

AUGUST 21, 2018

The Town Council met in regular session at the Town Hall at 8:30 a.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Blaylock.

Present were: BLAYLOCK, ALSOP, FLANDERS, WADE, and WATSON along with Clerk-Treasurer Karla Atkins and Attorney Erin Bauer.

The following visitors were present: Dan Barton, Mick McConnell, Johnathan Scott, Tom Stahl, Mary Ann Michna, Jeanne Maudlin, Chris Laughbaum, Don Alsop, Sue Krozel, Rick Gooden, Rick Huffman, and Bobby Grider.

Councilman Watson made and Wade seconded a motion the minutes of the previous regular meeting be approved. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Councilman Wade made and Watson seconded a motion the minutes of the July 31, 2018, special meeting be approved. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Councilman Alsop reported the street paving has been completed.

Councilman Alsop announced the New Harmony Garden Club will now be taking care of the north entrance of Murphy Park.

Councilman Flanders reported a bag of sharpies was left at the recycling center and an employee was stuck by one. He stated Chris Kissel can answer any questions regarding the disposal of these items.

Councilman Flanders announced that a request from Dollar General for construction of a new store in New Harmony will be on the agenda for the September 6 Plan Commission meeting. The meeting starts at 5 p.m. He encouraged those interested to attend.

President Blaylock appointed Allen Hatch to replace Don Alsop on the Plan Commission. Mr. Alsop recently submitted his resignation letter.

President Blaylock reported the gas regulator station needs some repairs and upgrades. An estimate of \$6,600 has been received from Utility Safety & Design. Councilman Watson made and Wade seconded a motion that the necessary repairs and upgrades be done by Utility Safety & Design per their estimate. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Councilman Wade made and Watson seconded a motion that the Town commit a maximum of \$29,078 in 2019 as match for the Community Crossings Matching Grant. This is the required 25% match of the total estimated project cost of \$116,312. All were in favor. Motion carried. President Blaylock stated an estimate of \$5,875 was received to pave the alley behind Chris' Pharmacy, from Church to Tavern. This is not covered by the grant and would need to be paid 100% by the Town.

Councilman Watson made and Wade seconded a motion that the DOT Drug and Alcohol Policy be adopted. This will replace the Town's current drug program for the gas utility. All were in favor. Motion carried.

President Blaylock reported the appraisals on the former school property have been received by the Town. Appraisal Company Inc. appraised the entire property at \$345,000, while Independent Appraisers Consultants Inc. quoted \$371,000. President Blaylock noted these are probably much lower than people expected, but he noted the appraisers had included in their analysis other schools that had sold, and all were sold very cheap. He continued that it had been suggested that the Town offer the building to the North Posey School District, and he had asked Attorney Bauer to draft a letter stating such. Councilman Wade made and Watson seconded a motion that the letter be submitted to the North Posey School District offering the former school building to them. Councilman Wade noted he would like the letter to be hand delivered. A deadline of September 14 is included in the letter for North Posey to respond. Councilman Flanders stated he feels the letter is premature. He feels Council should hire a broker first to see what options are available for the property. He suggested a group called ArtSpace.org, which converts former schools, and he stated solar fields could be looked into. He noted that he had suggested in the Council's budget meeting that an update of the Town comprehensive plan might be needed. He continued many things in Town have changed and new opportunities have arisen including the bridge, the lots on South St., the proposed Dollar General Store, and the former school property. He noted this is part of his argument as to why the former school shouldn't be offered to North Posey. Councilman Alsop asked how long of a delay this might cause regarding doing something with the former school. Councilman Flanders stated he thinks it might take a year or more but he does not feel like Council needs to be in a hurry. He repeated he thinks Council needs to proceed with hiring a broker for the property. All were in favor except Councilman Flanders. Motion carried.

Rick Huffman asked why the former school has not previously been listed with a commercial realtor. He pointed out the schools that were compared in the appraisals are in much worse shape than the former New Harmony School. President Blaylock commented that the property was not previously listed because Council was working with WMI, and that ended the first part of 2018. Also, it took several months to get the appraisals back.

Dan Barton stated he is opposed to Council sending a letter to North Posey. He feels the appraisals are way too low. He thinks the property should have been listed for sale the day the Town took ownership. Attorney Bauer noted the property can be transferred to certain nonprofits, if they meet the exception in the law.

Mary Ann Michna asked if Council would be interested in contacting Artspace.org. Council agreed all options are on the table.

Jeanne Maudlin asked Council why the healthy street tree was taken down and what procedure was followed in removing the tree at Brewery and South Streets. She stated this tree was planted with approval by the Town, and it was planted as part of the Park Board's bicentennial project. She also asked where the tree will be planted to replace that one. President Blaylock responded the Park Board will make the decision on the location of the replacement tree. He continued the tree in question was planted in a ditch, and would eventually hinder drainage. Therefore, the Park Board, and the Town Council member over Parks, made the decision to remove the tree. Johnathan Scott asked who made the decision that the tree would impede the drainage. He stated the tree was a dwarf, and near its maximum size when it was removed. He does not feel this tree would ever cause a problem. Park Board President Sue Krozel stated she was made aware of the tree by Supt. Grider, and they have been trying to address trees before they become a problem. She stated the tree will be replaced, and she is open to suggestions on the location. Supt. Grider commented that several years ago when trees were planted, he made some mistakes as far as some locations. He continued the tree in question was going to eventually tear up the sidewalk.

Jeanne Maudlin pointed out weeds are taking over much of the trails. President Blaylock agreed to look into this.

Rick Huffman reported the area in front of his shop on Main St. where the tree was formerly planted is a trip hazard. Councilman Wade and President Blaylock are aware of the problem and are addressing it.

President Blaylock announced the GIS mapping project is nearing completion. A new computer needs to be purchased to run the program. An estimate from Computer Plus for the needed hardware and software is \$1299.96, which is in addition to the cost of purchasing a tablet, which is also needed. Councilman Wade made and Watson seconded a motion that Supt. Grider be authorized to spend up to \$2,000 for a new computer and tablet. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Councilman Wade announced the sidewalks downtown will be sealed in the next month or so. He asked that business owners contact Supt. Grider with questions.

Council discussed naming the drive at Murphy Park as a step in possibly including it in a future Community Crossings Matching Grant project. Councilman Flanders asked if this could be done for alleys also. President Blaylock stated this could be done, but he cautioned there are 38 alleys in the residential areas of Town, and paving one will cause residents in other areas to become upset. Councilman Wade made and Alsop seconded a motion the drive at Murphy Park be named "Park Circle". All were in favor. Motion carried.

Councilman Alsop made and Watson seconded a motion the claims be allowed and the Clerk pay the same. All were in favor. Motion carried.

President Blaylock reported the insurance company is not wanting to continue insuring the vacant former school building. This could create a problem in the future.

President Blaylock announced water line flushing will begin soon. He would also like to replace four or five of the older hydrants.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Alvin Blaylock, President of Town Council

Attest:

Karla L. Atkins, Clerk-Treasurer