



**Town of Merrillville**  
**Town Council Meeting Minutes**  
**June 13, 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.

President Bella asked the council and audience to remember Councilman Donald Spann who was buried today at Calumet Park Cemetery.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Led by Vice-President Hardaway

**ROLL CALL** – Roll Call was taken by Madam Clerk-Treasurer Kelly White Gibson

Present were:

Vice-President Hardaway- (Ward 2)

Councilwoman Uzelac- (Ward 4)

Councilman White - (Ward 7)

Councilman Pettit- (Ward 6)

President Bella- (Ward 5)

Five Present (5) at roll call One (1) Absent Councilman Minchuk

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

**Kiwanis Presentation**

The Kiwanis Club presented the Merrillville Police Department K-9 unit with a check for \$700.00 to help with the needs of the K-9 program. The Crossroads Kiwanis Club use to be the Merrillville Breakfast Club. The club has expanded to include Crown Point and Merrillville. The club had a waffle breakfast to support the canine unit in Merrillville and Crown Point.

President Bella thanked the Kiwanis Club for their involvement and support of Merrillville's K-9 program.

**Vernon Smith Legislative Wrap-Up Report**

Representative Smith came in after the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission report that was given by Vice-President Hardaway.

Representative Smith gave the council and audience an overview of his role as a representative for the Town of Merrillville and said a few words paying tribute to Councilman Donald Spann.

Representative Smith also went over a few highlights and updates of some bills from his Legislative Report that was passed out at the meeting.

Representative Smith highlighted the following bills:

- House Bill #1002 (Education and Workforce Development: Page 4) – A bill to add more funding to Education and Workforce Development
- House Bill #1004 (Healthcare: Page 5) – A bill to spend more money on healthcare.

President Bella asked Town Manager Reardon or Director King did they have anything to report.

Councilwoman Uzelac informed the council that Town Manager Reardon has some letters to present.

Town Manager Reardon informed the council that several items will be reported under this section. The items are as follows:

**Signage Proposal Funding Approval**

Town Manager asked Director King to present the signage proposal for approval.

Director King informed the council that as part of the initiative to revitalize the department, the name is now called the Merrillville Street Department. We would like to have a 4 by 8 digital sign erected out in front of the building located on 13<sup>th</sup> West 73<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. The building sits back a little and people don't know we are located on the street. The 4 by 8 digital display will allow us to post Town events such as branch and leaf pickups.

Director King also informed the council that the proposal includes the replacement of two awnings and all the electrical work.

A motion was made by Councilman Pettit to approve the new sign engine awning at the Street Department, seconded by Councilwoman Uzelac.

President Bella informed the council that the council had discussed that half the funding would come from Broadway Tiff and the other half from American Rescue Plan (ARP).

President Bella asked Council Pettit will his motion stand with the additional funding information.

Councilman Pettit stated his motion stands with the added information about funding.

Councilwoman Uzelac stated that her second stands with the added information about funding.

President Bella asked Vice-President Hardaway do he agree regarding the ARP funding.

Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that an ARP meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 14, 2023, at 4:30 pm and the information can be presented to the committee.

Councilman White asked about the total cost of the project.

Director King informed the council that the total cost will be around \$62,000.00 for the awning, signs, and electrical work to rebrand the department.

No further questions or comments from the council.

Motion carries by voice vote 5-0.

**Letter Proposal to Provide Our Services to Complete the Next Level Trails (NLT) Application**

President Bella asked Councilwoman Uzelac did she have the letter proposal to provide services to complete the Next Level Trails Application.

Councilwoman Uzelac stated that she has the letter and that Town Manager Reardon will read it to the council.

Town Manager Reardon informed the council that the letter comes from Butler, Fairman, & Seufert and has to do with the Next Level Trails Grant application round four which is the extension of the Erie Lackawanna Trail along West 91<sup>st</sup> Avenue. The myriad of activities associated with this proposal. are as follows:

- Complete The Application
- Coordinate with the Town of Schererville and the City of Crown Point.
- Identify Possible Connections to the Pennsy Trail at Clark Road
- Prepare a Detail Cost Breakdown Including Updating Any Previous Construction Engineering
- Develop the Application Narrative Including but not limited to a Detailed Description
- Address Historical Ecological and Architectural Resources
- Document Environment Permits
- Prepare and Submit Information to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources
- Coordinate and Enhance Existing Type
- Take Photos of Proposed Routes
- Monitor and Relay the Information on Construction

**PERSONNEL POLICY & EMPLOYEE BENEFITS – HARDAWAY-** Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that Representative Smith had to go home to pick up his report for his section on the agenda.

Vice-President Hardaway also informed the council that in April of 2023 President Bella, Director Pettit of Human Resources, and himself met with Dr. Danny Lackey to discuss several ideas on how to continue our efforts on diversity, equality, and inclusion. Dr. Lackey has retired from the school system and is available to work with the Town of Merrillville on a contractual basis to assist us in keeping our efforts going on these important issues.

Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that a proposal is in their council packet from Dr. Lackey for consultation and training services. Dr. Lackey will establish a diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) committee with Town employees representing various departments. Once the committee has been established, we will have orientation and training sessions with committee members focusing on DEI education in the Town's diversity and equality statement.

Vice-President Hardaway elaborated more on Dr. Lackey's proposal for consultation and training services for the Town of Merrillville.

President Bella asked Dr. Lackey to approach the podium to give a synopsis.

A motion was made by Vice-President Hardaway to approve Dr. Lackey's proposal for diversity, equality, inclusion consultation, and training services at a cost not exceeding \$7,500.00, seconded by Councilwoman Uzelac.

Vice-President Hardaway added to his motion that the council would like to empower President Bella to sign the agreement.

President Bella asked Councilwoman Uzelac if her second still stands with the addition to the motion

Councilwoman Uzelac confirmed that the second still stands.

No further questions or comments from the council.

Motion carries by voice vote 5-0.

**PUBLIC SAFETY- MINCHUK-** Councilwoman Uzelac informed the council that Councilman Minchuk is calling a meeting for Tuesday, June 27<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm an executive session to be held at Town Hall.

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

**PARKS & RECREATION- UZELAC** – Councilwoman Uzelac updated the council on the following improvements to the parks:

- The parks have been mowed.
- The rehab of the Rosenbalm, Pruzin, and Forest Hill is complete. The gazebos have new roofs.
- The bike trails are in great shape.

President Bella informed the council that there are photographs of the before and after of the gazebos' repairs.

Director Price added that he is glad that the problems were resolved.

**ABANDONED -BLIGHTED PROPERTIES-HARDAWAY** – Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that he has no report, but agrees with Councilman White about the travesty at Hickory Ridge. Code Enforcement and everybody else had played an integral part in trying to rectify this situation.

Vice-President Hardaway also informed the council that the Town will do whatever it can to help eliminate some of the residents' pain we should do.

President Bella asked Town Manager Reardon what happen to the landscaping company the Town hired to clean up the property at Hickory Ridge.

Town Manager Reardon stated he would contact the company,

Chief Nuses informed the council that a landscaping company wasn't hired by the Town, but the owner is paid up for their landscaping services and is supposed to start cleaning up the property.

available because of construction. We encourage everyone to come early and secure your spot. This year we will have a radio station V107.3 that will synchronize the music to the fireworks.

**Independence Day Parade July 4<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 am**

The Independence Day July 4<sup>th</sup> parade will start at 11:00 am. This year we will have guests speaker at three spots on Broadway.

**Job Fair July 27<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm**

The Town of Merrillville 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Job Fair will be on July 27<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 am until 3:00 pm at the Mike Anderson Event Center. We encourage those looking for employment to come out on that day.

Town Manager Reardon informed the council that we had verbal commitments from fifteen vendors to participate in the job fair. If we repeat our first and second years, we will top out at sixty.

President Bella asked how many jobs were offered at the first and second job fairs.

Town Manager Reardon informed the council that Albanese hired almost twenty people many more at our first job fair. At the second job fair including Albanese and Fed Ex, fifty people were hired. As we reinstate vendors back for our third job fair, we are asking them for their success rate.

Councilman Pettit informed the council that we need to remind vendors of the ten percent goal we asked for in hiring Merrillville residents when we give out incentives.

Town Manager Reardon informed the council that those are the first company we call and some of them call us in advance.

President Bella clarified the time start time of the parade. At the last meeting, the time given was 11:30 am which was an error. The parade will be starting at 11:00 am this year from the Community Center at 66<sup>th</sup> and Broadway traveling south and finishing at 80<sup>th</sup> Place.

Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that we will be able to use the parking lot at PNC Bank.

***DEPARTMENT & COMMISSION REPORTS***

***LAKE COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT-WHITE*** – Councilman White informed the council that he has nothing to report at this time.

***NORTHERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION-HARDAWAY*** – Vice-President Hardaway informed the council that he attended a NARCA conference earlier last week. At the meeting, we discuss the following:

- Trails
- Electric Vehicles
- Affordable Housing

of all the things that were discussed, the two that are dear to Merrillville are trails and affordable housing. More information will be forthcoming at a later date on how we can access some of these federal funding.

President Bella informed the council that we will not revert to Representative Smith's section on the agenda.

***STORMWATER MANAGEMENT RESOURCES-LAKE*** – Director Lake informed the council that Golf Construction is going to remobilize and get back on the Kaiser Ditch Lateral Project. There were some utility conflicts, but enough of them have been resolved for Golf Construction to continue with the projects. Director Lake elaborated on other projects in the works.

Director Lake also informed the council that we are officially a class seven again which is the best ranking in Indiana by CRS. This lowered flood insurance for high-risk categories by ten percent automatically, We have also received bronze status for the Clean Community Program.

Chief Nuses informed the council that for May 2023 there were 564 traffic stops and of those 306 tickets were issued. The department has implemented a traffic enforcement policy. We have assigned an officer who will only be addressing speeding vehicles in the twenty-five problem areas in the Town of Merrillville.

Chief Nuses also informed the council that he is working with Director Price to address the graffiti problem in Merrillville.

Chief Nuses informed the council that the department is looking to conduct a Woman's Self-Defense Night within the next few months. He hopes to have more information at the next council meeting about this event.

President Bella asked Chief Nuses to put the residents on notice that increased traffic patrol will be out in the community.

Chief Nuses informed the council and audience that ticketing speeders will increase in the community.

**Town Manager Reardon**

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)***

None

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

**Resolutions 23-16 (Discussion and Voice Vote)**

A Resolution Authorizing and Approving Acquisition of Certain Real Estate to be Utilized by the Merrillville Fire Protection Territory, and All Matters Related Thereto.

Vice-President Hardaway made a motion to approve Resolution 23-16, seconded by Councilwoman Uzelac.

President Bella asked Attorney Svetanoff if there was anything else the council should know about Resolution 23-16.

Attorney Svetanoff informed the council that the attorney for Fire Territory contacted him. All property that's acquired by the Fire Territory District has to be approved by the Merrillville Town Council. This property isn't going to cost us anything. The property can be paid strictly with the Fire Territory District proceeds. At this time, I heavily recommend that we accept Resolution 23-16 as tendered.

President Bella informed the council, for the record, the address is 20 West 73<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. The parcel number is 45-12-16-278-006.000-030.

President Bella asked Attorney Svetanoff for the purchase amount.

Attorney Svetanoff informed the council that the purchase amount is 130,000.00.

Councilman White asked how is the property going to be used.

Attorney Svetanoff informed the council that he thinks that the property is going to be used for training and administrative offices.

No further questions or comments from the council.

Motion carries by voice vote 5-0.

Vice-President Hardaway informed the council and audience that the caucus only involves the four Precinct Committeeman. The current precincts are 1,22, 18, and 25. They will select someone to serve the unexpired term of Councilman Spann.

Councilman White recognized Kimeka Parker for all of her work in the Hickory Ridge situation.

***SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS***

None

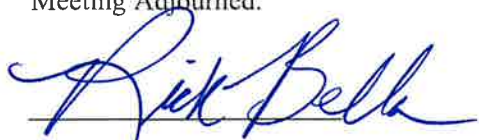
***ANNOUNCEMENTS:***

- Town Tax Talk June 14<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center
- Juneteenth Freedom Feast June 17<sup>th</sup>, 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm
- Town Council Meeting June 27<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm
- Fireworks will be at Merrillville High School on July 3<sup>rd</sup>
- 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade July 4<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 am starting at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center going South
- Job Fair July 27<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 am-3:00 pm at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center

***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*