

OCTOBER 15, 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, 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 9/17/2024 Regular Meeting. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Councilperson Clark made, and Weinzapfel seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the 9/23/2024 Special Meeting. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Councilperson Williams made, and Clark seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the 10/02/2024 Memorandum of Executive Session. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Councilperson Williams reported that night sky lights were installed in the new shelter at Murphy Park. There was a total of six lights out at the park and two had been replaced. The Parks Board is assessing future lighting needs of the park. Five new trees were planted by Ancient Roots Native Nursery. United Way's Day of Caring was September 27, 2024. New pickets were installed around Playtopia, and support boards were stained by workers from Apex Engineering, led by Jim Riese. Arbor Day will be celebrated on October 19, 2024, in Murphy Park at 10:00 am. Councilperson Williams read the program. Williams also reported the new box scraper was being tested on the river trail gravel before the RGRG 5K run. The town has more gravel coming to complete the river trail. The riprap received a second treatment with one more to go.

Councilperson Weinzapfel reported that the Clerk/Treasurer simplified the tree report form. Weinzapfel is investigating the best practices of lighting. Deig Brothers is contracting with CenterPoint to replace florescent and incandescent lighting for small businesses, towns, and non-profits. Deig Brothers went to all the town properties to evaluate opportunities. CenterPoint has a program where they will pay, sometimes, up to 70% of the costs of replacing your light bulbs. It was reported a \$2,000 annual energy savings at the Sewage Treatment Plant. The Town would pay \$1,185 for \$4,000 worth of work. To replace all the lights in the Town Hall would be an annual energy savings of \$280. The cost to replace the bulbs is \$560, of which CenterPoint will pay \$336. Weinzapfel reviewed the total cost of this project at \$2,356. Councilperson Weinzapfel asked for a suspension of the rules to ask for a vote on this project. Williams seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried. Weinzapfel wants to quickly engage Deig Brothers, through CenterPoint, because this must be completed by the end of November 2024. Councilperson Weinzapfel made a motion that we approve this CenterPoint project not to exceed \$3,000 (to include motion sensors). Williams seconded. There was discussion regarding motion sensors or night sky lights at the sewer plant; a comment was made that the sewer plant would be going from no lights to a lot of lights. There will be motion sensors on exterior lights, and they will reduce overall costs. Williams seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Councilperson Clark gave an update on the possible purchase of the school. The process is ongoing, and the property has been listed. Sealed bids will be accepted. The council will make sure we continue to stay in the game and communicate that we are interested in the property. The town is in the process of replacing water meters. They will be radio readers. Installation of new meters will continue into the Spring. The Federal and State Governments will be leading a lead and copper survey of towns and the residents. The Town has already completed a survey of everything that is on our side of the meters. On our side of the meters, we have no lead, galvanized or copper piping and no problems. The next step is on the residents – meter to house. The Government wants the town to send out notifications by November 15, 2024. The town must get this information back from everyone in town. The easiest place to look is where the pipe comes into your house. You will hear more about this. Clark reported that the new well is up and running. The sewer plant repairs will be completed when we receive parts. The new fire hydrants arrived. They are being assessed to ensure they are the correct ones before we install. President Smotherman reminded residents that they will hear more about this because water will have to be shut down for periods of time to install. Councilperson Clark announced that he and the Clerk-Treasurer have spent some time reviewing medical coverage for town employees for 2025. We do not have the final numbers yet but should soon. Clark gave a tech update noting that it will be completed when the new computers are installed at Town Hall on October 19, 2024. He said the next steps will include billing online. The Clerk-Treasurer and Billing Clerk will be talking to vendors and coming back to the council for approval. Clark said that we are looking at technology that would include new ways to communicate with the community, credit card payments, golf cart permits, building permits, and camping, that will be implemented in pieces. Clark reported that the gas locator tool quit today. Johnathan Webber, Superintendent, has researched the price and is estimating \$8,000. With the council's

permission Clark will contact Baker Tilly (financial consultant for municipalities) for budget training, investments, reserves, TIFs, and redevelopment districts. Also, some long-term budgeting. With the council's approval, Councilperson Clark would like to reach out to Baker Tilly and set up an informative meeting.

President Smotherman reported the second Flock camera is up by the fire department.

Jan Kahle, President of Harmony Associates, said that new pickets have been installed at Playtopia. They are still taking orders. Pickets are \$35 each and order forms are available at Town Hall.

Jeanne Maudlin, President of the Parks Board, announced that all new lights at Murphy are installed.

Jean Kares asked if she would be able to make utility payments through direct deposit out of our checking. President Smotherman commented that we can already do that now and clarified that it is a direct payment. Councilperson Clark said yes, and to make sure your account number was recorded in the memo section. Charles Bandy requested that our new program be built as an auto payment.

Joe Briant said that she has used the restrooms and Murphy Park. Upon entering the light went on but just a minute after entering the stall, the lights went out.

Debra Johnson asked if the \$200,000 "COVID" money was secured. Councilperson Clark responded that we signed the agreement for the funds. It is not committed to buying the school, but the money is committed to us. Johnson asked when we would get it. Clark and President Smotherman said they would have to investigate that.

Council Weinzapfel reported that the REA Comprehensive Plan had over three hundred participants in the two public workshops and focus groups. REA is determining the town's outer boundaries and looking at zoning code. All information pertaining to the Comprehensive Plan and summaries from the workshops are online. October 18, 2024, is the last day to complete surveys.

Councilperson Clark made a motion to accept and submit the 2025 budget. Weinzapfel seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Councilperson Clark made a motion to approve Johnathan Webber as our new Superintendent and increase his hourly amount from \$25.00 (effective 10/1/24) to \$28.50 based on completed gas certification. Webber will receive another increase when he completes the water certification. Williams seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed. Councilpersons Clark and Williams both commented on the excellent job Webber is doing. Clark mentioned that we are looking for a new person in maintenance to replace Webber, who replaced Strader.

Councilperson Weinzapfel made a motion to have the Elm tree behind town hall removed at the cost of \$2,600 from Wabash Valley. Williams seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Councilperson Clark communicated that a previously approved estimate from MelKay was \$68,292. The final bill was \$72,481.61. Clark made a motion to pay an additional \$4,189.61. Weinzapfel seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Councilperson Clark made a motion to replace big meters at a cost of \$26,141 for seven meters. The big meters service the State Park, Atheneum, Nursing Home, Auditorium, Inn, Red Geranium, Conference Center, Granary, Ford Home, and Fragrant Farms. Williams seconded it. There was discussion around Fragrant Farms having a large meter, which Anita Hawkins confirmed they did not. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Councilperson Clark reported that he is looking at radio readers for our gas meters also. The quote is not back yet. This proposal will just be replacing readers, not the meters. Of course, some meters are regularly replaced because of age. There was discussion regarding the difference between a reader and a meter.

President Smotherman read the event permit application for Christmas in New Harmony. Robin Lewis clarified some of the events on December 7, 2024. Events will be happening from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm. The expected number of spectators is 10,000. The parade will commence at 10:30 am. The maintenance team has been given a map pertaining to roadblocks and parade route. Lewis reported that the petting zoo is contained in a bus. Santa will be roaming around the WMI/Candy Land area to reduce the congestion of lines. There will be food trucks. There will be a house tour with Historic New Harmony providing the tram transportation available and a gnome scavenger hunt. Lewis listed the houses on the tour. Clark made a motion to accept the permit application. Williams seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed.

President Smotherman reminded residents that October 25, 2024, is the fall cleanup day.

Councilperson Clark made, and Weinzapfel seconded a motion to approve the claims. All were in favor. Motion carried.

There being no further business, Councilperson Clark made and Weinzapfel seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor. Motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Jeffrey Smotherman, President of Town Council

Attest:

Ann Huelsmann, Clerk-Treasurer