



WINCHESTER CITY COMMISSION WRAP-UP

Information from the Tuesday, April 1, 4:30 p.m. special and 5:30 p.m. regular meetings

Commission approves changes to ordinance to address blighted, abandoned property

With changes to a pre-existing ordinance, the City of Winchester is prepared to start better enforcing policies around blighted and abandoned properties.

The Winchester Board of Commissioners approved an amendment to the ordinance at the Tuesday, April 1, meeting, which will strengthen the city's ability to enforce the codes.

According to Kentucky Revised Statute, cities are permitted to enact a separate rate of taxation on abandoned and blighted urban properties.

According to the ordinance, which will require a second reading, "the Board of Commissioners finds that abandoned and blighted urban properties require greater code enforcement activities, maintenance and services such as police and fire protection by the city, which results in significant financial costs for the city."

In the ordinance, an abandoned property is one within the city limits that has been vacant and unimproved for at least one year, and which is "dilapidated, unsanitary, unsafe,

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DON'T MISS THE NEXT MEETING!

The next meeting of the Winchester Board of Commissioners will be Tuesday, April 15. There will be a 5:30 p.m. regular meeting. The 4:30 p.m. special meeting has been canceled.

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vermin-infested or otherwise dangerous to the safety of person and is unfit for its intended use." Other indicators of abandoned property are:

- Accumulation of trash and debris as a result of neglect or lack of maintenance
- At least three years of delinquent property taxes
- Disconnection, destruction or removal of utilities, plumbing, heating or sewerage, which would make the property unfit for its intended use

The ordinance references KRS 99.705 for definitions of blighted property, which is a space or structure that is in a state of significant deterioration, neglect or disrepair, posing a threat to the community's health and safety.

There will be an ad valorem tax of \$1.50 on each \$100 of value in addition to the normal ad valorem tax. All money collected from the additional taxes will be placed in a fund designated for legal fees, demolition or rehabilitation of the property.

According to the ordinance, each year, the code enforcement officer will determine which properties are abandoned or blighted and provide a list to the property valuation administrator before the date for annual assessment, at which point the property taxes will reflect the additional tax rate. By May 1 of each year, the code enforcement officer will mail a notice to property owners that the property has been indicated as abandoned or blighted.

Public Works gives annual update

Winchester Public Works Director Brian Sewell provided an update for the Winchester Board of Commissioners at the Tuesday, April 1, meeting.

Sewell said some main tasks of the department include storm sewer and street maintenance, vehicle maintenance, painting, sidewalk maintenance, sign maintenance and salting/scraping roadways during winter weather.

Sewell shared that the department has two full-time mechanics that work on the city's fleet of vehicles. In 2024, they did about 300 oil changes and installed more than 50 new tires.

While street sweeping, the department collected 275 tons of trash and debris from the city roadways and the storm sewer system.

With the sidewalk program, the department replaced 350 feet of sidewalk with a goal to replace more in 2025.

The department focuses on painting every other year, with the main focus on yellow curbing. Striping the roadways is contracted out.

Sewell said one of the highlights of 2024 was the completion of the city's salt barn, which had been under construction since late 2023. The department used more than 950 tons of salt this winter and has about 125 tons left. Sewell said without the salt barn, the department would have likely come close to running short on salt this winter.

"Our goals are to provide good service and keep expenses down," Sewell said.

IN OTHER BUSINESS

In other business, the commission:

- approved a request to close portions of College Street, Wheeler Avenue, Fitch Avenue and Dudley Street for the WinSprint Triathlon from 8 to 10 a.m. on June 8.
- approved a request for out-of-state travel for Patrolman Blake Gabbard and K9 Jensik for a conference.
- approved a request to close Depot Street for the Farmers' Market from 8 a.m. to noon on Saturdays from May 10 through Oct. 4.
- approved the second reading of an amendment to the city's nepotism policy. The amendment clarifies that no employee shall be directly supervised by a family member.

— approved the first reading of an ordinance updating language associated with the use, cultivation, processing or production of medical cannabis within the city and county. The ordinance will require a second reading.

— rescinded an order appointing Regina Spencer to the Clark County-Winchester Heritage Commission and appointed Sherry Hosler to the Commission to fill an unexpired term.

— approved an order entering into an inter-local agreement with the Clark County Fiscal Court for county-wide emergency medical services.

— approved an order reclassifying Monty Corbett, Matthew Reed and Jon Larrett with the Winchester

Police Department.

— approved an order reclassifying Toni Clayton and Nicholas Riggs with the Winchester Fire Department.

— approved an order employing Steve Hamilton as a crossing guard.

— approved an order employing Joni Goble as a part-time single-role paramedic.

— approved an order employing Ronin Calautti as a part-time single-role EMT-B.

— heard a presentation from City Advisor Mike Flynn regarding city-owned property. The city will soon put out requests for proposals from 501(c)3 organizations with the goal of establishing more affordable housing in the community.