

Thank you, Councilwoman McKenzie.

I'm Becky Wade, director of the City Community Development Department. Development of affordable housing and coordination of homelessness services come through my department.

We are requesting that Council postpone a vote on Ordinance 12-F, the closure of a section of Myrtle Street at East Fifth Avenue, for 12 weeks.

I want to provide a little background and context of what's being proposed at this site, which is comprised of three City-owned vacant lots next door to Positively Living.

The City acquired this tract years ago, after the Smokies Southern League baseball team left Knoxville and Caswell Park was being developed as a recreation space and public park. Houses located on this property on East Fifth Avenue were demolished to make room for the park, and ultimately, this specific tract became cut off from the park by the outfield fences of the softball fields. It is idle and not used by Parks and Recreation, but it is zoned as open space.

Recently, Volunteer Ministry Center approached the City with an idea to acquire the property and develop 48 permanent supportive housing units there. There is a great need in Knoxville for these units, which serve extremely low-income residents – the poorest of our poor.

It's very early in the planning process, and these units are extremely expensive to build and manage, but VMC is working on its plans and exploring the availability of grant funding.