



**Town Council of Merrillville**  
**Town Hall**  
**7820 Broadway**  
**Merrillville, IN 46410**  
**Town Council Meeting Minutes**  
**October 24, 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 Paul Anderson of First Presbyterian Church.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Led by Councilor Hardaway.

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

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

**Employee of the Month for October 2023**

Chief of Police Nuses and Interim Town Manager Griffin presented to the council and audience Chief's Admin Assistant Lori Sanfratello as October's Employee of the Month for the Town of Merrillville. Mrs. Sanfratello received a certificate of recognition and a gift card on behalf of the Town of Merrillville. Chief Nuses elaborated on Mrs. Sanfratello's exemplary qualities as an employee at the Police Department.

Councilor Bella elaborated on Breast Cancer Awareness Month explaining why the council and department heads were wearing pink colored shirts.

Councilor Bella informed the council that an additional item would be added to the agenda. Ordinance 23-25 will be added to the agenda due to the Budget and Finance Committee finding ways to conserve the current year's budget authority to make it available for a proposed budget of 2024. Ordinance 23-25 identifies current appropriations that might produce up to \$100,000.00 of savings in the current year's budget that can be applied towards the benefit for fiscal year 2024.

It was moved by Councilor Minchuk and seconded by Councilor Pettit to add to the agenda Ordinance 23-25. Upon a voice vote the Ordinance 23-25 was added to the agenda. The motion passed.

***CONSENT AGENDA***

Accts. Payable Register Voucher Approval for October 24, 2023.  
Approval of Town Council Meeting Minutes of October 10, 2023.  
Approval of Budget & Finance Committee Meeting Minutes of October 9, 2023.  
Approval of Budget & Finance Committee Meeting Minutes of October 12, 2023.  
Approval of Budget & Finance Committee Meeting Minutes of October 17, 2023

It was moved by Councilor Uzelac and seconded by Councilor Pettit 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 on the agenda there will be Ordinance 23-24 and Ordinance 23-25.

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

**STREET DEPARTMENT- MINCHUK** – Councilor Minchuk reported that the Street Department is waiting for the leaves to fall.

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

**Quick Response Code (QR CODE)**

120 residents have signed up to receive updates and information using the QR Code printed in the Town’s Newsletter.

**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](http://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. Councilor Hardaway informed the council that the mold at City Mall is the county's responsibility not the Town of Merrillville.

**ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS- WHITE** - Councilor White reported that according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Lake County is still at a low level for COVID-19 transmissions and zero deaths. Councilor Uzelac added that Walgreens and other drugstores are giving the flu and COVID-19 vaccines. Doctor’s offices are giving the flu vaccine.

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

**PUBLIC SAFETY- MINCHUK-** Councilor Minchuk reported that the traffic in Merrillville is still a problem despite the traffic measures that have been put into place. Once the traffic study is complete, the council will look into further measures to help with this overwhelming traffic problem.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT-PETTIT** – Councilor Pettit deferred to Councilor Minchuk. Councilor Minchuk reported that the property formerly known as Moe’s Garage has been acquired by the Town of Merrillville and will be used temporarily to house equipment for the Parks Department until Spring 2024. Councilor Pettit added that Silos at Sanders Farms have started construction on the third building which is 455,000 square feet. The permit fee was \$127,576.20. The Advante Building has all of its walls up. This is a 55,000-square-foot building being constructed by Holiday Corporation.

**PARKS & RECREATION- UZELAC** - Councilor Uzelac reported a birthday party in Crescent Parks and that the parks are in order except for leaves being picked up.

**ABANDONED -BLIGHTED PROPERTIES-HARDAWAY** – Councilor Hardaway had nothing to report at this time.

**DEAN & BARBARA WHITE COMMUNITY CENTER-PETTIT** – Councilor Pettit reported that the committee met and in attendance were Interim Town Manager Griffin, Director Price, and Financial Advisor Hudson. The yoga problem is being resolved this week with the yoga instructor. Councilor Pettit also elaborated on other items from the meeting including Capital Projects and Pop Warner Football League.

**SPECIAL PROJECTS (F & B TAX, DIVERSITY, 4<sup>TH</sup> of JULY CELEBRATION-HARDAWAY** – Councilor Hardaway had nothing to report at this time.

**DEPARTMENT & COMMISSION REPORTS**

**LAKE COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT-WHITE** – Councilor White reported that the Lake County Solid Waste District's Leaf Back program for unincorporated parts of Lake County including these Townships, Calumet, Union, and Dyer has started. The next bi-monthly meeting will be on November 17, 2023

**NORTHERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION-HARDAWAY** – Councilor Hardaway reported that the Northern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) was audited by the State Board of Accounts and no problems were reported.

**STORMWATER MANAGEMENT RESOURCES-LAKE** – Director Lake wasn't present at the meeting.

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

**FIRE TERRITORY BOARD-MINCHUK** – Councilor Minchuk reported that a meeting is scheduled for November 6, 2023.

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

#### **Director Price– Parks Department**

Director Price reported that if the weather holds up, the Parks Department will continue mowing the lawns at the parks. The department will also monitor the leaves. The trackers from NIRPC are in place to track the number of people using the trails.

#### **Chief Nuses – Police Department**

Chief Nuses reported that planning has begun for the holidays. The Police Department will be increasing officers in certain areas of the Town because thefts and armed robberies usually increase during this time of year. There's been a slight increase in vehicle break-ins throughout the Town and 90% of them are due to people leaving their car doors unlocked. The Traffic Blitz is still ongoing and is working. The Police Department is continuing with crime suppression in problem areas. Tickets are being written by Code Enforcement for debris on the property.

The Town Police Department 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 Edgewater Health Clinic has moved to the Town of Merrillville. The location is 5495 Broadway. The open house is on October 28<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. The ribbon cutting will be on Thursday, October 26<sup>th</sup> from 4:00 until 6:00 p.m.

#### **Interim Town Manager Griffin**

Interim Town Manager Griffin reported to the Councilors that he submitted a detailed report to them and to Madam Clerk-Treasurer Kelly White Gibson.

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> at the request of Dr. Lackey. Dr. Lackey asked to brief our staff and leadership about his early findings on our diversity initiatives. This meeting will be on October 25<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m.

### **GENERAL ORDERS**

#### ***A. Ordinances***

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

#### **Ordinance 23-25 (Discussion and Roll Call Vote)**

Interim Town Manager Griffin elaborated on the reductions listed in Ordinance 23-25.

### **TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE ENACTMENT NO. 2023-25**

**AN ORDINANCE REDUCING APPROPRIATIONS IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET FOR SOME DEPARTMENTS OF THE GENERAL FUND, PURSUANT TO I.C. 6-1.1-18, I.C. 36-5-3-5, ET SEQ.**

WHEREAS, It has been determined that it is now necessary to reduce appropriations from what was appropriated in the budget for the several identified departments of the General Fund;and,

WHEREAS, It has been determined that such diminished and reduced appropriations as may be approved by this enactment, will neither increase nor decrease the levy set under I.C. 6-1.1-17 and in the course of collection for FY 2023, however such reduction will work to preserve and reconcile the proposed 2024 budget, all pursuant to I.C. 36-5-3-5,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ENACTED by the Council of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana, as follows:

**Section 1.** That for the expenses of said municipality, the following appropriations of money are hereby reduced and ordered returned and reverted to the fund herein named and for the purposes herein specified, subject to the laws governing the same:

CORPORATION GENERAL FUND

**Department 002 Office of TOWN COUNCIL**

1101.002.141.00	IT Director	\$ 6,000.00
1101.002.391.00	INSTRUCTION	<u>\$ 4,000.00</u>
	<b>Subtotal Departmental reductions</b>	<b>\$ 10,000.00</b>

**Department 004 Building and Planning**

1101.004.117.00	Building Director	\$ 11,000.00
1101.004.140.00	Special Services Officer	<u>\$ 19,000.00</u>
	<b>Subtotal Departmental reductions</b>	<b>\$ 30,000.00</b>

**Department 005 Metropolitan Police Department**

1101.005.393.00	Hardware/Software	<u>\$ 20,000.00</u>
	<b>Subtotal Departmental reductions</b>	<b>\$ 20,000.00</b>

**Department 010 Code Enforcement Department**

1101.010.144.00	P/T Part-Time Code Enforcement	<u>\$ 10,000.00</u>
	<b>Subtotal Departmental reductions</b>	<b>\$ 10,000.00</b>

**Department 011 Engineering Department**

1101.011.394.00	Engineering Contractual	<u>\$ 30,000.00</u>
	<b>Subtotal Departmental reductions</b>	<b>\$ 30,000.00</b>

**Total GENERAL FUND** \$ 100,000.00

**Section 2.** That the Clerk-Treasurer is hereby authorized and instructed to inform the Indiana Department of Local Government Finance of this action and that these reductions be used to reinforce the available financial support for the adopted and filed budget for FY 2024, pursuant to IC 6-1.1-17;

**Section 3.** That in satisfaction and for the purposes of the provisions set out in I.C. 36-5-2-9.6, I.C. 36-5-3-5, I.C. 36-5-4-2, this enactment shall be deemed properly filed and introduced before the Town Council at a regular or special meeting, properly called and convened pursuant to I.C. 5-1.5-14 *et seq.*

Introduced and Filed on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of October 2023.

**Duly Passed and Adopted** this \_\_\_\_ Day of October 2023, by the Town Council of the Town of Merrillville, Indiana. Having passed by a vote of \_\_\_\_ in favor and \_\_\_\_ opposed, with a duly constituted enactment, all pursuant to I.C. 36-5-2-9.6;I.C. 36-5-3-5; I.C. 36-5-4-2.

**TOWN COUNCIL of the TOWN of  
MERRILLVILLE, INDIANA**

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**Rick Bella, President (IC 36-5-2-10)**

Attest:

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**Kelly White Gibson, Esq.**  
**Clerk-Treasurer (IC 33-42-4-1; IC 36-5-6-5)**

It was moved by Councilor Hardaway and seconded by Councilor Pettit, to approve the Ordinance 23-25. Upon a roll call vote, there were seven affirmatives and no negatives. With Councilors Hardaway, White, Minchuk, Pettit, Neal, Uzelac, and Bella voting in the affirmative, the motion passed. The ordinance was approved on first reading.

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

**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

Councilor Hardaway asked Madam Clerk-Treasurer Kelly White Gibson to read into the record the following:

The funds' total for the adopted budget is \$26,548,600.00  
The adopted tax level is \$14,278,418.00  
The adopted tax rate is .6899  
Under our home-rule funds, the total amount is 18,881,130.00

It was moved by Councilor Hardaway and seconded by Councilor Pettit for adoption of Ordinance 23.24. Upon a roll call vote, there were seven affirmatives and no negatives. With Councilors Hardaway, White, Minchuk, Pettit, Neal, Uzelac, and Bella voting in the affirmative, the motion passed. The ordinance was approved on first reading.  
Madam Clerk-Treasurer Kelly White Gibson read into the record:

Ordinance / Resolution Number: 23-24

Be it ordained/resolved by the **Merrillville Town Council** that for the expenses of **MERRILLVILLE CIVIL TOWN** for the year ending December 31, **2024** the sums herein specified are hereby appropriated and ordered set apart out of the several funds herein named and for the purposes herein specified, subject to the laws governing the same. Such sums herein appropriated shall be held to include all expenditures authorized to be made during the year, unless otherwise expressly stipulated and provided for by law. In addition, for the purposes of raising revenue to meet the necessary expenses of **MERRILLVILLE CIVIL TOWN**, the property tax levies and property tax rates as herein specified are included herein. Budget Form 4-B for all funds must be completed and submitted in the manner prescribed by the Department of Local Government Finance.

This ordinance/resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and approval by the **Merrillville Town Council**.

***Second Reading Public Hearing***

Democratic nominee for Clerk-Treasurer Eric January, Merrillville Indiana, opposes the role of the financial consultants when it comes to the Town Finances and wants changes made in January to the 2024 budget. He also opposed the 20% in income taxes going towards building a railroad.

Interim Town Manager Griffin reported that in the budget process with the help of department heads the general fund line-item was decreased to \$12,300,018 in the budget for 2024.

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

**Resolution 23-36 (Discussion and Voice Vote)**

A Resolution of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana Transferring Monies Within the CCI Fund.

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

**Resolution 23-37 (Discussion and Voice Vote)**

A Resolution of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana Transferring Appropriations Within the 2023 Budget of the Parks Departments.

It was moved by Councilor Minchuk and seconded by Councilor Uzelac to approve the resolution. Upon a voice vote the resolution was approved. The motion passed. The resolution was adopted.

**Resolution 23-38 (Discussion and Voice Vote)**

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

It was moved by Councilor Hardaway and seconded by Councilor Uzelac to approve the resolution. Upon a voice vote the resolution was approved. The motion passed. The resolution was adopted.

**Resolution 23-39 (Discussion and Voice Vote)**

A Resolution of the Town of Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana Transferring Monies Within the 2023 Local Roads and Street Budget.

It was moved by Councilor Hardaway and seconded by Councilor Minchuk 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 24, 2023 is \$23,591.16.

It was moved by Councilor Hardaway and seconded by Councilor Minchuk, to approve the ARP AP Voucher Register Summary for \$23,591.16, Upon a voice vote the ARP AP Voucher was approved. The motion passed.

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

*None*

***OLD BUSINESS***

*None*

***NEW BUSINESS***

*None*

***SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS***

*None*

***PUBLIC COMMENT***

1. Sabine Miller, Merrillville Indiana asked about the twenty-year agreement for 20% of the Town of Merrillville income tax dollars and when the agreement ends. She also asked about License Plate Recognition and Eminent Domain.
2. Ursula Peppers, Merrillville, Indiana requested that the council look into installing speed bumps in her neighborhood.
3. Alice Smedstad of the Merrillville Historical Society, Merrillville, Indiana explained how historical signs are handled.
4. Bryon Mesarch, Merrillville, Indiana asked about the Eminent Domain and why was it enforced on Moe's property and no other property in Merrillville.
5. Chris Hiltz, Merrillville Indiana asked for a private meeting to bring the project of the Turkey Creek sign to a close.

***ANNOUNCEMENTS***

- TRUNK or TREAT Thursday, October 26<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. at the Community Center 6600 Broadway
- Town Council Meeting November 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.
- Town Hall is an Official Toys for Tots drop-off location through December 8th

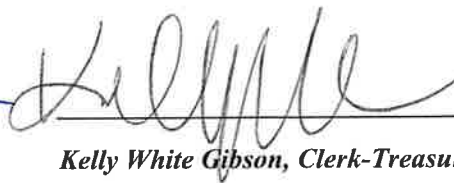
***ADJOURNMENT***

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.



***Rick Bella, President***



***Kelly White Gibson, Clerk-Treasurer***

***Respectfully Submitted By Angela Lewis***

