

Village of Hiram

Finance/Safety Committee Meeting Minutes

March 29, 2022

Call to Order: Chris Szell called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm

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

Committee Members Absent:

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

Others: Ed Frato-Sweeney

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

Minutes: A motion to approve the meeting minutes of February 22, 2022 as presented was made by Mayor Bertrand with a second from Mr. Smith. Motion passed unanimously.

Guests/Public: Ed Frato-Sweeney reminded everyone the deadline to apply for the Hiram Community Trust grant is April 15th.

Department Updates:

Police Department: Police Chief Brian Gregory provided his report.

SB 215 regarding concealed carry without a permit goes into effect on June 12th. For out of state, you are still advised to obtain a permit. Brian explained some of the details of the bill.

The alcohol and drug awareness event we have had in partnership with AAA at the College; we will not be having this spring. The AAA representative is not available in the spring. They will revisit this event at Hiram College at the beginning of the school year in August.

Speed humps have been purchased last winter; however, due to the inclement weather, they have not been used. They are looking at May. There will be signs posted to advise motorists.

Pancake breakfast fundraiser is Saturday, April 16th. Volunteers from Kiwanis will help.

Patrol vehicle mechanical issues his department has had in recent weeks; Brian thanked James and Steve for working to get them fixed and back on the road.

Citations, now that all COVID restrictions have been lifted, have been steadily increasing.

Chris Szell asked Chief Gregory about an incident on campus with a slow response from Portage County Sheriff and asked him if he had any more information. Brian spoke about the recent meeting between the Portage County Sheriff, Hiram, Garrettsville and Windham.

Fire Department: Asst. Chief Jason Groselle reported the fire department is down to one squad. Their second squad is in for repairs; tires are wearing out due to an accident in late of 2018! This is an ongoing insurance claim.

Village Adm/Utilities: VA James McGee reported on the status of the phone system and the Reverse 911. Both systems are in the installation process but require some more set up. The phones are up and running with just a few glitches and awaiting Spectrum to come and finish installing the final phones.

The street department handed door to door flyers for signing up for the 911 system and also put the flyer on our website. There will be a test of the 911 system on April 30th at noon.

The natural gas pipeline and regulators are completed; the contractor will hopefully be returning the first of April to complete repairs to the yard and walkway.

The water plant trees and EPA storage; all of the trees that needed to be removed have been cut down. To save money, the street department will be completing the clean up of the remaining trees. The south area of the water plant was cleaned, three trees were removed, and is being leveled to make a storage area for leaves, mulch, wood chips and stone. Cleaning and leveling the area has also made it possible to direct storm water in a better fashion by adding proper drainage with new pipe. The EPA paperwork has been all filled out; however, it has not yet been submitted. The street department wants to complete the clean up of the area prior to notifying the EPA, who will then send an inspector out for final approval of the area.

The water meter project; Newman Plumbing will be returning to complete the final meter installs. That date has not been determined at this time. Core & Main, the General Contractors, have successfully installed the new modem at the water tower for the AMR water meter reads. Core & Main are also finalizing the configuration of the meters to the RNI system. Once this is complete, the information can be transferred to the new billing software.

The water tower; an additional OWDA loan has been submitted, awaiting a decision by July 1st.

The Winrock/Hinsdale road project; we should find out about this project on May 12th. This is a \$300,000 project with \$250,000 in grant funding and a \$50,000 zero interest loan. The project includes fixing the storm drain issues on Hinsdale Road.

Grass mowing/cemetery care; the Village Administrator has received a quote from the same company who cut grass last year for the Village at \$1,000 per mow/weed whip. Finance discussed the previous years with summer help and issues we are facing to get any help! James is currently waiting for other quotes.

All general maintenance on the generators and automobiles have been completed; the street department will begin maintenance of the mowing and outdoor equipment.

Mayor:

The Mayor had some sad news, past Mayor Richard Pejeau died yesterday! He was the Mayor of Hiram from 1985 to 1991. He was the one who got us into NOPEC!

Ohio Municipal League conference, which everyone missed, the Mayor attended. He has the booklet if anyone would like to review it. It was very informative and worthwhile.

The Mayor spoke with Jack Groselle regarding the Hiram Township garage; he indicated an appraisal will be done on the property by the Twp.

We have positions to fill on the Parks and Recreation and on the Beautification Commission. The Mayor provided some names of persons who have been recommended.

Fiscal Officer/Admin: Susan Skrovan reported on the health insurance renewal. The health insurance renews May 1st. Copies were provided to members for their review. The health went up 7.89% and the dental went up 3.0%. The vision and life had no increases. Finance members reviewed the policy renewal. The renewal will come before Council for approval.

The liability insurance renews April 1st. Department heads have been working with Wendelin to update our equipment on the plan. The renewal went up 9.0%. We had some new equipment put on it and have had some claim losses. We have one trailer missing from the coverage; Susan will get that added. Finance members asked Susan to call our liability representative Amy Ballachino to make certain that we are covered until Council which is not until April 12th. Susan will work on putting legislation together with Tom Reitz as well.

Susan reported receiving the OPWC loan amortization schedule for the Garfield Watermain project; it is now a closed project with OPWC. Loan amount is \$81,670.10 over 30 years; \$2,722.32 per year!

Bills List:

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

Unfinished Business: a. **Township Property-Ryder Road Garage and Garfield Road Township Hall:** The Mayor already addressed this in his report.

b. **General Fund Discussions:** Finance members discussed the options regarding a tax increase and cutting the current tax credit. Susan provided members with copies of legislation that our Solicitor Tom Reitz prepared. Chris added with regard to the General Fund; the idea of giving the Light Plant to the College. Paul Spencer said the Light Plant is valued at over \$20,000 so we cannot just give it away. Dave Smith had the appraisal from Portage County. The land is valued at \$25,000 and the improvement at \$57,900. Paul said that is public property so it has to go out for bids. Paul Spencer was thinking about keeping it separate on the ballot; one for the credit; one for the increase. Hopefully they would both pass. The Mayor mentioned Streetsboro whom does not give 100% credit; he does not recall them ever voting on that.

The Mayor added that we received an opinion from our legal counsel that we should vote on it. When Lou was at the seminar, he spoke with one of the presenters who suggested because our solicitor is cautious, we can ask the Attorney General for an opinion. Paul had read that anything over that 1.0% threshold, has to go to the voters. Steve said a 1.0% credit or 50% of our 2.0% since the .25% is not included; RITA in 2019 projected \$49,460 and \$94,000 for 100%. Chris Szell agreed that they should be two separate pieces of legislation on the ballot. How do we sell this to the voters? Finance members discussed our inside and outside millage levies. Paul is not for reducing the credit; however, others see it differently. We should seek out an Attorney General's opinion on what we can do. Chris Szell would like to ask Tom to split the legislation. He did say that he does not agree totally with an income tax increase. Dave and Paul both felt that if you are going to increase someone's taxes, that they have a say in it. Dave added that they will need to sell the increase not to offer more services but to keep operating and maintaining what we have now. Costs keep going up and our revenue is not keeping up with it. Mayor Bertrand said we need to make a recommendation to the Council.

A Motion to recommend to the Village Council to carry both pieces of legislation, if necessary, to the voters at the November General Election as two separate issues was made by Mayor Bertrand and seconded by Mr. Spencer. More discussion followed. The Mayor called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.

Susan said she already spoke with Tom Reitz; he was informed that we would be discussing the income tax increase and credit issues this evening. He is awaiting the outcome to prepare legislation for Council. Susan said she would call him tomorrow.

c. Blighted/Nuisance Properties: Paul Spencer spoke about the current properties in question. Paul said we do have a zoning inspector that takes care of zoning issues; we do not have a building inspector for issues with structures. We rely on Portage County. Any legal steps we take would be paying our Solicitor Tom Reitz for extra services out of our General Fund. There should be a ledger of conditional use permits somewhere in the files at the fiscal office. More discussion followed on properties in the Village and our current zoning code. Jason Groselle asked whether anyone from the Village has gone and spoke with these people with blighted properties to explain to them what will happen if they do nothing? Paul said that is not the Village's job to do. One thing Paul mentioned is the conditional use allowed for a residential dwelling "above" a commercial business. P&Z should take a look at a provision to allow for a residential dwelling behind a commercial business as well. We have a person interested in doing just that at the Hiram Professional building. Dave Smith did note a fire separation issue has to be addressed; it can be done. Paul felt there needs to be a P&Z meeting to review procedures and the zoning code.

New Business:

a. Light Plant Recommendations: The Village Administrator spoke on the condition of the building and their options. James would like to patch the roof and sell the building cheap or trade it to the College. More discussion followed.

A Motion to recommend to the Village Council to sell the Light Plant property pursuant to law was made by Mayor Bertrand and seconded by Mr. Szell. Motion passed unanimously.

b. Snow/Ice removal on Hayden and SR82: Dave Smith spoke about the snow issue on the sidewalks there for about a month. People had to walk on the street to get around. Paul Spencer said this is up to the property owners! Dave was talking about the snow and ice that was put there by our Street Department. James said no, his department goes through there and plows it out; that comes from the commercial properties parking lots. James spoke about what occurred with the two large snow storms we had and how it was handled. The Village did not cause the piles on the corner of Hayden & SR82.

c. Brush Pickup: Dave said he has been asked by several residents whether the Village is going to have brush pickup this spring. Steve said nothing will happen until the EPA comes out and does their inspection of the water plant property. Pickup would be in the fall.

d. Early Warning Siren: Tornado season is coming up, this needs to be up and running. Jason said there is a new company that took over inspections; they are scheduled to come out.

e. Other: James reported the heating system at the Hiram Salon went down. The system was 19 years old. It was replaced with a new Trane furnace, A-coil and outside A/C condensing unit for \$12,000. It may come to Council to replenish the Village Hall General Fund appropriations.

James also brought up merit increases he is recommending; these would be within our current budget. Simon Bednarski would receive a \$2.00/hour increase for his lab certification, Wendelin Taylor would receive a \$1.50/hour increase and Steve Schuller would receive a \$1.00/hour. Discussion followed on what funds these employees' wages are paid from.

EMS Collections: Were reviewed and signed off.

Any Other Business:

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

Adjournment: A Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Spencer with a second from Mr. Szell. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:28 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Attest:


Susan J. Skrovan, Fiscal Officer


Chris Szell, Finance Chairman