer these services in the near future.

*Request for the Parks and Rec presentation to be placed on the city website:*

The parks and recreation presentation is something I started working on a few weeks ago and is a “working document” meaning slides will be added and deleted as necessary. I would like to fine tune this presentation some more in the coming weeks.

*Question asked about a town center:* I mentioned that we have placed on the agenda for the Feb 28<sup>th</sup> meeting to discuss the McBrien school complex. Request for a pool was made again. I expressed the huge liability and insurance costs associated with a pool. I mentioned that MTAS discourages the prospect of a city pool.

*Question about Hotel/Waterpark:* Stated that this project is still active but slow.

*Question for Tucker McClendon HCDE District 8 Board Member (which attended the meeting):* Request to see about a partnership with High School kids in the construction academy to use their skills in our community to help citizens that may not have resources to help themselves.

Question concerning the construction of a sports center to house a hockey team: Mention of several avenues to acquire monies (Tennessee Municipal Bonds, Naming Writes of facilities and corporate sponsors. It was mentioned that we are working through that scenario currently with the Red Wolves Soccer team. Once we get some questions answered we will have a better understanding of what we can do with private/public partnerships in our city. We fully support the idea of constructing a sports specific arena that could house activities such as basketball, volleyball, wrestling, pickleball, soccer and hockey leagues and tournaments year-round. This idea would also free up the existing arena to be able to be rented out December – February in addition to the other 9 months it is currently rented.

Question about recycling: Can glass be recycled? Can we place glass in our recycle containers?

Property Tax help or tax freeze for seniors: This would have to be researched to see if it is a viable option, the financial impact and the process in which to implement.