



# Letter Writer Dettmers: Wood River Council Votes Down Opportunity To Hold Town Hall Meetings In More Inviting Atmosphere

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On October 18<sup>th</sup>, Wood River City Council voted down an opportunity to hold Town Hall meetings to allow a more informal, inviting atmosphere than the rigid formality of the regular City Council meetings. The idea was to get more people involved, with a free exchange of concerns and ideas between council members and residents. This would have provided each council member the opportunity to make their position on

vital issues known to the public and the direction they would like to see the city move in. Town Hall meetings were okay in 2018, but they don't want to hold them today. Why? Because three council members have closed their minds to any ideas that could move the city forward instead of building the proposed rec center.

Council members Duncan, Hagaman and Tweedy voted against holding Town Hall meetings. They apparently prefer the protection and insulation from the public that is afforded to them with their silence at City Council meetings. An individual is allowed only three minutes to speak, the minimum amount of time required by law, and there is no response from any council member. The very nature of the City Council meeting is designed to limit your First Amendment Rights. But more importantly, it is intended to be a form of psychological intimidation intended to frustrate the electorate and reduce its desire to be involved with their government so that the elected may control and operate more freely, with limited oversight and interference.

At the October 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, I brought documents obtained by FOIA that disclosed that the city held a series of Town Hall meetings in 2018 that were used as the pretext to pass the 1% Sales Tax in April 2019. Each of these Town Hall meetings was held in violation of the Open Meetings Act. There was a Public Notice of Meeting for each. Several flyers mailed to resident's homes, asking "Vote YES!" on the tax referendum, stated that the City Council held these meetings. However, in response to a FOIA requesting minutes of the meeting, the city replied that they didn't keep any minutes. Without minutes there is no official record of what was discussed which means that information could be manipulated to create any narrative the city desired. The goal of these meetings was not for desperately needed infrastructure and to improve our schools. Instead, it was to build a rec center that will tie up city resources for decades, stifle economic growth and continue to depress property values. This will mean higher taxes and fees due to increased expenses, poorer schools and continue the city's downward trajectory.

Instead of a Town Hall meeting, the city requested that residents call council members if they wish to speak. I encourage each resident to do so.

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