Town Council of Merrillville

7820 Broadway Ave - Merrillville, IN 46410

Town Council Meeting Minutes

November 28, 2023 - 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 Robert Szoke of Impact Church.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Councilor Uzelac.

ROLL CALL – Present at the meeting were Councilors Rhonda Neal, Jeffrey Minchuk, Margaret Uzelac Shawn Pettit, Leonard White, and Rick Bella. Madam Clerk-Treasurer Pro Tempore Angela Lewis was present to memorialize the proceedings. A quorum was attained.

PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, AND REMONSTRATIONS

Interim Town Manager Griffin reported there were none to present at this time.

CONSENT AGENDA

Accts. Payable Register Voucher Approval for November 28, 2023.
Approval of Town Council Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2023.
Approval of Town Council Work Study Minutes of November 9, 2023.

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

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION

A. Proposed Additional Appropriations in the Municipal Cumulative Capital Development Fund (MCCD) in the amount for $43,590.00.

a) Town Attorney review of Proof of Publication(s): Post-Trib 11.17.2023 (date it ran)

Interim Town Manager Griffin gave a synopsis of the additional appropriation. Attorney Svetanoff reported that the proof of publication looks to be in order and is legal under the Indiana Code.

b) Public Hearing

Taxpayers appearing at the hearing will have a right to be heard on these proposed additional appropriations.

There were no public comments.

c) Action on Proposed Ordinance 23-28

The Interim Town Manager requested that this ordinance be considered under the suspension of the rules pursuant to Sec. 2-41 and be taken up at the same meeting of its introduction.

Interim Town Manager Griffin gave a synopsis of the request for suspension of the rules pursuant to Sec. 2-41 for Ordinance 23-28

Councilor Bella reported that the council will take up this matter later on the agenda.

B. Proposed Additional Appropriations in the Municipal Cumulative Capital Development Fund (MCCD) in the amount of $40,000.00.

a) Town Attorney review of Proof of Publication(s): Post-Trib 11.17.2023 (date it ran)

Interim Town Manager Griffin gave a synopsis of the additional appropriation. Attorney Svetanoff reported that the proof of publication looks to be in order and is legal under the Indiana Code.

b) Public Hearing

Taxpayers appearing at the hearing will have a right to be heard on these proposed additional appropriations.

There were no public comments.

c) Action on Proposed Ordinance 23-20 (this is the second reading)

The was introduced at the Town Council Meeting of 11.14.2023

The council will take up this matter later on the agenda

STANDING & SPECIAL COMMITTEES REPORTS

BUDGET & FINANCE- HARDAWAY – Councilor Hardaway was absent from the meeting. Interim Town Manager Griffin had nothing to report at this time for Budget & Finance.

COUNCIL AFFAIRS- PETTIT – Councilor Pettit had nothing to report at this time.

STREET DEPARTMENT- MINCHUK – Councilor Minchuk had nothing to report at this time.

ELECTIONS, PUBLIC RELATIONS, & TOWN BEAUTIFICATION - NEAL- Councilor Neal reported the following:

Tree Lighting and Decorating Contest

This event will be held at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center on December 1st from 5:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. The contest will involve all five elementary schools in Merrillville. We will have Santa, hot chocolate at this event. You can find information regarding this event and contest on the Town's website at merrillville.in.gov.

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS- WHITE - Councilor White reported that according to the news, there's a new variant of Covid-19. Councilor Uzelac added that flu is quite prevalent and flu shots are available at Walgreens, CVS, and local doctor offices.

PERSONNEL POLICY & EMPLOYEE BENEFITS – HARDAWAY- Councilor Hardaway was absent from the meeting.

Councilor Bella acknowledged Matt Glaros of Meyer Glaros, who presented the following recommendations to the council:

Meyers Glaros

Dear Council Members,

It is the recommendation of the personnel committee and Meyers Glaros brokerage to proceed with the following recommendations:

1. We recommend moving the Dental and Vision to United health care to capitalize on the discounting UHC will provide on the medical premium as well as invoice credits

2. Because we are moving the dental and vision to UHC we recommend that the town renew the current medical plans with UHC and accept their offer of approximately a net reduction of 1% in premium payments.

3. We recommend that they town offer a fourth benefit plan option which would be similar to the PPO offering in 2022. However if employees want this option they would be responsible for the difference in premium from the base HSA Plan to the newly offered PPO plan

4. We recommend that the town increase their HSA contributions from $500 for a single to $1000 and for an employee plus 1 or more from $1000 to $1500. We did preliminary modeling and found that even if 20% of the employees moved from the PPO to HSA this would only cost the town 3% more in benefit spend in 2024, this is well below the 2024 budget.

5. We are recommending that the town continue its wellness education and incentive program via Hollys Health talk. This is fully funded by UHC via wellness credits.

6. We are recommending that we hold employee meetings to educate them on the plan offerings and the benefits of the HSA plan

Again, my apologies for getting it to you later than expected.

Matt Glaros
T: 219.865.6447 | F: 219.865.6443
D: 219.206.1858 | www.MeyersGlaros.com

Councilor White asked about AFLAC and was informed that Aflac Insurance is supplemental insurance which isn't included in the recommendations.

It was moved by Councilor Pettit seconded by Councilor Minchuk to approve the recommendation of Mr. Matt Glaros. Upon a roll call vote, there were six affirmatives and no negatives. With Councilors White, Minchuk, Pettit, Neal, Uzelac, and Bella voting in the affirmative, the motion passed. The recommendations presented by Mr. Matt Glaros were approved.

PUBLIC SAFETY- MINCHUK- Councilor Minchuk had nothing to report at this time.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT-PETTIT – Councilor Pettit had nothing to report at this time.

PARKS & RECREATION- UZELAC - Councilor Uzelac reported that everything is in order with the parks and bike trails.

ABANDONED -BLIGHTED PROPERTIES-HARDAWAY – Councilor Hardaway was absent from the meeting. Interim Town Manager Griffin had nothing to report at this time for Abandoned-Blighted Properties.

DEAN & BARBARA WHITE COMMUNITY CENTER-PETTIT – Councilor Pettit reported that he received an email request from Jaycob Knazur of Andrean High School asking the council to waive the rental fee for usage of the Mike Anderson Event Center. Andrean High School will be having its Alumni Dinner in early 2024. The rental fee was waived for this event last year by the council.

It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Councilor Uzelac to waive the rental fee of $400.00 for Andrean High School for their Alumni Dinner. Upon a voice vote, the motion passed. The waiver of the $400.00 rental fee for Andrean High School was approved.

SPECIAL PROJECTS (F & B TAX, DIVERSITY, 4TH of JULY CELEBRATION-HARDAWAY – Councilor Hardaway was absent from the meeting.

DEPARTMENT & COMMISSION REPORTS

LAKE COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT-WHITE – Councilor White reported that the next meeting is scheduled for November 30, 2023.

NORTHERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION-HARDAWAY – Councilor Hardaway was absent from the meeting.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT RESOURCES-LAKE – Director Lake reported on these projects:

Kaiser Ditch Lateral Project
This project is virtually completed. The paving is done. A final walkthrough will occur later this week with DLZ, and we will get our final pay request with Gough Construction.

Updated Stormwater Ordinance
We have a second reading of the updated Stormwater Ordinance.

GIS/Mapping
Director Lake has been updating the GIS shape files and working closely with the Lake County Coordinator Matt Cashen on any changes to the roadway layer.

Director Lake elaborated on several other projects of the department.

SOUTHSHORE VISITORS AND CONVENTION AUTHORITY-PATENA - Deann Patena wasn't present at the meeting.

FIRE TERRITORY BOARD-MINCHUK – Councilor Minchuk reported that nothing has been scheduled. He also reported that the board and department heads were very grateful for the approval by the council to purchase the radios using American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding. The board received information from the company that if the radios were purchased earlier there would be significant savings in the cost of the radios.

Councilor Bella asked Ed to come up and elaborate on the cost savings on the radios.

Ed reported that if the purchase could be secure before January 1, 2024, with a purchase order, the total cost of the radios would go from $511,000.00 to $386,000.00 that's a $125,000.00 saving. The radios won't be in until March or April 2024.

Councilor Bella reported that $250,000.00 has already been approved by ARP. There is a balance of $136,0000.00 that needs to be approved from another funding source.

Council Pettit asked Interim Town Manager Griffin and Financial Advisor Hudson about using TIFF District funds to cover the balance of $136,000.00.

The Financial Advisor reported that she believes this is an allowable expense for the TIFF District Funds.

Interim Town Manager Griffin reported that recent legislation passed in this recent session retroaction to January 1, 2023, authorizes the use of tax increment from any allocation fund for Public Safety purposes which includes Capital and Operational.

Councilor Pettit reported that a Special Redevelopment Commission will be called on December 12th to have this item on the agenda.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS/INTERIM TOWN MANAGER

Director Price – Parks and Recreation

Director Price reported that the Boys and Girls Club will be having its Annual Christmas Party on December 7th. There will also be a coat distribution sponsored by 219 Ride'N Wranglers on December 17th. The Angel Tree toy distribution on December 18th and 19th will be sponsored by the Salvation Army from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. All of these events are at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center. The Angel Tree is open to everyone who would like to sponsor a child. The tree is located in the lobby of the Dean and Barbara White Community Center.

Chief Nuses – Police Department

Chief Nuses reported that the License Plate Recognition System (LPR) is up and running on Broadway. He thanked the surrounding agencies for helping with the influx of visitors coming into the Town of Merrillville.

Director Shine – Building and Planning

Director Shine reported that the Planning and Building Department has been working to get the building permit application online.

Director King – Street Department

Director King reported that the Steet Department has been busy hanging Christmas decorations along Broadway and replacing street light bulbs all over town. Leaf pickup is still ongoing as long as the weather permits. The department is switching over the winter operations.

Councilor White thanked Director King and his department for all the work that was done on the streets in his Ward.

Interim Town Manager Griffin

Interim Town Manager Griffin complimented the department heads and reported that one of the objectives is to get an investment policy ordinance adopted by year-end.

GENERAL ORDERS

A, Ordinances: (Discussion and Roll Call Vote)

***First Readings:* (Discussion and Roll Call Vote)**

Ordinance 23-28 (Discussion and Roll Call Vote)

An Enactment Appropriating Additional Monies in Excess of the Annual Budget for the Municipal Cumulative Capital Development Fund, all pursuant to I.C. 6-1.1-18, I.C. 36-5-3-5, et seq.

It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Councilor Uzelac, to approve Ordinance 23-28 on the first reading.

Upon a roll call vote, there were six affirmatives and no negatives. With Councilors White, Minchuk, Pettit, Neal, Uzelac, and Bella voting in the affirmative, the motion passed. The ordinance was approved on the first reading.

Councilor Pettit informed the council that this is the ordinance Interim Town Manager Griffin mentioned to suspend the rules.

It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Councilor Minchuk to suspend the rules. Upon a roll call vote, there were six affirmatives and no negatives. With Councilors White, Minchuk, Pettit, Neal, Uzelac, and Bella voting in the affirmative, the motion passed. The rules were suspended to read Ordinance 23-28 on the second and final reading.

It was moved by Councilor Minchuk and seconded by Councilor Pettit to approve the Ordinance 23-28 on the second and final reading. Upon a roll call vote, there were six affirmatives and no negatives. With Councilors White, Minchuk, Pettit, Neal, Uzelac, and Bella voting in the affirmative, the motion passed. The ordinance was approved on the second and final reading.

Ordinance 23-29 (Discussion and Roll Call Vote)

An Ordinance of the Town of Merrillville, Indiana, Providing That Ordinance No. 21-24 of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana Be Amended by Adding a Section Regarding Completion Date of the Project.

Attorney Svetanoff elaborated on Ordinance 23-29.

It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Councilor Minchuk to approve the Ordinance 23-29 on the first reading. Upon a roll call vote, there were six affirmatives and no negatives. With Councilors White, Minchuk, Pettit, Neal, Uzelac, and Bella voting in the affirmative, the motion passed. The ordinance was approved on first reading.

***Second Reading: (*Discussion, Public Comment, and Roll Call Vote)**

Ordinance 23-20 (Discussion, Public Comment, and Roll Call Vote)

An Ordinance of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana, Authorizing Additional Appropriations in the 2023 Budget.

No Public Comments.

It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Councilor Minchuk to approve Ordinance 23-20 on the second and final reading. Upon a roll call vote, there were six affirmatives and no negatives. With Councilors White, Minchuk, Pettit, Neal, Uzelac, and Bella voting in the affirmative, the motion passed. The ordinance was approved on the second and final reading.

Ordinance 23-25 (Discussion, Public Comment, and Roll Call Vote)

An Ordinance Reducing Appropriations in the Annual Budget for the Several Departments of the General Fund, Pursuant to I.C. 6-1.1-18 I.C. 36-5-3-5, Et Seq.

No Public Comments.

It was moved by Councilor Minchuk and seconded by Councilor Uzelac to approve the Ordinance 23-25 on the second and final reading. Upon a roll call vote, there were six affirmatives and no negatives. With Councilors White, Minchuk, Pettit, Neal, Uzelac, and Bella voting in the affirmative, the motion passed. The ordinance was approved on the second and final reading.

Ordinance 23-26 *(Amended)* (Discussion, Public Comment, and Roll Call Vote)

An Ordinance of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County Indiana, Amending Ordinance 23-18, 23-16, 23-01, and 22-9A, and the Pay for Employees of the Town of Merrillville, Indiana, for the Calendar Year 2024.

No Public Comments.

It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Councilor Minchuk to approve Ordinance 23-26 on the second and final reading. Upon a roll call vote, there were six affirmatives and no negatives. With Councilors White, Minchuk, Pettit, Neal, Uzelac, and Bella voting in the affirmative, the motion passed. The ordinance was approved on the second and final reading.

Ordinance 23-27 (Discussion, Public Comment, and Roll Call Vote)

The Town of Merrillville, Indiana Stormwater Management Ordinance.

Director Lake elaborated on Ordinance 23-27

No Public Comments.

It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Councilor Uzelac to approve the Ordinance 23-27 on the second and final reading. Upon a roll call vote, there were six affirmatives and no negatives. With Councilors White, Minchuk, Pettit, Neal, Uzelac, and Bella voting in the affirmative, the motion passed. The ordinance was approved on the second and final reading.

B, Resolutions: (Discussion and Voice Vote*)*

None

C, American Rescue Plan

Councilor Bella reported that the AP Voucher Register Summary for ARP Purchases for November 28, 2023, is $98,305.47.

It was moved by Councilor Minchuk and seconded by Councilor Neal, to approve the ARP AP Voucher Register Summary for $98,305.47. Upon a voice vote, the motion passed. The ARP AP Voucher was approved.

D. BZA & LARGE GATHERING ACTIONS

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

***NEW* BUSINESS**

None

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

None

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Town Council Meeting December 12th at 6:30 p.m.
- Town Building closed on December 22nd & 25th for observance of Christmas
- Tree Lighting Night December 1, from 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
- Merrillville House Decorating Contest Applications are now available
- Town Hall is an Official Toys for Tots drop-off location through December 7th

ADJOURNMENT

A motion and a second were made. The motion passed by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

Rick Bella, President

Kelly White Gibson, Clerk-Treasurer

Respectfully Submitted By Angela Lewis