

Village of Hiram

Finance/Safety Committee Meeting Minutes

June 28, 2022

Call to Order: Chris Szell called the meeting to order at 6:25 pm following the Special Council Meeting

Committee Members Present: Lou Bertrand, Mayor
Chris Szell, Chairman
Beth Greenwood, Councilperson
Paul Spencer, Councilman
Susan Skrovan, Fiscal Officer

Committee Members Absent: David Smith, Councilman

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

Others: None

Agenda: A motion to approve the proposed agenda for Finance/Safety was made by Mr. Szell with a second from Mr. Spencer. Motion passed unanimously.

Minutes: A motion to approve the meeting minutes of May 31, 2022 as presented was made by Mayor Bertrand with a second from Mr. Spencer. Motion passed unanimously.

Guests/Public: None

Department Updates:

Police Department: Police Chief Brian Gregory provided his report.

Our Police Officers were involved in a vehicle pursuit on Friday morning, June 24th at 12:40 am. The pursuit was terminated in Nelson Township; the vehicle was later found abandoned with front end damage near Koritansky Hall. Officer Devin Brown and our K9 were called to the scene and conducted a K9 track resulting in the apprehension of the assailant.

A new law in the State of Ohio, HB172, takes effect on July 1, 2022, allowing for the use of consumer grade 1.4G fireworks. The new law also permits municipalities to restrict use or completely ban the use of fireworks within the Village limits. The Hiram Village Council has legislation banning the discharging, ignition or exploding of consumer grade fireworks (1.4G) anywhere in the Village. Chief Gregory would ask permission to post this on our website.

A motion by Finance to put the Ohio Fireworks Law on the Village's website was made by Mr. Szell and seconded by Mrs. Greenwood. Motion passed unanimously.

Hiram Police will hold their annual Bike Rodeo on Sunday, July 3rd at 4:30 pm. The course usually takes 4-5 hours to set up. The parade will follow directly after the event.

Hiram Police will be hosting their annual Fishing with a Cop at Camp Asbury on Saturday, August 20th from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm.

Fire Department:

Fire Chief Bill Byers reported his department does not have much that is pressing. Bill said he spoke with James regarding the garage doors and was told they may have to be postponed or cancelled. He asked whether there was an issue with paying for them? Chris and Susan said there was legislation to amend appropriations in the General Fund to pay for them. Finance members said plans are to proceed with the upgrades to the doors and openers.

Chris asked if all the fire engines were okay? Bill said they were waiting on the factory to get back with them on a quote for the bumper repair; it may take a while to get that in. When that does come in, they will get it fixed along with the minor body work at the same time. Paul asked Bill to refresh his memory; why was the bumper needing to be repaired? Bill said it was struck on a fire call in Auburn by an SUV; we were not at fault and there were no injuries.

Village Adm/Utilities: Asst. VA Steve Schuller provided an update on the recent brown out of our #1 well pump. The well pump and controller were changed. They were able to get well #3 up and running. Well #1 produces 280 gallons per minute, well #3 produces 90 gallons, well #2 is down and in the process of repair based on the requirements of the EPA.

Our Rave911 system had 158 users signed up, now we have 165! Discussion followed about how to best notify our residents of boil alerts and other emergency situations. Finance members would like to see put on the water bills; “sign up-Smart911” and again into our Communicator. All landlines and anyone who signed up their cell phones are on the system.

Steve provided one proposal for the roof on the light plant; they are getting more quotes.

Re-bids for the water tower project will be opened on July 21st at noon.

The Street Department is working with our Solicitor on the easement for Hinsdale/Winrock.

Mayor:

The Mayor has planned a meeting with Hiram College President Dave Haney on July 12th to discuss our mutual problems including the renewal of the Police/Fire contract. Paul Spencer felt we need to ask for about \$90,000 per year on the contract! The Mayor said that was close to the figure provided to Council by our esteemed Assistant VA, Steve Schuller.

The Mayor brought up the NEFCO meeting; he would like someone on Council to attend. Chris McCreight will attend on behalf of the Village.

Our August Council meeting will be moved to the 3rd Tuesday, August 16th; Susan will advertise.

The Mayor will have a proclamation ready next month for Mr. Norm Wood, retired VA who recently passed away.

Fiscal Officer/Admin: Susan Skrovan reported upon review of the Portage County Auditor's tax estimates, she spoke with the auditor's office. The property value is at the 35% assessed values. Susan looked at the last three years, our tax revenue estimates have gone up slightly each year.

There has been no unusual spending out of the General Fund for June.

The Kubota Track Loader has come in and is ready to be delivered once financing is complete.

Our 2020-21 audit is now 76% complete; Alger & Associates did file for an extension with the State Auditor's office until July 20th because they could not complete our audit by June 30th.

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

Unfinished Business: **a. Blighted Properties Update:** The Mayor said we have until July 9th for the property on Plum Ridge; Mr. Don Miles. We gave him 60 days. Paul Spencer said we asked the Zoning Inspector to send out letters to the Farm, the gentlemen next to the gas station and to Ruby Brown's estate. These are the three that have been identified so far.

New Business: **a. Boil Alerts-improving communications:** This has already been discussed.

b. General Fund and ideas for improving the long-term health of this fund: Chris said all of Council will need to think about how to fix this; the tax credit was tabled at the last Council meeting. Paul Spencer spoke on cutting services that we are providing that are not being paid for. Working a ton of overtime is not the answer! If those who require the services are not going to help support them, they are not going to get them! Paul said when he started on Council, we used to get \$76-78,000 per year for the contract; it has gone down every year since! Steve spoke about the meeting they had with Hiram College; they had not even looked at the reports Susan provided to them. He thought the Hiram College contract renewal is October 1st. Paul felt a fee schedule could be the answer. The ARPA funds could help and we need to revisit the Hiram Township contract. Chris Szell would like to re-assess Wendelin's salary to water and sewer and to look at the possibility of a police/safety services levy. Paul wondered about a Fire/EMS district as well. More discussion followed on the costs of a separate district.

c. Tax Credit discussion: Chris Szell felt that reducing the tax credit has to be a part of the equation! He cannot see how we make up the gap without it. Steve worked on some of the numbers; only 8.4% of our total General Fund revenue is what residents pay in property taxes to support Village functions! Village employees pay almost as much if not more to the Village. Finance talked more about what all has to happen, no single thing will fix the problem.

d. Hiram Township Fire and EMS Protection Agreement: This is coming up for renewal. Finance members discussed the struggles with matching Village's portion to the Township's ever increasing property tax values and development.

Beth Greenwood spoke about how she is not in favor of increasing the income tax rate at this time until we have a better handle on our General Fund spending and our budget. She is however, up to the idea of reducing the tax credit.

EMS Collections: Were reviewed and signed off.

Any Other Business: None

The next Finance/Safety Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 26, 2022.

Adjournment: A Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Spencer with a second from Mayor Bertrand. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Attest:


Susan J. Skrovan, Fiscal Officer


Chris Szell, Finance Chairman
Chair, Ro Terry.