The governance of the City of Forest Hills in large measure depends on volunteers who are willing to take the time to meet and make decisions that affect every resident of the City.

The Charter for the City provides for a City Manager-Commission form of government, which means that the three unpaid Commissioners elected by the people have the responsibility to see that the City is run efficiently and well for all of its citizens. To oversee the management of the City and to see that ordinances are enforced, the Commissioners employ the City Manager.

The Board of Commissioners also has the responsibility to appoint all other boards, commissions, committees, and task forces to advise the Board of Commissioners and to make important decisions for the City. Currently there are two permanent committees, the Planning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals. In addition, the Cultural and Natural Resources Committee was formed four years ago to make the City a more distinctive and attractive place to live. To help in the design and construction of the new City Hall, a City Hall Advisory Committee was created.

Because these commissions and committees are so important, the next four issues of the Forest Hills News will highlight each one of them, starting with the Board of Zoning Appeals.

The Board of Zoning Appeals is composed of three members who are appointed by the BOC. The current BZA members are Janie Rowland, chair; Jim Littlejohn, vice chair; and Lanson Hyde as the third member. All have busy professional lives but take the time every third Friday of every month at 8 a.m. to hear appeals from citizens who seek a variance from the zoning ordinances that govern how their houses and properties should be built or remodeled.

Some common requests for variances deal with fence height. The Forest Hills zoning regulations state, “Open fences, regardless of location, shall not exceed four feet in height.” If a home owner wants a fence higher than four feet, an appeal for a variance must be presented to the three members of the BZA for resolution.

Other matters that come before the BZA are variances for front-yard or side-yard setbacks and building coverage ratios.

The decisions that these three dedicated public servant volunteers make affect the beauty and the livability of Forest Hills for all citizens. Please take the time to thank them for their service to our community.
How much tax do you pay to the City of Forest Hills?

I enjoy fielding questions from residents about "the amount of taxes I pay." That has not always been the case when I served at other cities. That question has occasionally caused heartburn, but not in Forest Hills.

As residents of Davidson County you pay a substantial amount in property taxes to the Metropolitan Government of Nashville Davidson County. The amount of property tax you pay to Forest Hills is ZERO!

I am always surprised by the number of people who respond with, "but you receive that money back from Metro." Not true! Forest Hills does not receive any funding from Metro.

As a resident, unless you develop property; attempt to rezone property; build a structure, pool, or accessory building; or improve/change your property in some manner, you may never write a check to the City of Forest Hills. The City assesses fees on these projects in order to recoup its expenses. Other than these fees, the City of Forest Hills does not have a source of revenue from its residents.

So what is the source of City funds?

We receive a share of the taxes imposed by the state of Tennessee. Two examples of "state shared revenue" are the Hall income tax and the state and local sales tax. One might respond that the City of Forest Hills is still taking money from Forest Hills residents. Actually we are not. The state established these taxes, the state takes your money, and shares part of it with every city.

For example, the Hall income tax is a tax established by the State and assessed on certain types of income. The amount an individual pays in Hall tax is based on income, not residence. Individuals pay the same amount in Hall tax whether they live in Memphis, Forest Hills, or Knoxville. If you move from Forest Hills to Brentwood, the state will send the "local share" of your Hall tax to your new city of residence, Brentwood. If an individual moves to an unincorporated portion of a county, then the distribution would go to that county government.

The sales tax is similar, yet different. The sales tax has two parts: state sales tax and local option sales tax. The state of Tennessee's portion is currently 7%. The local option sales tax is adopted in cities and counties by referendum. In Davidson County the amount is 2.25%. The two portions currently combine for a total sales tax rate of 9.25% in Davidson County. The State shares a portion of its 7% with every city and county, and it is allocated on a per capita basis.

The local option sales tax differs in that it is returned to the county and city in which the tax was originally collected. By state law, 50% of the local option sales tax proceeds must be spent on education, while the remaining 50% is returned to the local general government fund. Forest Hills has very few retail businesses within its corporate boundary; however, there is a reasonable amount of income in this tax.

I decided to address this issue now because many of you are writing checks to pay your property taxes. Each year Forest Hills residents send approximately $14 million to Metro in property taxes.

What do Forest Hills residents receive for the money sent to Metro? Police, fire, and ambulance service are the most visible. You are also entitled to use the public parks.
Forest Hills incurs record costs for winter snow

The winter of 2010/2011 is one for the record. At right is a comparison of costs for the period December 1 through February 6 for the past five years. These costs include salt and labor to spread salt and/or remove snow. At publication, the City does not yet have the bills for snow removal on February 7 and 9.

Forest Hills has approximately 40 miles of streets. Snow represents a challenge to everyone: residents who need to go to work; transportation of children to those schools that do not close for the weather; the City attempting to guess how much pre-salting and preparations to make; and the long hours by the crews attempting to negotiate snow, ice, cars parked on the street, and children simply being children.

Since its inception in 1957, Forest Hill has outsourced virtually all services. As with any business plan, there are pros and cons to outsourcing. In those years when we have little or no snow, it represents a tremendous cost savings. However, the alternative would be staffing full-time employees, purchasing expensive trucks and equipment, and stockpiling salt on the chance it might snow.

Based on the expenditures for the years 2006/07, 2007/08, and 2008/09, the City would not have covered the cost of the equipment, much less the payroll and benefits for the employees.

The City's hope is that the past two years are anomalies and more normal weather patterns will return soon.

City initiates process of hazard mitigation planning

Forest Hills has begun to develop standardized plans to mitigate the impact of future natural disasters.

Cynthia Popplewell, an official with AMEC Hazard Mitigation and Management Program, outlined the steps to develop a localized multi-hazard mitigation plan to the Board of Commissioners on December 2.

She talked about requirements of planning and outlined key steps in the planning process. Mitigation, she explained, is “sustained action to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to life and property from natural hazards.”

Local governments are required by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 to adopt a hazard mitigation plan for dealing with natural disasters in order to maintain eligibility for mitigation funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. They are not required to cover man-made disasters such as acts of war or terrorism.

One reason for this requirement is that the cost of disaster response and recovery continues to go up as populations and areas of development increase. In Forest Hills, for instance, the population over the past 20 years has gone from around 4,200 in 1990 to over 6,100 in 2010. That means more potential personal and property damage.

Many events are predictable and repetitive, for example, areas of flooding. Taking loss-reduction actions before they recur is cost-effective, environmentally sound, and legally and morally responsible.

Developing the plan

The first step in creating a successful plan is to identify the natural hazards threatening Forest Hills and begin assessing potential impact by examining the condition of buildings and infrastructure to determine areas at risk and estimate potential losses, as well as looking at how land is currently being used and where development trends are leading.

The mitigation plan itself sets local goals and objectives based on data from the assessment. It identifies actions the City can take to reduce its vulnerability. For example, the Planning Commission can make recommendations on zoning standards that make it more difficult to build on steep slopes or areas of poor soil because structures built there are at greater risk.

The plan also specifies how the proposed actions will be evaluated, prioritized, implemented, and monitored. The plan must be reviewed at least once a year, with an updated plan created every five years.
Invocation
Offered by Stan Lowery, Hillsboro Church of Christ
January 29, 2011

Almighty God, we come to you this morning, enjoying the beauty of this day and the wonderful nature that surrounds us—and we know that everything we see is a gift from you. Father, we come as individuals from all walks of life and varied backgrounds, but we acknowledge that you are a God that loves each and every one of us standing here—as you do each person in our City.

This morning, we humbly come before you as fellow citizens of this nation, this state, and of this special community—the City of Forest Hills—seeking your continued blessings on us in the things to come.

Today, we gather here to break ground on a wonderful new facility—a tool that we believe will be used for the good of our neighbors, our City, and the communities around us for generations to come. Father, we thank you for our current City leaders and we seek your hand of guidance on them as we embark today on a new phase in the life of this City. And like these current leaders, we ask that you will continue to bring up men and women in the years to come that will follow in their steps as caring, compassionate and honorable servants of our community.

We ask for your hand of blessing on this project as it begins today and as it progresses over the coming months. We seek your hand of safety for the workers that will bring this building to life and transform this corner into a literal center of this community.

Most of all, we ask that you will put in our hearts the desire to always use this tool of our civil government for the welfare and betterment of mankind.

I humbly ask this in the name of my Lord Jesus. Amen.

Citizens gather for City Hall groundbreaking

About 40 City officials, interested citizens, and enthusiastic neighbors met under clear blue skies on the morning of January 29 to celebrate the groundbreaking for the new Forest Hills City Hall.

Following a welcome from Mayor Bill Coke and a review of the project from Vice Mayor John Lovell, Commissioner Tim Douglas recognized to the team that helped bring the vision of a City Hall into reality: architect, landscape architect, contractor, and the City Hall Planning Committee led by David Waller.

Metro Nashville Mayor Karl Dean offered his congratulations and shared fond memories of earlier days he spent in Forest Hills.

Then, with gold shovels in hand, Coke, Lovell, Douglas, Waller, and Dean broke the ground to signify the official, tangible beginning of the Forest Hills City Hall.

Clockwise from above: Edward Kelly, whose family once lived on the property, shares memories with historian Fletch Coke; Nashville Mayor Karl Dean addresses the crowd; Forest Hills Vice Mayor John Lovell visits with architect Lenny Celaruo and landscape architect Joe Hodgson; Sandy Moore and David Waller compare notes; Commissioner Tim Douglas talks with architect David Allard, Councilmember Carter Todd, and architect Michael Ward; NES Chief Operating Officer Allen Bradley reviews plans with Mayor Bill Coke.

The Road to City Hall Advisory Committee

By David Waller, Chair, City Hall Advisory Committee

In mid-June 2009, Mayor Bill Coke contacted me regarding the new City Hall and asked me to chair the Mayor’s City Hall Advisory Committee. I accepted.

The committee membership includes Alison Douglas, Clay Jackson, Jim Littlejohn, Jeff Orr, and me; each of us brings extensive talents and experience. The Mayor charged the committee with advising the Commissioners on the selection of an architect, the selection of a construction manager, and other tasks during construction.

The committee has met on numerous occasions over the past 18 months and has been very productive. By mid-July 2009, the committee had produced a questionnaire for the Commissioners and the staff, asking them for their thoughts on the form and function of the new City Hall, both for the present and the future needs of the City.

In August 2009 the committee, with input from the Commissioners, the staff, and others, produced a list of 20 architectural firms to be invited to participate in the architect selection process. At the same time the committee developed a process for the evaluation of the architectural firms. The City sent out invitations to the architectural firms, with a required response date of September 24, 2009; the City received 11 proposals.

The committee met on several occasions, reviewed the proposals and came up with a short list (four) of architects to be interviewed. This short list was presented to the Commissioners, who agreed that we should move forward with the interviews. The committee interviewed the four candidates and found them all to have excellent credentials.

The committee ultimately recommended the firm of Allard Ward Architects to be the architect for City Hall.
The Road to City Hall Advisory Committee began working in June 2009. In late November, the City advertised for proposals from construction managers for this project and received four proposals. The committee interviewed these candidates and compared their experience, their fees, and monthly administrative costs. In mid-February the committee recommended that R.C. Mathews be awarded the contract as construction manager, and the Commission awarded that contract.

From March 2010 on into August 2010, the architect and the construction manager worked together, along with input from the committee, to formulate plans and cost estimates. In August 2010, floor plans, building elevation drawings, and cost estimates were presented to the Commission, which approved them with some minor modifications. From then through October, the architect was completing plans and specifications and the construction manager was identifying potential subcontractors.

The City advertised for prequalifications on the site work and subsequently for bids. Four bids were received, and the low bidder Sunrise Construction was awarded the contract. In December 2010, the City advertised for prequalifications on the other subcontracts and, after that process, advertised for bids. Bids were received on January 6, 2011, and awards were made by the City on January 20.

The total construction package came in at a projected $1,642,923, which was in the range of projections approved by the Commission in August 2010. The official groundbreaking ceremony was on January 29, and all are pleased to move forward. The Advisory Committee will continue to be part of the construction process in reviewing and recommending items related to “finish” and other items as requested by the Commission.
Many people have always considered a public school education to be the norm. Unfortunately, the quality of public schools in Nashville has declined over the years, and private schools have grown to where they now educate a substantial portion of our youth. But the cost of sending children to private schools has gotten beyond the reach of many residents of our City.

For financial as well as societal reasons, many parents in and around Forest Hills have decided that a public school education is the best option for their children. The health of our public schools is vitally important; they serve our community. So, it was a natural fit for me and the other Commissioners when Percy Priest approached the City seeking financial support for the construction and renovation of their library.

Percy Priest Elementary School was built in 1957 to accommodate 200 students. The original design included its 1,735-square-foot library. Now, the school has over 500 students; the library has remained unchanged all these years; and there is no Metro funding available for capital improvements until at least 2016–2017. The Percy Priest Parent Teacher Organization has decided that it cannot wait until 2016 to renovate the library and to install a media center/computer lab.

The Percy Priest PTO has estimated the total cost of the renovation to be $865,000, and the expansion will create a nearly 4,600-square-foot resource.

In November 2010, the PTO approached Forest Hills seeking a lead gift of $300,000, and we were persuaded that the renovated library enhancement would help the School maintain its position as a premier Metro Nashville K–4th grade elementary school. In addition, the Commissioners understand and believe that Percy Priest is “the face of Forest Hills,” with so many parents coming and going there on a daily basis. So, the Commissioners approved the funding request in hopes that the school will proceed expeditiously with its project after raising additional funds from other friends and parents.

Economically, we were convinced that a $300,000 gift was a good investment. We have nearly 2,500 homes in Forest Hills, so the gift amounts to just over $100 for each residence. Home buyers with young children want to live in areas with good public schools. The real estate expansion in Williamson County has been fueled by the fact that Williamson County has a strong public school system. And a strong public school system increases real estate values.

One reason many people want to live in Forest Hills is because Percy Priest Elementary School has a very good academic achievement record. While the Percy Priest-zoned area includes areas just outside and adjacent to Forest Hills, the largest area served by Percy Priest is Forest Hills. The School has recently stopped accepting students from outside its zoned area because of increased demand from within its existing zoned area, so a higher percentage of students in the future will be Forest Hills residents.

Young families will certainly pay more than an additional $100 for a home in Forest Hills, just so that they can send their children to Percy Priest—and save the $10,000 to $20,000 per year cost per child of going to a private school. A strong elementary school in Forest Hills will boost home values much more than the cost of the gift to Percy Priest Elementary School. So, we will invest just over $100 per residence, and the value of our residents’ property will be strengthened.

This initiative, while unplanned at the beginning of the calendar year, is consistent with our efforts to invest in our City to increase property values, and the Commissioners believe this is a great investment. We hope you agree.
We all need to work to protect our clean water

The City of Forest Hills is required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to meet certain minimum standards with regard to stormwater runoff. In a nutshell, water flowing through Forest Hills via our two main waterways (Otter Creek and Richland Creek) must be as clean when it leaves the City as when it enters it.

(As a side note, Richland Creek actually originates in Forest Hills on property owned by the Hillsboro Road Church of Christ.)

Stormwater is pure rainwater plus anything the rain carries along with it. Rain that falls on impervious surfaces like roofs, driveways, roads, etc., is carried through a series of ditches and pipes that are separate from the sewer system. Stormwater is not treated, so whatever pollutants it picks up along its way flows directly into our creeks and eventually on to our rivers and lakes.

After a rain, polluted stormwater can clearly be seen as a muddy color, often carrying litter, chemicals, and yard waste. These pollutants can kill plants and animals living in the creeks, rivers, and lakes. Sediment from erosion or construction reduces light, which can cause plants to die. It can also suffocate fish by clogging their gills. Toxic chemicals offer a clear threat to plants and animals coming in contact with them.

The City requires monitors and permits for construction and grading, which can introduce sediments into our creeks. We are also embarking on a public education and outreach program to involve citizens in dealing with this issue.

Some things that we as individuals can do to reduce stormwater runoff pollution are listed at right. Please do your part to help.

- Use fertilizers sparingly and sweep up driveways.
- Do not dump anything in ditches or down storm drains.
- Vegetate bare spots in your yard to help control erosion.
- Compost yard waste.
- Avoid using pesticides as much as possible.
- Direct downspouts away from paved surfaces.
- Take your car to a carwash rather than washing it in your driveway.
- Check your car for leaks, and recycle motor oil.
- Pick up after your pets.

**LITTER**

Everyone’s problem, everyone’s responsibility

By Sally Huston, Chair, Cultural and Natural Resources Committee

Whether seen by our residents or by the people passing through Forest Hills, litter is the blemish that distracts from the beauty of our City. We are noted for our precious open spaces, our hills, our trees, and most recently homes that place us at the highest overall value in Nashville.

But we continue to see this marred by tossed trash bags, tossed cans and bottles, even use of our roadside shoulders as a dump for major appliances. We do have litter laws but these are difficult to implement.

Our community has taken action:

- The Davidson County Sheriff’s Department periodically picks up litter on major thoroughfares.
- The Hillsboro Baptist Church Boy Scouts do litter patrol twice a year.
- The volunteer Forest Hills Clean Team is out in force six times a year keeping our side streets clean.

But this is not enough! We need everyone to view this as a MY problem not a YOUR problem.

April 9 is being declared Forest Hills Beautification Day.

**Here’s how you can help**

- Join the Forest Hills Volunteer Clean Team.
- Mobilize your neighborhood to form your own clean team that patrols your street year-round.
- Pick up the litter accumulated over the winter in your own front yard.

Our city is a treasure. We need all of you to be dedicated to preserving our treasure.
Seven Hills, the pre-Civil War Compton House on Hillsboro Pike, was bequeathed to David Lipscomb College by A.M. Burton, who acquired the house and surrounding acres around 1929. In 1983, the property was sold to developers of Burton Hills and the house was donated to Historic Nashville, which gave it to Tim Jackson of Dickson, who wanted to rebuild the historic home. Unfortunately time, weather and vandals made that impossible.

The exhibit will remain at the Green Hills Branch Library, 3701 Benham Avenue, until July 5. Beginning July 11, the photographic collection will be on display at the Metro Archives.

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