Town Council of Merrillville
7820 Broadway Ave - Merrillville, IN 46410
Town Council Meeting Minutes of the Regular Meeting of
July 23, 2024 - 6:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: Clerk-Treasurer Eric January called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

Clerk-Treasurer Eric January announced that the present council members need to elect a President Pro Tempore in the absence of President Rick Bella and Vice-President Rhonda Neal.

It was moved by Councilor Uzelac and seconded by Councilor Hardway to elect Councilor Pettit as the President Pro Tempore.

Upon a voice vote, the motion passed. Councilor Pettit was elected President Pro Tempore for this meeting.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag was led by President Pro Tempore Pettit.

INVOCATION/MOMENT OF SILENCE: A brief invocation was given, along with a moment of silence, by Pastor Robert Szoke of Impact Church.

ROLL CALL of COUNCIL – Present at the meeting were Councilors Leona Chandler-Felton, Margaret Uzelac, Kesha Hardaway, and Shawn Pettit. Clerk-Treasurer Eric January was present to memorialize the proceedings. A quorum was attained.

PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, AND REMONSTRATIONS

- **Parade Winners Presentations**

  By the leave of President Pro Tempore Pettit, Chas Reilly presented the winners of the Town of Merrillville July 4th Parade. The community online voting results were as follows:

  - 1st Place – 107.3 VIP
  - 2nd Place – 219 Ride'N Wranglers
  - 3rd Place – Danny The Groomer

  Each winner will be given a Certificate of Recognition on behalf of the Town of Merrillville. President Pro Tempore Pettit congratulated the winners and thanked the committee.

- **Employee of the Month – July**

  Town Manager Michael Griffin, Honorable Judge Eugene Velazco, and Town Court Administrative Assistant Chanda Flowers presented to the council and audience Town Court Bailiffs Mr. Jerry McCollum and Mr. Sherman Wilder as July's Employees of the Month for the Town of Merrillville. Mr. McCollum and Mr. Wilder received certificates of recognition and gift cards on behalf of the Town of Merrillville. Town Court Administrative Assistant Flowers elaborated on Mr. McCollum's and Mr. Wilders's exemplary qualities as employees of the Merrillville Town Court.

PUBLIC HEARING
NONE

CONSENT AGENDA

- Accts. Payable Register Voucher Approval for July 23rd, 2024
- AP Register Summary for ARP Purchases for July 23rd, 2024
- Approval of Town Council Meeting Minutes of July 9th, 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.

PRESENTATION of DECLARATIONS

NONE

STANDING & SPECIAL COMMITTEES REPORTS

BUDGET & FINANCE - NEAL – Councilor Neal was absent from the meeting.

Upon a question from President Pro Tempore Pettit regarding a report, Financial Advisor Hudson responded there was nothing to report.

COUNCIL AFFAIRS- PETTIT – President Pro Tempore Pettit had nothing to report.

STREET DEPARTMENT- UZELAC– Councilor Uzelac reported that Fred from the Chapel Hill Homeowners Association called regarding the following:

- Sidewalks
- Street Lights
- Speed Humps
- Other Concerns in Chapel Hill

Councilor Uzelac also reported that Director King would be contacting Fred and did install a sign in Chapel Hill warning trucks not to drive through Chapel Hill. The Street Department has also installed speed humps in her Ward and will be installing the speed humps in Chapel Hill.

Upon a question from President Pro Tempore Pettit regarding the paving list for all seven Wards and a follow-up workshop, Town Manager Griffin responded that a follow-up workshop would be scheduled to discuss the matter.

ELECTIONS, PUBLIC RELATIONS, & TOWN BEAUTIFICATION - NEAL- Councilor Neal was absent from the meeting.

Upon a question from President Pro Tempore Pettit regarding a report from the committee, Councilor Chandler-Felton responded that she had nothing to report.

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS- PETTIT – President Pro Tempore Pettit had nothing to report.

PERSONNEL POLICY & EMPLOYEE BENEFITS – HARDAWAY- Councilor Hardaway reported that there's a job posting for a Scheduling Administrator at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center. Those interested in applying can go to www.merrillville.in.gov to apply.

Upon a question from Councilor Hardaway regarding the Town of Merrillville Compensation Study by Baker & Tilly, Town Manager Griffin responded that the compensation study is underway with Human Resources Director Kathy Pettit gathering the personnel data including employees' exit data.

PUBLIC SAFETY- HARDWAY- Councilor Hardaway reported that she will defer to Chief Nuses' report under the Department and Commission Reports.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT-PETTIT – President Pro Tempore Pettit has nothing to report.

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

SPECIAL COMMITTEES

ABANDONED-BLIGHTED PROPERTIES - HAYNES-EDWARDS & CHANDLER-FELTON– Councilor Hayes-Edwards was absent from the meeting.

President Pro Tempore Pettit deferred to Town Manager Griffin for the report.

Town Manager Griffin reported that the Town of Merrillville had three standing hearings before the Hearing Authority for unsafe buildings and unsafe premises. He also reported that the process has started for acquiring new staff members and how this process should work.

Town Manager Griffin also reported that there will be two workshops where the Administrative Law Judge/Hearing Officer for the Unsafe Building Authority Richard (Rick) Gikas, Esq will present the information.

- First Workshop - Code Enforcement under the new terms of the new nuisance amendments.
- Second Workshop – Code Enforcement under the terms of the unsafe building matter.

President Pro Tempore Pettit thanked Town Manager Griffin, Director Steve King of the Street Department, Attorney Svetanoff, and Joe Berger for all of their work on abandoned and blighted property issues.

President Pro Tempore Pettit also reported there's another property located at 6927 Delaware Place that is in deplorable condition.

SEMI-QUINCENTENN IAL COMMITTEE - HAYNES-EDWARDS – Councilor Haynes-Edwards was absent from the meeting.

Town Manager Griffin reported that the state has already established a committee to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and encourage every county and local unit of government to have a committee.

Town Manager Griffin also reported that he is on task to obtain the logo that the United States Archives have developed for the Semi-quincentennial. He will be discussing with President Bella that the council should establish under Robert's Rules a rule that will make this a template.

SPECIAL TOWN PROJECTS - NEAL – Councilor Neal was absent from the meeting.

Upon a question from President Pro Tempore Pettit regarding the committee report, Councilor Chandler-Felton responded she had nothing to report.

President Pro Tempore Pettit went back to the Election, Public Relations, and Town Beautification Committee listed on the agenda.

> Upon a question from President Pro Tempore Pettit regarding signage for the Town of Merrillville and Dean & Barbara White Community Center, Director King responded that a meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 29th at 3:00 p.m.

DEAN & BARABAR COMMITTEE - PETTIT – President Pro Tempore Pettit reported that a committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 25th at 5:00 p.m. at Town Hall to discuss the HVAC system and staffing.

DEPARTMENT & COMMISSION REPORTS

LAKE COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT-NEAL– Councilor Neal was absent from the meeting.

NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION-HARDAWAY – Councilor Hardaway reported that the next meeting will be on September 19th.

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

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

FIRE TERRITORY BOARD - NEAL & HARDAWAY – Councilor Hardaway had nothing to report.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS/ TOWN MANAGER

Interim Assistant Director Roberts – Parks and Recreation
Interim Assistant Director Roberts reported on the following updates at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center:

- The Town of Merrillville Job Fair is on July 24th at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center from 11:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m.
- Two new employees have been hired at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center. The Community Center is looking to hire one more.
- Interim Assistant Director Roberts is looking to add a couple of programs to the Dean and Barbara Community Center a Boot Camp Fitness and Yoga training.

Chief Nuses – Police Department
Chief Nuses reported the unofficial numbers for July 2024:

- Calls for Service – approximately 2.000 calls

The remaining numbers will be reported at the next council meeting.

Chief Nuses also reported that there has been an uptick in nonsense calls in Turkey Creek. A police presence has been increased in Turkey Creek due to vandalism and breaking into cars by two or three different groups of kids. The children's ages range from 7 to 17. The children were taken home to their parents.

Chief Nuses reported that Merrillville's Officer Osborne part of the Lake County Drug Task Force was involved in another drug raid on the 2500 block of West 65th Avenue. The Women's Self-Defense Seminar will be held on August 22, 2024, from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center. Residents interested in the training can register via social media. There will be a Quick Response Code (QR Code) to scan and space is limited.

Chief Nuses reported that the National Night Out is coming up on August 6, 2024, from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. This is an opportunity for the community to come out to meet with the Police Officers and Elected Officials.

Director Shine - Building and Planning
Director Shine was absent from the meeting.

Director King – Street Department
Director King updated the council on the following projects:

- Demolition at 6933/6935 Broadway - The buildings are down and the site has been backfilled. The grading and seeding still need to be done at the location.

- Summer Maintenance – We are mowing Town properties and other properties reported to us by Code Enforcement. The blighted properties mowing process is being hindered due to parked cars, pets, and people on the property. The department is going to stop mowing these properties.
- Trash Pickup – We have been picking up furniture, mattresses, and syringes. The syringes pose a safety concern for the Street Department trash pickup staff.
- Branch Pickup – This is ongoing due to the weather.
- Crack Ceiling – We will be doing a crack ceiling at Madison Meadow this week.
- Speed Humps – Speed Humps are being installed in Chapel Hill Farms, 85th Avenue, and Marshall on Saturday, July 27th.
- Chapel Hill Farm Requests – The street lights request requires a petition that must go to the residents. The request for sidewalks will be addressed. We haven't done any concrete work because of other needs of the residents in the Town of Merrillville.
- Pruzin Park – Director King reached out to Mike Neal regarding the overgrowth of vegetation on the boardwalk at Pruzin Park. His department will work with Mr. Neal.

Upon a question from Councilor Hardaway regarding quotes for the Boardwalk at Pruzin Park, Director King responded he would get together with the Building Inspector Dan Brown regarding the quotes for repair.

Upon a question from President Pro Tempore regarding the installation of new rumble strips, stop signs and warning signs, Director King responded that the rumble strips have been refreshed and a new illuminating stop sign was installed and two installed at 68th and Madison.

Councilor Uzelac thanked Director King and his staff for the removal of a huge tree that fell. The tree was blocking the road and sidewalk.

Upon a question from President Pro Tempore Pettit regarding people moving out of units at 73rd and Whitcomb, but leaving furniture, carpet, and debris on the street, Director King responded that Waste Management gives the Town of Merrillville eight free dumpsters a year for this type of trash. This is the month of July and the Town is already on the eight dumpsters. We will have to pay Waste Management for any additional dumpsters.

Clerk-Treasurer Eric January – Office of the Clerk-Treasurer
Clerk-Treasurer Eric January had nothing to report.

Town Manager Griffin – Town Administration
Town Manager Griffin reported that a written report was given to the council members and Clerk-Treasurer Eric January.

GENERAL ORDERS

A. Ordinances:

First Reading: (Discussion and Roll Call Vote)

1. **Ordinance 24-27 (Discussion and Roll Call Vote)**
   An Ordinance Of The Town Of Merrillville Indiana, Providing That The Zoning Ordinances Town Of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana Be Amended By Changing The Established M-1. Limited Industrial Zoning District Classification To A Planned Unit Development Zoning District Classification (Phase 6) And Amending Phases 5 And 7.

-This Section Left Blank-

ORDINANCE NO. 24-27

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 M-1, LIMITED INDUSTRIAL ZONING DISTRICT CLASSIFICATION TO A PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT ZONING DISTRICT CLASSIFICATION (PHASE 6) AND AMENDING PHASES 5 AND 7

BE IT ORDAINED by the Town Council of the Town of Merrillville:

SECTION 1: That Ordinance No. 03-23, entitled, Merrillville Indiana Zoning Ordinance, and particularly the Zone Maps, which has REPLACED Ordinance No. 78-5 be and the same is hereby amended by changing the following described real estate on the Zone Maps from its established M-1, Limited Industrial Zoning District Classification to a Planned Unit Development Zoning District Classification: (PHASE 6) and amending PHASES 5 and 7.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Phase 6:
Part of the Northeast Quarter of Section 30, Township 35 North, Range 8 West of the Second Principal Meridian more particularly described as follows: Commencing at the Northwest corner of the NE ¼ of said Section 30; thence S 00°02'42" W along the West line of said NE ¼, a distance of 577.67 feet; thence S 05°57'27" E, a distance of 52.08 feet to a point of curve; thence Southeasterly along a curve concave to the East and having a radius of 328.37 feet, an arc distance of 118.08 feet; thence S 28°36'07" E, a distance of 261.10 feet to the point of beginning; thence N61°23'53" E, a distance of 35.00 feet; thence S 72°02'25" E, a distance of 28.00 feet; thence S 89°39'22" E, a distance of 1638.38 feet; thence S 01°46'21" W, a distance of 275.44 feet; thence S 88°07'20" E, a distance of 352.68 feet; thence S 01°52'40" W, a distance of 140.00 feet to the South line of the NE ¼ of the NE ¼ of said Section 30; thence N 88°07'20" W along said South line and the South line of the NW ¼ of the NE ¼, a distance of 1835.23 feet; thence N 28°36'07" W, a distance of 419.57 feet to the point of beginning, containing 15.537 acres, more or less, all in the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Phase 5 and 7 merged into one:
Part of the Southeast Quarter of Section 19, Township 35 North, Range 8 West of the Second Principal Meridian and the Northeast Quarter of Section 30, Township 35 North, Range 8 West of the Second Principal Meridian, more particularly described as follows: Beginning at the SW corner of the SE ¼ of said Section 19; thence N 00°24'05" E, along the West line of said SE ¼, a distance of 477.23 feet; thence S 88°00'19" E, a distance of 631.01 feet; thence S 01°59'41" W, a distance of 125.00 feet; thence S 00°12'04" W, a distance of 121.06 feet; thence S 00°18'00" W, a distance of 591.95 feet; thence S 90°00'00" E, a distance of 370.73 feet; thence S 00°42'28" W, a distance of 221.32 feet; thence S 89°07'28" W, a distance of 990.34 feet; thence N 05°57'27" W,

-This Section Left Blank-

a distance of 41.66 feet to the West line of the NE ¼ of said Section 30; thence N 00°02'42" E along said West line, a distance of 577.67 feet to the point of beginning, and part of the Southeast Quarter of Section 19, Township 35 North, Range 8 West of the Second Principal Meridian and the Northeast Quarter of Section 30, Township 35 North, Range 8 West of the Second Principal Meridian, more particularly described as follows: Commencing at the NW corner of the South 40 acres of the SE ¼ of said Section 19; thence S 00°24'05" W along the West line of said SE ¼, a distance of 185.07 feet; thence S 88°00'19" E, a distance of 631.01 feet; thence S 01°59'41" W, distance of 125.00 feet to the point of beginning; thence S 88°00'19" E, a distance of 316.21 feet; thence S 08°12'15" E, a distance of 386.34 feet; thence S 00°42'28" W, distance of 319.63 feet; thence N 90°00'00" W, a distance of 370.73 feet; thence N 00°18'00" E, a distance of 591.95 feet; thence N 00 12'04" E, a distance of 121.06 fe to the point of beginning, and part of the Northeast Quarter of Section 30, Township 3 North, Range 8 West of the Second Principal Meridian more particularly described as follows: Commencing at the Northwest corner of the NE ¼ of said Section 30; thence 00°02'42" W along the West line of said NE ¼, a distance of 577.67 feet; thence S 05°57'27" E, a distance of 41.66 feet to the point of beginning; thence N 89°07'28" E, distance of 1273.28; thence S 08°44'02" W, a distance of 146.71 feet; thence S 88°13'39" E, a distance of 615.16 feet; thence S 01°46'21" W, a distance of 483.57 fe thence S 88°07'20" E, a distance of 352.68 feet; thence S 01°52'40" W, a distance of 140.00 feet to the South line of the NE ¼ of the NE ¼ of said Section 30; thence N 88°07'20" W along said South line and the South line of the NW ¼ of the NE ¼, a distance of 1835.23 feet; thence N 28°36'07" W, a distance of 680.67 feet to a point of curve; thence Northerly along a curve concave to the East and having a radius of 328.34 feet, an arc distance of 118.08 feet; thence N 05°57'27" W, a distance of 10.4 to the point of beginning, excepting therefrom the following described parcel: Part of Northeast Quarter of Section 30, Township 35 North, Range 8 West of the Second Principal Meridian more particularly described as follows: Commencing at the Northw corner of the NE ¼ of said Section 30; thence S 00°02'42" W along the West line of s NE ¼, a distance of 577.67 feet; thence S 05°57'27" E, a distance of 52.08 feet to a point of curve; thence Southeasterly along a curve concave to the East and having a radius of 328.37 feet, an arc distance of 118.08 feet; thence S 28°36'07" E, a distanc of 261.10 feet to the point of beginning; thence N61°23'53" E, a distance of 35.00 fee thence S 72°02'25" E, a distance of 28.00 feet; thence S 89°39'22" E, a distance of 1638.38 feet; thence S 01°46'21" W, a distance of 275.44 feet; thence S 88°07'20" E distance of 352.68 feet; thence S 01°52'40" W, a distance of 140.00 feet to the South line of the NE ¼ of the NE ¼ of said Section 30; thence N 88°07'20" W along said So line and the South line of the NW ¼ of the NE ¼, a distance of 1835.23 feet; thence I 28°36'07" W, a distance of 419.57 feet to the point of beginning.

THIS LAND IS TO BE DEVELOPED PER PLAN SUBMITTED AND APPROVED BY THE MERRILLVILLE PLAN COMMISSION ON JULY 16, 2024.

SECTION 2: The Town Council now finds that the above Zone Change will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals and general welfare of the community and that the use or value of the area adjacent to the property included in this ordinance will not be affected in a substantially adverse manner and the need for the change in zoning herein arises from a condition peculiar to the property involved and the condition is not due to the general condition of the neighborhood. The Council further finds that the strict application of the terms of the Zoning Ordinance will constitute an unusual and unnecessary hardship if applied to the property herein if this rezoning were not granted and this rezoning does not interfere substantially with a comprehensive plan.

SECTION 3: That the Town Engineer and/or Planning & Building Department hereby authorized and directed upon enactment and approval of this Ordinance, to cause a change to be made on the Zone Maps, to make certain notations in ink thereon and to record the date of passage of this Ordinance.

SECTION 4: Since an emergency exists for the immediate taking effect of this ordinance, the same shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage, or as soon thereafter as otherwise provided by law.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Town Council of the Town of Merrillville, on this ___23rd_____ day of ____July__ 2024.

President Pro Tempore Pettit explained Ordinance 24-27.

By the leave of President Pro Tempore Pettit, Randy Hall President of Luxor Homes gave a brief overview of the information that he presented at the Plan Commission regarding Plan Unit Development (PUD).

It was moved by Councilor Uzelac and seconded by Councilor Chandler-Felton to approve Ordinance 24-27.

Upon a roll call vote, there were four affirmatives and no negatives. Councilors Chandler-Felton, Uzelac, Hardaway, and Pettit voted in the affirmative. There were no negatives. The motion passed. The ordinance was approved.

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

Second Reading:
NONE

B. Resolutions:
NONE

C. BZA & LARGE GATHERING ACTIONS

Petitioner:	Fr. Mikolaj Markiewicz
Owner:	Salvatorian Fathers & Fr. Mikolaj Markiewicz
Request:	Approval for a Large Gathering Permit
Purpose:	Polonia Pilgrimage
Location:	5755 Pennsylvania Street
Times:	August 11. 2024 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

President Pro Tempore Pettit explained the Large Gathering Action.

It was moved by Councilor Uzelac and seconded by Councilor Chandler-Felton to approve the Large Gathering Action.

Upon a question from President Pro Tempore Pettit regarding a voice vote for the Large Gathering Action, Attorney Svetanoff acknowledged that a voice vote is acceptable.

Upon a voice vote, the motion passed. The Large Gathering Action was approved.

Petitioner:	Milos Drljevic
Owner:	Milos Drljevic, Anton Settelle, Jelena Vasic, Kathy Baroevich & Peter Sormaz
Request:	Approval for a Large Gathering Permit
Purpose:	St. Salva Serbfest
Location:	9191 Mississippi Street
Times:	Friday *and* Saturday, August 2nd *and* 3rd from Noon – midnight, and Sunday, Aug 4th Noon – 11:00 p.m.

President Pro Tempore Pettit explained the Large Gathering Action.

Upon a question from President Pro Tempore Pettit regarding public safety being in order, Chief Nuses responded that everything was in order and security was under control regarding this large gathering.

It was moved by Councilor Uzelac and seconded by Councilor Chandler-Felton to approve the Large Gathering Action.

Upon a voice vote, the motion passed. The Large Gathering Action was approved.

OLD BUSINESS
NONE

NEW BUSINESS
NONE

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Bill Williams Merrillville, Indiana voiced his concern regarding the Drug Rehabilitation Facility and the new bike trail by Innsbrook Country Club.

2. Bryon Messer Merrillville, Indiana voiced his concerns regarding the new bike trail, the Firefighters Memorial property, National Night Out, and the demolished property at 6933/6935.

3. Vern Hines Merrillville, Indiana voiced his concerns regarding the lack of council representation at the Lake County Solid Waste Management meeting held on July 18th and updated the council regarding the meeting highlights.

4. Kay Guidon Merrillville, Indiana voiced her concerns regarding stop signs, speeders, and the installation of a wall to reduce noise levels.

5. Chris Holz Merrillville, Indiana voiced his concerns regarding vandalism and security cameras in Stefek Park.

6. Mattie Perry Lightfoot Merrillville, Indiana voiced her concerns regarding pool safety for above-ground swimming pools and a resident moving a mailbox.

7. Gretchen Wrosblewsi Merrillville, Indiana thanked Director Shelia Shine of the Building and Planning Department for all of her help on a nuisance building.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Council President Pro Tempore announced the following:

- Town Council Meeting Tuesday, August 13th at 6:30 p.m.
- Job Fair July 24th from 11:30a.m – 2:30 p.m. at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center
- National Night Out August 6th at Town Hall at 6:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Having completed all items on the agenda, the President Pro Tempore declared the meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Rick Bella, Town Council President

Eric O. January, Clerk-Treasurer

Respectfully Submitted By Angela Lewis