

**Village of Higginsport
Village Council Meeting
May 13, 2024**

The Council of the Village of Higginsport met in regular session at the Village Municipal Building on Monday, May 13, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. with all members present.

Also, present were: Police Chief Shawn Elliott, Fire Chief Rob Starrett, Dean Miracle, Tina Germann, Tricia Wood, C.J. Sharp, Sandy Bear, Linda Fester, Karen Vonderhaar, Chuck Vonderhaar, Scott Wilburn and David Osborne, Jr.

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

Public Participation

Mrs. Linda Fester reported on the following:

- The Village has been awarded \$6.3 million dollars grant funding for the proposed ball park renovations. The grant was under the wonderful water initiative and the first sub-recipient grant meeting will be held May 14, 2024 at 11:00 a.m.
- The Village has been selected to participate in the Ready Local Government program. She and Mayor Bear would be participating in the nine-week course. Once the course is completed the Village would be eligible for a \$50,000.00 grant.
- A group from the Village attended the Rivertown Review Workshop sponsored by the Ohio River Way.
- The Brown County Extension Office has a program available to the Village for community planning, urban interface, leadership building and strategic planning.

Mr. Chuck Vonderhaar inquired if the awarded grant was a reimbursing grant or required a village match. Mrs. Fester confirmed the grant was one hundred percent (100%) funded and it would not be a reimbursing grant.

Ms. Tricia Wood provided an update regarding the America 250 Celebration planning. She expressed the Village still needed to determine an interactive booth for the event.

Mrs. Tina Germann reported the village flower pots and flowers had been purchased and requested volunteer assistance in preparing the pots and planting. A discussion ensued regarding her request. Ms. Germann reported that Bob Eubanks would be donating fill dirt for the park and the flower pots.

Ms. Wood expressed her appreciation to all those that have volunteered for the work at the village park.

Mayor Bear reported that David Taylor with Sardina Concrete had donated three yards of concrete to the village for work at the village park.

Mrs. Germann suggested Council consider placing a recognition plaque or a small flower garden in Miss Aurora Bishop's honor as she had initiated the park improvements by raising monies with a lemonade stand and donating the proceeds to the village for its park. A brief discussion ensued regarding her suggestion with general consensus of Council to do so once the park improvements have been completed.

Police Department Report

Chief Elliott reported on the following:

- The department email account and Microsoft is in need of renewal. The annual cost is \$480.00
- Police cruiser is schedule for service and new tires.
- April citation and call status
- The Antique Bar has been sold. (Mr. Null reported they had contacted him as they have resources they would like to share with the village.)
- Both housefires in the village have been deemed as accidental fires.

Solicitor Report

Mr. Osborne reported the guardrail case is still open as the responsible individual has not been located.

Old/New Business

Mr. Null inquired why the municipal building parking lot had been blocked off on Friday night. Mayor Bear expressed it was an error on his part but that he had notified the bar employees that they could park there. A discussion ensued regarding the matter with Mr. Null suggesting that “no parking” signs be installed.

Mr. Null reported that he and Mayor Bear needed to finish the street sign installation.

Ms. Wills reported that she had not been notified of the special meeting on April 19, 2024 and inquired as to how council members and the fiscal officer would be notified when special meetings are called. A brief discussion ensued regarding the matter.

Ms. Wills inquired as to the status of the Nature Works grant. Mrs. Fester reported that e Attorney General’s office was completing the necessary resolution with the unresolved findings for recovery and once completed the grant award contract could be signed by the village.

Mr. Null requested Council review the recent increase to the sewer rates as the new rates did not reflect a fair and equitable increase for business versus residential rates. A discussion ensued regarding the matter as well as the proposed change to the fee for reactivation of a sewer tap as discussed at the previous special council meeting on April 19, 2024.

Ordinance 2024-02

Motion by: Mr. Fester

Seconded by: Mr. Null

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 2024-01 APPENDIX 1 AND DECLARING THE SAME AN EMERGENCY.

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

Mrs. Adams inquired if Mr. Greg Wilson was aware of the village’s sewer budget constraints. Mayor Bear expressed that Mr. Wilson’s hours should be reducing his hours. Mrs. Dufau reported the most recent invoice received from Mr. Wilson was for approximately \$5,700.00 which was for a month of service at the sewer plant and the twelve-year sewer maintenance plan previously approved by Council. Mr. Null inquired if Mr. Wilson was still interested in doing the monthly sewer billing for the village. Mayor Bear expressed the matter should be tabled for the time being.

Mrs. Adams expressed that the village solicitor's hours should be managed as well due to the village's limited funds.

Mr. Smith presented a quote from Summitt for servicing eight fire extinguishers and replacing the batteries and bulbs in two exit signs in the municipal building. The total quote being \$964.00. He reported that Summit had replaced two exit lights and serviced the fire extinguishers at the sewer plant at no charge to the village.

Mr. Miracle expressed that he had a friend that would service the fire extinguishers for \$45.00 each and might possibly do the exit signs and backup lighting. A discussion ensued regarding the matter with Mr. Null recommending the village do any work that can be completed by village council members and volunteers.

Resolution 24-11

Motion by: Mr. Fester

Seconded by: Ms. Wills

To approve the purchase of exit signs for the municipal building and to have the installation completed by village volunteers.

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

Mr. Fester reported a sewer committee meeting would be held Friday, May 17, 2024 at 2:00 p.m. to rate the engineering firms for the village's sewer project. He reported the approximate cost of the engineering would be \$10,000.00 to \$20,000.00 and that any grants secured for the project would require a monetary match by the village. Mayor Bear inquired if the \$50,000.00 grant from the Ready Local Government program could be used to fund the engineering study. Mrs. Fester confirmed that they were not far along in the process to utilize it for funding. A brief discussion ensued coordinating the sewer committee meeting.

Mr. Fester reported the sub-recipient of the Appalachian grant has already advertised for a general contractor for the project. He and Mrs. Fester would be administering the grant on behalf of the village and the sub-recipient will be managing the project.

Mr. Fester reported that he had spoken to Mrs. Germann regarding recognizing those that have and continue to support the village and village projects. He expressed he would prepare a certificate that could be sent to individuals for recognition for their support of the village.

Fiscal Officer's Report

Mrs. Dufau present a re-appropriation resolution for Council's approval for additional expenditures not allocated in the original 2024 appropriation budget.

Resolution 24-12

Motion by: Mr. Fester

Seconded by: Mrs. Adams

WHEREAS, the Village Council approved Resolution# 24-11 and 24-12 to enter into a contract with Greg Wilson Consulting for village sewer plant operations and consulting services, and

WHEREAS, sewer fund re-appropriations are needed to facilitate these additional expenditures, and

WHEREAS, the Village Council also approved Resolution# 24-08 to enter into an employment contract for the position of village solicitor with David J. Osborne, Jr., and

WHEREAS, general fund re-appropriations are needed to facilitate these additional expenditures,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the following re-appropriations be approved:

General Fund

From: 1000-930-930	Contingencies \$	5,800.00
To: 1000-750-211	OPERS	\$ 700.00
1000-750-213	Medicare	\$ 75.00
1000-750-225	Worker's Comp	\$ 25.00
1000-750-141	Salary - Solicitor	\$ 5,000.00

Sewer Fund

From: 5201-930-930	Contingencies	\$ 6,000.00
5201-541-190	Salaries	\$16,522.00
5201-541-213	Medicare	\$ 240.00
5201-541-211	OPERS	\$ 2,310.00
To: 5201-549-349	Professional Serv.	\$25,072.00

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

Village Administrator Report

Mr. Miracle reported on the following:

- Requested approval from to Council to contact Rumpke to have the port-a-let in the alley removed. (General consensus of Council was to have it removed.)
- Seventeen properties in the village have been identified as needing cleaned up or boarded up.
- Requested paint from Brown County Rural Water to paint the fire hydrants. BCRW came and completed painting them.

Mr. Miracle requested an executive session to discuss a personnel matter.

Motion by: Mr. Fester, seconded by: Mr. Null to go into executive session to discuss a personnel matter. **Motion passed unanimously. Time Out: 7:21 p.m.**

Motion by: Mr. Null, seconded by: Ms. Wills to return to regular session. **Motion passed unanimously. Time Returned: 8:02 p.m.**

Fire Department Report

Chief Starrett reported on the following:

- Preventative maintenance has been scheduled for pump testing which is completed every two years.
- Department assisted Kentucky with recovery of a truck in the Ohio River.
- Awaiting grant approval to purchase new radios
- Demolition of properties through Moving Ohio grant monies is tentatively scheduled to begin in May.

Chief Starrett requested that Council reinstate Mr. Smith as a paid volunteer firefighter. He reported that he and the fiscal officer had researched the matter and that Mr. Smith could be paid as a volunteer firefighter as he does not receive compensation for being a village council member. A discussion ensued regarding the matter with Mr. Fester requesting the village solicitor verify if that were the case.

Chief Starrett addressed the village solicitor inquiring as to why he had an issue with the Lewis Township fire contract that Council approved in December 2023. Chief Starrett expressed that the contract had been prepared by the township's insurance company (OTARMA) and that it had been reviewed and approved by the Brown County Prosecutor's office prior to the township providing it to the entities they were contracting with for services in the township. Mr. Osborne did not respond to Chief Starrett's question but expressed he had an issue with the firefighter liability statement that some of the firefighter's had signed. He expressed he felt the liability statement should have been prepared by an attorney.

Motion by: Mr. Smith, seconded by: Ms. Wills to approve and pay the bills. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by: Mr. Smith, seconded by: Mr. Null to approve the April 8, 2024 meeting minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by: Mr. Smith, seconded by: Mrs. Adams, 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