

Village of Hiram

Finance/Safety Committee Meeting Minutes

April 26, 2022

Call to Order: Chris Szell called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm

Committee Members Present: Lou Bertrand, Mayor
Chris Szell, Chairman
David Smith, Councilman
Paul Spencer, Councilman
Susan Skrovan, Fiscal Officer

Committee Members Absent: Beth Greenwood, Councilperson

Hiram Officials Present: Frank Hemphill, Councilman
Bill Byers, Fire Chief
Jason Groselle, Asst. Fire Chief
James McGee, Village Administrator
Steven Schuller, Asst. Village Administrator

Others: Ed Frato-Sweeney

Agenda: The Mayor said he has to leave by 6:30 pm this evening so he would ask that some items under unfinished business be moved up on the agenda. A motion to approve the proposed agenda for Finance/Safety and move Unfinished Business up after public comment was made by Mr. Spencer with a second from Mr. Smith. Motion passed unanimously.

Minutes: A motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 29, 2022 as presented was made by Mayor Bertrand with a second from Mr. Spencer. Motion passed unanimously.

Guests/Public: Ed Frato-Sweeney wanted to mention that negotiations need to start between Hiram College and the Village; he had a meeting today with the College President and others and they are willing to discuss their contract. They are willing to increase their contribution but want to know specifically what it would go to. Ed was looking for the most recent Village budget. Susan will send it over to their CFO, Nancy Rubin. Steve Schuller said he has most of the information Ed was looking for in his original proposal; he will copy it to him.

Unfinished Business: a. **Township Garage and Appraisal:** The Mayor said Township Trustee Jack Groselle sent him the appraisal for their garage; the Township really wants to sell it. Finance members discussed their options and the Village's current financial situation. Village Administrator James McGee said we have all been thinking about this; for one thing the building is zoned residential. For someone to utilize the building for commercial, they would have to come before our zoning. The Street Department could use it as a garage or for storage. We could also use it for our Police or Fire but there would be costs involved in updating the building. It is not hooked up to our sewer system. Dave said we have storage already; the placement near the cemetery is good however, the cost of \$185,000 is a lot for storage or for the cemetery use. We are also not flush with cash, if we were, it may be worth purchasing.

Dave would like to see the Village sell the light plant which we use for storage before considering purchasing another building for possible storage. The Mayor suggested we could lease the building with an option to purchase. Paul also suggested we put our light plant on the market. Our building does have a hole in the roof that would need to be repaired first. Members wanted to think about the options and discuss it again next month, they would like to take a look at the Township building first and define the possible uses more clearly.

d. Light Plant: Hiram College is not interested in this building. Paul suggested we get some market analyses from several realtors. Our Village Administrator will get a current market analysis, as is, from a realtor on the building/property.

c. Blighted Properties: The Mayor brought up blighted properties. Paul said the Couch farm house; the farm wants the person out that is living there and tear it down! It was Paul's understanding that the person living there was given life estate on that property for taking care of the owner! Chris said there is nothing on record, it was a handshake deal. There is concern over serving a conviction notice on the property. Paul would like to see it fixed up. Notices were served on other blighted properties such as the property on S.R. 305. Chris said the neighbor of that property did ask him about the truck parked there. Dave thought we had something in our zoning about abandoned/junk vehicles; has our Zoning Inspector checked this out. Paul said not that he knew. The Mayor and Paul felt if there is no license on it, that would be a police matter. Inspection of the property is not our Zoning Inspector's job, that falls on the County Building Department and the Health Department. Dave said, so abandoned vehicles is not in zoning? Paul did not know right off the top of his head. Dave said most places have something in their zoning about junk vehicles. Susan provided a copy of the zoning code for Dave to review.

The Mayor will attend the Ohio Municipal League seminar in Cuyahoga Falls on June 10th; he encourages all of Council to attend, they are excellent regional conferences.

Department Updates:

Police Department: Police Chief Brian Gregory was absent so he provided his report to the Fiscal Officer. Copies were provided for everyone. The report will be attached to the official minutes.

Fire Department: Fire Chief Bill Byers provided an update on the tornado sirens; the Village one had low voltage. They are still waiting on the service company to come out for the Township siren.

The Fire Department's Assistant Chief Groselle applied for a grant with the Ohio Department of Commerce for an air pack; it is a \$10,000 grant. We were awarded the grant.

Village Adm/Utilities: VA James McGee reported on the generator for the water plant; parts are ordered.

Water meter project; there are four left to be installed. Our first meter read will be May 1st. Mr. Dunn had the auto reader and new meter installed last Thursday! Who should install new meters moving forward? Finance felt our crew should do the installation; cost is \$400.00.

James brought up the rear parking lot; paving is to begin in June. The Street Department would like to have the sewer drive done at the same time at a cost of \$12,000 and use sewer capital. We have sufficient funds in Sewer Capital. Paul felt we should do it.

A motion to approve paving the driveway to the Sewer Plant for \$12,000 was made by Mr. Spencer and seconded by Mr. Szell. Motion passed unanimously. Legislation will be prepared.

James reported that Adam Beal gave his two-week notice. An ad will be placed for his replacement; This would be for the water and sewer department.

Mowing the cemetery; we have \$15,000 appropriated for mowing or for part-time help. The Street Department would recommend having the company we used last year to help with the mowing prior to Memorial Day at \$1,000 per mow. There are approximately 26 weeks of mowing. Finance felt we should split the costs; pay for 13-15 weeks and do the rest ourselves.

James received quotes on the garage doors for the fire bays; \$23,500, \$25,040 and \$27,745. This includes the doors and the openers. Members discussed how we would pay for it. Paul Spencer said we would have to pay for it out of our General Fund. Members wondered whether this would be paid from Fire since it is for the fire bays or the General Fund because it is on our municipal building. Chief Byers said we could push it out one more year but they are rusted and getting really bad. Paul said we will have to pay for this out of General Fund and move forward! Legislation will be done.

James and Steve brought up the speed humps ordered for Peckham. Their concern is that they would have to drill our freshly paved roadway in order to install them and then remove them before snow plowing season. The Street Department is against drilling holes in our paved roads; can we return them? Finance members asked them to see if they can return them.

Fiscal Officer/Admin: Susan Skrovan reported receiving our first insurance payment for the generator rental at the water plant; she has paid CAT up to April 15th and TNT Stump removal for the trees that were cleaned up.

There has been no unusual spending with our General Fund; other than the \$25,000 that was just approved tonight.

Susan asked about the new skid loader loan payments; do we want to do a five or a six-year loan and do we want to put a down payment on the equipment? Without a down payment for a five-year loan; semi-annual payments would equal \$19,900 per year. With a down payment; semi-annual payments would be \$17,900. Without a down payment for a six-year loan; semi-annual payments would be \$17,000 per year and \$15,300 with a down payment. This would come out of the street infrastructure fund, water and sewer funds. Members discussed the options and what other projects will come from the street infrastructure fund. Finance would like to go with a six-year loan and provide a 10% down payment. Steve would like to go with the six-year loan but without a down payment. We will need legislation.

Finance would like to see some maintenance done to the light plant building and for James to get a quote on the roof. Dave would like to have Finance be updated on our equipment replacement plans over time and to know what future plans we have for all Village buildings and their maintenance. More discussion on maintenance and the costs involved. Susan found legislation from 40 years ago, 1983, involving the College, the Portage County Library and the Village. The Village offered to donate \$50,000 towards a new library facility, the College was willing to provide the property for a new library in exchange for the Village "giving" the light plant building to the College deeming that it was no longer needed for any administrative use!

Bills List: Bills list was reviewed. A motion to pay the bills was made by Mr. Spencer with a second from Mr. Smith. Motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business: **b. General Fund and Hiram College Discussion:** Chris Szell spoke about the recent meeting with Hiram College and with defining our services to the College. They noted what they are paying for in the contract and what is paid in income tax for operations of the Village. Paul Spencer stated the employees of Hiram College pay the income taxes, not the College. Paul said it will break down to either we have the money to provide the services or we do not provide the services. Chief Byers noted conversations in the past with providing private ambulance to their events; costs add up very quickly! Steve Schuller said the College appreciated them going and sitting down with them to explain the contractual stuff and why the Village is asking for more. Steve said the College felt the income tax they pay is their portion to the Village for services. What we are losing in property taxes from the College, we are not getting some other way. We are not bridging that gap, it is getting wider! Paul said, and we do not have businesses to help make up the gap.

Ed Frato-Sweeney suggested to Finance members to not discuss purchasing a \$185,000 property; he would drop that topic. Discuss ways to raise money. It looks bad to be looking at purchasing a \$185,000 property without a plan of what to use it for with the General Fund struggling. This should be taken off the table! Others agreed with Ed.

New Business: **a. HRA vs HSA:** tabled for tonight.

EMS Collections: Were reviewed and signed off.

Any Other Business: Fire Chief Bill Byers mentioned at the Hiram Township Trustees' meeting; they discussed capital purchases and asked how the Village was paying for their share of the new squad. Bill explained what the Village puts in for capital. The Township Trustees said they were using some of their COVID funds for the squad and asked what the Village was using theirs for? Finance members discussed when the funds come in and what funds are placed in capital. More discussion followed on the levies and what funds they are put into for Fire/EMS/Capital.


David Smith asked about our zoning code; he did find something in our code regarding prohibiting junk motor vehicles; Section 1113.17.

The next Finance/Safety Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 31, 2022.

Adjournment: A Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Szell with a second from Mr. Spencer. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:43 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Attest:


Susan J. Skrovan, Fiscal Officer


Chris Szell, Finance Chairman