

**Village of Higginsport
Village Council Meeting
February 10, 2025**

The Council of the Village of Higginsport met in regular session at the Village Municipal Building on Monday, February 10, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. with all members present.

Also, present were: Fire Chief Rob Starrett, Police Chief Shawn Elliott, Chris Ruggles, Greg Wilson, Patrick Elliott, Dean Miracle, Scott Wilburn, Linda Fester, Sandy Bear, Leslee Hasenstab, Tricia Wood, Peggy Wood, and Eddie Crawford.

Mayor Bear called the meeting to order and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Special Presentation

Chris Ruggles with Strand Engineering and Greg Wilson addressed Council regarding sewer plant equipment repairs/replacement that needed to be completed to be in compliance with the Ohio EPA. Mr. Ruggles expressed that engineering design needed to be completed by September 2025 and the village would have twenty-four (24) months to complete the equipment repairs/replacement. A discussion ensued regarding possible funding which could possibly include grants (OWDA, OPWC, OH-EPA or ARC), loans or bonds. Mr. Ruggles expressed that the approximate cost could be \$775,000.00 which included an engineering design cost of \$75,000.00. He also explained that there were no guarantees the village would secure any grant funding for the project.

Chief Starrett recommended Council investigate other possible funding sources including CDGB grant, HUD, FHA, or a private low interest loan. A brief discussion ensued regarding the village's ability to secure a bank loan. Mayor Bear recommended Council table the matter and schedule a special meeting to discuss the matter further.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Bear inquired if Council desired to have Mr. Faul pretreat the village streets due to the anticipated snowfall overnight. After a brief discussion it was general of consensus of Council to wait to see if the impending snowfall warranted doing so.

Mayor Bear called for nominations for the 2025 Council President.

Mr. Null nominated Matt Adams

Mr. Fester expressed that he would be interested in being council president.

Mr. Null withdrew his nomination of Mr. Adams and then nominated Mr. Fester.

Motion by: Mr. Null, seconded by: Mrs. Adams to appoint Mr. Fester as council president for 2025. Motion passed unanimously with Mr. Fester abstaining from the vote.

Mayor Bear requested Council establish the 2025 village committees. After discussion, the following committees were established:

Records Retention

Lester Bear
Sheila Dufau
Kathy Adams
Tricia Wood

Finance

Kathy Adams
Linda Wills
Scott Null

Parks & Recreation

Mark Fester
Scott Null
Drew Smith

Streets

Scott Null
Mark Fester
Matt Adams

Police & Fire

Mark Fester
Linda Wills
Matt Adams

Sewer

Matt Adams
Scott Null
Drew Smith

Grants

Mark Fester
Scott Null
Kathy Adams

Buildings

Scott Null
Matt Adams
Drew Smith

Police Department Report

Chief Elliott provided an update on two police department incidents in January as well as department vehicle maintenance updates.

Public Participation

Mrs. Sandy Bear requested permission to start planning a village community day to be tentatively held on June 7, 2025. Council granted her permission to do so.

Mr. Scott Wilburn inquired if Council would be addressing the puddle of gray water at the intersection of Plum Alley and Main Street. Mayor Bear expressed they were looking into the matter.

Mr. Wilburn notified Council that there was an abandoned camper at the end of Plum Alley that he would be having removed in order to clear trees.

New/Old Business

Mr. Fester reported that weekly meeting is being held regarding the riverfront development project.

Mr. Null inquired if the village had a solicitor. A discussion ensued regarding the absence of the current village solicitor and the possible need to find a new solicitor.

Mr. Null inquired about the status of the property destroyed by fire at the intersection of US 52 and US 505. Chief Elliott reported that the property is currently being probated to another family member.

Mr. Null reported damage to one of the parking bumpers in front of the municipal building and recommended Council approve the purchase of additional replacement bumpers. Mr. Null provided an estimate for the purchase. **Motion by: Mr. Fester, seconded by: Mr. Null** to the approve the purchase of additional parking bumpers at a cost of \$350.00. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Null recommended Council establish a committee to address the matter of all village streets that end at the Ohio River possibly even leasing the streets to the adjacent property

owners. Mayor Bear expressed the matter would be something the established street committee should meet to discuss. Mr. Null recommended the property owners be invited to the street committee meeting for their input on the matter as well. After a brief discussion, a street meeting committee meeting was scheduled for Monday, February 17, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

Ms. Wills reported that Council had received a letter regarding the village's recent financial audit. She expressed her appreciation to the village fiscal officer, Mrs. Dufau for the great job she does for the village.

Ms. Wills expressed her concern regarding the high electric bill for the village community center as the building has been used very little. Chief Elliott reported that community center had been used for the December council meeting as well as the community Christmas event which most likely contributed to the additional electric costs.

Mrs. Adams expressed her concern that no council vote had been taken at the recent special meeting to enter a contract with Dustin Faul for street snow removal. A brief discussion ensued with confirmation that there had been no formal contract approved with Mr. Faul that his services had only been approved on an as needed basis.

Fire Department Report

Chief Starrett expressed that he wished to address a question posed by Mr. Miracle at the January meeting regarding the designation of fire lanes. Mr. Miracle had asked him how long he had been village fire chief, which he had responded for forty years to which Mr. Miracle had asked the why now are fire lanes needed. Chief Starrett expressed that the answer to Mr. Miracle's question was that the property and building development there was not there twenty years ago.

Chief Starrett announced that he would be running for Lewis Township Trustee in November 2025.

Chief Starrett reported that it was now the fourth month he has requested the removal of the dock blocking Olive Street and there was now a trailer next to it totally blocking the street. He provided to Council a proposed ordinance for establishing fire lanes for all streets/alleys that end at the Ohio River as well as the Ohio Revised Code that permits him to remove the dock and trailer and expressed that he would be having them removed.

Mr. Patrick Elliott stated that he had moved the utility trailer onto the street because of the rain and that if he moved the trailer would the fire department be able to access the river.

Chief Starrett responded that the trailer and the dock need to be moved off the street.

Mr. Elliott expressed that he had been there for twenty-four (24) years and that he had gotten approval from the Army Corp of Engineers for the ramp and that a previous village council had approved. He stated that he had poured the concrete that was there and had made a place for the fire department to anchor a truck.

Mayor Bear and Mr. Fester interrupted and ended the conversation moving on with other village business.

Fiscal Officer's Report

Mrs. Dufau presented the following for Council's approval:

- 2025 permanent appropriation budget
- January 13, 2025 regular meeting minutes
- January 21, 2025 special meeting minutes
- Paid bills

Resolution 25-03

Motion by: Mr. Fester

Seconded by: Mr. Null

WHEREAS, the Council of the Village of Higginsport are required to adopt a permanent appropriation budget, and

WHEREAS, the Fiscal Officer has presented the permanent appropriation budget for Fiscal Year 2025 to the Council,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Council of the Village of Higginsport adopt and approve the permanent appropriation budget for Fiscal Year 2025 as presented.

Vote: Mrs. Adams, Yes; Mr. Adams, Yes; Mr. Fester, Yes; Mr. Null, Yes; Mr. Smith; Yes Ms. Wills, Yes

Motion by: Mr. Null, seconded by: Mr. Adams to approve and pay the bills. Motion passed unanimously

Motion by: Ms. Wills, seconded by: Mr. Adams to approve the regular meeting minutes from January 13, 2025. Motion passed unanimously

Motion by: Mr. Adams, seconded by: Mr. Null to approve the special meeting minutes from January 21, 2025. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by: Mr. Null, seconded by: Mr. Fester to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Lester Bear, Mayor

Sheila G. Dufau, Fiscal Officer

Kathy Adams, Council Member

Matt Adams, Council Member

Linda Wills, Council Member

Scott Null, Council Member

Mark Fester, Council Member

Drew Smith, Council Member