



Wood River Councilmen Dettmers, Plank Discuss Developments, Meetings, More

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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WOOD RIVER - Wood River City Councilmen Bill Dettmers and Jeremy Plank recently spoke in more detail about their plans for Wood River, recent council meetings, and more on [an episode of Our Daily Show! on Riverbender.com](#).

Dettmers said the Wood River dispensary debate is an “open question,” though he’s received comments against it being in the city’s downtown.

“When I was campaigning, just a couple weeks before the election, the number-one topic was the dispensary,” Dettmers said. “I think it’s an open question as to whether or not the people want a dispensary, but overwhelmingly, the comments I received that they did not want it downtown.”

The dispensary issue is being placed on a binding referendum for voters to vote on during the next election. Dettmers said he understands why some community members are upset about the dispensary being delayed until the vote, but he still believes it’s important to let the voters decide.

Plank said the voters decided during the election last April that they wanted a more open and transparent government, which has been his goal and the goal of Dettmers and fellow Councilman Dr. David Ayres.

“The voters spoke in April - they want transparency and accountability, and they want the City Council to move forward, and they want a responsive government,” Plank said. “That’s what we intend to do and that’s what we’re hoping to do now.”

Dettmers added part of this transparency initiative was “because of all the problems we had in the past” with prior administrations in Wood River.

“The city ignored the referendum on the Rec Center,” Dettmers said. “We asked the council to allow us to vote on financing and they wouldn’t allow us to vote on it, so my approach - and Jeremy and Doc Ayres agree with it - is that we want to make this a more open, transparent council, and that’s why we allowed the community to have an opportunity to vote on a referendum for the dispensary.”

The councilmen have also given citizens more time to speak during the public comment portion of City Council meetings, which Dettmers said he felt was important. The city’s former 3-minute time limit was raised to five minutes after a 3-2 vote on June 5, with Mayor Tom Stalcup and Councilman Scott Tweedy voting in opposition.

“Every meeting, I listen to what everyone has to say, and no matter what they have to say, I try to keep an open mind about it, because ... they keep me grounded,” Dettmers said. “I think the additional two minutes is important, and I appreciate all the comments. No matter how they feel about me, I do appreciate the comments.”

Asked about wedding venue developer [Knotting Hills](#)’ decision to [back out of their plans](#) for a [wedding venue in Wood River’s Belk Park](#), Dettmers said he was initially opposed to the idea until he visited the developer’s current location in Peavey, Mo. After seeing that venue, he said it would have made a wonderful addition to Wood River, but he was “always skeptical” of whether the public would accept the project being built on park land.

Plank added that the voices of 17 opposing constituents were impossible to ignore.

“I was in favor of it, but when the constituents overwhelmingly say, ‘We want something different,’ or to go in a different direction, I have to listen, and so that’s sort of where I am at this point,” Plank said.

Plank also said he would like to see future City Council meetings and public commentary focused more on the actual agenda items than things like personal attacks.

“I’m willing to meet with anyone under the right context and talk about their disagreement, whatever that is, and try to work for common ground,” Plank said. “It would be really nice, and I think the voters want us to be focused on the agenda items and not all the personal issues.”

As far as their future plans, Plank said he would like to prioritize repairing several crumbling sidewalks around the city. Dettmers added they are looking to review the

rates for water and sewer services, which he said have escalated for years and was the number-one complaint he received from residents during his campaign.

The next Wood River City Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 7. The full interview with Dettmers and Plank can be watched at the top of this story or on Riverbender.com/video.

