

# Village of Hiram

## Finance/Safety Committee Meeting Minutes

November 29, 2022

**Call to Order:** Chairman 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 at 6:04 pm  
Susan Skrovan-DeYoung, Fiscal Officer

**Committee Members Absent:**

**Hiram Officials Present:** Brian Gregory, Police Chief  
Bill Byers, Fire Chief  
Jason Groselle, Asst. Fire Chief  
James McGee, Village Administrator  
Steven Schuller, Asst. Village Administrator

**Others:** Christopher McCreight & Frank Hemphill, Councilmen, Dr. David Haney; President of Hiram College, Mr. & Mrs. Sorrick, many other residents and students. See sign in sheet attached.

**Minutes:** A motion to approve the meeting minutes of October 25, 2022 as amended was made by Mr. Smith with a second from Mayor Bertrand. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

**Agenda:** Chris Szell asked for a motion to approve the agenda. A motion to approve the agenda as presented for Finance/Safety was made by Mr. Spencer with a second from Mr. Smith. Motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

**Guests/Public:** Chris Szell welcomed all the guests at tonight's meeting. Chris asked that anyone wishing to make a comment or ask a question, to please state your name and affiliation for the record.

The street parking legislation is before Finance/Safety. This legislation is less than a month old, it was first introduced to this Council on November 9<sup>th</sup>. Chris would encourage this committee to listen to it's constituents and address and answer questions if they can, research those questions they cannot answer tonight and have a healthy discussion.

President David Haney asked with regard to the proposed legislation on parking permits; what problem is it trying to solve? Paul Spencer said cash flow; we have discussed implementing parking meters for years. Paul said it is an area of revenue for the Village to help pay our Street Department to maintain our roads! The Village has allowed the College to utilize some of its' parking and the College actually charges the students to park on Village property. We see none of that revenue. Near the townhouses there are parking areas that are actually Village parking lots, Hiram College sells permits for them. Asst. Village Administrator, Steve explained there are three parking lots attached directly to Winrock across from the townhouses, that are actually Village property.

There is an easement agreement between the College and the Village that they can use it for parking, it is still owned by the Village. The villagers can use it for parking but the College sells permits and can ticket there and in return, the College was supposed to take care of Winrock, including plowing which has never occurred. There have been discussions with the different maintenance companies working at the College in the past with no results. President Haney said it sounds like there needs to be a conversation about this as opposed to legislation. Chris Szell agreed. Paul said with regards to commercial parking; the building across from the post office, the College has claimed lot #4. James said also the lot across from the dining hall that AVI uses is actually for the Hike & Bike trail. A student said they know they are not allowed to park there. Paul said Council is just "entertaining" the concept of implementing a fee for parking on the main streets.

Holly Grable, a student at Hiram College, asked for clarification of the "main" streets. You are talking about Garfield, 700, State Route 82 and Hinsdale? Dave Smith added the inner streets, Dean, Hinsdale, Garfield, Bancroft and Brown would be included. Chris asked if we know whether we can charge for parking on state routes? Steve said, yes, we can.

Megan Plakowski, a student, asked if this paid parking were to be implemented, how many free parking spaces would there still be for students? Paul said there should be adequate parking within the parking lots on college property. The biggest hindrance is that students will have to walk up the hill. More discussion about whether there would be any free parking available to students and visitors to the Village and College. Megan felt this was poorly developed with little to no details, she does understand it is in the early stages.

Asst. VA, Steve, clarified there would be an annual parking permit for students, faculty of \$100.00 proposed in the legislation. There would also be a pay by phone app which many cities have already implemented such as in Cleveland and Peninsula. There would be signage.

Roxanne Sorrick, a 22-year resident, said they were in Peninsula when it was implemented there; there was a lot of pushback! Not just from the community, but also from the businesses! We are not Peninsula, we are a small village. Garrettsville does not have this, nor does Burton or Middlefield. Our income tax is one of the highest at 2.25%. Employees working in the Village support that income tax including College employees which she has been for 22 years. We are already funding the Village with our income tax. She felt due diligence must be done to investigate how other small villages are managing without pay by meter and permits. Please investigate Peninsula as well and to make your findings known to the community residents, students and businesses. Paul commented that what is driving Council to create a revenue stream is so that we can have 24-hour police, so we can keep the streets up, so that we can make our community safe! It is great to have the college here, the work force that supports the Village. The problem is that the infrastructure of the College, other than the employees, we do not receive revenue from! The Village does not receive any tax money from Hiram College, it is not like a business. When you look at the Fire Department, the Police Department, the Street Department, when it comes to the end of the year, we do not have any money. We tell them to do their jobs but cannot provide the funds for them to do that nor to provide for raises to keep them because we have an 800-pound elephant on our back, no disrespect, but we still have to provide services. It is sheer economics! It would be great if we had an incubator that would drive economic growth!

Caylie Shook, a student here on behalf of two other students, all highly disagree about these motions for permits and paying! They already pay now for parking; you will have no one come and visit Hiram! You will drive everyone out. There is an empty lot that could be made for more parking at the corner of State Route 700 and Hinsdale. Paul said that property was the old Zuver property and is owned by Hiram College so the College could increase parking.

Chief Brian Gregory said back when the College had 1,500 students; there was adequate parking. They are only half of that now so there is plenty of parking.

Ryan Strecker, a student and a member of the Hiram Senate, felt that the College and Village both have the same problem; they both need a revenue source! He would ask the Village to look outward to develop an economic development plan. New businesses like a grocery store or convenient store; we cannot buy a loaf of bread in Hiram! Lets do creative problem solving.

Chris Szell clarified that the legislation before them does not specifically mention parking permits in order to charge students and faculty. The legislation before them addresses public street parking and whether or not we have a fee for that.

Isabella Galecki, also a student and Senate member, asked if there were any other alternatives discussed at the last two meetings for revenue sources and have any been discussed? Paul said they were discussing a 3.0% income tax on the faculty in order to make up for the shortfall. Personally, he does not want to go down that road and burden them with 3.0%. It is getting tough to run the Village; we are trying to find alternative ways. Isabella asked if Council has tried bringing in businesses? Paul said we have tried, unfortunately, most of the property is privately owned, we cannot force them to develop their property. We have an economic development committee; however, no one wants to see change; it is moving slow. Chris added that there is very little "open land" available for development within the Village.

Paul added that the Village worked for years with the College to annex 88 acres with the idea that there was going to be a commercial area, a med center and housing and the Village was ready to help in any way with zoning or anything else. The College has decided to sell that property so that revenue chain fell apart. It was sold to a private owner.

President Haney referred to Jana Willan, Director of Admissions, spoke about the number of visitors that come to Hiram College campus for recruitment. Since January 3<sup>rd</sup>, there have been 2,100 unique visits. There are 53 unique visits scheduled this week. They are asking for consideration to have specific spots and/or vouchers tied to license plates for visitor parking. Paul referred back to the old Zuver property; should the College want to pave that area for guests, you may have a solution to this problem by creating a parking area; it could be a perfect location.

President Haney asked what has been estimated for the cost to administer the parking system and what would you estimate the revenue to be? Steve said you could do either the permits or pay by the hour rate through the app; the charge to the Village would be .30 cents per transaction. President Haney asked what the cost would be to enforce it? Steve said the police would enforce it. Brian said it is not a felony or a misdemeanor, just a simple traffic ticket so any employee can enforce it and write the tickets. Steve said we could hire students just like the College used to do. What about accessibility issues with some students. Chris Szell said we currently have seven handicap spots.

President Haney said Hiram College had very few rather strange conversations with the Village over revenue issues recently; the Village voted to cancel the contract that the College was paying for safety services; around \$30,000 a year. President Haney said they were in the middle of discussions of raising that and Council voted to cancel that, gave the College until December 31<sup>st</sup> and President Haney said they could cancel it now if the Village could not afford to continue it. It is saving the College about \$10,000 a year. The Village essentially gave up about \$10,000 per year of revenue from the College, which they were willing to increase, and now the Village is putting in potential legislation to get in more revenue without any conversation. This goes along with what the students have been saying about discussing economic development!

The College is in fact looking at leasing out space; they have plenty of space available that they probably do not need. He requests that Council talk with the College before implementing anything to increase revenue for the Village.

David Smith said that President Haney's second part of his question was not addressed; what is the projected revenue for the Village. Steve said he could give him the figures he was given from the app service which was approximately \$300,000 net. The problem with that number is that they are going off of half to three-quarter of those spots being parking permits paid by the hour. Not a true number and Steve cannot project it without knowing what the restrictions will be. Chris Szell would like to know what Peninsula has generated from this program.

Kevin Painley, a business owner for 18 years in the Professional Building asked about their parking lot and how it will be handled under this proposal. It is of great concern to him. Chris Szell said it would not be part of the proposal because it is not owned by the Village. Steve said that lot, lot #4, is owned by the Professional Building. Paul did mention their ideas for a short-term free parking in front of area businesses for their customers. The parking fine section is part of this overall proposal as well. Chris said we do not want to hurt our current businesses.

Matt Sorrick, a resident, wanted to clarify something Paul had said about the 3.0% rate for faculty; anyone who works or owns a business in Hiram would be impacted by a 3.0% rate! He referenced the last meeting minutes for Finance regarding the possibility of installing an impound lot and about the revenue loss over the past six years with the contract? Chris Szell said the contract is the safety services contract with the College. The six years is just referencing the reduction in that contract. When Lori Varlotta became president of Hiram College, the contract was reduced from \$75,000 down to \$30,000. Chris said from his seat, he would say that the Village was discounting the College what it actually costs to provide those services. The actual costs for services to Hiram College for Police and Fire/EMS which were provided by the chiefs of each department, was almost \$57,000 versus \$30,000 from the contract! President Haney asked to see those numbers. Chris said he would provide them but felt it was a messy contract. It has cost the Village significant revenue over the past six years. In 1999 the contract stood at \$40,000, due to inflation, we should be looking at a contract closer to \$80,000! President Haney felt that Chris was confusing two different questions. Chris said he is not confused; those are the actual numbers. President Haney stated there are two issues here; one is what the College used to pay, which was a lot more. The other issue is how much those services actually cost. Matt read further in the last meeting minutes about the comment that they did not want to look retaliatory and that Chief Byers had said it looked like it was going to get worse before it gets better. Matt is assuming that those comments are relating to this contract. Beth said yes, that is correct, it is in the context of the contract which we had just left a meeting with President Haney a week prior where we were talking about the safety services contract. That meeting was a little bit uncomfortable. Beth said the comments that Matt was not including and she hoped were in the notes was that we need to be communicating with the College on this have open dialogue; that should be in the notes as well. Matt said yes, it is. Paul said the contract has always been a moot point; we have to go through this every year! The College should know what the services are, they should know what they cost and we should provide them! Whatever it cost the Village to provide them; that's what we charge, it should be simple. Services should be on an "as needed basis", or ala-carte. Paul said for sixteen years, he has been telling the Village to get out of the contract!

Ryan Streeter wanted to reiterate that no one gets anywhere by pointing fingers; we need to work together to move forward. Find a productive solution! Paul complimented the students for attending the meetings and wanting to discuss these issues that we all face together!

Abigail Stevenson, a resident who also works at the College, she agrees with Ryan, they have a brilliant student body that wants to work with you! One of her biggest concerns is she felt there is an equity issue between the people being affected by this potential legislation and the people benefiting from it; they are not the same. She would challenge the committee to consider this question. We need to find ways to raise revenue.

Megan, a student and a resident assistant, spoke about the parking places out on the streets and what will happen with move-in? There is no way for people to move in if those spaces are used for permit parking! Paul felt the College will have to look at ways to provide some areas of parking for students to move-in. More discussion on parking areas currently available. Paul said it sounds like the permitted parking will be in parking areas, the street parking would probably be the pay by the hour as a first come first serve you pay. Chris Szell has noted that there is an "issue" with move-in and felt this is a logistical issue which needs to be discussed further with the committee.

Alyssa Smith, a student and College resident, asked what the Village will do when people come in to sports events on the weekends? Chris said it sounds like events cause a parking issue for students as well. Paul asked her if she was saying there is not enough parking on College property? Megan said there is not enough "convenient" parking! Paul said but there is parking. He is the chair of the P&Z Commission and would need to know if we are short in our parking areas. Alyssa said at move-in, her Dad helped her move in and had to sit down because he has a health issue, cannot breathe and you would be saying now, we would have to park further away and move in from there! Having available parking during move-in is going to help not only her family but other families who have loved ones with disabilities as well.

Chris Szell said as members of this committee, we hear what she is say and about health and safety. It will be taken into consideration.

Holly Grable said the students are most affected by this! She spoke about the cost of gas and inflation rates.

Chris Szell wanted to clarify his point from last evening; it is a source of revenue for us because police officers drive around to patrol, which is the gas that we are using that is going up. Our revenues are stagnant yet our costs are increasing. Chief Gregory said his fuel budget was exhausted by the end of July! Holly commented about the patrol cars running while officers are in the dining hall. Police Chief Gregory explained he is aware of the vehicles running. The amount of equipment in the vehicle, about \$8,000 in computers, radios and electronic equipment. It has to remain running otherwise when you start it up, it takes about four minutes for the camera to boot up and if they get a call, they have to be ready to go. Chief Byers said they have had similar emails and calls about the squad up there sitting at an idol. The equipment and medicines they carry must be kept at a constant temperature of 68-70 degrees ideally.

Ryan said from what he has heard, business in the past was done with a handshake! He would like to extend an invitation for the Village to sit down with the students and talk about options. Paul said legislation comes before Council and gets three readings unless it is just an administrative task. During those three readings, there is public discussion and input. The more you are involved, the more change you can affect! Paul thanked them for using their voices.

Madison P. asked about the various parking fines and where those numbers come from? Chief Brian Gregory replied that the Village Solicitor is looking into the fines; he is not here tonight but is looking into them to make sure they are at state standards. There was more discussion on adequate parking spaces and the need for additional handicap parking.

At this time, Chris Szell said they have had 65 minutes of discussion; he thanked the public. The public is welcome to stay, Finance members are going onto department head reports.

Members discussed other communities and what they do. Brian said as far as weekend events, that would be the majority of our revenue. Steve said the whole idea here was to bring in revenue; our General Fund is depleting and we have cut every bit of spending that we could! Steve added that we have lost an estimated \$337,000 in revenue from a contract that no one wants to talk about! In 2012, the Village went to three shifts; before that we only had 16 hours of coverage! Brian explained what was happening before he came on as Chief and the legalities of it. You had untrained reserve officers working out there on third shift. Steve said services should have been cut as soon as the contract was cut! David Smith said the understanding was that the College was in financial straights at the time. Steve said now we are in financial stress. More discussion on the parking area issues and the fact no one believes we have a parking shortage in the Village.

Chris McCreight would propose an idea for providing a service that would allow overnight parking on the public streets for a fee. Steve said the way legislation is written it covers 24/7 paid parking; it would eliminate the 2-6 am no parking. Paul thinks the main highways should not be parking by permit; it should be pay by phone. Steve said Oberlin has a 48-hour limitation. The Mayor said Kent has parking meters everywhere! Chris McCreight said he has heard a lot about "convenience", this would be an asset to the students and a source of revenue for the Village.

Chris Szell said it is an asset that we should be looking at. There is a cost for us to maintain it. He asked the College to provide an analysis whether their faculty and staff would prefer a 3.0% tax on their income or whether they would prefer to see those using the parking, to pay for the parking. He is still waiting for the answer.

## Department Updates:

**Police Department:** Police Chief Brian Gregory wanted to clarify that it was President Hancy who decided to cancel the safety contract with Hiram College on September 30! We were not the ones that said that!

The Shop with a Cop event is set for Saturday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> beginning at 9:00 am at Target in Streetsboro. They have 33 children from both school districts benefiting from the program. They have planned lunch at Village Hall in the fire bays following shopping.

AAA traffic safety award; Hiram Police Department again this year received the platinum award! We are the only department in Portage County to receive it! It is the highest award.

Ohio Sub-House Bill 512 regarding the Ohio Police and Fire pension fund or OP&F has in the works to raise the employer's share beginning January of 2023 from 19.5% to 24%! It is going on the Governor's desk now for his signature! We gained some with cutting the K-9 and now we are going to lose that savings with the increase to OP-F.

Brian's department has brought in \$25,579 in court fines to date.

The issue of overtime pay versus compensatory time is difficult to judge how much they are going to have and which is best. Brian would rather look at paying out the overtime! Other departments would rather keep it the way we have it set up now. Paul said the State wants their tax money as soon as possible. They do not want to see banks of hours sitting and would rather see overtime paid. Susan said OP-F hours paid out as compensatory time is non-pensionable! Overtime paid every two weeks would be pensionable at the time it was incurred.

For anyone in the OPERS retirement system, any prior year carryover of comp time is non-pensionable; only current year comp time payout is pensionable. Steve said the Village is saving with three employees because they are using their comp time hours throughout the year as time off. So, for police it is better to pay overtime but for everyone else, comp works better. Paul said there is nothing saying we have to keep it the same for every department. Paul felt comp time should never go above 80 hours; once it goes over and say you have two weeks banked, pay them out. Steve did say the Village is saving with those who are using comp.

As a follow-up with Mr. McCreight regarding the data from the speed trailer. Brian said for two years he paid for data to go to the cloud. He was not going to pay their price for downloading the information; he was able to get it but it is a dvt file; encrypted. Brian will contact PC Surgeons for their help. Paul asked Brian to send it to him; he will try and open it. Brian has tried opening it in every type of software available. Chris McCreight said it was in the news recently where Bratenal had been receiving some revenue from speeding tickets, perhaps inappropriately. It was about \$700,000 over three years. Brian said he has read that it may come down to where local governments do not receive certain funding if they have these speed cameras. Chris said he asked Susan about that; we get about \$60,000 in local government funds.

**Fire Department:** Fire Chief Bill Byers said there are no write-offs for tonight.

Bill asked Chairman Szell to put the Lifeforce billing rates on the agenda; he did receive them from Lifeforce what they would recommend. Everyone received a copy. Bill would recommend maybe going \$25.00 across the board above what the recommended rates are with the exception of non-transport. It would not change our Medicare or Medicaid billing, only insurance billing.

**A motion to take the suggestion of Lifeforce Management and pass appropriate legislation to go \$25.00 above their recommended rates as per our Fire Chief was made by Mayor Bertrand with a second from Mr. Spencer. Motion passed unanimously, 6-0.**

Bill reported their new rescue squad should be in next week. The bumper that came in on engine 2 was the wrong one! Needless to say, that engine is not in service at this time.

**Village Adm/Utilities:** VA James McGee reported that basically, they are out of money!

His department has been working to fix some of the lights on Village Hall.

The new garage doors for the fire bays are complete!

**Mayor:** The Mayor reported attending the AMATS meeting; he has some reports from the meeting.

Regarding solar panels, should we investigate them for the Village! The Mayor said they are good for 35 years! Paul said, and then they are no good. The applicant that came before the Planning & Zoning Commission is paying \$42,000 for the two panels; she will see a tax credit and a final cost of \$25,000. They are guaranteeing her twelve years covering 95% of her electric bills! Chris McCreight said after 18 years, the investment is paid. The Mayor felt we should take a look at it. Chris McCreight felt it is cost effective. The Mayor said we may have a possibility to go through NOPEC for a grant using our Energy Special Improvement District.

Department head reviews; the Mayor plans to review them next month at Council. Be prepared to stay for executive session.

Our trees along Hinsdale and the Bancroft Park; there has been talk about purchasing trees. The Mayor believes we could get enough interest to have people buy memorial trees.

The Mayor said we covered the police with the current working conditions. Right now, with the Chief it is unsustainable. If we cannot do something with increasing revenues, then we have got to cut the third shift!

Cost of living and merit raises is something we need to discuss. What can the committee do better to serve the community in respect to what happened tonight. Balance what is right for your community. Paul felt when they stir the pot, we get more people participating. Chief Gregory said the students are here for maybe four years; they do not understand the big picture. They don't understand that we are close to fiscal emergency in this Village!

Paul Spencer spoke about the economic development committee's discussion about the College rumored to be selling off unnecessary properties throughout the Village. One of the overtures the committee wants to put out there to everyone including the College and through zoning and planning is to enable a smaller footprint home. To encourage development of these properties to get more residents within the Village. We need to have some open conversation on it. The idea to have to build a 2,400 square foot home for two people; it really is not necessary. A 1,000 or 1,100 square foot home is more than sufficient. The Mayor felt the County could help us. Chris Szell would be in favor of smaller houses.

**Fiscal Officer/Admin:** Susan Skrovan reported that the promissory note on the Ford F550 is paid in full! She believed that was the Fire Department's vehicle.

Susan brought up the historic century house and the insurance coverage. The question came up why the Village would be paying for that coverage? Paul said we shouldn't be. The Mayor said the house is not our property. The land it is on is our property. The Mayor felt it would be renter's insurance. The premium is \$190.00 a year. And if so, should we have legislation on it? James said the legislation that Wendelin pulled out said the Village is responsible for paying that and should have been ever since 1973. James said we have not been paying it. James felt that if we pay the premium for it and it is destroyed; why would we turn the insurance money over to the historical house! And, why would we want it rebuilt. James reached out to our insurance agent because of the legislation. He will get copies of that to everyone; there are a lot of questions to be answered. Tom provided it the first time to everyone.

Susan is working on compensatory payout numbers for the next Council meeting. We may have to have legislation to amend appropriations to cover the payouts; the police are her concern. Total compensatory payout could be around \$11-12,000 with \$7,000 of that coming from police.

**Bills List:**

Bills list was reviewed. A motion to pay the bills was made by Mayor Bertrand with a second from Mr. Spencer. Motion passed unanimously, 6-0. David Smith said now that we have fixed the leaf machine, are we going to pick up leaves next year? Steve said if we have property to dump the leaves on, we can.

**ew Business:**

- a. **Comp Time or pay straight overtime for full time employees:** Already discussed.



**b. Base Compensation and Salary Increases:** Chris Szell has a hard time giving our Solicitor more than they can offer all the employees. Members discussed the raise chart. Department heads were asked and all were okay with a 1-1/2% to 2.0% raise for employees.

**A motion to recommend to Council to provide a 1-1/2% salary increase to all employees was made by Mr. Szell with a second from Mayor Bertrand. Motion passed unanimously, 6-0.**

**A motion to adjust the legislation from the Village Solicitor Contract to reflect the same 1-1/2% salary increase was made by Mr. Szell and seconded by Mayor Bertrand. Motion passed unanimously, 6-0.**

Susan will prepare the legislation for Council on the raises.

**c. Review/Discuss Ordinance 2022-16:** Nothing this evening.

**d. Discuss Ordinances 2022-18; 19; 20 & 21:** Chris asked what other ordinances are needed to be discussed, the snow ban, the street closing? Steve said the snow ban is self-explanatory. The road closure is something that was put into place in other cities/villages. We already have some of it in our legislation such as with parades. Paul Spencer would like to see a map of the different parking areas and related costs. A visual plan! The committee liked this suggestion.

Chris Szell felt the College sounds like they are willing to entertain discussions around a "contract" as a base amount for Village services plus the ala-carte for special items/events.

**e. Land Donation:** Chris Szell said the College has agreed to donate the land. Solicitor Tom Reitz asked for some type of donation agreement. Chris obtained one from work and will forward it to Tom. We would enter into a formal donation agreement of about one acre. It is part of a larger parcel so there will be a split and a consolidation with the costs for surveying borne by the Village. Paul asked what we will do with this land. Steve said once the land is our property, we can follow through with the EPA for a composting facility.

**Unfinished Business:** None

**EMS Collections:** None

**Any Other Business:** Chief Bill Byers said a check from Hiram Township is coming toward the new squad. The remaining rescue plan funds; Hiram Township is giving them for their Fire/EMS capital.

Paul commented on allowing for a cannabis dispensary; he is not opposed to it! It is a great revenue stream!

The next Finance/Safety Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 27, 2022.

**Adjournment:** A Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mayor Bertrand with a second from Mr. Spencer. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

**Respectfully Submitted by:**

**Attest:**

  
Susan J. Skrovan, Fiscal Officer

  
Chris Szell, Finance Chairman