



# Wood River City Councilmen Respond To Criticism

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter  
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WOOD RIVER - Some members of the Wood River City Council have responded to [public comments criticizing them](#) at their meeting last Monday. The councilmen were accused of being “outsiders” stopping the city’s success and much more, but claim these and other comments were not exactly true.

Pastor Dave Landry referred to councilmen Bill Dettmers, David Ayres, and Jeremy Plank as “outsiders who never grew up in Wood River and have no interest in Wood River’s success.” Councilman Jeremy Plank said that in his case, that is only partially true.

“I’ve lived here since 2005 - I did not grow up here, that is true, but I’ve had a long footprint in Wood River and want to respect all opinions in the community, but certainly that does not negate my ability to make effective decisions for our voters.”

Councilman Bill Dettmers said he’s also lived in Wood River since 2005, but his wife was born and raised there, he has several friends in Wood River, and wants to see the city succeed.

“I think everyone wants to see Wood River succeed,” Dettmers said. “I’d like to see the downtown area succeed. I think everybody has different ideas and approaches on how they want to get there, but I think everyone wants to see Wood River succeed.”

Landry also claimed the councilmen would “scare off developers,” but both Dettmers and Plank said they consider proposed developments through a business-oriented lens of the potential return on investment for the city.

“I’m all in favor of bringing in developers,” Dettmers said. “The one thing I want to look at, though, is I want to look at what the cost is to the city and what the return is. I’m going to take a more business-like approach and analyze things ... I want to know what the city has to put into it and what the rate of return is in the long run.”

Plank agreed and said: “I’m a businessperson. I’m a CPA, I’m pro-business. I’d like to see some of the rules that the city has for business licensing and such be simplified and easy to understand so that businesses can come to Wood River and be promoted - in fact, I’ve been one of the biggest advocates for promoting downtown and growth.”

At the meeting, Wood River marketing consultant and former City Council candidate Kristen Burns said the vote at the May 1 meeting to postpone the mayor’s suggested appointments to various boards and committees around the city was an “insult” to city volunteers. Dettmers said they postponed the appointments due to conflicting interests with several city employees and their family members serving on various boards and committees.

“We’re not trying to insult anybody associated with the city or the volunteers - what we’re trying to do is develop a way to make appointments to the committees more open and fair,” Dettmers said. “We are concerned about the high concentration of city employees and their families on the committees ... we want to make sure that other people have the opportunities, and I think we need to do a better job of going outside of the city employees and their families to get more opinions and get a better perspective.”

Plank gave a similar reason, claiming “nepotism” was present in the suggested appointments, and added that the council members did not have much time to review them before the first vote.

“The listing of the appointments was put on the agenda late on a Friday afternoon, so councilmembers didn’t have time to review the list and so we wanted more time,” Plank said. “We’re also looking to address certain things like employee appointments, where city employees are on committees, and to address nepotism. We’re looking to address those issues going forward and I think we’re going to do that.”

Burns also said the attacks on her during the last election cycle were “disgusting.” Dettmers said he was not sure what she was referring to, and that all candidates were attacked last election. Plank had no comment.

Finally, former Councilwoman Sonya Hagaman suggested the councilmen “put egos away” and ask questions before the meetings rather than during the meetings. Plank said they ask questions during meetings to keep the public aware.

“I think it’s important to ask questions during the meetings, because voters need to be able to hear the answers,” Plank said. “While we may already know the answers to those questions, it’s important to let the voters hear it.”

Dettmers gave a similar reason and said: “I’m sorry, but I’m going to be asking questions in public. I don’t believe in asking questions behind the scenes and I want the public to know what’s going on.”

Dettmers added that he is introducing a proposal at a special meeting tonight at 5 p.m. at Wood River City Hall to expand the city’s time limit for public comments from three minutes to five minutes, and encouraged the public to speak at this and future meetings.

Councilman David Ayres was unavailable for comment at the time of this writing, but this story will be updated when his response becomes available.

A full recording of the May 15 meeting is available at the top of this story, on [RiverBender.com/video](https://riverbender.com/video), or the [Riverbender.com](https://riverbender.com) Facebook page.