



Town of Merrillville
Town Council Meeting Minutes
Municipal Day
May 9, 2023
6:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: President Bella and Saniyya Fisher 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 and Maxwell Flores.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by any veteran in attendance.

ROLL CALL – Roll Call was taken by Madam Clerk-Treasure Kelly White Gibson and Evelyn Hughes
Present were:

Ward 1 - Councilman Spann & Da'Riyah Martin

Ward 2 – Vice President Hardaway & Lelond Ray

Ward 3 - Christopher Bland (Councilman Minchuk was absent)

Ward 4 – Councilwoman Uzelac & Royce Edwards

Ward 6 – Councilman Pettit & Isis Selby

Ward 7 – Councilman White & William Tolson

Ward 5 - President Bella & Saniyya Fisher

Six (6) were Present at Roll Call and One (1) was Absent Councilman Minchuk

Student Fisher read an essay she wrote to the council regarding her serving as Town Council President for Municipal Day.

DEPARTMENTS

Planning and Building, Director Shine & Audrey Prieto

Economic Development, Director Chilcott & Angelina Martin

Street Department, Director King & Justen Gober

Human Resources, Director Pettit & Taylor Parker

Town Courts, Judge Velazco & Natalie Cox Kemp

Parks & Recreation, Director Price & Terrance Harvey

Police Department, Chief Nuses & Joshua Tamo

Fire Department, Chief Yerga & Lauren Lathem

Code Enforcement, Director Bunnell & Ernesto Hernandez

Clerk-Treasurer's Report, Madam Clerk-Treasurer Kelly White Gibson & Evelyn Hughes

Town Attorney Report, Attorney Svetanoff & Jackson Cowherd

PETITIONS, COMMUNICATION, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, AND REMONSTRATIONS:

Arbor Day Proclamation – Matt Lake & Gabby Mroz

-Student Mroz read the Arbor Day Proclamation.

- A motion and a second were made to approve the Arbor Day Proclamation.
- No further questions or comments from the council or students.
- Motion carries by council voice vote 6-0.

Swearing in of Student Council Court Administrator Flowers & Natalie Cox

- Student Cox gave an overview of the role of the Town Judge.
- The Student Council was sworn in office.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Accts. Payable Register Voucher Approval for May 9th, 2023
Approval of Town Council Meeting Minutes of April 25th, 2023

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

No further questions or comments from the council or students.

Motion carries by voice vote 6-0.

STANDING COMMITTEES:

BUDGET & FINANCE -HARDAWAY & Lelond Ray – Vice-President Hardaway and Student Ray informed the council that a meeting with department heads will occur the first week of June to review current spending and look at needs for the second half of the year.

Vice-President Hardaway and Student Ray also reminded residents and small businesses of the Town of Merrillville to apply for the American Rescue Plan (ARP) assistant program for exterior improvements.

COUNCIL AFFAIRS – PETTIT & Isis Selby – Chairman Mr. Pettit & Isis Selby informed the council that there is nothing to report at this time.

STREET DEPARTMENT – MINCHUK & Christopher Bland - Student Bland gave an overview of the role of the Street Department in the Town of Merrillville.

ELECTIONS, PUBLIC RELATIONS, TOWN BEAUTIFICATION – PETTIT & Isis Selby – Councilman Pettit and Student Selby informed the council that a meeting is scheduled for next week.

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS- WHITE & William Tolson- Councilman White and Student Tolson informed the council that Covid-19 cases went down by eleven percent (11%) and no deaths have been reported.

PERSONNEL POLICY & EMPLOYEE BENEFITS – HARDAWAY & Lelond Ray– Vice-President Hardaway & Student Ray informed the council that they will defer to the Human Resource Department for the report.

PUBLIC SAFETY- MINCHUK & Christopher Bland – Councilman Minchuk was absent from the meeting. Student Bland gave an overview of the Town of Merrillville's Police and Fire Departments.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT-PETTIT & Isis Selby – Councilman Pettit & Student Selby informed the council that there is nothing to report at this time.

PARKS & RECREATION- UZELAC & Royce Edwards – Councilwoman Uzelac and Student Edwards informed the council that the renovations for Forest Hill Park, Rosenbaum Park, and Pruzin Park won't exceed \$85,000.00.

Councilwoman Uzelac and Student Edwards gave an overview of the scope of work to be completed for each park.

A motion and a second were made.

President Bella stated that these repairs addressed some of the concerns Student Fisher mentioned in her essay.

No further comments or questions from the council or students.

Motion carries by roll call vote 6-0.

ABANDONED -BLIGHTED PROPERTIES-HARDAWAY & Lelond Ray – Vice-President Hardaway and Student Ray informed the council that they will defer to the Code Enforcement Department for the report.

DEAN & BARBARA WHITE COMMUNITY CENTER-MINCHUK & PETTIT & Isis Selby
Boys & Girls Club purchase agreement & Ingress/Egress/Parking Easement Agreement

Councilman Pettit and Student Selby informed the council that the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Northwest Indiana Inc proposes to build a club in Merrillville on land owned by the Town. The property is located at 6680 Broadway. The club will be modeled after the new Valparaiso Club. The proposed purchase price of the approximately three Acres is \$86,620.50 After discussions with the Parks and Recreations, Fire Department, Street Departments, and Town Authority, the committee recommends that the Town accept the offer and agree to sell the land.

Councilman Pettit and Student Selby also stated that the committee received an Ingress/Egress parking easement agreement from the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Northwest Indiana Inc requesting an easement through a self-parking lot of the Dean and Barbara White Community Center. The easement would allow vehicles and pedestrians access at 6680 Broadway. After the conversation with the Building and Planning, Parks and Recreation, and Town Authority, the committee recommends that the Town grant the easement.

A motion and a second were made for discussion regarding the Property Purchase Agreement.

Councilman Pettie asked members from the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Northwest Indiana to give the council an overview of the partnership.

Councilman Pettit also informed the council and audience that through the Redevelopment Commission, the Town of Merrillville is committing a total of \$2,000,000.00 towards the actual construction. The Town will do a ten-year lease with the Boys and Girls Club with \$200,000.00 a year coming out of Broadway Tiff towards the capital campaign that Chairman Glaros of the Boys and Girls Club and his board will be directing.

No further comments or questions from the council or students.

Motion carries by roll call vote 6-0.

President Bella asked about a second motion.

A motion and a second were made regarding the Ingress/Egress Parking Easement Agreement drafted by Attorney Svetanoff.

Attorney Svetanoff informed the council that the agreement before the council guarantee the number of parking spaces that the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Northwest Indiana Inc will retain at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center at the purchase of this land.

No further comments or questions by the council or students.

Motion carries by roll call vote 6-0.

SPECIAL PROJECTS (F & B TAX, DIVERSITY, 4TH of JULY CELEBRATION- HARDAWAY & Lelond Ray – Vice-President Hardaway and Student Ray informed the council that the Juneteenth Celebration will be held on June 17th at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center from 12:00 pm until 5:00 pm. There will be something for all ages including music, dance teams, and bouncy houses. Please contact Director Shine of the Building and Planning Department for more information regarding the Juneteenth Celebration.

Vice-President Hardaway and Student Ray also informed the council and audience that Town will be having a firework celebration on July 3rd at Merrillville High School parking lot. The fireworks will start at 9:00 pm. The Town 4th of July Parade will start at 11:00 am at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center. Parade applications are available at the Town Administration Office and Community Center.

Vice-President Hardaway and Student Ray informed the council and audience that the Town of Merrillville National Night Out will be held on Tuesday, August 1 from 5:00 pm until 8:00 pm at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center more details will be coming at a later date.

Department & Commission Reports

LAKE COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT-WHITE & William Tolson – Councilman White and Student Tolson informed the council that the 2023 household hazardous waste collection schedule will be posted on the website at www.lcswmd.com. The next collection will be at Hobart Public Works on May 20th from 9:00 am until 2:00 pm. Compost is also available for purchase by businesses and other organizations with a valid tax-exempt number.

Councilman White added to the report that Lake County Solid Waste District is ready to release \$2,100,000.00 in recycling grants to all nineteen communities in Lake County.

NORTHERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION-HARDAWAY & Lelond Ray – Vice-President Hardaway and Student Ray informed the council they have nothing to report at this time.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT RESOURCES-LAKE & Gabby Mroz – Director Lake and Student Ray informed the council that construction is about sixty percent complete on the drainage improvement project on 93rd and Randolph Street. We are also celebrating Arbor Day today because trees are important for the quality of life and are a part of our Tree City USA program.

Director Lake and Student Ray also informed the council that construction has started for the Taney Ditch Replacement Project of all the ditch crossings from 79th Place to 73rd Place in the Lincoln Garden subdivision at Independence Hill Third Edition subdivision.

Director Lake and Student Ray informed the council that the Stormwater Board approved engineering for our Country Club subdivision at Independence Hill Third Edition subdivision.

Director Lake and Student Ray also informed the council that we have achieved bronze-level status as an IDM clean community.

SOUTHSHORE VISITORS AND CONVENTION AUTHORITY-REARDON & Malachi Whitlow – Town Manager Reardon and Student Whitlow informed the council to visit the website at www.southshorecva.com to learn about the many activities to do in Lake County, Indiana. The website will list the following:

- Things to Do
- Events
- Restaurants
- Places to Stay
- Sports

FIRE TERRITORY BOARD-MINCHUK & Da'Riyah Martin – Councilman Minchuk was absent from the meeting. Student Martin informed the council that the Fire Department along with the Fire Territory will be conducting a memorial service on Monday, May 29, 2023, to honor those who have preceded us and paid tribute to the past Fire Fighters and Police Officers. There will be a silent parade to the Veterans Memorial located at the old Merrillville cemetery on East 73rd Avenue. The parade lineup will be at 10:00 am at the Old Town Hall located at 13th West 73rd Avenue.. The start of the silent parade will be at 10:15 am going down to the War Memorial Cemetery on 73rd Avenue by 65th and have a ceremony there then come back to the fire station about 11:00am. A memorial service will be conducted there and open to the public.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS/TOWN MANAGER

Town Manager, Mr. Reardon & Malachi Whitlow

Town Manager Reardon and Student Whitlow informed the council about the Town of Merrillville's new website that launch May 1, 2023, and all of the updates including the new email features that will allow residents can sign up and be alerted on events and updates of their choosing. Town Manager Reardon and Student Whitlow also informed the council and residents to bear with us as we work through all the kinks of this new website. We will be constantly updating and adding tools for the residents, visitors, and businesses.

Town Manager Reardon and Student Whitlow also informed the council that the Town is requesting residence and business ideas and feedback on the Town's Comprehensive Plan. We want to address the needs properly of everyone in our town. Everyone is invited to fill out a survey on our Facebook Page called Town of Merrillville at www.facebook.com and our website at merrillville.in.gov.

Town Manager Reardon and Student Whitlow informed the council that the Town's Annual Job Fair will be held on July 27, 2023, from 11:00 am until 3:00 pm at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center look for more information on our Town's website and Facebook page.

Town Manager Reardon and Student Whitlow informed the council that the Citizen Participation Plan, Affirmative Action Program, and Section 3 Understanding are three parts of the Town's 23 application for the Community Development Block Grant. The Town's application will be submitted in the following weeks.

Town Manager Reardon and Student Whitlow asked for a motion to approve the three elements of the block grant.

A motion and a second were made.

Councilman White and Student Tolson asked President Bella and Student Fisher to elaborate on the Affirmation Action portion of the block grant.

President Bella and Student Fisher informed the council that the Town of Merrillville agrees to implement the following specific affirmation action steps direct increasing the utilization of lower-income residents and program-era businesses.

No further comments or questions from the council or students.

Motion carries by voice vote 6-0.

Planning and Building, Director Shine & Audrey Prieto

Director Shine and Student Prieto informed the council that permits have been issued to Merrillville High School for interior and exterior renovation of existing schools. Merrillville High School will invest approximately \$100,000,000.00 over the next five years for school renovations.

Director Shine and Student Prieto elaborate on several other projects that have been issued permits and construction has commenced.

Economic Development, Director Chilcott & Brooklynn McCumber

Director Chilcott and Student Martin informed the council that the Town of Merrillville Community video is available on the Town's website. The Town partnered with CGI Digital to coordinate and produce a series of educational videos highlighting Merrillville and everything we have to offer residents, visitors, and businesses. The overall goal was to showcase what makes Merrillville a great town to learn, live, work, and play.

Street Department, Director King & Justen Gober

Director King and Student Gober informed the council that the tree branch pickup program was completed on May 5, 2023. The residents can still bring branches to our North Barn located at 5750 Tyler Street. The Street Department is changing over to our summer operations which include the following:

- Hot patching crack ceiling.
- Mowing the lawns of Town-owned property.

- Residential sidewalk replacement.
- Other issues that will arise daily.

Director King and Student Guber elaborated on other projects the Street Department is working on this spring and summer. The Town is also having an auction on Saturday, May 13, 2023.

Human Resources, Director Pettit & Taylor Parker

Director Pettit and Student Parker informed the council that the department continues to post available job openings, interview applicants, hire applicants, and train new employees. Last month the department brought back the Employment of The Month award. The employee of the month will be selected based on working well with others who may have different values and cultural beliefs.

Director Pettit and Student Parker also informed the council that the department is working with the Parks and Street Departments to hire a summer cleanup crew to work part-time for the Town. If you are interested in being part of the summer cleanup crew, please contact the Human Resources Department.

Town Court, Judge Velazco & Natalie Cox Kemp

Town Court Administrator Flowers and Student Cox Kemp informed the council they have nothing to report at this time.

Parks and Recreation, Director Price & Terrance Harvey

Director Price and Student Harvey informed the council that the Dean and Barbara White Community Center is offering summer fun for kids of all ages starting June 13th through July 25th from 11:00 am until 1:00 pm. The programs will be inspiring, empowering, and educational.

Police Department, Chief Nuses & Joshua Tamo

Chief Nuses and Student Tamo informed the council that summer is drawing near, and the department will be stepping up patrols in the Town. The residents will be seeing more of our ATVs and UTVs along with motorcycles during the spring and summer months. We are aiming to do proactive police work to help keep the Merrillville Community peaceful and safe

Chief Nuses and Student Tamo also informed the council that an event for the public to meet the Town of Merrillville Police Department is scheduled at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center on May 25th from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm

Fire Department, Chief Yerga & Lauren Latham

Chief Yerga and Student Latham informed the council that the Fire Department is partnering with the Crown Point Fire Department on building a joint training facility. This facility will be utilized for both departments to better train themselves regularly to better respond to emergencies in both communities. This facility is being built with the help of many local companies and unions. Some of the biggest help has come from the Chicago Steel and Iron Workers Local Unions. We wouldn't have this facility without the generous help of these unions.

Code Enforcement, Director Bunnel & Ernesto Hernandez

Director Bunnel and Student Hernandez gave an overview of the functions of the Town's Code Enforcement Department. The Code Enforcement Department is responsible for enforcing the Town's Ordinances regarding code violations in the community.

Clerk-Treasurer's Report, Madam Clerk-Treasurer Kelly White Gibson & Evelyn Hughes

Madam Clerk-Treasurer Kelly White Gibson and Student Hughes gave an overview of the Merrillville Clerk-Treasurer's Office. The Clerk-Treasurer's Office is a government agency responsible for the management of financial transactions and records for the Town of Merrillville Indiana. The office serves as the central repository of all financial information related to the Town's budget, revenue, and expenditures.

Madam Clerk-Treasurer Kelly White Gibson and Student Hughes elaborated on other responsibilities of the Town's Clerk-Treasurer's Office such as business licenses, animal licenses, hazmat licenses, and passports.

Town Attorney Report, Attorney Svetanoff & Jackson Cowherd

Attorney Svetanoff and Student Cowherd gave an overview of the functions of the Town's Attorney. The Town of Merrillville Attorney represents the Town Council Board of Zoning Appeals, Plan Commission,

and Redevelopment Commission. The Town seeks our opinion to better prepare and evaluate all of its options and minimize the likelihood of disputes and litigations.

General Orders

A. Ordinances

First Readings: (Discussion and Roll Call Vote)

None

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

Ordinance 23-14 (Discussion, Public Comment, and Roll Call Vote)

An Ordinance Vacating a Portion of a 40-Foot-Wide Unimproved Frontage Road in the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana.

Councilman Pettit made a motion to table Ordinance 23-14 because of a legal matter. State statute requires thirty days between the first-reading and second reading of Ordinance 23-14. The thirty days will be up by the next council meeting on May 23rd, 2023, seconded by Vice-President Hardaway.

No further questions or comments by the council, public, or students.

Motion carries by roll call vote 6-0.

Ordinance 23-15 (Discussion, Public Comment, and Roll Call Vote)

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

Vice-President Hardaway made a motion to approve Ordinance 23-15, seconded by Councilman Spann.

No further questions or comments by the council, public, or students.

Motion carries by roll call vote 6-0.

B. Resolutions

Resolution 23-13 (Discussion and Voice Vote)

A Resolution Authorizing and Directing the Town Council President of the Town of Merrillville to Submit a Project Proposal for Community Development Block Grant Funds for Federal Fiscal Year 2023.

Vice-President Hardaway made a motion to approve Resolution 23-13, seconded by Councilman Pettit.

Madam Clerk-Treasurer Kelly White Gibson and Student Hughes read Resolution 23-13 in its entirety.

No further questions or comments by the council or students.

Motion carries by voice vote 6-0.

C. American Rescue Plan

AP Voucher Register Summary for ARP Purchases for May 9, 2023

Vice-President Hardaway and Student Ray informed the council that the ARP Voucher summary is \$64,360.77.

Vice-President Hardaway made a motion to approve ARP purchases for 64,360.77, seconded by Councilman Spann.

No further questions or comments from the council or student.

Motion carries by roll call vote 6-0.

D. BZA & LARGE GATHERING ACTIONS

Petitioner: Leonard White
Owner: Crossroads Plaza
Request: Variance of Use Approval
Purpose: To Allow an Office and Event Venue
Location: 6120 Broadway
Zoning: M-2, Limited Industrial Corridor District

Planning and Building Director Shine elaborated on the BZA Action.

The Petitioner is Councilman White.

A motion was made by Councilman Spann to approve the BZA Action, **no second was made** by a council member.

Councilman Pettit made a motion to table the BZA Action until the council gather all of the details, seconded by Councilman Spann.

Petitioner Councilman White stated that he is entitled to due process.

Attorney Svetanoff informed Petitioner Councilman White that a deferral isn't a denial.

Councilman Pettit informed the council that the BZA Action would be on the agenda for the May 23rd council meeting.

No further questions or comment from the council or students.

Motion carries by voice vote 5-1.

Petitioner: Jose Ramirez
Owner: Jose Ramirez
Request: Special Exception Approval
Purpose: To Allow a Dine in Restaurant
Location: 5524 Broadway
Zoning: C-2, Community Commercial Zoning District

Planning and Building Director Shine elaborated on the BZA Action.

A motion was made by Councilman White to approve the BZA Action, seconded by Councilman Spann.

Councilwoman Uzelac asked Petitioner Ramirez about the number of employees and hours of operation.

Petitioner Ramirez stated there will be two employees and the hours of operation will be 11:00 am until 8:00 or 9:00 pm at the latest.

No further questions or comment from the council or students.

Motion carries by voice vote 5-Yes and 1-Abstaination

Petitioner: Quiana Jones
Owner: Dan Guerin
Request: Special Exception Approval
Purpose: To Allow an Event Venue
Location: 7880 Broadway
Zoning: C-2, Community Commercial Zoning District
Planning and Building Director Shine elaborated on the BZA Action.

A motion was made by Vice-President Hardaway to approve the BZA Action, seconded by Councilman Spann.

A motion was made by Councilman Pettit to table the BZA Action for thirty days until he gathers more information regarding the Dean and Barbara White Community Center rentals, **no second was made** by a council member.

No further questions or comment from the council or students.

Motion carries by roll call vote 6-0.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Special Presentations

Awards & Recognition

-Vice-President Hardaway on behalf of the Town Council of Merrillville presented Christopher Bynum an award of recognition for his efforts as a volunteer to improve the Merrillville Community by cleaning up a portion of 58th Avenue East of Broadway.

-Vice-President Hardaway on behalf of the Town Council of Merrillville presented Kara Bonin, Principal of Merrillville Intermediate School an award for her years of serving for Municipal Day and her dedication to the Town of Merrillville as an educator for many years in the capacity of both a teacher and administrator.

Announcements: President Bella & Saniyya Fisher

- Plan Commission Meeting May 16th at 6:30 pm
- Redevelopment Commission Meeting May 23rd at 6:15 pm
- Town Council Meeting May 23rd at 6:30 pm
- Juneteenth Freedom Fest June 17th from 12-5 at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center
- Fireworks will be at Merrillville High School on July 3rd
- 4th of July Parade July 4th at 11:30 am starting at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center going South.

Adjournment: President Bella & Saniyya Fisher

- A motion and a second were made and passed by voice vote.
- Meeting Adjourned.



Rick Bella, President



Kelly White Gibson, Clerk-Treasurer

Minutes Submitted by Angela Lewis

