Town Council of Merrillville
7820 Broadway Ave - Merrillville, IN 46410
Town Council Meeting Minutes of the Regular Meeting of
November 11, 2025, 6:32 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: President Rick Bella called the meeting to order at 6:32 P.M.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag was led by President Rick Bella.

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, Margaret Uzelac, Shawn Pettit, Keesha Hardaway, and Rick Bella. Clerk-Treasurer Eric January was present to memorialize the proceedings. A quorum was attained.

PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, AND REMONSTRATIONS:

- **F.O.P / Town of Merrillville Collective Bargaining Agreement Approval:**

  President Bella highlighted the following items in the agreement:
  - Officers will receive a 10% annual increase beginning in January of 2026
  - Longevity pay will increase from $100.00 to $200.00 per year of service starting after the fifth year.
  - Special pay increase for K-9 Instructors, Field Training Officers, Riot Teams, and other specialties will increase to $750.00 per specialty.
  - The council will approve the take-home vehicle policy as prescribed by Town of Merrillville Police Chief Nuses in an earlier directive.

  It was moved by Councilor Hardaway and seconded by Councilor Uzelac to approve the Town of Merrillville Collective Bargaining Agreement.

  Upon a roll call vote, there were seven affirmatives and no negatives. Councilors Rhonda Neal, Shauna Hayes-Edwards, Leona Chandler-Felton, Margaret Uzelac, Shawn Pettit, Keesha Hardaway, and Rick Bella voted in the affirmative. There were no negatives. The motion passed. The Town of Merrillville Collective Bargaining Agreement was approved.

- **F.O.P / Contract Signing**:
  Representatives from the F.O.P., President Bella, Vice-President Neal, Police Chief Nuses, and Town Attorney Joseph C. Svetanoff signed the agreement.

  Town Manager Griffith gave the history of policing in the United States and Indiana.

  President of F.O.P., Ian Davidson-Dugan, thanked the council for supporting the Town of Merrillville Police Officers with the most pro police agreement in Lake County, Indiana, and even in the State of Indiana.

  Police Chief Nuses commented on the agreement and thanked the council.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:
Two comments were made at the meeting. A copy of the video from the Town Council Meeting held on November 11, 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 November 11th, 2025
- Approval of Town Council Meeting Minutes October 28th, 2025

It was moved by Councilor Uzelac 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*:*

Petitioner: Tuan A Duong
Owner: DG Properties
Request: Special Exception Approval
Purpose: To Allow a Dine in Restaurant
Location: 7219 Taft Street
Zoning: C-2 Community Commercial Zoning District

Planning and Building Director Sheila Shine reported that the ABZA was approved.

The Petitioner, Tuan Duong, explained the business.

Upon a question from Councilor Pettit regarding remonstrators, Director Sheila Shine responded that there were none. The vote for approval was 5-0.

Upon a question from Councilor Pettit regarding the former restaurant that closed, Director Sheila Shine responded that the property was formerly Pizza Hut; now Jerk to Go is located on the property.

Councilor Pettit responded that it was the former Merrillville location of Strack & Van Til.

Director Shine responded that Luna Tea was the former owner of Petitioner's Duong location.

It was moved by Councilor Chandler-Felton and seconded by Councilor Uzelac to approve the BZA Special Exceptions Approval.

Upon a roll call vote, there were seven affirmatives and no negatives. Councilors Rhonda Neal, Shauna Haynes-Edwards, Leona Chandler-Felton, Margaret Uzelac, Shawn Pettit, Keesha Hardaway, and Rick Bella voted in the affirmative. The motion passed. The BZA special exception was approved.

Petitioner: Iyad Ibrahim
Owner: Broadway 8000 LLC
Request: Special Exception Approval
Purpose: To Allow a Children's Indoor Playground
Location: 8000 Broadway
Zoning: C-2 Community Commercial Zoning District

Planning and Building Director Sheila Shine reported that the ABZA was approved.

The Petitioner, Iyad Ibrahim, explained the business. He also stated that Merrillville residents will receive a 20% discount.

Director Shine informed the council that there were no remonstrators; however, the Board of Zoning had imposed a condition that a Merrillville Police Officer must be on duty 100% of the time.

Upon a question from President Bella regarding how this condition will be monitored, Police Chief Nuses explained the process and that he would meet with the Petitioner to ensure that this business is a safe zone for children.

Councilor Pettit informed the council that he, Director Angie Chilcott, and Director Sheila Shine met with the Petitioner's brother and discussed these concerns.

Upon a question from Councilor Pettit regarding the age limit, the Petitioner responded that everyone is welcome; however, the activities are for zero to twenty-four months and twenty-four months to nine years old.

Upon a question from Councilor Pettit regarding the council imposing an age limit condition, Town Attorney Svetanoff responded that the council can impose any kind of condition.

Councilor Pettit informed the Petitioner that a Certificate of Occupancy will not be issued until the parking lot expansion, lights, and other areas of concern are completed.

It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Councilor Haynes-Edwards to approve the BZA Special Exceptions Approval, with an age limit of 12 years old or younger, the hiring of a Merrillville Police Officer, and a six-month review.

Upon a question from President Bella regarding the age limit imposed by the council affecting the business's success, the Petitioner responded that he expected the age limit to be fourteen and under.

The Petitioner stated that the business would accept the age limit imposed by the council.

Clerk-Treasurer Eric January voiced his concerns regarding restricting teenagers over the age of fourteen in the Town of Merrillville.

Director Sheila Shine informed the council that the equipment is for children.

President Bella informed the council that the age limit can be accessed at the six-month review.

Upon a roll call vote, there were seven affirmatives and no negatives. Councilors Rhonda Neal, Shauna Haynes-Edwards, Leona Chandler-Felton, Margaret Uzelac, Shawn Pettit, Keesha Hardaway, and Rick Bella voted in the affirmative. The motion passed. The BZA special exception was approved with a limit of 12 years old or under, hiring of a Merrillville Police Officer, and a six-month review.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

***BUDGET & FINANCE*—NEAL**— Vice President Neal had nothing to report.

STREET DEPARTMENT & PARK MAINTENANCE - UZELAC– Councilor Uzelac reported on the following:

- **Snowstorm –** The Street Department has been working since 2:30 a.m. Monday morning to kee up with the plowing. The snowplows were hindered by cars parked on the streets.

President Bella informed the council and audience that Police Chief Nuses put out a notice on all the Town's social media accounts and the mymerrillville app regarding the towing of vehicles.

President Bella also informed the council that the Street Department was busy plowing for sixteen hours straight and will continue plowing tomorrow, curb to curb, and cleanup work. Leaf Vac will continue after the snow melts.

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

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE- HARDAWAY- Councilor Hardaway had nothing to report.

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS- UZELAC – Councilor Uzelac had nothing to report.

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 had nothing to report.

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

PARKS AND DEAN & BARBARA WHITE COMMUNITY CENTER - PETTIT – Councilor Pettit had nothing to report.

SPECIAL COMMITTEES

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

SPECIAL TOWN PROJECTS – HAYNES-EDWARDS – Councilor Haynes-Edwards had nothing to report.

DEPARTMENT & COMMISSION REPORTS:

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

NORTHERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION-HARDAWAY – Councilor Hardaway had nothing to report.

LAKE COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT-NEAL– Vice President Neal had nothing to report.

THE SHARED ETHICS ENTITY-HARDAWAY – Councilor Hardway reported that the Ethics Summit was well attended and a success. The panelists were Mayors from Lake and Porter Counties. She will report numbers at the next council meeting.

FIRE TERRITORY BOARD - NEAL & HARDAWAY – Vice President Neal and Councilor Hardaway had nothing to report.

CLERK-TREASURER OFFICE - JANUARY – Clerk-Treasurer Eric had nothing to report.

SSCVA – DEANN PATENA - No Report

DEPARTMENT REPORTS/ TOWN MANAGER:

Director Jerry McCartney – Parks and Recreation Department
Director McCartney was absent.

Chief Nuses– Police Department
Police Chief Nuses had nothing further to add to his report.

Director Shine – Building and Planning
Director Sheila Shine had nothing further to report.

Director King - Street Department
Director Steve King was absent.

Town Manager Griffin – Town Administration
Town Manager Griffin reported on the following:

- **Monthly Reports** – Town Manager Griffin reported that his Town Manager Report has been given to the council members and Clerk-Treasurer Eric January.

GENERAL ORDERS

Ordinances: (Discussion and Roll Call Vote):

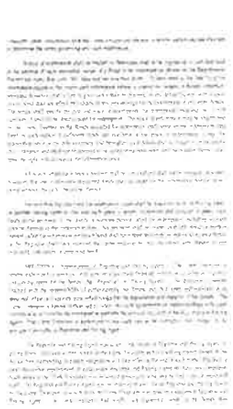
Zoning: (Motion to adopt or reject; confer IC 36-5-2-10(d): ***NONE***

First Reading: Ordinance (Discussion and Roll Call Vote)**: *NONE***

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

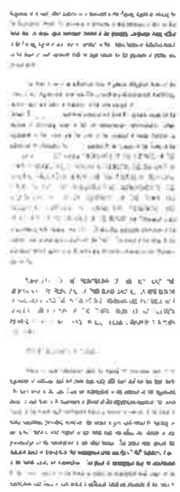
Ordinance 25-33 (Discussion & Roll Call Vote)
Ordinance Of The Town Of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana, Authorizing The Issuance Of General Obligation Bonds For The Purpose Of Providing Funds To Pay For Infrastructure Improvements, The Acquisition Of Certain Equipment Of The Town, And Incidental Expenses In Connection Therewith, And On Account Of The Issuance Of The Bonds.



Town Council Meeting Minutes 11/11/25





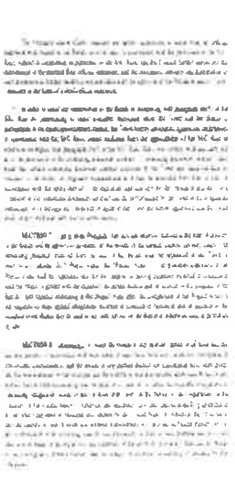


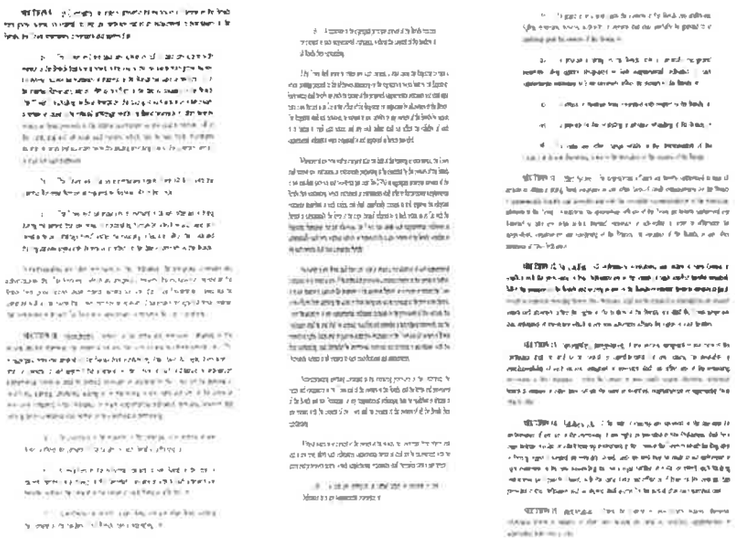












SECTION 16. Effectiveness. This Ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its adoption and the procedures required by law. Upon payment in full of the principal and interest respecting the Bonds authorized hereby or upon deposit of an amount sufficient to pay when due such amounts in accord with the defeasance provisions herein, all pledges, covenants and other rights granted by this ordinance shall cease.

ALL OF WHICH IS PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS __ DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2025, BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE, LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA.

TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE, LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA, TOWN COUNCIL

Exhibit A

Project Description

The Project shall consist of the payment of (a) improvements to the Town Hall and Police Offices, (b) Town Hall roof improvements, (c) gateway signs and park signs, (d) cameras as well as other security equipment, (e) vehicles for the Parks department and planning director, (f) park monitors and software, (g) other equipment and maintenance items as determined by the Town and (h) costs related to the issuance of the Bonds.

Town Manager Griffin explained Ordinance 25-33.

President Bella informed the council and audience of the absence of Department Heads due to the Veterans Day holiday.

It was moved by Councilor Pettit and seconded by Vice President Neal to approve on second and final reading Ordinance 25-33.

Upon a question regarding public comments, by leave of President Bella, Town Manager Griffith responded that there are no statutory requirements.

Upon a roll call vote, there were seven affirmatives and no negatives. Councilors Rhonda Neal, Shauna Hayes-Edwards, Leona Chandler-Felton, Margaret Uzelac, 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.

A. **Resolutions (Discussion and Voice Vote):** ***NONE***

OLD BUSINESS: ***NONE***

NEW BUSINESS: ***NONE***

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Town Council President announced the following:

- Town Council Meeting November 25th at 6:30 p.m.
- RDC Meeting November 25th at 6:00 p.m.
- Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony, December 6th at D&BWCC
- Plan Commission Meeting November 19th
- Council Workshop Meeting November 19th

ADJOURNMENT:
Having completed all items on the agenda, the Town Council President announced the meeting had adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Rick Bella

Rick Bella, Town Council President

Eric J

Eric O. January, Clerk-Treasurer

Respectfully Submitted By Angela Lewis