



**Town Council of Merrillville**

**Town Hall**

**7820 Broadway**

**Merrillville, IN 46410**

**Amended - Town Council Meeting Minutes**

**October 10, 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.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Led by Commissioner Ward.

**ROLL CALL** – Present at the meeting were Councilors Richard Hardaway, Jeffrey Minchuk, Shawn Pettit, Leonard White, Rhonda Neal, and Rick Bella. The Madam Clerk-Treasurer Pro Tempore Robyn Johnson was present to memorialize the proceedings. A quorum was attained.

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

**Swearing in New Patrolman Kraig Caridine**

Patrolman Kraig Caridine was sworn in by Judge Velazco.

Chief Nuses gave a brief overview of Patrolman Caridine's qualifications and experience.

***CONSENT AGENDA***

Accts. Payable Register Voucher Approval for October 10, 2023.  
Approval of Town Council Meeting Minutes of September 12, 2023.  
Approval of Budget Meeting minutes of September 21, 2023.  
Approval of ARP Meeting Minutes of September 26, 2023.

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

***STANDING & SPECIAL COMMITTEES REPORTS***

***BUDGET & FINANCE- HARDAWAY*** – Councilor Hardaway reported that he will make a motion for the adoption hearing on the proposed 2024 budget. This is Ordinance 23-24 listed on the agenda under General Orders.

A budget meeting will be held on Thursday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, and Tuesday, October 17<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 am at Cender and Dalton location 233 E. 84<sup>th</sup> Dr. Ste. #103, Merrillville, IN 46410.

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

***STREET DEPARTMENT- MINCHUK*** – Councilor Minchuk reported that the Town's Newsletter was mailed out to the residents and the schedule for leaf collection is listed in the newsletter.

Director King reported that a new five-way stop sign was installed on 86<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merrillville Road.

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

**Trunk or Treat Program**

This event will be held at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center on October 26<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. The information is included in the Town's newsletter and on the website at merrillville.in.gov.

**Tree Lighting and Decorating Contest**

This event will be held at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center on December 1<sup>st</sup> from 5:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. The contest will involve all five elementary schools in Merrillville. The information is included in the Town's newsletter and on the website.

**Signage**

The Town of Merrillville is updating the Gateway signage and looking for input from the residents. The details are listed on the Town's website.

**ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS- WHITE -** Councilor White reported that there is an issue at City Mall with mold. Interim Town Manager Griffin is in contact with the county regarding mold.

**PERSONNEL POLICY & EMPLOYEE BENEFITS – HARDAWAY-** Councilor Hardaway had nothing to report at this time.

**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 was absent.

**ABANDONED -BLIGHTED PROPERTIES-HARDAWAY –** Councilor Hardaway reported that as you ride around Town you see a lot of flags on residents' property, and this is in violation of the Town's ordinance. Chief Nuses will meet with Councilor Hardaway and the Director of Code Enforcement regarding the issue.

Councilor White asked Chief Nuses to look into the number of cars that are on the property with no or expired license plates.

**DEAN & BARBARA WHITE COMMUNITY CENTER-PETTIT –** Councilor Pettit reported that the committee met last week. Individuals who were concerned about the yoga class being canceled attended the meeting to voice their concerns. A meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, October 18<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 pm that will include the committee, Interim Town Manager Griffin, and Financial Advisor Hudson to tackle some of these issues.

Councilor White voiced concerns about the lights being left on at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center at night.

**SPECIAL PROJECTS (F & B TAX, DIVERSITY, 4<sup>TH</sup> of JULY CELEBRATION-HARDAWAY –** Councilor Hardaway reported that the nominations for the Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) have been submitted and the final list of members will be shared with the council. The initial training will be on October 19<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 am until 1: 00 pm. A culture and climate survey developed by Dr. Lackey will be distributed to the Department Head on October 24<sup>th</sup>.

Councilor White requested that Dr. Lackey give the council a report.

**DEPARTMENT & COMMISSION REPORTS**

**LAKE COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT-WHITE –** Councilor White reported that reported that the Solid Waste Management meets by-monthly.

**NORTHERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION-HARDAWAY –** Councilor Hardaway reported that the next meeting is October 19<sup>th</sup> in Portage, Indiana.

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

**Stormwater Ordinance**

The updated ordinance with regulatory changes and limitations on enforcement of things we can't do because of state law changes should be ready by the October 24<sup>th</sup> council meeting.

**Comprehensive Emergency Plan**

He is working with the Fire Department on the flood aspect of the plan to get an update to Senator Dalton.

**Community Block Grant**

The Town of Merrillville received a Community Block Grant from Lake County Economic Development.

Director Lake elaborated on other plans and projects Stormwater is working on for the Town of Merrillville.

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

***FIRE TERRITORY BOARD-MINCHUK*** – Councilor Minchuk reported that no meetings are scheduled at this time.

***DEPARTMENT REPORTS/INTERIM TOWN MANAGER***

**Director Price– Parks Department**

Director Price was absent. Chaz Reilly reported he has met with Director Price on how to enhance Parks and Recreation's website and social media presence. He elaborated on how this will be done to make the site more user-friendly. The October 7<sup>th</sup> Midwest JUCO/ PREP Jamboree that was held at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center was a well-attended event.

**Chief Nuses – Police Department**

Chief Nuses reported the following:

**Traffic Blitz**

The Traffic Blitz is still ongoing in Merrillville. The last one on October 6<sup>th</sup> resulted in 30 traffic stops, 39 traffic tickets were issued with 13 warnings.

**Crime Reporting**

Instead of posting crimes on Facebook Messenger after they have already occurred, please contact 911 or call the Dispatch Center at (219) 660-0001.

**Town PD Talk**

The Town PD Talk will give residents an overview of the Merrillville Police Department. This event will be held on October 26<sup>th</sup> at the Mike Anderson Event Center located in Dean and Barbara White Community Center at 6:00 p.m.

**Director Shine – Building and Planning**

Director Shine reported that the Building and Planning Department continues to issue building permits to businesses. She reminded the resident to be careful with contractors. There is an Asphalt contractor going door to door quoting a price of \$99.00 and issuing a contract, but the agreement states \$99.00 per pound. She advised residents to take the contractor card, but don't sign any paperwork.

**Director King – Street Department**

Director King reported the following:

- The North Barn closed on October 1<sup>st</sup> for the season. Branches can be brought to the facility located at 13 West 73<sup>rd</sup> Avenue.
- The Fall Leaf Collection will start on October 16<sup>th</sup>. The schedule is listed in the newsletter and on the Town's website. If the schedule has to be adjusted because leaves aren't falling, the Street Department will accommodate this adjustment.
- The Department has received two proposals for the Town of Merrillville Traffic Study, and they will be reviewed this week to select a firm.
- 86<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Broadway and Merrillville Road opened on October 6<sup>th</sup>. This was a \$1,500,000.00 project funded locally by the Town of Merrillville.

**Interim Town Manager Griffin**

Interim Town Manager Griffin reported to the Councilors that he submitted a detailed report to them, and Madam Clerk-Treasurer Pro Tempore Robyn Johnson. He will be brief for this meeting; The next staff meeting will be held on Thursday, October 26<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. instead of Wednesday, October 25<sup>th</sup>. In our staff meeting in November, we will be working on a Capital Management Plan for our Capital assets and rolling stock policy with Mr. Jon Peterson. The staff will be briefed on some of the new protocols for capital management.

Councilor White requested a pie chart of all funding each of Wards receive in federal funding. The Interim Town Manager will respond to the request in an alternative report other than the pie chart and share the report with the council members.

**GENERAL ORDERS**

**A. Ordinances**

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

None

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

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

An Ordinance of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana Appropriation Additional Monies Within the Various Fire Protection Territory Fund for the Year 2023 Not Included in the Current Budget.

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

**Ordinance 23-24 (Discussion, Public Comment, and Roll Call Vote)**

An Ordinance of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana Regarding Taxes and Budget for 2024

Financial Advisor Hudson elaborated on why adjustments need to be made to reduce the budget request by \$2,500,000.00 because of revenues coming in at lower than what was expected.

It was moved by Councilor Hardaway and second by Councilor Pettit, to table the ordinance until the next Town Council Meeting on October 24, 2023.

Councilor Bella asked for clarity regarding the motion to be tabled. He asked Councilor Hardaway if he wanted to continue the matter until the Town Council Meeting on October 24<sup>th</sup>.

Councilor Hardaway affirmed that he would like a continuation of the matter.

Councilor Bella stated to clarify the motion, Councilor Hardaway's motion was to continue the matter for consideration at our next Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, October 24 2023 at 6:30 pm.

Councilor Bella asked Councilor Pettit if the second still stands.

Councilor Pettit affirmed that his second still stands.

No taxpayers' petitions have been filed.

Upon a roll call vote, there were seven affirmatives and no negatives. With Councilors Hardaway, Uzelac, White, Minchuk, Councilors Pettit, Neal, and Bella voting in the affirmative, the motion passed. The ordinance was continued on second reading until October 24, 2023.

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

A Resolution of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana Transferring Monies of the 2023 Budget of the General Fund.

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.

**C. American Rescue Plan**

Councilor Hardaway reported that the AP Voucher Register Summary for ARP Purchases for October 10, 2023 is \$21,123.05

It was moved by Councilor Hardaway and second by Councilor Minchuk, to approve the ARP AP Voucher Register Summary for \$21,123.05, Upon a voice votes the ARP AP Voucher was approved. The motion passed.

**D. BZA & LARGE GATHERING ACTIONS**

**Petitioner:** Town of Merrillville  
**Owner:** Town of Merrillville  
**Request:** Variance of Use Approval  
**Purpose:** To Allow an LED Message Center  
**Location:** 13 West 73<sup>rd</sup> Avenue  
**Zoning:** C-2, Community Commercial Zoning District

Planning and Building Director Shine elaborated on the BZA.

The Town of Merrillville Street Department is seeking approval to install an LED Message Board.

It was moved by Councilor Pettit and second by Councilor White, to approve the BZA Action, Upon a voice vote the BZA was approved. The motion passed.

*None*

**OLD BUSINESS**

*None*

**NEW BUSINESS**

Councilor White informed the council that he filed a complaint with the Secretary of State regarding the redistricting.

Councilor Bella reported that the Community Development Block Grant funding is \$143,000 that was awarded to the Town of Merrillville by Lake County Economic Development.

**SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS**

*None*

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Christ Host, Merrillville Indiana asked about the cost of replicating the Turkey Creek sign. The council informed him that the original sign would be installed not a replicate,

Jenny Weber, Director of the Human Society of Hobart, Indiana reported that they are taking in animals from Merrillville 92 so far and would like to have a meeting to discuss the Town helping with the cost of their housing and care.

Varron Butts, Merrillville, Indiana reported problems with Indiana American Water and NIPSCO doing damage to his front yard because of a busted water pipe and a gas leak. He also has a dead tree in his yard. The council will look into these concerns.

Maceo Rainey, Prairie Creek Homeowners Association, Merrillville, Indiana asked would the council consider having a trained parliamentarian accompany the Town Council Meeting to help move it along and keep order. Councilor Bella asked Mr. Rainey to send the council a proposal.

Curtis Pearson, Elected Precinct Committeeman and Board Member of Ross Township, Merrillville, Indiana inquired about getting information on the Star Plaza property. The Councilors Bella and Pettit informed him that contact information is on the for-sale sign.

Bryon Mesarch, Merrillville, Indiana asked how decisions are made which Wards get funding for stop signs and repairs. He also asked about the Turkey Creek sign and eminent domain. The council answered his questions.

Trina Barandal, Merrillville Indiana reported a nuisance home that sits across the street from Pierce Middle School that has garbage everywhere and a refrigerator in the yard. The council and Chief Nuses addressed her concerns. She also asked about a Community Night.

Vern Hines, Merrillville Indiana attended a meeting at the Dean Barbara White Community Center regarding the Comprehensive Plan. He feels that the plan doesn't address senior citizens.


**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- RDC Meeting October 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.
- Town Council Meeting October 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.
- Trunk or Treat October 26<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
- Trick or Treat October 31<sup>st</sup> from 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

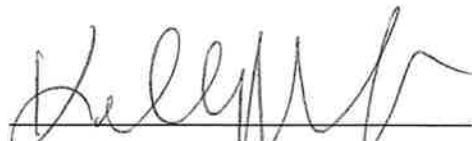
**ADJOURNMENT**

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.



*Rick Bella, President*



*Kelly White Gibson, Clerk-Treasurer*

*Respectfully Submitted By Angela Lewis*