**Town Council of Merrillville**
**7820 Broadway Ave - Merrillville, IN 46410**
**Town Council Meeting Minutes of the Regular Meeting of**
**August 26, 2025, 6:35 P.M.**

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

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag was led by Honorable Judge Eugene Velazco

**INVOCATION/MOMENT OF SILENCE:** A brief invocation was given, along with a moment of silence, by Pastor Dennis Walton of Faith Temple of Christ Church.

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

Councilor Margaret Uzelac was absent.

**PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, AND REMONSTRATIONS:**

- **Employee of the Month: August**
  Clerk-Treasurer Eric January and Office Manager Joi Whiteside presented Angela Lewis, who serves in the Clerk-Treasurer's Office, as August's Employee of the Month for the Town of Merrillville to the council and audience. Ms. Lewis received a certificate of recognition and a gift card. Clerk-Treasurer Eric January expounded on Ms. Lewis' exemplary work and qualities at the Clerk-Treasurer Office.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**
There were no public comments given at the meeting. A copy of the video from the Town Council Meeting held on August 26, 2025, has been uploaded to the Town's website at https://www.merrillville.in.gov/government/town_council/town_council_meetings.php.

**CONSENT AGENDA:**
- Accounts Payable Register Voucher Approval for August 26, 2025
- Approval of Town Council Meeting Minutes August 12, 2025

**It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Vice-President Neal to approve the consent agenda.**

**Upon a voice vote, the motion passed. The consent agenda was approved.**

**SPECIAL ORDERS**: *NONE*

**BZA & LARGE GATHERING ACTIONS***: NONE*

**PRESENTATION OF DECLARATIONS**: *NONE*

**STANDING & SPECIAL COMMITTEES REPORTS:**

***BUDGET & FINANCE*—NEAL**— Vice-President Neal reported that a meeting was held before the counci meeting. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday September 3, 2025

***STREET DEPARTMENT & PARK MAINTENANCE - UZELAC***– Councilor Uzelac was absent.

***COUNCIL AFFAIRS—PETTIT***—Councilor Pettit had nothing to report.

***PERSONNEL COMMITTEE- HARDAWAY***- Councilor Hardaway reported that the following positions are available for hire:

- Community Event Planner – Parks Department
- Recreation Attendant – Parks Department
- Administrative Assistant – Clerk-Treasurer's Office

If you meet the qualifications, you can apply. The application and job descriptions are available for download on the website https://www.merrillville.in.gov/departments/human_resources.php. and the Town of Merrillville app: The postings will be closed on September 9, 2025. Director Gerry McCartney will explain the two Parks Department's positions.

***ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS- UZELAC*** – Councilor Uzelac was absent.

***PUBLIC SAFETY—HARDAWAY***—Councilor Hardaway had nothing to report.

***ELECTIONS, PUBLIC RELATIONS, & TOWN BEAUTIFICATION - NEAL-*** Vice-President Neal had nothing to report.

***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT-PETTIT*** – Councilor Pettit reported that a Redevelopment Commission (RDC) meeting was held before the council meeting to pass the Consent Agenda.

Based on a discussion with Attorney Svetanoff, a meeting needs to be held regarding the closing on the six-acre property on Colorado Street for the Fire Station. Once Attorney Svetanoff receives the settlement statement, a meeting can occur next week. The allocation must be approved in a public meeting. After the allocation is approved, Director Angie Chilcott and Administrative Assistant Joanna Guardiola will collaborate with Clerk-Treasurer Eric January's Office to wire the money to Community Title.

By leave of President Bella, Councilor Pettit gave a brief overview of the renovation for the new hotel Sleep Inn, formerly known as Norwood Inn and Suites.

Upon a question from President Bella regarding hotel safety concerns. Chief Nuses responded that, due to the ordinance being in place, his department can now address hotel violators and excessive calls in the Town of Merrillville.

***UTILITY LIAISON –CHANDLER-FELTON*** – Councilor Chandler-Felton had nothing to report.

***PARKS AND DEAN & BARBARA WHITE COMMUNITY CENTER - PETTIT*** – Councilor Pettit reported that the next monthly meeting will be held at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center on Thursday, August 28th at 5.00 p.m.

Councilor Pettit also stated that he would meet with Director Gerry McCartney to go over the agenda items such as flooring and sponsorships.

**SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

***ABANDONED-BLIGHTED PROPERTIES - HAYNES-EDWARDS & CHANDLER-FELTON***– Councilor Haynes-Edwards had nothing to report.

***SPECIAL TOWN PROJECTS - NEAL*** – Vice-President Neal reported that the committee is planning the following fall events for the Town of Merrillville:

- Trunk or Treat
- Christmas Tree Lighting

***SEMI-QUINCENTENNIAL COMMITTEE - HAYNES-EDWARDS*** – Councilor Haynes-Edwards reported that residents have started emailing her regarding interest in serving on the semi-quincentennial committee. If anyone is interested in serving on the committee, you can contact Councilor Haynes-Edwards at shedwards@merrillville.in.gov

**DEPARTMENT & COMMISSION REPORTS:**

***STORMWATER MANAGEMENT RESOURCES-LAKE*** – Director Matthew Lake was absent.

***NORTHERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION-HARDAWAY*** – Councilor Hardaway stated that she will give a report at the next Town Council Meeting.

***LAKE COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT-NEAL***– Vice-President Neal reported on the following:

- **Household Hazardous Waste Collection** – The next Household Hazardous Waste Collection is on Saturday, September 20th, at Hammond Public Works. There will only be one more collection this year in October. Information on both collections will be announced at the next Town Council Meeting.

- **Next Meeting** – The next meeting is on September 18, 2025

***THE SHARED ETHICS ENTITY-HARDAWAY*** – Councilor Hardway had nothing to report.

***FIRE TERRITORY BOARD - NEAL & HARDAWAY*** – Councilor Hardaway reported that a meeting was held earlier in the day to approve the bids sent out by Core Construction for the fire station. The groundbreaking is anticipated to commence in March 2026.

***CLERK-TREASURER OFFICE - JANUARY*** – Clerk-Treasurer Eric January reported on the following for June:

- **Collections -** (Comprise of Court, Fire Department, General Fund, Obligated & Non-Obligated Funds, Police Department, RDA, Stormwater, etc. Funds) $41,148,759.19.
- **Charges for Services** – The amount is $1,774,262.15.
- **Charges for Fines, Forfeitures, and Fees** – The amount is $283.784.46.
- **Licensing and Permits** – The amount is $973,139.45.
- **Cash Inflow** – The amount is $16,274,442,93.
- **Taxes and Inter-Governmental Transfers** – The amount is $21,843,130.20.
- **Outflows** – The amount is $37,734,192,41. The bulk of this amount was personnel services, which is close to 50% in dollars. The amount is $17,265,700.92.
- **Debt Service** – The amount is 4,508,200.46.
- **Fund Balance** – There was an increase in fund balance of $3,414,566.78.
- **Budget 2025** – This year's budget for the period ending June 30th was slightly over by 2.33%,
- **Cash Balance** – The cash balance amount is $50,655,435.00.

Clerk-Treasurer Eric January also stated that the Town is paying attention to how the money is spent.

***SSCVA – DEANN PATENA*** - No Report

**DEPARTMENT REPORTS/ TOWN MANAGER:**

**Director Gerry McCartney – Parks Department**
Director McCartney reported on the following:

- **Adult and Youth Volleyball** – Registration is open now through September 2nd. The league plays on Friday Nights from September 12th through November 14th.
- **Basketball Skills Camp** – The camp, which is on Mondays and Thursdays, started on August 25th.
- **Line Dancing** – The class is still on Wednesday.
- **Paint and Sip (Non-Alcoholic)** – The event will be held on Friday, August 29th.
- **Heel Dancing Class** – The heel dancing class will be every Wednesday.
- **Positions for Hire –** The Recreation Attendant is the Front Desk Attendant position that was open. We changed the name because the area of coverage expanded to utilize more of the facility. The Community Event Manager position is a Project Manager who will work on different events and activities that are held at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center to generate revenue. The Parks Department would oversee running the events and activities.

**Chief Nuses– Police Department**
Chief Nuses reported that the department will be cracking down on all hotels, group homes, and rehabilitation centers that are out of control in the Town of Merrillville. The two-person traffic unit will be going live on September 15th. This unit will focus on all areas of traffic and accidents. Chief Nuses also announced that the

Women's Self-Defense class will be on October 8th at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 pm.

**Director Shine – Building and Planning**
Director Sheila Shine was absent.

**Director King - Street Department**
Director Steve King reported on the following:

**Asphalt Patching** – Asphalt patching is occurring on bad spots on 73rd Avenue, Whitcomb Street, and Merrillville Road
**Park Maintenance** – The department has cleared the bike path of hanging tree branches.
**Town Beatification** – The department is continuing to work with the plants until the planting season ends.
**Branch Pick-Up** – August 29th is the last day to set out branches in the Town of Merrillville. At that time, the department will go throughout the Town to pick up the branches. Once the branches are picked up from that area, the information will be posted on the website to let residents know that area is finished.

**Administrative and Building Manager Linda Rosas– Town Administration**
Administrative and Building Manager Linda Rosas reported on the following:

- **Monthly Reports** – Administrative and Building Manager Rosas reported that the two reports, including the staff report, have been given to the council members and Clerk-Treasurer Eric January.

- **Bus Passes** – The Town still has plenty of bus passes left. Merrillville residents 65 and older can receive a 30-day bus pass. You can pick up the bus pass at Town Administration by showing proof of age and residency. The bus pass is for riding the Gary Public Transportation bus that goes up and down Broadway. Town Administration will release fifty bus passes each month. This information is in the mymerrillville app as well as on the website.

- **Fire Buddies** – Fire Buddies will be having their first fundraiser. A scavenger hunt for ages 21 and up on October 25th at the Slovak Club. More information will be forthcoming. Councilor Pettit requested that the artwork be sent to him, the Street Department, and Director Shine to be uploaded to the electronic message boards.

**GENERAL ORDERS**

***A.* Ordinances: (Discussion and Roll Call Vote): *NONE***

**Zoning**: (Motion to adopt or reject; confer IC 36-5-2-10(d)

**First Reading: Ordinance (Discussion and Roll Call Vote):**

1. **Ordinance 25-25 (Discussion & Roll Call Vote)**
   An Ordinance of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County. Indiana, Appropriating Additional Monies Within the Fire Protection Territory Operating and Cumulative Fire Equipment Funds for the Year 2025 Not Included in the Current Budget.

**ORDINANCE NO: 2025-25**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE, LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA APPROPRIATING ADDITIONAL MONIES WITHIN THE FIRE PROTECTION TERRITORY OPERATING AND CUMULATIVE FIRE EQUIPMENT FUNDS FOR THE YEAR 2025 NOT INCLUDED IN THE CURRENT BUDGET**

**WHEREAS,** it has been determined that it is now necessary to appropriate more money than was originally appropriated in the annual budget in the 2025 Fire Protection Territory Operating and Cumulative Fire Equipment Funds, and

**WHEREAS,** the Town Council is aware that the 2025 Fire Protection Territory Operating and Cumulative Fire Equipment Funds currently holds a sufficient cash balance to support the requested additional appropriation, and

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED,** by the Town Council of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana, that there is hereby provided and ordered for the expenses of the taxing unit, the following additional sums of money are appropriated out of the funds named and for the purposes specified, subject to laws governing the same:

| Fund Name: | Amount Requested: | Amount Approved by Fiscal Body: |
|---|---|---|
| **Merr. Fire Territory (8604)** | | |
| 2243010187/Overtime | $100,000.00 | $100,000.00 |
| 2243010361/Repair Parts | $ 50,000.00 | $ 50,000.00 |
| 2243010394/Contractual Services | $ 50,000.00 | $ 50,000.00 |
| **Cumulative Fire Equipment (8692)** | | |
| 4444010431/Equipment | $ 50,000.00 | $ 50,000.00 |

**DULY ADOPTED AND ORDAINED THIS _____DAY OF_____2025 BY THE TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE TOWN COUNCIL, LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA.**

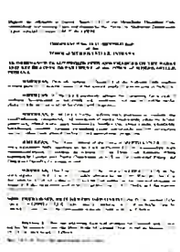
**TOWN COUNCIL of the TOWN of MERRILLVILLE, INDIANA**

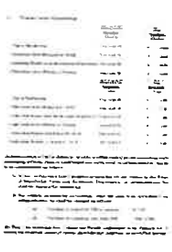
**It was moved by Vice-President Neal and seconded by Councilor Haynes-Edwards to approve Ordinance 25-25.**

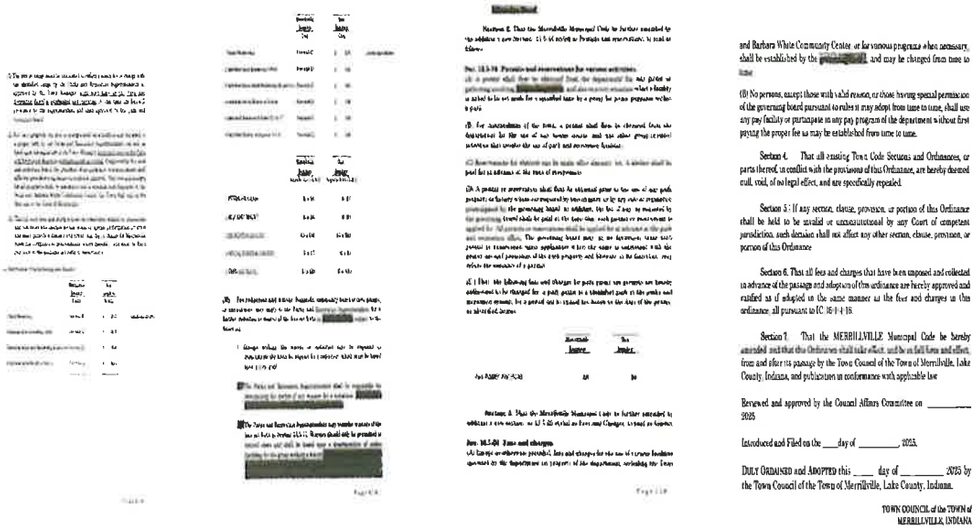
**Upon a roll call vote, there were six affirmatives and no negatives. Councilors Rhonda Neal, Shauna Haynes-Edwards, Leona Chandler-Felton, Shawn Pettit, Keesha Hardaway, and Rick Bella voted in the affirmative. There were no negatives. The motion passed. The ordinance was approved on first reading.**

**Second Reading:** (Discussion, Public Comments Only If Required & Roll Call Vote):

1. **Ordinance 25-17 (Discussion & Roll Call Vote)**
   An Ordinance To Authorize Fees and Charges of the Parks and Recreation Department of the Town of Merrillville, Indiana.



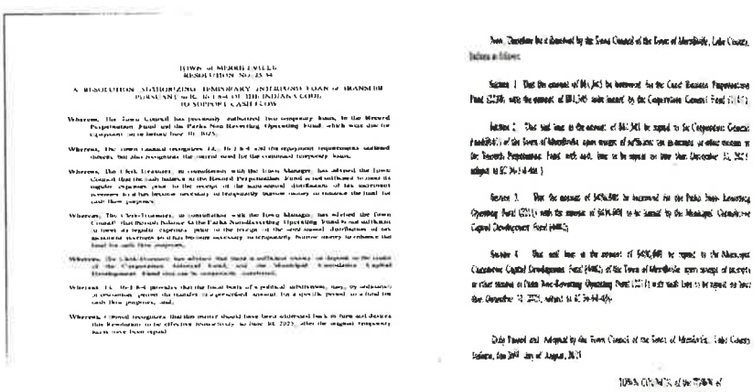


**It was moved by Councilor Chandler-Felton and seconded by Councilor Haynes-Edwards to approve Ordinance 25-17.**

**Upon a roll call vote, there were six affirmatives and no negatives. Councilors Rhonda Neal, Shauna Haynes-Edwards, Leona Chandler-Felton, Shawn Pettit, Keesha Hardaway, and Rick Bella voted in the affirmative. There were no negatives. The motion passed. The ordinance was approved on second and final reading.**

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

1. **<u>Resolution 25-34 (Discussion & Voice Vote)</u>**
   A Resolution Authorizing Temporary Interfund Loan Or Transfer Pursuant To I.C. 36-1-8-4 Of The Indiana Code To Support Cash Flow



**It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Councilor Chandler-Felton to approve Resolution 25-34.**

Clerk-Treasurer Eric January commented that he is concerned regarding approving Temporary Interfund Loans for the Town Court when the revenue stream from court cases is too small to repay back to loan.

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

**OLD BUSINESS :**
***NONE***

**NEW BUSINESS:**
***NONE***

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Council President announced the following:

- Town Council Meeting September 9th at 6:30 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Having completed all items on the agenda, the Town Council President announced the meeting had adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

***Rick Bella, Town Council President***

***Eric O. January, Clerk-Treasurer***

**Respectfully Submitted By Angela Lewi**