

November 19, 2024

The Town Council met in a regular session at the Town Hall at 5:30 p.m.

President Smotherman led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present in person were: SMOTHERMAN, CLARK, ARNEBERG, WEINZAPFEL and WILLIAMS along with Clerk-Treasurer, Ann Huelsmann and Attorney, Nathan Maudlin.

A list of visitors is attached.

Councilperson Weinzapfel made, and Williams seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the 10/15/2024 Regular Meeting. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Councilperson Williams made, and Clark seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the 10/28/2024 Memorandum of Executive Session. All were in favor except Councilperson Arneberg, who abstained because she did not attend. Motion carried.

Councilperson Williams reported that eleven trees were planted in Murphy Park, along with six planted on Arbor Day. There is more gravel to place on the River Trail. There will be no more mowing at the cemetery this year. Williams then talked about the passing of Rebecca Boskey of Backbeats. Rebecca and Don (her husband) are active members of our community. She was an incredibly talented merchandiser with quirky taste. Rebecca will be missed.

President Smotherman asked the Parks Board to think about closing Murphy Park or not for winter. We did not close for the winter last year, only bathrooms and shelter. A suggestion for putting in a port-a-potty was made for the Parks Board to consider.

Councilperson Clark asked Williams about the cemetery annex. There is no new information pertaining to the annex.

Councilperson Arneberg presented slides from the Posey County Housing Study which included New Harmony. Segments from the pages Arneberg noted are included with this document, which includes Page 3, 4, 10, 72, and 78. Key findings include the need for more affordable housing (<\$200,000, not low-income housing). Also, local government should focus on zoning and the possible purchasing of land. Ideally that plan would be to build one hundred houses per year for the next ten years throughout the county. The final version of this study will come out in December 2024 (will be available online). Arneberg stated that seven members of One New Harmony and NHBA will be attending the National Main Street Conference in Philadelphia.

Councilperson Weinzapfel reported there will be a presentation regarding nuisance insects at the WMI on March 6, 2025, at 6:30. Doug Ginder, Vector Entomologist for the Indiana Department of Health will lead the conversation. Weinzapfel said the Christmas decorations will hopefully be up before Thanksgiving if it works out. Streetscapes is working with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Tom Guggenheim in developing a planting list for street trees.

Councilperson Clark had no update at this time.

President Smotherman reported on several items pertaining to the Town Marshall including getting police decals for the police car. The Marshal has completed CPR certification and at the end of this week the Marshal will be officially certified. The fire department is having hoses tested and will replace, as needed. Other building maintenance being done is looking at vents, filters and roll up door service. Smotherman is collaborating with One New Harmony and Tom Smith who is working with CenterPoint on some electrical upgrades for festivals and/or food trucks around the community. This initiative will probably get done in the Spring.

Councilperson Williams made a comment in reference to Streetscapes. CenterPoint has been in town and put up new brighter lighting which has resulted in some complaints. Williams wanted to make it clear that Streetscapes is still pursuing dark sky lighting. Please be patient and know the current new brighter lights have nothing to do with the town council.

Councilperson Weinzapfel reported that REA is at the beginning of the third phase out of four and has compiled a summary of key issues identified. These include declining population, lack of housing, high expectations of local government, sidewalks in need of repair, streetscapes, trail improvements, the bridge future, and the future plans for the school property, and flood plain. REA looked at everything that was brought forward by citizens. There was also mention of land use, zoning codes and new ways we classify various parts of town. They are working on legally defining boundaries of New Harmony. More information pertaining to the comprehensive plan will be coming January 21,

2025, as REA presents to the Steering Committee, the Town Council and the Plan/Preservation Commission. Citizens can find documents to date at [newharmonyplan.com](http://newharmonyplan.com).

President Smotherman commented that the previous Comprehensive Plan outlined the use of dark sky lighting.

Councilperson Clark outlined changes regarding the purchase of the school since the last meeting in October. Sealed bids were due last Thursday (November 14) at 3:00 pm. Six bids were received. A second and final bid can be submitted by November 20 at 10:00 am. The Town did submit a bid. The Town Council is considering whether they want to change their bid. The Town can offer a higher bid now based on the two updated appraisals. The appraisal numbers were changed due to previously using a book valuation to tear down the building, lights, baseball field, etc. There is also value in selling asphalt. Our bid maximum went from \$116,000 to \$253,000. The Town Council will be notified in the next couple of days if the town bid is accepted. If the town's bid is accepted, then the council would vote to purchase it or not.

Anita Hawkins asked if we were buying the school to use it or to tear it down. Councilperson Clark responded to get the maximum value of the property would be to tear it down and build housing. It was asked what we would do with the property if we got it. Clark responded that a community decision would be taken into consideration on future use.

Lois Gray asked if the town council was having an Executive Meeting later that evening. Councilperson Clark responded that an Executive Meeting was held earlier that day. "We thought we would let the sellers know if we were going to change our offer or not. Nothing is due until tomorrow so we thought we would wait until tonight should anything come up in this meeting," Clark responded.

Councilperson Clark continued his update. We have updated our Water Emergency Continuation Plan. Clark made the motion to approve the Water Emergency Continuation Plan. Weinzapfel seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Councilperson Clark reminded us that fire hydrants have been purchased. There was a delay in installing them to determine whether we had the correct ones which we do. Installation will happen in the spring.

Councilperson Clark made a motion to accept United Systems quote for gas meter radio feed readers, not to exceed \$60,000. Weinzapfel seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed. (IS THIS THE SAME AS THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH?)

Councilperson Clark reported that most of our new water meters are in and 120 have been installed. We talked about doing the same thing with our gas meters – a radio read. We want to install both at the same time moving forward. Clark made a motion to purchase 454 radio modules and service /support from United Systems, not to exceed \$60,000. Weinzapfel seconded it. Arneberg asked about which fund the money would come from. Williams stated that it is a great investment. Clark said the Gas Utilities Depreciation fund has \$125,000 money in it. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Councilperson Clark updated us that all wastewater equipment that was previously approved has come in. Clark has received two bids for installation. The quotes range from Lakeside (\$20,000) to Melkay (\$7,740). Clark made a motion to accept Melkay's quote for installation not to exceed \$9,000. Williams seconded it. Councilperson Williams noted that have repaired/upgraded all the sewer workhorse "pieces." Clark mentioned that we have only one agitator and to get a second as backup could cost as much as \$2-3M. We currently have capacity for the town. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Councilperson Clark acknowledged that New Harmony has some unsafe, unfit and nuisance properties. President Smotherman has reached out to numerous residents regarding their properties. That is commendable but we do not seem to be getting anywhere with that approach. Clark knows that there is a formal process where you can put people on notice. Mt. Vernon has formally put people on notice if their properties decline, have seized some, and even sold the properties. Clark proposed that he begin the process to investigate addressing unsafe and declining properties. Christopher Layer asked if we currently had posted criteria. Clark replied we have numerous ordinances. For example, we do have an ordinance of unlicensed vehicles that we have addressed. Our new Marshal knows that it was a part of his mandate when hired to start to pursue such violations. Clark said that our ordinance specifically addressing nuisance properties needs to be updated. It was mentioned that ordinance books are at Town Hall and the WMI. Ordinances are currently being reviewed.

Councilperson Clark stated that the Town Council and Clerk-Treasurer are having conversations with Baker Tilly regarding financial consulting support to look at the optimal way to budget and invest our funds. Clark did not get the quote back in time for this meeting. We should have something back by the December meeting.

President Smotherman mentioned that he will be rewriting the parameters around forgoing the event fees for 501c3s. Smotherman will start to put criteria together outlining eligibility.

Councilperson Clark made a motion to hire Duell LaMar as a Maintenance Laborer at \$16.00 an hour starting November 25, 2024. Williams seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Councilperson Williams made a motion to increase the hourly rate for Terry Brown, Anita Hawkins and Christian Mills to \$20.00 an hour on the next pay period. Clark seconded it. Motion passed. It was mentioned that Brown and Mills are going to obtain their gas certification. Hawkins is doing a good job assisting in town hall transitions such as the radio readers. Hawkins is partnering well and closely with Johnathon Webber in the installation of the new meters, working in double systems. She is doing a wonderful job. Clerk-Treasurer Huelsmann said that Hawkins's hours and eligibility for some benefits will be addressed in an updated ordinance. Smotherman mentioned that we are also looking at Hawkins moving to full-time hours and being eligible for some benefits. That will be addressed in a future ordinance. All were in favor. Motion passed.

President Smotherman read the request for the Town Council to establish a Dr. George and Peggy Rapp Memorial Award. The Purchase Award will not exceed \$1,000. The Hoosier Art Salon suggested funding source could come from the Economic Development fund since the Plain-Air Paint out has been a 25-year benefit to the New Harmony business community. Councilperson Arneberg made a motion to establish a Dr. George and Peggy Rapp Memorial Award. Williams seconded it. There was discussion that this is a onetime award, as the town does not collect artworks. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Lecia Cousert presented to the Town Council that she wanted her sewer bill to be reduced to \$0 on her Taylor St. property where a trailer was removed. It was explained that should she want to use water on that property in the future there would be a \$750 re-tap fee. Cousert also explained that this reduction in her bill is coming three months after she initially asked because of misunderstanding of the rules to request. President Smotherman clarified that she was not on the agenda previously. Councilperson Weinzapfel made a motion to reduce her water bill to \$0 effective on next utility bill. Williams seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed.

President Smotherman asked the Town Council to consider adding to the agenda 1. Printer and copier purchase in Town Hall and 2. Purchase of uniforms for the maintenance crew. Councilperson Williams made the motion to add these two items to the agenda. Clark seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Councilperson Clark made a motion to approve winter/safety gear and clothing not to exceed \$3,200. Weinzapfel seconded it. Weinzapfel asked if they would last a few years. Smotherman answered that yes, they are durable, and their current gear is old. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Councilperson Weinzapfel made a motion to approve the purchase of one new printer, new copier, and a service agreement not to exceed \$6,999. Williams seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Councilperson Clark made, and Arneberg seconded a motion to approve the claims. Weinzapfel questioned utilizing the Tolliver Fund for payment to a tree company. Clerk-Treasurer Huelsmann confirmed Tolliver funds were used only for trimming and/or purchasing trees, not removing. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Christopher Layer presented \$200 to the fire department from a Scottish tea picnic fund raiser he hosted along with Denise Rapp.

There being no further business, Councilperson Arneberg made and Weinzapfel seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor. Motion carried and the meeting was adjourned.

Jeffrey Smotherman, President of Town Council

Attest:

Ann Huelsmann, Clerk-Treasurer