



Planning Commission Appointments Postponed, Debated At Wood River Meeting

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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WOOD RIVER - Wood River City Council members voted to delay the reappointments of Sara Hall, Sheila Angel, and Shelly Fitzgerald, as well as the new appointment of Kristen Burns, to the city's Planning Commission. Jesse Daniels was to be appointed as Chairman and Councilman Bill Dettmers was to be appointed as Ex-Officio before the council voted 3-2 to table the item until the next meeting.

After the motion to approve Mayor Tom Stalcup's recommended appointments to the commission was made, Councilman David Ayres moved to table the item until the next meeting, stating he suggested the council meet about this topic twice since their first meeting, but no such meeting had taken place.

Councilman Bill Dettmers said the goal of reviewing and limiting these committee appointments is based on "several cities" which have tried to limit the size of their committees, adding that the Wood River Planning Commission is the largest committee in the city. He said the overall goal is to do the following:

1. Limit the number of people allowed to serve on each committee, including decreasing the size of the city's 13-member Planning Commission
2. Limit the amount of times an individual is able to serve on the same committee.
3. Limit the number of different committees an individual can serve on.
4. Limit the number of city employees or family members that are eligible to serve on committees.

“We’re not targeting any individual,” Dettmers said to laughter from the public attendees. “We’re trying to make sure these committees are more open to more people and have more access to the community - that is the goal.”

Mayor Tom Stalcup responded by saying he thought delaying the appointments was “appalling” and that it shouldn’t matter whether committee members are city employees or their spouses.

“I think it’s appalling that you turn down people that have been good people on these committees and have done a lot of work and volunteered a lot of time - and I don’t care if they’re a city employee or not, or a spouse to a city employee,” Mayor Stalcup said. “I really take offense that you want to turn down the public’s help.”

Mayor Stalcup added that the city’s committees have a high number of members to maintain a quorum (or sufficient number of people to vote on items) since some members can’t be at every meeting.

“I do not want to lower the numbers. We’ve talked about this, you guys gave me your ideas, I don’t like them - but here again, it’s all concern for a vote, not a personal feeling,” Stalcup said. “I really respect and thank everybody that’s helped us throughout all these years, but to start turning down people in this manner, I’m against it.”

Councilman Scott Tweedy said people shouldn’t be removed from any of the city’s boards or committees unless it can be proven they’re not working properly, adding “if it’s not broke, don’t fix it.”

“To limit a person in years after they’ve been on there for so long, a lot of people take pride in the fact that they’ve been serving the city in a volunteer capacity, and then you just tell them that their services, ‘No thank you, they’re not needing now,’” Tweedy said. “These people enjoy what they’re doing and I think they take their roles and jobs very seriously, and I think it’s wrong just to pull the rug out from under them.”

Dettmers responded by saying there are plenty of other individuals who would like to serve on these boards and commissions.

“I think the issue is that there’s other people who would like to serve, and I’d like to see us expand the pool of people that we’re looking at to serve on the commissions and committees and the boards - that’s the purpose,” Dettmers said. “It’s nothing against anybody, I appreciate and respect everyone’s service on these committees, but there’s other people who would like to serve.”

After discussions concluded, the council voted 3-2 to table the recommended appointments until the next meeting, with Councilmen Dettmers, Ayres, and Jeremy Plan voting “yes” and Councilman Tweedy and Mayor Stalcup voting “no.”

A full recording of the June 5 meeting can be watched at the top of this story or on Riverbender.com/video.