



# **Letter To The Editor: City of Wood River Should Not Fund Rec Center At This Time**

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On October 19<sup>th</sup> the Wood River Finance Director abruptly resigned. I have not spoken with the former finance director and I do not know his reasons for his resignation. However, I do have some information regarding reports prepared by him and recent actions taken by the Wood River City Council that may have influenced his decision to leave.

On December 10, 2019, the finance director gave a report to the city council at a special work session where he provided guidance on the 1% Non-Home Rule Sales Tax with assumed annual revenue projections of \$1.4 million. The actual revenue the first full year was approximately \$1.3 million, about \$100,000 less than he assumed. At this meeting the finance director provided guidance on possible funding of three infrastructure projects; the proposed rec center for \$8 million, the EPA required Sewer Separation Project of \$4 million, and the East Side Detention Pond of \$2 million. A fourth project, the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Detention Pond (now the 9<sup>th</sup> Street Detention Pond) was not listed. This project will eliminate flooding for residents that must pay FEMA flood insurance of thousands of dollars per year. This project is expected to cost \$4 million. My understanding is the finance director recommended that the city finance only 3 of the 4 projects at a time.

On April 30, 2020, the city approved its 2020-2021 annual budget with funding only for the Sewer Separation Project as it was legally obligated to do so. No other funding was provided for any of the other three projects.

On September 21, 2020, the city submitted documents for a \$2.2 million loan to finance the East Side Detention Project. This does not include roads and other infrastructure which I understand will cost an additional \$1 million.

On October 5, 2020, the city amended its 2020-2021 budget to add \$150,000 for the East Side Detention Pond, \$450,000 for the Rec Center, and \$100,000 for the 9<sup>th</sup> Street Detention Pond. This was in addition to the funding for the Sewer Separation Project which was already in the budget. At this meeting, Councilman Tom Stalcup objected to funding four infrastructure projects as this was against the recommendation of the finance director. He was the only councilman to vote against the amended budget.

Does anyone not see what I see as the possible reason the finance director resigned before the next City Council meeting?

On November 3, 2020, Wood River overwhelmingly voted, with 72% in favor, to Save the Roundhouse and suspend funding for the proposed rec center. We should not fund four projects as the former finance director recommended. The city should follow the advice of its residents and cease funding the rec center at this time. Every resident of Wood River should call City Hall at 618 251-3100 and get the phone number of each council member to demand the fiscal policies of the former finance director be adopted.

**Bill Dettmers**

**Wood River**

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