**SPECIAL MEETING OF CELINA CITY COUNCIL – December 9, 2024**

Council President King called the Special Meeting of Celina City Council to order at 7:00 pm. Council Members Baltzell, Buxton, Clausen, Fleck, Gray, Sanford, and Wolfe were present. Also present were Mayor Hazel, Safety Service Director Hitchcock, Law Director Moore and Auditor Shinn.

CM Baltzell made a motion to accept the agenda, seconded by CM Clausen. Motion passed with a roll call vote 7-0 Aye.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

None.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

None.

**AUDIENCE COMMUNICATIONS:**

Cory Agler who resides at 609 Echo Street voiced his concern about the Celina Fire Department and the station, specifically about a boiler problem where they are not able to heat bay area and about the building feasibility study. Mayor Hazel noted they are expecting the results of the building feasibility study around December 16th, 2024 while also noting the feasibility study will be for the building only and will have nothing to do with staffing. Cory asked about the boilers and the process and it was explained the Fire Chief is handling that problem and noted they just heard about the PO and issues over the last couple of weeks. CM Clausen noted that nothing was brought up during Council during the budget process. Cory noted problems like the boiler make it hard to attract lateral transfers from other departments. CM Wolfe noted that from his past experience as a department head they are in charge of building maintenance and will submits PO’s as needed to be approved by administration and it never went to council unless they needed to appropriate money. Cory noted he wants solutions specifically from any side and notes everyone is on the same team and hopes to bring some solutions and noted that finding the money now to help fund the positions are great but it was done after we lost some of our most senior employees. Cory asked about the leadership training and if it has been completed and Mayor Hazel noted it has not since we are put last on the list since it is being done pro-bono. Cory also asked about the staffing and the half percent and believes operations means the City should and can use that money on payroll and staffing and President King noted that when Council spoke about the initial passing of the half percent it had nothing to do with wages and staffing and was about replacing capital equipment which in turn would free up one percent money and possibly help to fund other things. Cory asked about exit interviews for employees who have left and administration noted that they have been completed with all employees who have left starting with and since Cory Agler himself. Cory asked if those were discussed with Mayor Hazel and management with administration and that was confirmed to be correct and noted there was more research done based on the exit interviews and ways that could possibly help. Mayor Hazel spoke about that additional hires the Fire Chief has been granted to make and that in 2025 we hope they will be at their max staffing which is 19 employees as currently constructed and noted the EMS side is a County program and that 90% or so of calls are for EMS and not fire. Cory noted his belief that the City is reactive instead of proactive and President King noted they are trying to find solutions to increase staffing levels at that is something Council has to try to figure out. CM Baltzell spoke about how only in the last year has he heard about any shortage in staffing in all his years as a Council Member and spoke about how we cannot go back to a time where streets are not funded at all and there needs to be a balance. Cory noted he believes retention is a major issue and President King noted it is a nation-wide problem and Council wants to help in any way possible and noted this is the first time he has heard about the boiler issue. CM Buxton spoke about the budget process with department heads and noted that the recent County initiative that passed helped us increase our staffing by three and that it takes time to get these going. President King noted that we must use the half percent wisely and how we said it would be used because if it is ever rejected at the ballot box, they would have trouble funding many projects. CM Clausen noted they want to know all the needs from the department heads but it is a blend and if the EMS initiative did not pass, he does not think we would be in a position to hire these three additional people. Cory noted he understands and sympathizes with Council and their position but progress needs to be made and he believes communication is an issue. President King noted they want to fix the problems and that there have been some solutions offered but they do not work in practice.

**NEW BUSINESS:** (First Reading)

None.

**OLD BUSINESS** (Second Reading):

**64-24-O:** An Ordinance to make Appropriations for expenses and other expenditures of the City of Celina, State of Ohio, during the calendar year ending December 31, 2025, and to declare an emergency. CM Fleck made a motion to pass to a third reading, seconded by CM Clausen. Motion passed with a roll call vote 7-0 Aye.

**65-24-O:** An Ordinance authorizing the Safety-Service Director to advertise for bids and to enter into contracts for City Projects and Capital Equipment for Fiscal Year 2025. CM Clausen made a motion to pass to a third reading, seconded by CM Gray. Motion passed with a roll call vote 7-0 Aye.

**66-24-O:** An Ordinance authorizing the Safety-Service Director to advertise for bids and to enter into contracts for certain materials, services, supplies and equipment needed during 2025. CM Wolfe made a motion to pass to a third reading, seconded by CM Buxton. Motion passed with a roll call vote 7-0 Aye.

**OLD BUSINESS** (Third Reading):

None.

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS:**

Mayor Hazel noted he appreciated Cory coming up and noted there has been some staffing ideas but it has been more about rearranging the pecking order and titles versus adding more staffing for on shift firefighters with the exception of possibly a fire inspector.

President King adjourned the meeting at 7:36 pm.

Submitted by Michael F. Didonato, Clerk of Council