

**Minutes
Committee of the Whole
May 5, 2025**

The Committee of the Whole met on May 5, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. in the Conference Room at the City Building. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Mayor Melissa Monich. Attendance was as follows:

Members Present: Dan Driehaus, Melissa Monich, Cindy Peebles, April Robles, Jodi Woffington

Staff Present: Rusty Herzog-City Manager

Juvenile Court Hillcrest Follow Up Discussion

Discussion opened with a question regarding the anticipated opening date for the Hillcrest facility. It was initially understood that the project was scheduled to open in November, but clarification was sought on whether this was still accurate, and if so, whether it would be in a full or limited operational state.

In response, it was clarified that there is currently no confirmed opening date for the facility. According to Jeff Aluotto, the Hamilton County Administrator, the project's funding is presently on hold. This delay is due to unresolved issues at the state, federal, and local levels. Mr. Aluotto informed Mr. Herzog that while capital improvements can proceed, there is insufficient funding available to support the ongoing operational programming required for the facility's function.

Two potential sources of funding were discussed, the Children's Services Levy, which may be placed on the ballot in November 2026 and potential allocations from the state of Ohio, though optimism about this route is minimal given concerns about the facility's security standards.

It was clarified that a decision from the state is expected by July. If the state decides to fund the project, it could initiate progress; if not, the initiative will likely remain indefinitely stalled.

Regarding the Children's Services Levy, it was noted that a committee determines its budget priorities. Input from this group will decide whether Hillcrest is included in the funding ask. Inclusion could increase the likelihood of funding, as such levies typically pass when put to public vote. However, without this inclusion, stakeholders expressed concern that the project would likely be defunded and discontinued.

Renovation work is reportedly planned to be completed by September 2025, with a tentative goal of opening by November 2025, contingent on funding availability. Even in the best-case scenario, the earliest realistic operational date would likely be 2027, assuming funding begins to flow post-November 2026.

Regarding capital improvements and security concerns, Mr. Aluotto had indicated to Mr. Herzog that while capital improvements are budgeted, including \$6 million in funds

allocated to the property, the county is exercising caution in executing these plans. One significant example involves the construction of a perimeter fence. It was clarified that no decision has been made to proceed with a three-sided fence, despite earlier suggestions to that effect. Stakeholders expressed confusion and concern regarding the perceived inadequacy of such a design, emphasizing the importance of a fully secured perimeter to meet state standards.

Further clarification was provided that the county is prepared to forgo the fence unless it is deemed essential to garner community or council support. This underscores that the fence is not part of the county's core vision for the project but is rather a potential concession to community expectations.

In pre-council discussions, it was reported that the state has expressed skepticism toward Hillcrest's security standards, potentially influencing their decision to deny funding. It was recommended that the county more explicitly identify and quantify the state's security requirements to better understand how to meet them.

Additionally, it was confirmed that Springfield Township has not been consulted about the fencing plans. The only official interaction involved a notification to apply for a variance to construct an eight-foot fence. Other local jurisdictions such as Wyoming and Woodlawn also confirmed they were not engaged in any prior input sessions, despite statements from project leaders implying community feedback had been collected. The only related public meetings appear to have occurred outside the area, including one at Xavier University in July.

Perhaps after the decision is made in July, Council can schedule a follow-up conversation around the same time to gain a better understanding of how the Children's Services Levy operates. That way, Council will have two key pieces of information to discuss during its next meeting.

Miscellaneous

Residents have expressed confusion and frustration over ongoing roadwork. Despite multiple communication efforts, some continue to be unaware of no-parking zones due to resurfacing. Signs are typically posted four days in advance, and residents are asked to move vehicles to avoid delays or towing. Coordination with local schools for special events is recommended to prevent disruption.

Residents are encouraged to use the SeeClickFix program on the city's website or contact the city directly to report issues such as potholes. Anecdotal evidence highlighted a positive resident experience with same-day pothole repair after contacting the city was shared.

Interest was expressed in evaluating the economic impact of recent investments in business districts. Although income tax revenue from these businesses is minimal, the city is actively engaging with owners through surveys and in-person outreach to assess

needs and satisfaction. Additionally, the city is exploring opportunities to increase marketing efforts and potentially centralize event coordination under Human Resources leadership.

Mr. Herzog shared that Rachel Leininger is transitioning to HR while retaining responsibility for event planning and grant writing. A new Recreation Director will be hired, allowing the city to grow its recreation and event programming. Interviews for this role have drawn strong candidates, and changes are expected to bring expanded capacity.

An update was provided on a narrow city-owned lot adjacent to the City Building that was previously thought to be sold. The potential buyer, a descendant of the former owner, has been asked to submit a development plan. The city is open to selling the lot under the condition that the proposed development proceeds or the property reverts to the city.

A Pilates studio is set to open in the space formerly occupied by Robby's Quality Alterations. The Delmonico Bar will open ahead of May Fete. The grand opening of the dog park is anticipated for May Fete day as well. Coyboy Cones is also reopening under new ownership.

The Mayor is anticipating the release of the independent review report regarding the police incident in Evendale and Lincoln Heights. The Sheriff's office has updated its website with FAQs showing self-reflection and public engagement. The Prosecutor's Office has also promised a review, though no release date has been provided.

Joe Hornsby will be sworn in prior to the May Council meeting to ensure eligibility to participate in votes that evening. Seating arrangements within the Council Chambers will be adjusted accordingly.

Adjourn

With no further agenda items to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debby Martin, Executive Assistant

Melissa Monich, Mayor