Town Council of Merrillville

7820 Broadway Ave - Merrillville, IN 46410

Town Council Meeting Minutes of the Regular Meeting of

January 09, 2024 - 6:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: Councilor Bella called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

INVOCATION/MOMENT OF SILENCE: A brief invocation was given along with a moment of silence by Pastor Mark Smith of Life Sanctuary

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by a veteran in the audience.

ROLL CALL – Present at the meeting were Councilors Rhonda Neal, Shauna Haynes-Edwards Leona Chandler-Felton, Margaret Uzelac, Shawn Pettit, Keesha Hardway, and Rick Bella. Clerk-Treasurer Eric January was present to memorialize the proceedings. A quorum was attained.

PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, AND REMONSTRATIONS

Proclamation

The following National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day Proclamation was read into the record by Interim Town Manager Griffin:

Town of Merrillville

PROCLAMATION

State of Indiana

The Town Council of Merrillville Recognizes

NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT APPRECIATION DAY

Whereas, "Ihe health and safety of the citizens of the Town of Merrillville, Indiana is important to the happiness, prosperity and well-being of our Town's families and community;

Whereas, The Town of Merrillville, Indiana is proud to recognize the dedicated and selfless service of our 61 sworn police officers who tirelessly work to ensure the safety and well-being of our community;

Whereas, Every second of every minute, every minute of every hour, and every hour of every day, those who have dedicated their lives and profession to law enforcement work to ensure that we feel safe in our homes and as we go about our daily lives can do so because of the Merrillville world-class police officers and civilian law enforcement personnel, as well as our new K9 group of enforcers, who take pride in our community and the work they do;

Whereas, these brave men and women of the Merrillville Police Department serve with unwavering commitment, facing challenges and risks to protect the lives and property of the 36,000 residents within our town; and over 100,000 daily visitors;

Whereas, National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day provides an opportunity for our community to express gratitude and appreciation for the sacrifices made by our police officers, acknowledging their dedication to upholding the principles of justice and maintaining public order;

Whereas, "The Town of Merrillville recognizes the vital role played by our law enforcement officers in fostering a sense of security and harmony within our community, contributing to the overall well-being of our residents,

Now, Therefore Be It Resolved, that the Town Council of the Town of Merrillville, Indiana do hereby recognize the Merrillville Police Department's officers and civilian support staff and proclaim today, January 9, 2024 as

NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT APPRECIATION DAY

in the Town of Merrillville, Indiana and urge on all residents of the Town of Merrillville to take a moment to express their gratitude to the 61, and soon to be 65 sworn police officers who dedicate themselves to the safety and prosperity of. our community.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hand and caused the seal of the Town of Merrillville to be affixed the 9th day of January, in the year of our Lord, two thousand twenty-four.

It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Councilor Hardaway to approve the proclamation. Upon a voice vote, the motion passed. The proclamation was approved.

Swearing-in of Police Officers: Stanley Thompson Jr, Christopher Trotter-Borrelli, Thomas Sarsfield & Roberto Espinosa

Each Officer was sworn in by Clerk-Treasurer Eric January. Chief Nuses gave a brief overview of each officer. The new officers will attend the Police Academy for sixteen weeks and then complete their field training. After the field training is complete, the officers will be on patrol.

Councilor Bella reported that upon a request from Chief Nuses for additional Police Officers, the council was able to review the budget and find the funding to hire four additional Officers for the Town of Merrillville.

2024 Town Council Committee Assignments

The Town Council President announced the following appointments:

*Budget and Finance - **Chairperson**: Councilor Neal Members: Councilors Hardaway and Chandler-Felton,

*Street Department - **Chairperson:** Councilor Uzelac **Members**: Councilors Neal and Haynes-Edwards

*Council Affairs - **Chairperson**: Councilor Pettit Members**:** Councilors Hardaway and Chandler-Felton

*Personnel Policy and Employee Benefits – **Chairperson**: Councilors Hardaway **Members**: Councilors Uzelac and Pettit

*Public Safety – **Chairperson**: Councilor Hardway **Members:** Councilors Neal and Chandler-Felton

*Parks and Recreation – **Chairperson:** Councilor Uzelac **Members:** Councilors Haynes-Edwards and Pettit

*Environmental Affairs – **Chairperson**: Councilor Pettit **Members:** Councilors Haynes-Edwards and Neal

*Elections and Public Relations – **Chairperson**: Councilor Neal **Members:** Members Haynes-Edwards and Chandler-Felton

*Economic Development – **Chairperson:** Councilor Pettit **Members:** Councilors Uzelac, Councilor Neal, Crossroads Chamber President Deann Patena, and John Jordan

*Utility Liaison – **Chairperson:** Councilor Chandler-Felton **Members:** Councilors Pettit and Uzelac

*Abandoned-Blighted Properties – **Chairperson:** Councilor Pettit Co-Chairperson: Councilor Chandler-Felton **Members:** Councilor Hardway and Vickie Bunnell

*Town Special Projects – **Chairperson:** Councilor Neal **Members:** Councilors: Haynes-Edwards, Pettit, and Chandler-Felton

*Semi-quincentennial 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence – **Chairperson:** Councilor Haynes-Edwards Members: **Councilors** Chandler-Felton and Neal

It was moved by Councilor Uzelac and seconded by Councilor Haynes-Edwards to support and approve the committees' assignments.

Upon a roll call vote, there were six affirmatives and no negatives. With Councilors Neal, Haynes-Edwards, Chandler-Felton, Uzelac, Pettit, Hardaway, and Bella voting in the affirmative, the motion passed. The committees'' assignments were approved.

2024 Board and Commission Appointments

Councilor Bella reported that some of the appointments won't be filled at this meeting because of a lack of letters of interest. If any residents are still interested in serving on boards and commissions, please submit a letter of interest. Appointments will be made in January or early February.

*Plan Commission – Kristopher Mellon was re-appointed by Councilor Bella Town Council President.

It was moved by Councilor Uzelac and seconded by Councilor Hardaway to appoint Councilors Pettit, Uzelac, and Chandler-Felton to the commission as legislative members.

Upon a voice vote, the motion passed. The legislative member's appointments were approved

*Advisory Board of Zoning Appeals – William C. Byers was re-appointed by Councilor Bella Town Council President.

*Town Board of Metropolitan Police Commissioners - **It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Councilor Uzelac to re-appoint Thomas Pawlak and Peter Dragojevic to the commission.**

Upon a voice vote, the motion passed. The Town Board of Metropolitan Police Commissioners appointments were approved

*Redevelopment Commission – Councilors Pettit, Uzelac, and Hardaway were appointed by Councilor Bella Town Council President.

It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Councilor Uzelac to appoint Councilors Chandler-Felton and Haynes-Edwards to the commission as legislative members.

Upon a voice vote, the motion passed. The legislative member's appointments were approved.

*Stormwater Management Board of Directors – Barbara Ghoston was re-appointed by Councilor Bella Town Council President.

*Northwest Indiana Regional Plan Commission Member (NIRPC) - Councilor Hardaway was appointed by Councilor Bella Town Council President.

*Lake County Solid Waste Management District Board of Directors – Councilor Bella reported that we're going to wait on the appointment for this board.

*Economic Development Commission – Councilor Bella reported that we're going to wait on the appointment for this board.

*Interlocal Cooperation Association now Called Interlocal Ethics Entity – Councilor Bella reported that we're going to wait on the appointment for this board.

*Fire Territory Board – Councilors Neal and Hardaway were appointed by Councilor Bella Town Council President.

Councilor Bella reported that all committee appointments take effect immediately.

*Town Attorney for 2024 - **It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Councilor Uzelac to nominate Joseph Svetanoff and the firm of Kopka, Pinkus, and Dolin as Town Attorney for the Town of Merrillville. This motion includes the Plan Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals.**

Upon a voice vote, the motion passed. The Town Attorney was approved

*Police Commission Attorney for 2024 - It **was moved by Councilor Uzelac and seconded by Councilor Chandler-Felton to nominate Michael Deppe for the Police Commission Attorney.**

Upon a voice vote, the motion passed. The Police Commission Attorney was approved.

*Town Council Financial Advisor for 2024 – Councilor Bella reported that Clerk-Treasurer Eric January would like the contract for Cender Dalton to include the Clerk-Treasurer Office for financial services or needs.

It was moved by Councilor Uzelac and seconded by Councilor Chandler-Felton to retain Cender and Dalton as the Town Council Financial Advisors with the addition of the Clerk-Treasurer Office to be added for services.

Upon a voice vote, the motion passed. The Town Council Financial Advisor was approved.

*Presentation of Home Decorating Contestant Award

Councilor Neal reported that over 18 families presented their homes for entry in the Home Decoration Contest. From the submission, there were over 600 votes from citizens.

- 3rd Place Winner – Dorothy Black of 241 West 54th Place
  - Councilor Neal awarded Dorothy Black a certificate. Dorothy wasn't present at the meeting.
- 2nd Place Winner – Michael Carpenter of 3000 West 57th Avenue
  - Councilor Neal awarded Michael Carpenter a trophy.
- 1st Place Winner – Scott Bonsteel of 44 Indian Trail
  - Councilor Neal awarded Scott Bonsteel a trophy.

*Councilor Bella asked that a letter from James L Wieser be read into the record. With leave from the Town Council, the following letter is placed in the record. The letter is below:

LAKE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC CENTRAL COMMITTEE
James L. Wieser, Chairman

Michelle Fajman, Vice Chairman
Christine Cid, Secretary
Peggy Katona, Treasurer
Beth Giles, Administrative Assistant
beth.giles627@gmail.com

1947 West Glen Park Avenue
Griffith, Indiana 46319

www.lakecountyindems.org

January 9, 2024

Via Electronic Mail
Rick Bella, President
Merrillville Town Council
7820 Broadway
Merrillville, Indiana 46410

Re: Senate 3 Caucus Meeting – Dean and Barbara White Community Center

Dear Rick:

As Chairman of the Lake County Democratic Central Committee and also as Chairman of the recently held caucus to fill the vacancy in Senate District 3, I want to take this opportunity to, first of all, thank you and the members of the Town Council for being gracious enough to arrange for us to use the Merrillville Community Center as the location for the caucus and second, to thank the staff of the Center, particularly Barbara Young, for the incredible assistance and graciousness in hosting the event. The venue, in the north end meeting room, was perfect and the staff was extremely cooperative in making adjustments to the setup that easily accommodated all of the precinct committeemen, elected officials, candidates and other interested observers who attended. I am sure that the number was approximately 100 in number, and we were easily accommodated.

The Town of Merrillville is very fortunate to have such a facility and I can assure you that our organization will continue utilizing it for future caucuses or other events that might come up. It is centrally located, and we received many compliments from attendees to the cooperation and kindness of staff and the comfort of the meeting room.

Thank you, and the members of the Town Council, once again, for not only providing a wonderful venue for us to hold the caucus, but to provide such a beautiful and functional facility for the residents and citizens of your community.

Democratically yours,

JAMES L. WIESER, Chairman of the Caucus
Chairman, Lake County Democratic Central Committee

JLW:ge

CONSENT AGENDA

Accts. Payable Register Voucher Approval for January 9th, 2024.
Approval of Town Council Meeting minutes of December 26th, 2023.
Approval of Special Town Council Meeting minutes of January 1st, 2024.

It was moved by Councilor Uzelac and seconded by Councilor Chandler-Felton to approve the consent agenda. Upon a voice vote, the motion passed. The consent agenda was approved.

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION

None

1) Don Koliboski, Merrillville, Indiana voiced his support for Ordinance 23-31 but had concerns about the Lake County Option Income Tax.

STANDING & SPECIAL COMMITTEES REPORTS AND COMMISSION REPORT

Councilor Bella reported that he would bypass the committee reports because of the recent appointments at this meeting and they have nothing to report at this time.

• ***STORMWATER MANAGEMENT RESOURCES-LAKE*** – Director Lake reported on the following projects:

- Turkey Creek
  - Homer Tree Services is doing risk-free removal in the area.
- Stormwater Improvement Project – 69th and Connecticut Street
  - Director Lake met with Grimmer Construction who will be mobilizing and ordering materials to start the project.
- Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM)
  - Director Lake met with IDEM who is reformatting the reporting and working on the annual reports for compliance.

Director Lake elaborated on other projects at Stormwater.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS/INTERIM TOWN MANAGER

Chief Nuses – Police Department

Chief Nuses reported that the Woman's Self-Defense Class will be in March. The exact day will be announced at the next council meeting. The Police Department is implementing Goal Oriented Policing between the Detective Bureau and the Police Division. Chief Nuses also reported to the council a hostage situation that ended well due to a police K-9.

Director Shine – Building and Planning

Director Shine had nothing to report at this time.

Director King – Street Department

Director King reported that his staff was out clearing and salting the roads. He also reported that sealed bids are due for the Community Crossing Project by 2:00 p.m. on January 16th. The Community Crossing Grant is a matching grant between the State of Indiana and the Town. The Town of Merrillville was awarded $1,000,000.00.

Interim Town Manager Griffin

Interim Town Manager Griffin reported that he would like to collaborate with Clerk-Treasurer Eric January and others to get an ordinance on an investment policy. This will be helpful to the Town of Merrillville. He also noted that his regular report was filed with the Town Council.

GENERAL ORDERS

A. Ordinances:

First Readings:

None

Second Readings:

1. **Ordinance 23-34 (Discussion, Public Comment, and Roll Call Vote)**

An Ordinance of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana, Providing that the Zoning Ordinance Town of Merrillville, Lake County be Amended by Changing the Established C-3, Highway Commercial

Zoning District, and R-2, Residential Zoning District to a PUD, Planned Unit Development Zoning Classification.

Director Shine reported that this is the second reading on an ordinance that was finalized at the Plan Unit Development (PUD) level and passed at the Plan Commission level for the storage unit facility.

It was moved by Councilor Uzelac and seconded by Councilor Haynes-Edwards, to approve Ordinance 23-34 on the second reading.

Councilor Pettit reported that he would abstain from voting on Ordinance 23-34 because of a fiduciary interest in the property from his employer Lamar Advertising.

Upon a roll call vote, there were five affirmatives, one negative, and one abstention. Councilors Neal, Haynes-Edwards, Chandler-Felton, Uzelac, and Hardaway voting in the affirmative, Bella voting in the negative, and Councilor Pettit abstaining. the motion passed. The ordinance was approved on the second reading.

The original is on file in the Office of the Clerk-Treasurer.

2. Ordinance 23-35 (Discussion and Roll Call Vote)

An Ordinance of the Town of Merrillville Indiana, Providing That the Zoning Ordinance Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana be Amended by Changing the Established C-3, Highway Commercial Zoning District, to a PUD, Planned Unit Development Zoning Classification.

Director Shine reported that the ordinance was finalized at the Plan Commission level for the storage unit facility.

It was moved by Councilor Uzelac and seconded by Councilor Pettit, to approve Ordinance 23-35 on the second reading.

Councilor Neal asked to see the rendering.

Upon a roll call vote, there were seven affirmatives and no negatives. With Councilors Neal, Haynes-Edwards, Chandler-Felton, Uzelac, Pettit, Hardaway, and Bella voting in the affirmative, the motion passed. The ordinance was approved on the second reading.

The original is on file in the Office of the Clerk-Treasurer.

B. Resolutions:

1. Resolution 24-01 (Discussion and Voice Vote)

A Resolution of the Town of Merrillville Indiana, Lake County, Indiana, Transferring From the General Fund to Funds 2211 and 3369.

Interim Town Manager Griffin elaborated on the resolution.

It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Councilor Neal to approve the resolution.

Upon a voice vote the resolution was approved. The motion passed. The resolution was adopted.

The original is on file in the Office of the Clerk-Treasurer.

2. Resolution 24-02 (Discussion and Voice Vote)

A Resolution of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana, to Authorize the Transfer of the Cash Change Funds in the Park Department.

Interim Town Manager Griffin explained why the resolution is needed.

It was moved by Councilor Uzelac and seconded by Councilor Neal to approve the resolution.

Upon a voice vote the resolution was approved. The motion passed. The resolution was adopted.

The original is on file in the Office of the Clerk-Treasurer.

C. American Rescue Plan

Councilor Bella reported that the AP Voucher Register Summary for ARP Purchases for January 9, 2024 is $2,068.75.

It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Councilor Uzelac, to approve the ARP AP Voucher Register Summary for $2,068.75. Upon a voice vote, the motion passed. The ARP AP Voucher was approved.

D. BZA & LARGE GATHERING ACTIONS

Petitioner: Jenifer Lorena Quintero
Owner: LBD Properties LLC
Request: Special Exception Approval
Purpose: To allow a Dine in Restaurant
Location: 6190 Broadway
Zoning: C-2 Commercial Zoning District

Planning and Building Director Shine reported the ABZA approved the use variance.

It was moved by Councilor Uzelac and seconded by Councilor Neal, to approve the BZA Action.

Upon a roll call vote, there were seven affirmatives and no negatives. With Councilors Neal, Haynes-Edwards, Chandler-Felton, Uzelac, Pettit, Hardaway, and Bella voting in the affirmative, the motion passed. The BZA Action was approved.

Petitioner: Tatiana Bynum
Owner: LBD Properties LLC
Request: Variance of Use Approval
Purpose: To allow a Beauty Bar Salon Suites
Location: 6110 Broadway
Zoning: M-2 Industrial Corridor Overlay District

Planning and Building Director Shine reported the ABZA approved the use variance.

Upon a roll call vote, there were seven affirmatives and no negatives. With Councilors Neal, Haynes-Edwards, Chandler-Felton, Uzelac, Pettit, Hardaway, and Bella voting in the affirmative, the motion passed. The BZA Action was approved.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

None

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

None

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Bryon Mesarch, Merrillville, Indiana congratulated the Merrillville Police Department and thanked the council.
2. Retoyna Omer, Merrillville, Indiana voiced her concerns regarding a dip in the curb in front of her house and vehicles on the street.
3. Ben King, Merrillville, Indiana voiced his concerns regarding vehicles on the street and the new trail.
4. Mariel Bates, Merrillville, Indiana voiced her concerns regarding trash on their property.
5. Isaiah, Williams, Merrillville Indiana voiced his concerns regarding the Food and Beverage Tax.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Council President announced the following:

- Redevelopment Commission Meeting January 23rd at 6:15 p.m.
- The Town Council's next regular Meeting is set for January 23rd at 6:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Having completed all items on the agenda, the President declared the meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Rick Bella, President

Eric O. January, Clerk-Treasurer

Respectfully Submitted By Angela Lewis