



**Town of Merrillville**  
**Town Council Meeting Minutes**  
**April 11, 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 Robert Szoke of Impact Church.

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

**ROLL CALL** – Roll Call was taken by Accounts Payable Secretary Angela Lewis.

Present were:

Vice-President Hardaway- (Ward 2)

Councilman Minchuk- (Ward 3)

Councilwoman Uzelac- (Ward 4)

Councilman Pettit- (Ward 6)

President Bella- (Ward 5)

Five (5) Present and Two (2) Absent Councilman Spann and Councilman White

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

National Child Abuse Prevention Month Proclamation read by Ellen Hennessy, President of Prevent Child Abuse Lake County.

-Councilman Minchuk gave an introduction regarding President Hennessy's career and experience.

-President Hennessy complimented the council and the Town of Merrillville for pulling together after a tumultuous week. She also stated as a member of Provincial Abuse Lake County we have a mission, and the mission is that together we will work towards a time when all children in Lake County experience a childhood in which they are safe, cared for, and loved.

-President Hennessy thanked the council for their willingness to show and help increase awareness of how important it is to protect our children.

President Hennessy read the Proclamation.

-President Bella asked Councilman Minchuk did he have a motion for the council.

-Councilman Minchuk stated that Child Abuse Prevention is something dear to his heart and he wants to make a motion to approve the National Child Abuse Prevention Month Proclamation, seconded by Vice-President Hardaway.

-No further questions or comments from the council.

-Motion carries by voice vote 5-0.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Accts. Payable Register Voucher Approval for April 11, 2023.

Approval of Town Council Meeting Minutes of March 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 5-0.

### ***STANDING & SPECIAL COMMITTEES REPORTS***

***BUDGET & FINANCE- HARDAWAY*** – Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that he has no report at this time.

***COUNCIL AFFAIRS- PETTIT*** – Councilman Pettit informed the council that he has no report at this time.

***STREET DEPARTMENT- MINCHUK*** – Councilman Minchuk informed the council that he would like to combine the Streets Department and Public Safety Committees into one report. Councilman Minchuk elaborated on the giant storm that affect the Town of Merrillville in Lake County and how the Town's Street Department, Fire Department, and Police Department came together for the residents. The people in those departments worked long hours with very little sleep. Councilmen Minchuk thanked all of the departments.

President Bella also reiterated Councilman Minchuk's thank you to the departments.

Councilman Pettit stated that his Ward 6 and Councilman Minchuk's Ward 3 were the hardest hit by this storm. Forest Hill, Madison Mellows, Southmoor Park, and Indiana Trails had a lot of damage. The residents were happy to see the departments in their community.

Councilman Pettit thanked all of the departments.

***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 was absent. President Bella asked Town Manager Reardon did he have anything to report from Councilman White.

Town Manager Reardon informed the council that he has nothing to report on at this time.

***PERSONNEL POLICY & EMPLOYEE BENEFITS – HARDAWAY***- Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that he has nothing to report at this time.

***PUBLIC SAFETY- MINCHUK***- Councilman Minchuk gave his report under the Street Department section on the agenda.

***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT-PETTIT*** – Councilman Pettit informed the council that he has nothing to report at this time.

***PARKS & RECREATION- UZELAC*** – Councilwoman Uzelac informed the council that the Street Department will check the parks to make sure everything is in order. She also stated the Street and Park Departments do a respectable job keeping the lawns mowed.

Councilwoman Uzelac also stated she hasn't heard anything from Director Price regarding the roof for the shelter at Rosenbaum Park. She asked Director Price has he received any acceptable bids.

Director Price passed the question to Town Manager Reardon.

Town Manager Reardon informed the council that there was an issue with the bids. There was too much of a range in pricing. We have contacted the two companies and requested that each of them send us an itemized scope of work. We are working with our Building Commissioner on all of the details.

Town Manager Reardon also informed the council that he is confident that all of the information regarding the bids will be ready to be presented at the next council meeting.

Councilwoman Uzelac thanked Town Manager Reardon and President Bella.

***ABANDONED -BLIGHTED PROPERTIES-HARDAWAY*** – Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that he has nothing to report at this time.

***DEAN & BARBARA WHITE COMMUNITY CENTER-MINCHUK & PETTIT*** – Councilman Pettit informed the council that he has nothing to report at this time.

***SPECIAL PROJECTS (F & B TAX, DIVERSITY, 4<sup>TH</sup> of JULY CELEBRATION-HARDAWAY*** - Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that he would defer to Director Shine regarding the Juneteenth update.



Director Shine informed the council that the Juneteenth Committee has met several times, and the following are in place:

- Sponsorship Packages
- Vendor Applications

Director Shine also informed the council that poster boards are going out to the businesses and emails were sent to the businesses who participated last year. The businesses are responding to our email campaign favorably.

Director Shine informed the council that the theme for Juneteenth 2023 is Juneteenth Freedom Festival. At this festival, we will have the following:

- Black History Museum
- Kiddie Corner
- Food
- Live Music
- Community Resource Tent with partner Community Health Net

Director Shine stated that we are looking forward to the Juneteenth Celebration Freedom Festival and for anyone who would like to join the committee, the next meeting is April 18<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm at Town Hall. If the residents or businesses have any questions, they can contact Director Shine at the Building and Planning Department, or Payroll Administration Johnson at the Clerk's Office.

Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that Municipal Day is in the works and the committee is meeting with department heads on Wednesday, April 12th at 10:00 am to make sure the Town of Merrillville has a great Municipal Day on May 9, 2023

Vice-President Hardaway also informed the council that he and President Bella met with the Legacy Foundation. The foundation will administer the excess money left over from the Black History Celebration. The funds of \$25,000.00 will be used for scholarships. Four scholarships will be awarded in 2023. The four scholarships are as follows:

- Three (3) will go to Merrillville High School students.
- One (1) will go to an Andrean High School student

The scholarships will be for \$1,000.00 each. The remaining \$21,000.00 will go into an endowment fund with a 4% interest rate. The council hopes the endowment fund will grow every year. The name of the scholarship is the Town of Merrillville Inclusive Scholarship. The council wanted to stay away from certain words to be inclusive in what we are trying to do in the Town of Merrillville.

Vice President Hardaway reiterated that the Legacy Foundation will manage all aspects of the scholarship program without any involvement from the Town of Merrillville Elected Officials and Employees on how scholarships are awarded to recipients. This is one way to ensure the integrity of the scholarship program. Hopefully, when this program rolls out this year, we'll be able to get donations every year.

President Bella stated he would entertain a motion authorizing himself to sign the fund agreement with the Legacy Foundation as long as Attorney Svetanoff agrees.

Attorney Svetanoff agreed that President Bella can sign the agreement.

Vice-President Hardaway made a motion to approve the Legacy Foundation Town of Merrillville Scholarship Fund, seconded by Councilman Pettit.

No further questions or comments from the council.

Motion carries by roll call vote 5-0.

## **DEPARTMENT & COMMISSION REPORTS**

**LAKE COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT-WHITE** – Councilman White was absent from the meeting and no report was given.

**NORTHERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION-HARDAWAY** – Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that a meeting is scheduled for next week.



**STORMWATER MANAGEMENT RESOURCES-LAKE** – Director Lake informed the council that the tornado that swept through the Town of Merrillville was devastating. His department has emergency maintenance contractors clearing out debris in Forest Hill and Turkey Creek taking out any blockages and leaning trees that will fall into a ditch.

Director Lake also informed the council that the Stormwater Board has agreed to solicit a proposal for right-of-way drainage for two subdivisions. The first subdivision County Club is located North of 61<sup>st</sup> Avenue and East of Taft. The other subdivision Independence Hill Third Edition is located South of US-30 and West of Taft.

Director Lake informed the council about Arbor Day which by tradition is the last Friday in April, but we can pick any day to hold this event. The Town will have to do a proclamation and we would like to partner with NIPSCO, Parks Department, and the Lions Club. We welcome any others who would like to partner with us for this event.

Director Lake also the council that the contractors have started the big drainage project at 93<sup>rd</sup> and Randolph that will help out two subdivisions in Panhandle.

**SOUTHSHORE VISITORS AND CONVENTION AUTHORITY** – Town Manager Reardon informed the council that a Board of Directors meeting will be held on Thursday, April 20, 2023. The council can also look for an electronic copy of the latest newsletter featuring activities throughout the county.

**FIRE TERRITORY BOARD-MINCHUK** – Councilman Minchuk informed the council that the next meeting will be in June.

#### **DEPARTMENT REPORTS/TOWN MANAGER**

-Director Shine informed the council that the Planning and Building Department is here to help the residents vet contractors they are using to repair the storm-damaged property. Upon request, the department will provide the residents' names of licensed contractors.

Director Shine also stated that the department will help with permits and waive the permit fees. However, inspection fees will still be charged. She warned the residents not to give contractors money unless the contractor is certified and licensed by the Town of Merrillville.

-Town Engineering Administrator Steven King informed the council that his department has been busy with storm cleanup. There is still work to be done in Forest Hills, Chapel Manor, and Madison Meadows. The residents are still bringing debris out to the street. On Sunday, he and Director Shine drove around storm-damaged subdivisions. Director Shine wrote down the names of contractors and verified they were licensed by the Town of Merrillville. He also informed the council that the Town of Highland and the Town of Munster reached out to him to offer any assistance needed

Town Engineering Administrator Steven King also informed the council that Spring cleanup has started. It started on April 10<sup>th</sup> on Monday. We have dumpsters at our facility located on 73<sup>rd</sup> Avenue that residents can bring debris and items to dispose of for Spring cleanup. The hours of operation for the facility are Monday through Friday 7:15 to 2:45. The facility will also be open for the next two Saturdays from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm.

-Councilman Minchuk informed the council that he wanted to thank Director Price and his staff for all the hard work and extra hours during and after the storm. The Dean and Barbara White Community Center served as a warming shelter on Friday and Saturday nights. Volunteers came out and went door-to-door handing out flyers informing residents about the warming shelter.

-Town Manager Reardon added that a meeting was held on April 10, 2023, with every agency involved in responding to the storm. We had representatives from the counties' Homeland Security, EMA, and Trustees Office in Ross Township. It was well attended and great dialogue occurred. We look forward to working with these agencies to improve our first response

Town Manager Reardon thanked the Parks Department, Human Resources, and Economic Development. It was rewarding to see how everyone came together as a team.

-President Bella thanked the residents of the Town of Merrillville for their patience and understanding during this difficult time. Residents kept calm and worked with Town Staff, Emergency Services, Fire Department, and the Police Department.

President Bella informed the council and audience about one scary moment. A resident couldn't be located, but later was found at a next-door neighbor's home. The Town of Merrillville was very blessed not to have any injuries or fatalities from this tornado. Our Town will prosper from this and move forward.



-Director Price informed the council that his staff gave their best and was willing to work with the team to help. The students were on spring break last week and activities are slowly picking back up this week at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center.

-Chief Nuses informed the council that lessons were learned from the storm and tornado. We were prepared, and ready, and learned that we can streamline things. We are going to work on improving and offering better Public Safety Services to the people of Merrillville.

Chief Nuses also informed the council that his department will be doing a Merrillville Community Police Meet Night on May 25, 2023, from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center. The goal of this event is to speak with the public and to show them our vehicles and equipment. There is also going to be a question-and-answer session. This is a chance to explain to the public what we do and why we do it.

Chief Nuses also stated the public is the eyes and ears of the Town of Merrillville. There are more citizens than Police Officers in the Town of Merrillville and we rely on the citizens to help us. The flyers for the Merrillville Community Police Meet Night will have a QR code. The community blitz with other Police Departments from surrounding areas is still ongoing.

Chief Nuses informed the council that Code Enforcement now a part of the Police Department has been working with Town Manager Reardon on addressing some of these homes that are eyesores in the community. He also encouraged the public to report homes that are eyesores.

-President Bella asked Town Manager Reardon did he have anything to add.

-Town Manager Reardon informed the council that he has nothing to add at this time.

## **GENERAL ORDERS**

### **A. Ordinances**

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

None

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

#### **Ordinance 23-12 (Discussion, Public Comment, 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.

Councilwoman Uzelac made a motion to approve Resolution 23-12, seconded by Councilman Pettit.

Director Price informed the council that he wants to make sure there is an understanding of what this decrease does to the Recreation Division. This decrease means we aren't doing anything in terms of programming for the rest of the year.

Director Price also informed the council that there will be only two sources of income being generated for the fiscal year 2023. The first source is the gym, and the second source is from special events. The Summer season is fast approaching, and families will be looking for things to do. We do have an event in May where families can find out what is going on; however, the question will be posed why the Parks Department doesn't have anything going on in the Town. This reduction doesn't allow us to plan for the remaining months of the year.

President Bella informed the council that this reduction won't stagnate any good ideas that come out of the Parks Department. All good ideas should be presented to the committee. If the council needs to find money to fund a specific event, let us know. This decrease doesn't mean summer activities are at a standstill.

Director Prices informed the council that the timing of the budget decrease is tough because all of the plans made will now have to be changed. Budgets allow us to plan ahead of time now we have to reassess the plans based on the budget adjustments.

President Bella stated there is no money to support the Parks Department budget.

President Bella informed the council that we will leave it to Councilman Pettit's committee to work with Director Price.

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

Motion carries by roll call vote 5-0.

**Ordinance 23-13 (Discussion, Public Comment, and Roll 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.

Councilman Pettit made a motion to approve Ordinance 23-13, seconded by Councilman Uzelac.

Councilman Minchuk informed the council that Fire Protection Territory had an unexpected repair to one of the latter trucks. This ordinance covers the cost of that repair.

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

Motion carries by roll call vote 5-0.

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

**Resolutions 23-10 (Discussion and Voice Vote)**

A Resolution of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana, Authorizing a Transfer of Monies Within the Funds of the Park Department.

Councilman Pettit made a motion to approve Resolution 23-10, seconded by Councilwoman Uzelac.

No further questions or comments from the council.

Motion carries by voice vote 5-0.

**Resolutions 23-11 (Discussion and Voice Vote)**

A Resolution of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana, Transferring Monies Within the 2023 Budget, -(CODE)

Councilwoman Uzelac made a motion to approve Resolution 23-11, seconded by Vice-President Hardaway.

No further questions or comments from the council.

Motion carries by voice vote 5-0.

**Resolutions 23-12 (Discussion and Voice Vote)**

A Resolution of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana, Transferring Monies Within the 2023 Budget, - (CODE)

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

No further questions or comments from the council.

Motion carries by voice vote 5-0.

***C. American Rescue Plan***

**AP Voucher Register Summary for ARP Purchases for April 11, 2023**

Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that the ARP Voucher summary is \$5,991.25.

Vice-President Hardaway made a motion to approve ARP purchases for \$5,991.25, seconded by Councilman Minchuk.

No further questions or comments from the council.

Motion carries by voice vote 5-0.

***D. BZA & LARGE GATHERING ACTIONS***

None

***NEW BUSINESS***



None

***OLD BUSINESS***

None

***SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS***

None

***ANNOUNCEMENTS:***

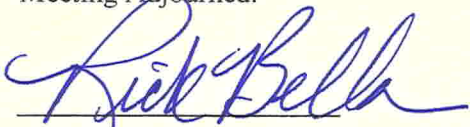
- Plan Commission Workshop April 18th at 6:30 pm
- RDC Meeting April 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:15 pm
- Town Council Meeting April 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm

***ADJOURNMENT:***

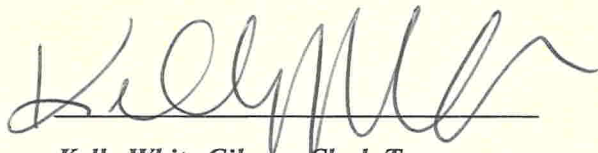
Vice-President Hardaway made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Minchuk.

Motion carries by voice vote 5-0.

Meeting Adjourned.



*Rick Bella, President*



*Kelly White Gibson, Clerk-Treasurer*

*Minutes Submitted By Angela Lewis*

