



Town of Merrillville
Town Council Meeting Minutes
March 14, 2023
6:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: President 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 Paul Anderson of First Presbyterian Church.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Vice-President Hardaway.

ROLL CALL – Roll Call was taken by Payroll Administrator Johnson.

Present were:

Vice-President Hardaway- (Ward 2)

Councilman Minchuk- (Ward 3)

Councilwoman Uzelac- (Ward 4)

Councilman White - (Ward 7)

Councilman Pettit- (Ward 6)

President Bella- (Ward 5)

Six Present (6) at roll call 1 Absent (1) Councilman Spann

*Councilman Spann came in at 6:44 pm

PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, AND REMONSTRATIONS:

Swearing in of Officers Jacob Shrewsbury, Timothy Michels, & Philip Mason

All three officers were sworn in by Judge Velazco.

Chief Nuses gave a brief introduction about each of the officers.

Awarding of Metal of Honor to Officer Nicholas Enyeart

The presentation for Officer Nicholas Enyeart will be done at the next council meeting on Tuesday, March 28, 2023.

Waste Management 2-Year Option Contract Renewal

President Bella informed the council that the contract was discussed in a workshop at great length and this is the Town's last two-year extension. The third option is April 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024, and the fourth option is April 1, 2024, through March 31, 2025.

President Bella asked Attorney Svetanoff if a simple motion is all that is needed.

Attorney Svetanoff stated yes.

A motion was made by Vice- President to approve the two-year option for Waste Management, seconded by Councilman White.

Motion carries by roll call vote 6-0.

***Agenda Item Added**

President Bella asked that a motion be made to add a BZA & Large Gathering Action item to the Agenda in regards to Crossroad Plaza that was left off the agenda.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Uzelac to add the BZA & Large Gathering Action to the agenda, seconded by Councilman Minchuk.

No further questions or comments from the council.

Motion carries by voice vote 6-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

Accts. Payable Register Voucher Approval for March 14, 2023.

Approval of Town Council Meeting Minutes of February 28, 2023.

A motion was made by Councilman Pettit to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Councilwoman Uzelac.

No further questions or comments from the council.

Motion carries by voice vote 6-0.

STANDING & SPECIAL COMMITTEES REPORTS

BUDGET & FINANCE- HARDAWAY – Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that he has nothing to report at this time.

COUNCIL AFFAIRS- PETTIT – Councilman Pettit informed the council that he has nothing to report at this time.

STREET DEPARTMENT- MINCHUK – Councilman Minchuk informed the council that he has two contracts from Hubinger Landscaping. The first contract is for the planters at 93rd Avenue. The work has been completed, and the amount is \$3,169.00. The second contract is for the planters at Town Hall and that total is 2,663.00.

President Bella asked if the contracts were for this year.

Councilman Minchuk confirmed that the contracts are for this year.

A motion was made by Councilman Minchuk to approve the Hubinger contracts for this year, seconded by Vice President Hardaway.

No further questions or comments from the council.

Motion carries by voice vote 6-0.

Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that there was a meeting with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Director Dr. Andrew Sawyer of the Office of Waste Water Management and his staff. This meeting was to discuss goals in resolving the ongoing sewer backup problems in the North end of Merrillville.

Vice-President Hardaway also stated these goals include the Town's supportive role in partnering with Gary Sanitary District as they apply for funds. Now that the Town has the ear of the Federal and State EPA, things should start moving to resolve the sewer issues,

Councilman White asked about the name change from Public Works Utilities to Street Department.

President Bella stated the department is still there, we are just going to call it Street Department.

Councilman White informed the council that he didn't see anything in the bylaws stating that Utilities was a part of Sewer Management.

ELECTIONS, PUBLIC RELATIONS, & TOWN BEAUTIFICATION-PETTIT- Councilman Pettit informed the council that he has nothing to report at this time.

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS- WHITE - Councilman White informed the council that according to the Center for Disease Control levels in Lake County are low. We are stable in the part of lake County.

PERSONNEL POLICY & EMPLOYEE BENEFITS – HARDAWAY- Vice-President Hardaway I ask the council did anyone have an opportunity to look at the applications for Parks Assistant Director. He informed them he is waiting on at least four recommendations from each council member.

PUBLIC SAFETY- MINCHUK- President Bella stated to let the record show that Councilman Span joined the meeting at 6:44 pm.

Councilman Minchuk informed the council that negotiations on the Fraternal Order of Police contract are finished and both parties have agreed to the terms and conditions. The contract is ready for approval at the next council meeting on March 28th.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT-PETTIT – Councilman Pettit informed the council that the committee had a Redevelopment Commission workshop. At the workshop, we got an overview of where things stand with all the tax increment financing districts. The districts are Merrillville Road Tiff, Broadway Ameriplex Tiff, and Mississippi Street Tiff.

Councilman Pettit also stated that the committee has instructed Financial Advisor Swintz to start preparing financial documents for 86th Avenue between Merrillville Road or the stub there into Hunter's Glen and connecting it to the Williamsburg Development to have a continuous run of 86th Avenue between Merrillville Road and Broadway.

Councilman Pettit informed the council that a couple of other funding projects were discussed regarding the following Dog Park, Merrillville School Corporation, and Community Center.

PARKS & RECREATION- UZELAC – Councilwoman Uzelac informed the council that she is looking forward to the spring cleanup that will include mowing the parks. She also stated that the roof on the shelter at Rosenbaum Park is going to be repaired and everything is alright with the parks and bike trails.

ABANDONED -BLIGHTED PROPERTIES-HARDAWAY – Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that he had a conversation with Town Manager Reardon and that a major problem in the Town is people not paying their garbage bills. The majority of the people who aren't paying have been identified as renters.

Vice President Hardaway stated that he has instructed Town Manager Reardon to go after the owner of the homes, not the renters. The owner of the homes is ultimately responsible for garbage pickup and going after them should resolve this issue. We met with Waste Management a couple of weeks ago. We were informed by them that we are one of the top municipalities that don't pay their bills.

Councilwoman Uzelac informed the council that we also have residents who leave their garbage cans out after garbage pickup for two or three days.

Vice-President Hardaway asked Chief Nuses to look into this problem.

Councilman White informed the council in his Ward there is still a problem with garbage.

President Bella informed the council that Waste Management is going to provide the council with a monthly report of delinquent accounts.

DEAN & BARBARA WHITE COMMUNITY CENTER-MINCHUK & PETTIT – Councilman Pettit informed the council there is an ordinance and resolution on tonight's agenda. Financial Advisor Hudson will give an overview of both agenda items at the appropriate time.

SPECIAL PROJECTS (F & B TAX, DIVERSITY, 4TH of JULY CELEBRATION-HARDAWAY - Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that the first Juneteenth meeting will be held Thursday, March 23rd at 11:00 am at Town Hall. The meeting is open to all Merrillville residents who are interested in being part of the committee.

Vice-President Hardaway also stated that the Town is looking for vendors. If anyone knows someone who would like to be a vendor, please have them contact Director Shine in the Planning and Building department.

President Bella asked Vice-President Hardaway to give the date and location for Juneteenth.

Vice-President Hardaway stated that the date is June 17th from 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center. Municipal Day will be May 9th the day of the council meeting. The Fourth of July fireworks will be on July 3rd, and the parade will be on July 4th.

President Bella asked Vice-President Hardaway if the fireworks display at Merrillville High School this year.

Vice-President Hardaway stated that the firework display is at Merrillville High School this year.

DEPARTMENT & COMMISSION REPORTS

LAKE COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT-WHITE – Councilman White informed the council that the meeting is Thursday, March 16, 2023, and he has nothing to report at this time.

NORTHERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION-HARDAWAY – Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that the meeting is Thursday, March 16, 2023, and he has nothing to report at this time.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT RESOURCES-LAKE – President Bella asked Town Manager Reardon if there was a report from Director Lake.

Town Manager Reardon stated not at this time.

SOUTHSHORE VISITORS AND CONVENTION AUTHORITY – Town Manager Reardon informed the council that on Thursday, March 16th from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm at Culinary Misfits in Crown Point the South Shore Visitors and Convention Authority will be hosting a legislative update and the next meeting is just before the event.

FIRE TERRITORY BOARD-MINCHUK – Councilman Minchuk informed the council that a meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 22, 2023.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS/TOWN MANAGER

Lisa Roberts from the Parks Department informed the council of several events that will take place at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center. The events for March are as follows:

- Elite Fighting (MMA) - Saturday, March 18th
- Gymnastics Competition

Chief Nuses informed the council that his department is working with our ordinances. We are making sure that we have the proper wording to ensure that the ordinances are enforceable to address the problems that we have in the Town.

Chief Nuses also informed the council that the Animal Control Officer application period is closed. We received a few applications and will be reviewing them soon.

Chief Nuses informed the council of the Joint Agency Task Force which consists of neighboring cities' Police Departments along with the Merrillville Police Department. The Task Force is working together doing proactive police work in Merrillville, Gary, and Hammond.

Councilman White asked about what neighbors the Task Force covers in their proactive police work.

Chief Nuses stated that the Task Force calls him regarding what areas they should saturate because of ongoing issues.

President Bella asked Director Shine did she have anything to add besides the BZA.

Director Shine stated not at this time.

Director Chilcott informed the council that the Economic Development Department has been busy fielding multiple inquiries regarding development in the Town of Merrillville.

Director Chilcott also informed the council that the Town's video is finished, and she received the final version today. A plan and process are being worked on to roll out the video to everyone for marketing and exposure regarding the Town of Merrillville.

Town Manager Reardon informed the council of an article in the Northwest Indiana Business Magazine about the one-million-square-foot project located on Mississippi Street.

Town Manager Reardon also informed the council that we have a name for our Comp Plan. The name is Merrillville Momentum. The kickoff meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 23, 2023, from 5:00 pm until 7:00 pm at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center. All of the Town's residents are invited to attend, and we look forward to your involvement at this first of several meetings.

GENERAL ORDERS

A. Ordinances

First Readings: (Discussion and Roll Call Vote)

Ordinance 23-12 (Discussion and Roll Vote)

An Ordinance of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana, Authorizing Additional Appropriations in the 2023 Budget – General Fund, Dept. 6, and Authorizing a Reduction of Appropriations in the 2023 Budget-Parks Non-Reverting Fund.

President Bella asked Financial Advisor Hudson to give an overview of the ordinance.

Financial Advisor Hudson informed the council that Ordinance 23-12 is to reorganize the Parks Department which includes the Dean and Barbara White Community Center budget. The current budget is going to be reduced to 1.4 million. This reduction won't take away from any operation plans of Director Price.

President Bella asked that this budget reduction doesn't affect current employees already in place.

Financial Advisor Hudson stated that is very true. Employees currently in place aren't affected by this budget reduction.

Councilman Pettit made a motion to approve Ordinance 23-12, seconded by Vice-President Hardaway.

Councilman Pettit informed the council and audience that he hopes everyone will keep in mind what the council has tried to do over the last four years to provide an outstanding facility. Councilman Pettit elaborated on all that has been done to make the Dean and Barbara White Community Center a place for our children and residents to enjoy.

Payroll Administrator Johnson informed the council that Financial Advisor Hudson should meet with the Clerk-Treasurer's Bookkeeper regarding the dollar amount of eight-line items listed on Ordinance 23-12. The available balances remaining are less than what is listed. For example, Contractual Services is listed for 50,000.00, but only has \$40,502.00 available in that line item.

Financial Advisor Hudson stated that the reduction is to the budget itself not the remaining balance in the appropriation. Transfers will be done to adjust for those balances.

Payroll Administrator Johnson state that she was asked to inform Financial Advisor Hudson that she need to meet the Bookkeeper Santos.

President Bella asked Payroll Administrator Johnson did she want to read the rest of the items in question into the record.

The rest of the items as read by Payroll Administrator Johnson are as follows:

- Labor Parks Non-Reverting \$24,025.38
- Finance \$25,378.25
- Contractual Services \$40,502.70
- Part-Time Staff \$10,815.75
- Recreation Coordinator \$17,306.23
- Part-Time Staff \$70,363.81
- Subcontractors \$14,019.20
- Subcontractors \$37,992.50

President Bella informed the council that we don't have to worry about adjusting the figures mentioned by Payroll Administrator Johnson. The figures are just the balances in the fund.

No further questions or comments from the council.

Motion carries by roll call vote 7-0,

President Bella asked Attorney Svetanoff or Financial Advisor Hudson if there was a need to suspend the rules and read Ordinance 23-12 on the second reading.

Financial Advisor Hudson stated no, but we need a notice published for the next meeting.

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

Ordinance 23-11 (Discussion, Public Comment, and Roll Call Vote)

An Ordinance of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana, Authorizing Additional Appropriations in the 2023 Budget.

President Bella asked Town Manager Reardon to give an overview of the ordinance.

Town Manager Reardon informed the council that Ordinance 23-11 will allow the Town to pay out of this fund that was established as a result of the generous participation of the many attendees at our recent event the Black History Month Celebration. This is a fund we hope to sustain for years to come.

Vice-President Hardaway made a motion to approve Ordinance 23-11, seconded by Councilman Minchuk.

Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that any balance remaining after all bills are paid will go towards the Town's Scholarship Program which will be run by the Legacy Foundation.

No further questions or comments from the council or the public.

Motion carries by roll call vote (6) Yes and (1) Abstention

B. Resolutions: (Discussion and Voice Vote)

Resolutions 23-07 (Discussion and Voice Vote)

A Resolution of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana, Transferring Monies Within the 2023 Budget – General Fund, Dept.6, and, Within the 2023 Budget-Parks Non-Reverting Fund

President Bella asked Financial Advisor Hudson to give an overview of Resolutions 23-07.

Financial Advisor Hudson informed the council that this is a companion to Ordinance 23-12 which was just discussed. Resolution 23-07 allows us to take various line items where funds aren't needed in the budget itself and transfer them to areas where the money is needed both in the general fund and non-reverting fund. The goal is to organize the budget to fit in line with the actual expenditures.

Councilman Pettit made a motion to approve Resolution 23-07, seconded by Councilwoman Uzelac.

No further questions or comments from the council.

Motion carries by voice vote 7-0.

C. American Rescue Plan

AP Voucher Register Summary for ARP Purchases for February 28, 2023

Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that the ARP Voucher summary is \$18,658.05.

Vice-President Hardaway made a motion to approve \$18,658.05, seconded by Councilman Spann.

Councilman White informed the council that he is supporting the ARP voucher but would like to see in the future funds from the American Rescue Plan used for other community projects like addressing the Black Maternity Death Rate in Northwest Indiana. An article published in an Indianapolis newspaper listed Northwest Indiana as third in the nation for black infants and young mothers with a high mortality rate.

President Bella stated we will ask Vice-President Hardaway to take that under advisement for the committee.

No further questions or comments from the council.

No voice vote was taken.

D.BZA & LARGE GATHERING ACTIONS

Petitioner: Crossroads Plaza
Owner: Crossbreds Plaza
Request: Special Exception Approval

Purpose: Variance of Use Approval
Location: 6110 Broadway
Zoning: M-2, Limited Industrial Corridor District

Planning and Building Director Shine elaborated on the BZA Action.

Councilman Petti informed the council that we went through this once before regarding the Petitioner's property. The property was zone M-2 at the request of the owner. The council rezoned M-2 to house a 250,000-square-foot industrial building which has absolutely no business going on this property.

Councilman Pettit also stated that this property needs to be rezoned back to commercial (C-2) so that the owner can market it properly because no industrial building is going up on the property.

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

Councilman White informed the council that this BZA is in his Ward, and the owner must get this property turned back into retail.

The owner's Representative informed the council that the council has the right to revert the property to retail according to the ordinance from 2018 by a vote.

President Bella asked Town Manager Reardon to add this topic to the March 28th Town Council Workshop meeting.

No further questions or comments from the council.

Motion carries by voice vote 7-0.

NEW BUSINESS

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

None

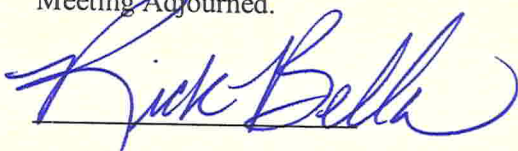
ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Plan Commission Public Meeting March 21st at 6:30 pm
- Town Council Meeting March 28, 2023, at 6:30 pm
- Redevelopment Commission Meeting March 28th at 6:15 pm


ADJOURNMENT:

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

