**REGULAR MEETING OF CELINA CITY COUNCIL – July 8, 2024**

Council President King called the Regular Meeting of Celina City Council to order at 7:06 pm. Council Members Baltzell, Buxton, Clause, Fleck, Gray, Sanford, and Wolfe were present. Also present were Mayor Hazel, Safety Service Director Hitchcock, Law Director Moore and Auditor Shinn.

CM Fleck made a motion to amend the agenda, seconded by CM Baltzell. Motion passed with a roll call vote 7-0 Aye. CM Baltzell made a motion to pass the agenda, seconded by CM Buxton. Motion passed with a roll call vote 6-0 Aye.

**NEW BUSINESS:** (First Reading)

**13-24-R:** A Resolution appointing a representative from the City of Celina to the Mercer County Joint Ambulance District and declaring an emergency. Mayor Hazel spoke about the legislation that passed last meeting for the purposes of the upcoming levy and noted that a City representative must be appointed in a time sensitive manner because the language needs to be worked out to get on the November ballot and also noted that CM Wolfe accepted and will be appointed in that role. CM Clausen confirmed this is about the County but will also help the City of Celina and Mayor Hazel noted this is a County EMT service that the City assists with and this will help alleviate and assist with some of the call back. CM Clausen made a motion to suspend the rules, seconded by CM Gray. Motion passed with a roll call vote 7-0 Aye. CM Buxton made a motion to pass the Ordinance, seconded by CM Baltzell. Motion passed with a roll call vote 7-0 Aye. CM Wolfe left the meeting.

CM Sanford and CM Clausen made a correction to the minutes from the 06-24-2024 meeting. CM Baltzell made a motion to accept the minutes, seconded by CM Clausen. Motion passed with a roll call vote 6-0 Aye.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

President King spoke about the two Committee of the Whole meetings that took place on 6-24-2024 noting that the second meeting consisted of most Council Members not wanting to bring any legislation forward allowing chickens but would like to bring legislation forward about having bees within the City limits.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

Mayor Hazel noted that the City has come to an agreement with Celina City Schools in regards to a School Resource Officer (SRO), and it will be taken to the school board and then will come to a future council meeting and the school will have them for about nine and half months a year.

Auditor Shinn spoke about the July budget that has to be submitted to the County and asked for a voice acclimation approving the budget. CM Clausen asked if it always shows such a large deficit at this point in the year and Auditor Shinn confirmed it is a working budget but it is similar to years past and it should be balanced at the end of the year. CM Baltzell made a motion, seconded by CM Fleck. Voice acclimation passed 6-0 Aye.

Auditor Shinn noted that she received a question last meeting about whether the City can use the half percent additional income tax for payroll for safety services and noted in 2011 when it first started it seems to have been used at least in part for payroll and until the language was amended and it has not been used to fund any payroll since that.

Law Director Moore noted he also had been asked if the half percent additional tax can be used to fund payroll and noted the best practice would be to take it to the voters and ask them what they mean and provide them an opportunity to have a say. Law Director Moore spoke about the amendment and what changed in the language and also noted that even though no half percent money has been used for payroll since the amendment that does not mean that it could not and noted that by cutting some street funding from the half percent it would free up money to use for payroll since there is no required percentage or dollar amount that that has to be used for streets and believes that can be done without going to the voters. CM Baltzell noted that the half percent is not permanent and if we use the majority of it to pay personnel there is a risk that the half percent will not get renewed. CM Baltzell also mentioned that Celina went through a long period where they did not touch the streets much and noted that the budget needs to be looked at and sees a need to increase funding for safety services but wants to ensure streets are being addressed. Auditor Shinn noted that since the amendment Council and administration has been clear the half percent has been for capital expenses and streets and was done at the seven-year mark so the community had an opportunity to vote on it and noted that you do not typically cut from payroll so it makes it harder when you are paying salary with temporary funding. CM Baltzell mentioned that facilities for the fire department need addressed and it will not be cheap so it would be wise to start figuring out how we will pay for that and what we can cut while noting that the safety services and streets are very important. CM Fleck noted it would be hard to tell the public that we are not doing streets anymore but want more money or the half percent to continue and noted that would not be popular. CM Clausen noted that when citizens see new streets and new safety equipment it helps them understand how the money is being spent and believes using the half percent to help fund a new or updated fire department will also help with staffing. CM Clausen noted that we are also doing the feasibility study that will help us determine what is needed. CM Sanford questioned whether there was some half percent money that went toward payroll before the amendment and or after the amendment and Law Director Moore noted he spoke about two different periods being before the amendment which used some money toward payroll and after which has not used any.

**AUDIENCE COMMUNICATIONS:**

Sheryl Braun who resides at 1560 Greenview Drive thanked Brooke for answering the question from the previous meeting and noted when she was on the board for the original half percent it was to take care of the fire department. Sheryl asked if it was possible to add money to utility bills in order to help pay for streets and Mayor Hazel noted that since streets are not a utility, he has not been able to find a mechanism to do that. Law Director Moore noted they have been looking into many things and if anyone has any ideas he would love to hear them. Sheryl asked for a percentage split on the half percent showing how much went to street and safety services capital and Mayor Hazel noted that the streets needed done up front but they will get an exact answer. Sheryl asked about the leadership classes and how they have been going and Mayor Hazel spoke about how they have been shifted to the right and that the next class will take place July 17th. Sheryl noted that she would like to see the City pay for classes to help recruit and get firefighters working for the City and have them sign a contract stating they will work for a certain number of years and Mayor Hazel noted they are bringing an Ordinance today in order to hire firefighters and also looking at reimbursing them for training. Sheryl asked about the runs that are being done and noted we maybe can take on the EMT side instead of being through the county to help increase revenue.

Patrick Crosby who resides at 7740 Weitz Road noted he works for the City of Celina but does not live in the City and noted that during the Safety Service Meeting he heard Fire Chief Lange speak passionately about the fire department and asked why the issues within the police department were not discussed and noted their staffing shortage that started July of 2023. Patrick noted his belief that the issue is just as dire within the police department as the fire department and CM Clausen noted that the fire department asked to have the meeting because their shortage may cause a change where they did not have enough for shifts and that is what lead to the Safety Service Meeting being scheduled and was to help identify a better recruitment process. Patrick asked if the police department shortage would be addressed. CM Gray noted his belief that staffing issues and recruiting that are being addressed with fire would also apply to police. Patrick asked if Council is concerned about the police department and Council confirmed that they were. Patrick noted the meeting was originally scheduled for an hour and asked about the change in timing and CM Gray confirmed it because of a personal issue and that he asked to push it back the half hour. President King noted it was not meant as a slight to the police department that they half hour meeting went to fire and noted that he has been trying to help recruit as well and noted there will likely be more meetings to come. President King noted that recruiting at a young age and going into high schools will help kids understand these are viable and great careers. CM Sanford asked if there was someone in the City who was able to do positive marketing while using social media as a tool to help recruit and noted that some of the negative social media comments are not helping. CM Sanford noted how great these professions are and how you can be well off and we should target our own community to help fill these voids. Mayor Hazel noted that they could possibly look into a recruiting agency for safety services and noted the need for police and fire are equal. CM Sanford noted that recruitment and retention are both very important and has some fear that social media comments may scare some applicants away. CM Gray noted he appreciates what was said and asked Patrick if he had any ideas to help fill the open positions and Patrick said he had plenty of ideas and agreed to get together at some point and talk about them.

Jim Stelzer who resides at 4611 St Anthony Road read a letter that he was given to read aloud by Brian Anderson since Brian was out of town. Jim read the letter and stated at the end that he did not write the letter and cannot confirm if everything in the letter is accurate. Law Director Moore spoke about the email exchanges he had previously with Brian speaking about the half percent and what it has been used for in the past and Auditor Shinn noted when the original ballot language was passed and when the amendment went into effect and also confirmed that at least in the year 2011 some of the half percent was used for payroll. Auditor Shinn noted that in 2016 is when we started tracking it separately and can be more certain what we have spent the half percent on. President King noted that when the original half percent was passed, we had equipment that needed to be purchased and no way to purchase them without additional revenue. Jeff Larmore a previous Council Member spoke about what he remembered when the original half percent was added and it was because we needed equipment badly and also because of the recession they used some money not to increase pay for anyone but to maintain staffing positions that Celina already had. Jeff spoke about some of the purchases when the half percent originally passed being firetrucks, boats, and anything that the fire and police department wanted that was capital was purchased and is certain that half percent will help build a new fire station. Jeff noted that the private sector has had a hard time for the last three years hiring and believes it has now caught up to the public sector. Jeff spoke about how there are likely outside resources that the City of Celina can use to help find people to fill these open positions and spoke about how great the packages are that we offer from the City of Celina such as fully funded deductibles with insurance and noted that Celina has brought up their wages. Jeff noted his belief that he can see why there would be morale problems with previous administrations but this current administration has provided all needed equipment and if there are morale problems, he thinks it may be about wages. Jeff believes that everyone needs to work together to help solve these problems and the negative comments on social media cannot be helping and no one is coming up with solutions and noted that he believes the public rather listen to current employees and not former about any problems. Jeff spoke about the need for transparency and reiterated that the half percent that passed was never meant for wages and if you are not honest with the public the levy will likely be voted down and noted that the half percent has easily passed meaning that City has been good stewards with the money in the eyes of the voters. President King noted the half percent is good for seven years and that it was never tied to wages because it is temporary. Mayor Hazel explained that when it was first passed the half percent went directly into the general fund but we no longer do that and it is easier to keep track of exactly what it is being spent on. CM Clausen noted that it is hard when we do not hear from the safety services outside of contract negotiation time and also that we just passed a contract recently agreeing to terms and conditions from both sides and believes it should have been addressed when we were talking about the contracts. Mayor Hazel noted that Celina was one of the last ones to the table which is why our wages were lower than other cities. Mayor Hazel noted that if we want to get ahead and stay ahead of close communities than we will need additional revenue on a permanent basis and we did not have enough time to get everything together to try to bring a levy this fall to help with recruitment and retention and that we need to speak to officers and possibly use a professional recruiting service. President King noted that Mayor Hazel spoke about the possibility of raising taxes and asked to have a committee meeting in the near future to discuss what that might look like. Mayor Hazel spoke about the County EMS budget and how we are contracted with them and that they are able to provide the ambulances and noted that we are the only full-time fire department within the County. President King asked what can a City use to create revenue and Mayor Hazel noted they have income taxes or millage when it comes to increasing general fund revenue. CM Baltzell asked that during that meeting he would like to see something like the July budget with a more realistic projection and that will help them know what they are able to do and what money if any is able to be moved around. Mayor Hazel confirmed they will get that ready.

Chase Kuhlman who resides at 218 Elm Street spoke about morale and transparency asked about Safety Service Director Hitchcock and a pool incident that happened in the past and President King asked to make sure he respects the Council decorum and is not personally attacking anyone. Chase spoke about his understanding that a public record was deleted by the Chief of Police and that nothing was done about it and that makes it hard for officers to trust the Chief of Police in his opinion. Chief Wale spoke about the incident in detail noting public record law and the BCI investigation that took place and that it was determined that it was not a public record. Chief Wale noted that he deleted a statement that was incomplete and made in subordination to an order he gave to an officer. Chief Wale explained in detail the events that took place that day and that it was a personnel matter and not a police matter which is what the officer was told who made the report against the orders of himself and the Assistant Chief of Police. Chief Wale noted that instead of possibly terminating the officer he decided to get rid of the statement and it went to BCI who interviewed all involved and confirmed Chief Wale did not commit a crime but a better course of action would have been to punish the police officer. Chase took issue with it not being allowed to be kept as civil report. Chief Wale noted that he should have disciplined the officer instead but likes and appreciates that officer and thinks he is one of the best on the force and they both made a mistake during the process. Chief Wale explained that is why he sends most discipline through our legal representation which the officers do not like. Chase asked about public records that he has requested and Auditor Shinn noted that HR was able to get her the information that day and she wanted to review it before sending it out. President King thanked Chief Wale for explaining the story in such detail that lets everyone know the circumstances more clearly.

**NEW BUSINESS:** (First Reading)

**47-24-O:** An Ordinance authorizing the Safety-Service Director to accept bids for the Mill Street Improvement Project. Safety Service Director Hitchcock explained how this is slightly different than normal and since it is coming out of multiple account lines and such a large project administration wanted permission from Council to bid it out. President King mentioned money that will be given by the state to help fund it. CM Fleck noted getting this done in a timely manner will help prevent the prices from increasing. CM Baltzell noted that there has been discussion about money especially in the general fund and asked if administration could talk about the age of the infrastructure and why it needs replaced. Safety Service Director Hitchcock noted they can let them know how many waterline breaks have happened and that they have put cameras down there and the sewers are bad but if it goes to a second reading, he will be able to provide additional information. CM Sanford noted with the money discussions maybe it is possible to do the project in phases in order to break the cost up. Safety Service Director Hitchcock noted that they knew these projects would cost a substantial amount and have been saving money back for years to help pay for these. CM Clausen spoke about the need to get this street done and that it is in bad shape and is certain the people on this street would like to see this get done and it was confirmed that the phases would be depending on how the contractor wants to get it done. CM Sanford made a motion to amend the Ordinance, seconded by CM Baltzell. Motion passed with a roll call vote 6-0 Aye. CM Baltzell made a motion to pass to a second reading, seconded by CM Fleck. Motion passed with a roll call vote 6-0 Aye.

**48-24-O:** An Ordinance authorizing the Safety-Service Director to enter into an amended agreement with the IAFF Local #2603 of the International Association of Firefighters and declaring an emergency. Administration spoke about how this will help recruiting and hiring people with a firefighter certification. CM Gray noted that this is a good step and is good we are trying to attract more people. CM Clausen asked if they will need to complete EMT training and it was confirmed they need to complete their EMT training within a year of hiring as a firefighter. CM Gray asked if they are able to drive and it was confirmed they would be able to. CM Baltzell made a motion to suspend the rules, seconded by CM Buxton. Motion passed with a roll call vote 6-0 Aye. CM Clausen made a motion to pass the Ordinance, seconded by CM Gray. Motion passed with a roll call vote 6-0 Aye.

**OLD BUSINESS** (Second Reading):

**43-24-O:** An Ordinance to accept the petition for the annexation of 6.75 acres more or less in Jefferson Township to the City of Celina; to be known as Machine-Pro Technologies, LLC annexation. CM Clausen made a motion to pass to a third reading, seconded by CM Baltzell. Motion passed with a roll call vote 6-0 Aye.

**OLD BUSINESS** (Third Reading):

**39-24-O:** An Ordinance authorizing a lease agreement between the City of Celina and the Driftwood RC Model Boat Club for the lease of the Eastview Park. CM Gray made a motion to pass the Ordinance, seconded by CM Fleck. Motion passed with a roll call vote 6-0 Aye.

**42-24-O:** An Ordinance authorizing the Safety-Service Director to enter into an amended agreement with the Celina Municipal Employees Representative Committee (“CMERC”) and declaring an emergency. CM Baltzell made a motion to pass the Ordinance, seconded by CM Clausen. Motion passed with a roll call vote 6-0 Aye.

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS:**

Mayor Hazel spoke about how taste of Celina will be happening and also noted how there has been an additional five dollars added to the vehicle registration tax by the County.

Chief Wale spoke about the drug statistics that were brought up from the previous meeting and confirmed while comparing the first six months of 2023 to 2024 the numbers are almost identical or down and does not know whether to attribute that to the lack of a drug task officer or good policing and people doing the right things. Law Director Moore noted that the previous report did not have the statistics correct and Chief Wale explained that it was coded as a suspicious call when they went out and it turned out the be a drug arrest but the officer did not update the initial log and noted the reports are only correct when everything is being logged accurately.

Law Director Moore reiterated that if anyone has any ideas to help solve any problems, he is more than happy to hear them and look into them.

**FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER:**

CM Baltzell spoke about the water plant administration report from this year compared to last year when it comes to testing the water samplings and it is about half and did not know what to attribute that to and administration noted that numbers vary and they can bring in a chart showing all previous years.

President King noted that he has heard from people who would be willing to put up wind screens around the pickle ball courts and noted that should be looked into and is glad four more courts are being put in.

President King adjourned the meeting at 8:54 pm.

Submitted by Michael F. Didonato, Clerk of Council