



Several Call For Resignation Of Wood River Councilmen

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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WOOD RIVER - Several Wood River residents made public comments at Monday night's City Council meeting, and the majority of them called for the resignation of councilmen Bill Dettmers, Dr. David Ayres, and Jeremy Plank.

Amy Davis criticized Dettmers for his lawsuit against the city funding the construction of its new recreation center using dollars from a 1% sales tax increase, which was dismissed by a circuit judge who ruled the city was within their rights to fund the project that way.

"Mr. Dettmers, your behavior and lawsuits against the city are an embarrassment," Davis said. "How is it fiscally responsible for a council member to cost the city money by defending itself against your lawsuits? You talk about conflicts of interest with volunteerism - that is a way bigger conflict of interest than any volunteer would ever bring to this community."

Davis added that she believes a law should be put in place that forbids sitting city officials from suing the city, and accused Dettmers of trying to entrap city attorney Rene Bassett into saying something she didn't mean and ultimately causing her to step down (Bassett has not been present at a City Council meeting since June 5). She then criticized the councilmen for being "dementia-ridden" and "misogynistic" before calling for their resignations.

"We just don't understand why you don't like strong women. We have people with degrees in public policy - but because they're women, their ideas are dismissed, they can't even volunteer," Davis said. "I would like to also ask for the three resignations from you three tonight because you are on the wrong side of history."

Another resident said she was “disappointed” by the conduct displayed at the last few city council meetings, particularly how Bassett was treated. She was also disappointed to see the city’s Planning Commission appointments approved “without so much as a second thought” after two women had withdrawn their names and were replaced by two men.

The resident also criticized Councilman Dettmers for tabling the allocation of TIF money to a business at 1 E. Ferguson Ave. because he didn’t think it would generate enough tax revenue for the city. She, and several others later in the meeting, claimed the business would employ up to 30 people who would generate tax revenue by eating, refueling, and shopping in the city. Dettmers said later in the meeting that he is willing to grant TIF money to anybody fixing up an old building in the city, but the amount he’s comfortable allocating to them depends on the tax revenue their business would generate.

“Are you willing to pay back the money used in time or attorney’s fees that it cost the city to fight your nuisance lawsuit?” the resident asked. “With the attack on Ms. Bassett and the other females that are trying to be positive entities in our city, I have to ask - are we supposed to get in the kitchen and make you a sandwich, or would you like us to volunteer our time, efforts, and talent to help make our city great?”

She then asked if Dettmers and Plank were prepared for a discrimination lawsuit if women in Wood River “keep getting denied a role” in the town’s future, before calling for the immediate resignation of both Dettmers and Plank and asking Ayres to be the “genuinely nice” person she knew him to be and not participate in the “bad politics” she believes he is “currently swept up in.”

Maggie Dillinger criticized the councilmen for stopping progress in the city, specifically halting a “legal, high-tax-revenue business like a dispensary” because they “don’t like it,” then asked what their plan was to bring in the “hundreds of thousands of dollars” in tax revenue the dispensary would’ve generated. She also claimed the councilmen never visit the downtown businesses, and said she’s talked with several downtown business owners who said “they’ve never seen” Ayres, Dettmers, or Plank, all of whom she then called for the resignation of.

Former City Councilman Mike Anderson said the councilmen’s actions were “not about right or wrong, but a vendetta against a past council.

“When I was on the City Council, even if we disagreed, we worked to move the city forward,” Anderson said. He later urged the councilmen to “lead, follow, or get out of the way.”

Pastor Dave Landry echoed the sentiments of previous public comments, but added he believed the councilmen in question were “not even probably listening to the cries of the people of Wood River.” He criticized Dettmers for his lawsuit against the city, emphasized the city’s financial health, and said he believed “all three” of the councilmen should resign immediately.

Former City Councilwoman Sonya Hagaman said she believed the councilmen have done significant harm in the short time they’ve served on the council so far.

“You guys have been in office for 63 days. This is your fifth meeting. So far, you have questioned established ordinances that have been in place for decades, you’ve stopped two small businesses, you’re trying to put roadblocks up for a third,” she said. “You’ve caused two women to resign from a board just so that volunteer board could be voted on. You have also caused a very experienced, intelligent, capable city attorney to say she doesn’t need to be where she’s not needed, so she quit - and you lost the lawsuit.

“You guys have ran a very transparent board. It’s extremely transparent that you have a disregard for the expertise and knowledge of the city officials, the city employees. Your misogyny is transparent, and your extreme despise for any woman who is outspoken, and intelligent, and capable of standing up to you.”

Hagaman then joined a total of six public commenters who explicitly called on Councilmen Ayres, Dettmers, and Plank to resign immediately - others offered criticisms but did not call for their resignations.

Several of the public commenters asked whether or not Councilman Plank actually lived in Wood River, with one claiming his alleged address was regularly vacant. Plank said later in the meeting that he does, in fact, live in Wood River.

“I ran for City Council because citizens’ voices were not being heard. In the November 2022 election, 72% of residents who cast their ballots said we need to prioritize infrastructure projects and other needs over a rec center. As a CPA, I worry and I see other cities throughout the Metro area losing money on their rec centers - and it looks like with our first budget on our current rec center we’re budgeting a loss for that as well.

“We must honor our promises to our most vulnerable citizens of Wood River. That’s why I ran, and I know Bill and Doc also ran on that as well ... we all love this community. I do live here. Bill Dettmers loves this community, Doc Ayres loves this community, and we want the best for the city.”

Plank added that the city paid “very little” in legal fees related to Dettmers' lawsuit because it was “taken care of through insurance,” and said he will “continue to listen to all residents as we do our best for the people of Wood River.”

A full recording of the July 3 meeting can be watched at the top of this story or on the [City of Wood River Facebook page](#).

